

# **Narcissistic Managers An Impediment to Organization Development**

*Marlo E. Ettien*

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## **Summary**

**In a technological age in which participative management is vital to the ongoing success of any organization, identification and continual improvement of processes Requires top and middle management to be an example through long-term, consistent leadership. With all the management self-help books, seminars, conferences, and mergers, it still seems to elude management teams that favoritism, discrimination, and using the company as a personal playing field are paths leading to stagnation rather than to continual development of the organization. Management does not have the luxury of being narcissistic or condescending. Rather, it must responsibly accept that stagnation in whatever measure begins with them and trickles down to the working level—and not the reverse. This article presents a concern that a lack of leadership skills poses a threat to organizational success. It also presents one author’s view about necessary leadership development to overcome the problem.**

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**Studies show that the most successful organizations create an environment of harmony and cooperation, fostering orderliness through unity and building efficient processes that lead to positive outcomes, such as increased productivity, timely achievement of goals, and customer satisfaction (Applebaum & Batt, 1994; Deming, 1995; Emery, 1995; Lawler, 1992; Pinchot & Pinchot, 1994.)**

**After more than fifty years, it appears that what Dr. Edwards Deming, the man who saved Japan’s industry after World War II, attempted to get American companies to understand is still necessary guidance. Dr. Deming’s Profound Knowledge Theory states that, “[a] leader must understand the system he or she is attempting to manage. Without this understanding the system cannot be managed or improved. A system cannot understand itself or manage itself. Optimization of the parts does not optimize the whole. System optimization requires coordination and cooperation of the parts, which requires leadership” (Deming, 1995; [www.maaw.info/DemingExhibit.htm](http://www.maaw.info/DemingExhibit.htm)).**

## **Organization Development**

Organization development is the process through which organizations seek to raise performance levels by understanding the people who operate the systems. These people are responsible for organizational viability, so organization development encourages management to act responsibly, rather than bask in the prestige and privileges afforded them.

Related to the concept of organization development are the concepts of human capital management, employee research, and leadership development, which require those in management to demonstrate the same emotional, creative, intellectual, and intuitive intelligence they expect other personnel to mirror in daily operations as partners in the organization. The same principles uniformly used at the upper management level need to be implemented at the working level to ensure that approaches to improvement are consistent. For example, results of management brainstorming sessions or high-level meetings with customers that change business practices or that would increase productivity at the working level should not be hoarded as exclusive benefits for management. Such information hoarding is disruptive and counterproductive.

## **Human Capital Management**

To prevent disruption in an organization's development, human capital management must guarantee that the person hired fits the position for which he or she is hired. Adequately trained personnel must understand their role in supporting and fully embracing their mission, particularly those hired to be managers. Promoting personnel to management positions who have not demonstrated they have the emotional, creative, intellectual, and intuitive abilities to perform at that level causes dysfunction. If potential managers have not demonstrated intelligence in its varying forms at the supervisory level and below, they cannot be considered for a management role. Wrong choices lead to employee frustration. Multiplication of small obstacles over time brings about large-scale stagnation for the organization. Management selections and decisions must be made in the best interest of the organization, never in the interest of individuals.

## **Leadership Development**

In the interest of the organizational whole, leadership development seeks to identify the following three abilities in managers:

1. The flexibility of leading and managing interchangeably;
2. Ability to adjust to the changes of the organization's goals; and
3. The consistency to function at the management level.

Despite lack of seniority or previous managerial experience, personnel who demonstrate such talent should be considered for decision-making positions. Talent, understood as leadership, is the most accurate measuring rod for advancement to the management level.

In a highly competitive global market, companies that lack cohesion and waste intelligence in its varying forms will stagnate. Managers who place their own interests ahead of those of the organization will necessarily make poor choices. Such management hubris leads to financial ruin, whereas management humility and cooperation lead to health for the organization. The very countries American companies are increasingly outsourcing to have taken the business knowledge they have acquired in America to surpass them in producing quality products and providing gracious customer service. If American companies cling to a narcissistic management approach instead of benefiting from the depth of "profound knowledge" of their own employees, other companies based in Africa and Asia will gladly replace them. Perhaps American companies would not have to outsource at such alarming rates if management did not use the company as its personal playing field. Instead, managers should develop the potential of employees with training, fair rewards, and advancement. These are lessons that Dr. Deming taught to the Japanese in the 1950s. Management should correct itself or face the consequences.

## **Addressing the Problem**

Solutions for self-correction should include the following:

1. Requiring all managers to have at least a master's degree with an area of specialization. By having an area of specialization, the manager demonstrates the ability to study a problem in depth and look at it from various angles; this translates into flexibility in the workplace and the ability to set aside glib answers;

2. Upper management should meet with employees individually to discuss the organization and compare their experiences with the data collected as feedback from surveys. This method serves as oversight to curtail any possible abuses of power. Further, it promotes the sharing of knowledge from the bottom up;
3. Middle managers as coaches need to understand that work is to be handled—never people; and
4. Supervisory managers need to examine the resume`s of all employees to know how to best utilize their skills. Appropriately matching skills with tasks helps to foster employee fulfillment, while at the same time furthering the goals of the organization.

## **Conclusion**

Respect for the abilities of employees and humility in management promote the health of the organization. Narcissism and self-seeking lead to inefficiency, which in turn leads to financial failure. To manage is to take on responsibility, not to take on an ego-satisfying position of prestige.

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Marlo E. Ettien is a contracting officer for the Office of Naval Research in Atlanta, Georgia. She has a bachelor's degree in communication from Chatham College and is pursuing a master's degree in organizational management at the University of Phoenix.