

Leading Ways: MOVING FROM MANAGING TECHNICAL WORK- TO LEADING PEOPLE

Making the transition from simply managing the day to day into leading the people who do the work is perhaps the biggest step in any career. Here is a shorthand list of some predictable pitfalls that can derail a promising individual..

1. More **V** and **R** less **T**. The basic leadership formula that **L** leadership equals **V**ision times **T**ask times **R**elationship is relevant here. You got the position because you did **T** very well. The new job calls on you to not just do more **T**, it demands a change in orientation and focus to do more **R** and **V** and do them better.
2. The old job probably called on you to “make sure.” The new one asks you to live with the ambiguity of “we can’t know for sure,” but still move forward. To do this requires that you live with the uncertainty, develop ways to handle a larger range of risks, and embrace the new political dimension of the work.
3. Communication before began and ended with your technical command of the issues. The people that are important to your work now assume you know this and don’t want to hear it. At all. What they want to know is whether or not you can put this work into a larger framework and share this with a clear, crisp and purposeful message. What you say always needs to exhibit your understanding of the broader common ground and be framed in that context.
4. When you had a punch list it ordered your work. Now, setting and more importantly managing priorities, is the name of the game. This work ranges from knowing what to do right away to being able to deploy the leadership “dark arts” such as the slow walk, the half measure, and the re-label.
5. If you were lucky your last job came with a mentor and a development plan. You may continue to be lucky, but don’t bet on it. You will need to secure your own feedback from a variety of sources, create your own plan, seek out your own mentors, and advocate for your own development.
6. The best perspective on your work for now is: two levels up and three years out. You don’t work there, but your work reflects your understanding of that framework in terms of issues

and relationships. As always, leading up still begins with your direct supervisor but knowing and working with the bigger perspective will help them do their job and help you do yours.

- 7.** Increasingly you will have decision authority, this does not mean you make the decision. What it does mean is that you are responsible for moving a group or team forward, reaching the best possible decision, while bringing most people along with that decision, with as little collateral damage as possible.
This will require strategic agility which means seeing the big picture, understanding the problem, both technical and political, and adapting as the situation changes. Making sure you know your strengths and weaknesses as a communicator is essential here
- 8.** Relationship capital is necessary for success as you lead. The broader your network, the better your coherent understanding of the work, and the more adaptive you can be then the more likely you are to build and not spend that capital.