

# If You Want It Done Right, You *Don't* Have to Do It Yourself!

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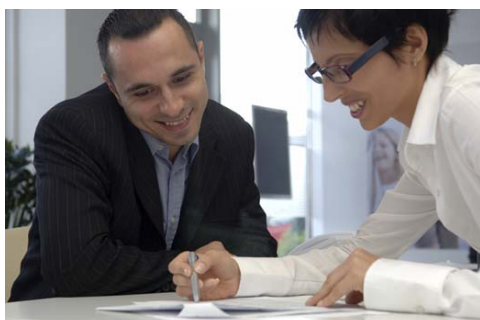
## Want It Done Right *Journal*

GenCorp Consulting • 1Q 2010

[Feature Article](#) • [Delegation Dr Daily Dose](#) • [Corner Crack-up](#) • [Want It Done Right Products & Services](#)

### Feature Article

## From Performer to Manager, Making the Paradigm Shift



Thank you to Tom of Evergreen, CO, for coming up with the idea for this quarter's newsletter. Actually Tom suggested I write a book on this topic, but since I have a couple of books I'm already working on, I thought I might start with an article and see where it goes from there.

In my speeches and trainings I emphasize how difficult the transition from performer to manager can be for a new manager as well as for the organization. The transition is tough because the style and skills required to be an amazing performer are very different from those required to be an amazing manager. Top performers like to get things done, they like checking off the to-do list, the sense of satisfaction they experience from accomplishment and the recognition they get. Once they get promoted into management their job, by definition, is to get things done through others. Most managers I encounter are not trained in the skills required to make this transition. Further, they're not even trained that there is such a transition required because the organization doesn't recognize this paradigm shift either! Even further, they're still held accountable for results. So what do they do? They end up doing their job as well as the job of everyone who reports to them because it's too scary to risk not getting the results needed to be successful. And not having the skills to get things done through others they often don't even know where or how to start. This scenario sets new managers up for failure. It's such a shame because

Invitation for those who believe in the Socratic Method:

Have you ever wished you had the perfect question for your situation? Submit your situation and we'll provide you with the perfect questions!

they've been known for their success.

So how does an outstanding performer show he has what it takes to be an outstanding manager? And how does the organization better assess who will make the best managers and therefore who to promote? Here are some tips to make this paradigm shift:

1. **Pre-promotion assessment** – If you want to get promoted into management, make sure your reasons for wanting to be a manager are sound. In other words, rather than just being interested in a loftier title and more pay, recognize how your job will change and be sure that's the type of work best suited to you. If you're a self-described doer, someone who loves to dive into the work, management may not be for you. If you prefer getting to giving recognition, management may not be very fulfilling. If, on the other hand, you truly enjoy helping others to be successful and you enjoy getting results by leading a team, then you may be well-suited to a management role.

Organizations should do a similar assessment by discussing motives and styles with individuals who want to be promoted to ensure there is a good fit *before* they promote someone. Even better, test these people in managing others through projects to see how well they do and how well this role fits them. This is a sure-fire way to avoid the Peter Principle: promoting people to their level of incompetence. This principle leads to the loss of many good performers who don't make it as managers.

2. **Learn the skills to get results through others.** If you've just been promoted or want to be promoted, learn what it takes to truly manage people. Management is not dictating and driving. Nor is it dumping and hoping for the best. It's a balance between setting clear expectations and holding people accountable on one side and giving them room to make their own mark while still achieving expected outcomes on the other side. Delegation is the skill that it takes to be effective. It's not hard to learn but it can be difficult to put into practice. Learning what the process involves is a first step. Practice, along with a good mentor to assist through the learning curve, will ensure success in your new position.

On their side, organizations would do well to provide training for newly promoted managers to ensure they have the skills they need to succeed. Such training would be a win-win for the manager, the manager's direct reports and the organization.

3. **Learn to manage up as well as down.** Not only do new managers have to learn the skills to manage their direct reports, they are now in a "sandwich position" where they need to translate the expectations of their managers for their direct reports. This translation task can be a challenging addition to the responsibilities of a new manager. Learning the skills of "managing up" – how to get as much information and clarity on expectations as possible from one's manager – can be an even

## Words of Wisdom

The best way to cheer  
yourself up is to cheer  
everybody else up.

