

## Transcription - Managing Executives vs Junior Staff

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Welcome back I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today we're going to talk about the difference between leading senior executives and leading a more junior group of workers.

I guess the difference really, for me, is in the results that you might expect from that particular group and the responsibilities that they take on for the roles that they're performing. The difference between leading a more junior team is, I feel, that you would be leading them all, that they would be looking for more direction, that they would be looking for more support and assistance and training and learning. When you move to leading a senior executive team, you are expecting a different level of performance, obviously, a different level of knowledge and of understanding. And there comes with that also, the acceptance of their position as leaders of their own groups that they're representing.

We are going to generalise a bit in here because when you look at these two distinctive groups, yes you can generalise them as a group, but within that we recognise that you've got a bunch of individuals and they're not the same and they won't be treated the same. So let me start off with the more junior, meaning less years in the workforce, maybe new from uni, maybe only been working one or two years. They are an absolute pleasure to work with and lead simply because they are very enthusiastic, they think they know everything and in some cases they know a lot more than initially one would give credit for, and not only that, but they have no fear, they have not had any setbacks, they haven't fallen over, they haven't had any experiences that might make them a bit more cautious. So from that angle, it's fantastic, as you are able to encourage all of that and at the same time, give them enough time to grow and learn. The most important thing is not to dampen that enthusiasm and not to bring them down at all. The thing is let them learn through experience.

Now as we have talked to Kim and I and others and other podcasts, they will make mistakes. You will make mistakes at any stage of your career anyway. So the key here is to let them know that making mistakes is okay as long as you quickly bring it to the surface and we together will clear it up and learn from it and not do it again. I think the most important aspect of that is that they are responsible enough to recognise that they have made a mistake. They have moved into the workforce, they are at a level of responsibility and maturity where they have to accept responsibility for their actions or for their omissions. If that has been the issue, it had to be addressed quickly, to be confident enough to say this isn't working, I didn't do this right, I missed this out, whatever it is, to know that within your management style, that that is a comfortable situation, that they are not going to wear that mistake for the rest of their careers.

That could be a difficult transition for them to make because they may all come from that background at home, at school or wherever, where admitting a mistake or admitting that things are not going well, is taboo. You need for them to understand that in the workplace, it is not taboo and in fact, it has to be something that is addressed immediately and responsibly. As individuals they would all have their own styles and personalities, some of them are more introverted, some are more extroverted. In either case you have to remember that you are the leader and the role model, you have to channel their energies in the right

direction.

So again, back to, like we said before, common goals, what's expected, make it very, very clear. People at that stage of a career, you have got to be specific and explain why, don't just say you need to do this by this time. How does that fit in the overall picture? Why this timing? What's the impact? What we are trying to get out of it? People will do better if they understand the total picture, even though their part of it is only a part and they don't see it all. So wherever possible, they've got to see that through your eyes. In a way you are also teaching them how to work in a team because they're new to the workforce, they haven't, yes, they would have had some collaboration at uni, at home, whatever, but at the end of the day, in a work environment, be aware that you are helping them develop the right habits. So you take on the role of mentor even if you don't see it as that role.

I think it's important for me to bring in some information that I use in other areas. When I talk to people about public speaking, about presentations, one of the steps that I will ask them to take, is to identify a favourite speaker. That's so that they can look at a style and a presentation mode that works for them in terms of modelling and implementation. I don't think it's a bad system to introduce to this situation as well. Think about who is your favourite manager or who is a manager that you admire. It doesn't have to be in your organisation, it doesn't have to be in your industry. Who is someone whose management style is one that you could adopt, that you know will work, that you will be comfortable with, that will produce results and model yourself on that and make sure that that fits the situation. So if you're looking after junior employees and you feel that that's the area where you can provide the best results for the organisation, say they are specialised in that. That's why we have teachers who remain kindergarten teachers, because that's where they're best, that's where their skills and their mentoring and their development facilities are best utilised.