-Mark Twain

### Corner Crack-up

Reporters  
interviewing a  
104 year-old  
woman:

"And what do  
you think is the  
best thing about  
being 104?" the  
reporter asked.

"No peer  
pressure," said the woman.



bigger challenge than managing employees. Fortunately for managers and organizations the delegation skill-set fulfills both requirements.

- 4. Evaluate where your loyalties lie.** One of the biggest challenges facing new managers is to shift their alignment from their peers to the management team. This is especially true for those promoted from within (which is where new managers typically come from). It's tough to now hold the same people in whom you once confided your frustrations about management decisions accountable for implementing these same decisions. And even tougher when you may not agree with the decisions! However, in order to succeed new managers must evaluate where they're going to align their loyalties. It's not to say they "turn" on their peers but rather, they embrace a bigger picture perspective in decision making and know what information they should and should not share with direct reports. Many a friendship has been lost as a result of a promotion but many a promotion has also failed as a result of loyalties to friendships. This alignment issue can also be true with people who would rather be seen as part of the front line than a part of the leadership team. Those who struggle with authority also struggle with becoming a part of that authority. With a promotion into management there is a reasonable expectation of alignment with management. This alignment shift may result in a loss in popularity that can be a difficult pill to swallow. Be sure you can get it down before you move up.

Organizations would also do well to assess this alignment before promoting someone into management. If an employee struggles with authority figures, it's likely they'll struggle when they become an authority figure. While it's wise to think twice about promoting those who constantly challenge authority, it's also wise to think twice about those who are too aligned with authority, i.e., the "climbers". What works best in management is a balance in critical thinking to challenge decisions but for the right reasons.

- 5. Based on all of the above, ensure you're in the role that's right for you.** If you want a better title and more pay but find through the above assessment that you're better suited to being a performer than a manager, you have a couple of options. One is to stay in your current role and be happy that you have a job you enjoy. Another option may be to see if your organization can adopt a "technical track" incentive program in which those who want to move up can do so within their technical expertise. Finally, if neither of the above work, you might try seeking a position with an organization that does have a technical track option

Organizations could benefit from creative incentive and promotion programs that allow people more flexibility than only moving up through management. For example, organizations that have adopted technical track advancement opportunities have fared well in avoiding the "brain drain" that can occur when people who want to stay and perform well in a doer role find that role is a dead end street.

Career decisions can be very complex. Sometimes compromises are required between job satisfaction and greater compensation. The more a person knows himself or herself, the better career decisions will be. Similarly, the more an organization knows an individual, the better the career decisions will be. Ultimately it is much better to have a great fit between a person and a position than it is to fulfill career path decisions based on desires rather than abilities. The former leads to satisfaction and success, the latter, leads to, well, the opposite.

Thanks again Tom, I hope I answered your questions!

## Delegation Doctor's Daily Dose



The New Year typically spurs us to take stock of the past year and set our goals for the year ahead. With this New Year being both the end and beginning of a decade, many of us are taking stock in a bigger way. What have we accomplished over the past 10 years? What have we learned? What were our successes and what would we like to improve? Questions such as these can help us design the next decade to be better than the previous one by challenging us to grow. But the biggest question embedded in these is will we do or be anything different in the decade ahead than in the one just passed? The answer depends on how we manage our lives and our time, in other words, how we focus and prioritize.

What I hear many people wishing for the most is time. Even in this economy when money is tight, it seems time is even more highly coveted. Time translates into balance of life. Time translates into quality of life. Time seems to become less and less abundant with every passing year. If we don't manage our time, our time manages us.

For those of us who have extensive to-do lists and especially those of us who underestimate the time it takes to do anything, time – or the lack of it – can be a huge source of frustration. We spend so much time ticking the little things off the list that we never get to our bigger dreams and goals. The tighter time crunch we're in it seems the lower the level of priority at which we work. The familiar thought to those of us on a tight schedule is, "I'll just get this one little item done, then at least I can feel like I accomplished *something!*" But that little thing takes far longer than we thought and pretty soon we're further behind. Day after day and week after week is the same story. Months and even years go by with us feeling like we haven't accomplished anything because all those little things are too soon forgotten. Maybe this is the year to make a change. Maybe this is the year when we manage our time rather than letting it manage us. Maybe this is the year and the decade when we start realizing our dreams once again. Here are some thoughts to get started:

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- Books
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- Presenter Guides
- PowerPoint Presentation
- PDF files
- Presenter's Kits
- Want It Done Right Presentations and Trainings

### [Help Your Kids Get It Done Right at Home and School!: Building Responsibility and Self-Esteem in Children](#)

- Books

1. **State your dreams – on paper!** If it's helpful, create some think time when you can ponder your life's dreams and goals, which have changed and which haven't, which you've fulfilled and which you haven't. Make a list of the goals and dreams that still drive or inspire you. Post them where you will be sure to see them multiple times per day.
2. **Identify the steps to start moving toward your dreams.** It can be tough to get started on a goal or dream that seems huge. To overcome this sense of overwhelm, it helps to make a plan, identifying small steps that help move you in the direction of your dream. What is something you can do this month, this week, or even today to move you closer to realizing your dream? Work out the steps it would take to get from where you are now to where you would be when you achieved your goal.
3. **Outline what progress would look like and the timeline within which to achieve that progress.** Once you've identified the measurable steps (make sure you've written the steps clearly enough to know when you've achieved them) to move you closer to your goal, outline reasonable timeframes to accomplish these steps. It may help to only identify a timeframe for the first step; then once that's accomplished outline the next timeframe. In this way, you're less inclined to get frustrated if you get behind on a schedule that may have been unrealistic from the start.
4. **Commit time each week to focus on realizing your dream rather than allowing the little things to swallow up your time.** As I mentioned in the beginning of this article, if you don't manage your time, your time may be managing you. To keep your time from getting devoured by nonessential little things, breaking your dreams down into smaller and simpler steps as described above ensures you spend your time on *essential* little things. Checking essential little things off your to-do list will be much more rewarding when you ultimately fulfill your dreams.
5. **Keep moving forward, even if you take a step back.** Even if you take all the steps outlined in this article you may find there are weeks or even months when something unexpected robs you of your time to devote to your dreams. If this occurs, don't allow yourself to lose heart. Instead, adjust down the time to work on your goals each week to what you can accomplish. Then keep reviewing your plan and adjusting your timeframes to be more reasonable based on what fell into your lap. As soon as possible, readjust your schedule to commit as much time as possible to your dream. The key is keeping your dreams in focus so you don't lose sight of what's important.

Instead of feeling our lives have "taken on a life of their own" we can be in the driver's seat. Just as though we were planning a trip, we can determine our destination and plan the markers along the way, then take the entire trip one step at a time. If our typical style is to not plan and just see where the road takes us, that's fine, as long as we're fulfilled at the journey's end. If not, it's best to take hold of the wheel and steer in the direction of a life in which we end with no regrets.

As I write this today, a hummingbird died in my lap. We found her (or

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him?) in the front entry this morning. She couldn't fly and was too exposed in the cold open air with predators around so we brought her inside. She was so weak she sat in my hand and made only small attempts to fly. We didn't know what to do for her, or if there was anything that could be done. We tried to give her food from outdoor feeders but she couldn't or wouldn't eat. We tried to make her as comfortable as possible but who knows what makes a hummingbird comfortable? I held her in my hand for a long time as my heavy workload beckoned. I guessed she was dying but I didn't know how long it would take for her to pass. This is foreign enough territory with people but with a bird, much less a hummingbird, it was even more foreign.

After a long while I placed her in my lap atop my soft, dark clothing. I had to get to work and I figured my lap was as good place as my hand. I typed for some time and would check on her every so often. In one check I found her gone. I couldn't help but wonder, would it have been better to "be" with her and let my work sit? If she were a friend or a family member there would be no question. But she was a bird that unexpectedly flew into my life on a Monday morning. Still, was there an opportunity to rethink my priorities and spend whatever time she had with her? I'll probably never know the answer about what was right or wrong to do. Maybe there is no right or wrong answer. There's only a choice; but these are the choices that determine our priorities every day. The question is, if I had it to do over again would I change my course of action? So many times we only know the answer after we've gained more information – in this case, how much time she had and how I felt about her passing. All I know is this choice of priorities gave me pause. Maybe more of our choices should. If we thought about our priorities more, how different would our lives, and maybe the world, be? Maybe this would be a great way to start the next decade. How many times do we miss an opportunity to hold a hummingbird in our hands?

**If you have read the book or attended a presentation or training  
and would like to comment,  
[please share your delegation story.](#)**

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