When you're looking at that aspect that Kim just mentioned, also there were some people who do actually know what they want to be in at that early part of their career. Others really don't or think they do and they will change. That doesn't mean that they're not clear or indecisive, it means they haven't had exposure. So if they haven't worked in sales before and they like it from the outside, then they want to do it and find that they're actually more suited for marketing. I mean that's fun, it's their training and what they came with, is one thing but this is the time for them to find their way over time. The answer to that is, whatever job they are in, they need to do it, they need to do it well and not just butterfly through. And as a leader of a new team member, is to show them how to be able to find their way around as well as deliver while they're finding themselves, if you know what I mean.

I think in both situations, whether they're junior or whether they're more senior, is also to give them exposure to the jobs that they don't think they can do, they don't want to do, they don't like doing, because often that's based on some other experience that they've had or views that they've heard. I know that for Fulyana, she actively sought experience in areas that she didn't really think were her strengths, that she didn't think were areas that she wanted to work. But I don't think that at the end of the exercise she came away thinking that she was sorry that she did it.

No, it certainly helped me because it's still part of my job The area that we're referring to is finance, it was not my strength but absolutely a necessity for any managerial or middle

management job that you do. If you don't understand that, you can't do your job very well. So I needed to do it and I needed to go through that learning.

In relation to the more senior staff and we'll be flicking between executives and newbies, if you like, people have already established their areas of strength, they've already got themselves a reputation. Managing them, imagine you're in a CEO role and you've got your senior leadership team, they're all different, obviously, because they're individuals, but they've also got different drivers at different parts of the year, different times of their career. By and large, they're nearly always competing for the next step up. The next step up can differ for some, it's straight up to the CEO's role. For others it could be a bigger role in a bigger part of the organisation or in the head office of the organisation or whatever. Here it's pretty tricky, because you really need to keep them all individually satisfied, but you also want them to have certain competition amongst each other but most importantly, to pull together as a team, to do their job towards the organisation and their role towards the teams that they are leading.

It is hard because you are talking to experienced, mature, ambitious people and you need to give them respect and individually cater to their staff. Basically once you get to that level, the people you are managing are all after your job. So you need to be able to put that to one side and to look at the strengths and the weaknesses, not in terms of succession planning, but in terms of still getting the results that are needed for the organisation as a whole. And being able, yet again, to communicate those and I think the communication at this level is as important, if not more important, than it is at any other level. At this level, it's too easy for people, because they've got responsibility, they've got years of experience, they've got knowledge and knowledge is power within an organisation, they can go off and do things of their own accord and create issues that weren't there in the first place, that cause more work to work around or work through or work beyond.

So it's a harder role, I think, the managing of senior executives, because it has more potential for disaster. So it's a situation where you really need to have planned and measured and look at the end result as well as the ongoing activities that are occurring.

When you are in a position of say, that CEO managing those executives, one way is to say to them and that's what I learned from other CEOs by the way, is they say, "What do you pride yourself on?" It's understood that meeting targets and you want to be promoted and you want the big bonus and you want to corner office, that's all of those. In saying that, it's saying, "What do you want people to describe you as?" Or as a CEO, "When I'm talking to another organisation, when I'm talking to a group, when I'm talking to anywhere, the head office of the organisation, what would you genuinely like me to be able to describe you as and your strength?"

That makes people think more about their leadership as distinct from just promote me, give me more money. When I'm mentoring the senior executives, I always say, "Work backwards, what do you want to be remembered for. What do you want to leave behind? If we collected 20 people that worked for you directly in the last five to ten years and we got them in a room, we want them to talk about you, how do they describe you for you to feel very satisfied and proud, what would that be?" They then work backwards in saying, "I'm naturally good at that, but I need to work on this and so on." So again, you're working towards not just technical competence here. It's more about leadership, emotional, intelligence at a much,

much higher degree.

There will be times where you are in a work group, at either level, where there is conflict and there is conflict that is below the surface, I guess, as opposed to politics of the organisation. This is just straight conflict between sections. I came across a very powerful activity with one organisation I worked with some time back, where there was obviously, when I went through and did the individual assessments and talked to the groups and talked to the individual managers of the more junior groups and then the senior groups, there was, within the junior groups, a level of conflict that was just below the surface. You couldn't quite pinpoint it in the day to day activity but you knew that there was some issue there that they weren't talking about. I think to be truthful, they didn't really know what the situation was, they just felt uncomfortable in the workplace and there was structural change happening at the time in the organisation that wasn't being communicated well. What came out of a session I had where I had all of these group leaders together, these team leaders together, and they had not ever had a session where they all sat down together because they all worked at different times throughout the day, it was an 18 hour shift situation. So this was the first time for them all to sit down together in the one room and talk amongst themselves across the table. Inadvertently, I had the two protagonists opposite one another at the table and I didn't realise this till sometime during the day of the activity, but the exercise we did towards the end of the day, I will say that I was exasperated by their behaviour and I said that to them at the end of the day, I said I'm not getting anywhere, there's no point in me wasting my time with you because you can't even talk to one another but you won't say what the issue is, so I'm just going to sit back here now and I'm going to wait until you can look at the person who is sitting opposite you and say five good things about them, in terms of the workplace, and their interaction with your section in the workplace.

There were some that struggled, but the two that were the worst ones, actually because they didn't go first, knew that they were going to have to say something or they weren't going to get out of the room and we'd already been there for nearly nine hours at that point. I was standing against the door, so they knew I wasn't going to move till they said something. They got to their turn and they actually found things that were positives, that they could say about one another in the workplace. When the session ended, they stopped everyone before I said well that's okay that everyone's had their say you can all go now, they stopped and said, well before we go, one of them said, I want to say that that was a really useful exercise for me because I never really thought about the positive side of the interaction that we have in the workplace. And the other person said, well I always thought that you couldn't stand me and I didn't really know why and that was the basis of the whole issue was that one person thought the other one didn't like them. It wasn't about why and we had one simple exercise after nine hours of struggling. We came up with a breakthrough.

It's very difficult with a senior management group, even a middle management group, to get them to sit down and talk to one another on a personal level because they're so used to dealing with one another through the process of whatever it is they're doing. So I would encourage you all, if you're faced with these situations, to get everyone together, to give them a safe environment where they can express their views and make sure that what they're expressing is not the political agenda, but rather the work agenda, and the interaction agenda.

If you do have that situation, just imagine the impact when it's at that senior level, on the rest of the organisation. You know what would happen. What happens is, if two senior people are not seeing eye to eye and that becomes obvious then their teams, they will be starting to take sides either for or against. They will create a ripple effect of negativity and oppression throughout the organisation. So if you are in a position where you're managing senior people and there is that situation then it's absolutely important that these behaviors are called early and put a stop to, because one of the things that senior managers should be rewarded on, all managers, all leaders, but particularly seniors, is how they achieve their results. It's their behaviour. Are they behaving in the way that is consistent with the organisation values and direction and cooperation with others or are they causing negative ripple effects to add to the organisation where they're adversely oriented?

The behaviour patterns and the achieving of the organisation's missions and goals, keeps coming back as a reminder to us. In every session we seem to have something that reflects on that and as much as I rail against having them up on the wall, I still think that they are very important to an organisation. It's just a matter of how you communicate them and how you measure constantly, at all levels of the organisation, that they are being met.

The other thing is the nature of the beast. If you are in a situation managing those senior people, you've probably got a group of say, minimum of six maybe maximum of ten, who are much brighter than you. So the skill is managing, the skill is doing these other things that they are obviously very good at and we need both. You can't have an organisation that's just all managers, otherwise it could almost be the public service. And you can't have an organisation that's all about people doing a task because there's no direction for the tasks if they're not managed and there's no end goal in mind.

So there's not a whole lot of differences between the two levels of management. There are differences, but there are differences that would come with, not so much experience, but I guess, exposure to the different levels of management within the organisations that you're looking at. I think that we need to focus on the similarities rather than the differences because if you develop those similar management skills when you start to manage a group of more junior staff, then by the time you get to the senior level, if that's where you choose to go, then they're just going to be that much more honed, that much more professional and professional management is not a bad thing. If you look at being a professional manager, I think the most important thing you can look at is what level of expertise, in terms of professional management, is best for you. I really firmly believe that if you decide that managing junior teams is what excites you, what you know you're good at, what gives them a return and an opportunity to grow and develop and move on, then that's where you should stay. You shouldn't, just because you started junior level managing, you shouldn't necessarily keep moving up the chain till you're at the senior level, it is not for everyone.

So that's our words on the differences and the similarities between managing at a junior level or a team of more junior workers and managing at the senior level. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.