

Voices from the Middle



Purposeful Supervision of
Middle Managers

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Introductions and Overview

- Introductions
- Framework
- Theory
- Practice

Middle Managers in the Literature

- Extending from top management down to the front line
- Implement strategies or policies set by top level managers and coordinate the work of lower level managers
- A pivot between the interest of senior management and knowledge of frontline staff

Framing the Middle Manager

- Generational Identity and its impact on the workplace
- Life stage and its effects on work and values
- Gender difference within the group and external to the group
- Middle managers within the changing context of Higher Education

Generational Identity

- ❑ **Silents (Born between 1925 and 1946)**
 - Loyal
 - Dedicated
 - Teamwork
- ❑ **Baby Boomers (Born between 1946 and 1964)**
 - Higher priority on work than personal life
 - Distrust authority
- ❑ **Generation Xers (Born between 1965 and 1980)**
 - Question authority
 - Work/ life balance
 - independent
- ❑ **Generation Ys or Millennials (born after 1980)**
 - Team centered
 - Demanding
 - Over-programmed

Generations in the Workplace

- ❑ What Type of Employees Are We?
- ❑ Natural to see the conflict of interests and themes between the mid level managers and their supervisors, as well as those that they may be supervising.
- ❑ Generational Conflict vs. Life Stage Conflict?

Life Stage and it's Impact

- ❑ **Baby Boomers**
 - Youngest are 44
 - Past their child rearing years
 - Caring for parents
- ❑ **Gen Xs**
 - Likely to be married
 - Child Care
 - Own Homes
- ❑ **Older Gen Ys**
 - Moving through the early life stage changes
- ❑ **Young Gen Ys**
 - Many still live at home with their parents
 - Unaware of the “reality” of life

Gender

- Divergent career paths
- Defining Cause for Advancement
- Stopping-out
- Gender of upper level admin
- Burden of Care Responsibilities

Within the Context of Higher Education

- Supporting the Mission
- Responsibility without Input
- New Challenges
 - Teaming
 - Downsizing
 - Turnover
- Dual role of Student Affairs

Employee Engagement

Motivation

Passion

Commitment

A Persistent State of Work Fulfillment

Rational and Emotional Commitment

Why focus on Engagement

3rd Top Management Challenge

Standards of Behavior

discretionary effort

long term commitment

peak performance

low turnover

increased tenure

Factors influencing Employee Engagement

Meaningful work

Autonomy

Collaboration

Growth

Fairness

Recognition

Connectedness to colleagues

Connectedness to leader

General Strategies for Supervisors

Recognize the need for development

Assess Personal Engagement lists

Recognize and tailor managerial responses to generational and personal differences

Ask yourself:

Are you motivating your people?

Are you challenging your people?

Do you show that you care for your people?

More Strategies

4 solutions to increase the odds of achieving an engaged workforce

Educate the leaders

Encourage networks

Champion work-life balance

Facilitate the match

Provide coaching, training, and mentoring

Engage in and publicize active retention strategies

**Engagement is built on time, commitment,
and consistent monitoring**

Value both Results and Relationships

Survey Details

Profile

- White Male or Female
- Generation X
- Four year large public or private
- 5-10 years career experience
- 1-4 years in current position
- 1-2 promotions in last 5 years
- Commitment level/career outlook: good to excellent
- Prospects for advancement in current job: poor to fairly poor

Resources and Engagement

“The **lack of resources** and **unrealistic (and unhealthy) demands** placed upon my time regularly make me **question my commitment** to this position and the field of student affairs.”

“**Lack of cohesion** and positive energy in office; **resistance to change** and new ideas. Poor attitude of coworkers and managers. **Poor management. Lack of recognition and reward** for a job well-done. Currently, **less interaction with students** than in the past.”

"There are times when I honestly do not understand how our supervisors (and, more accurately, those above them) expect us to **"do more with less"** year after year after year. It almost seems that, despite their supposed gratitude for our long years of service, insight, and experience, they are **trying to force all mid-level employees out of our positions** so they can replace us all with entry-level employees so they can hire sycophants and save money. I **bring over a decade of student affairs experience** and I am sought out by my peers as an expert in my field, but I feel like **no one on my campus has any faith in my work** or abilities at times."

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- "I have a great staff and we are a **part of a great Division of Student Affairs**. We have **visionary leadership** at our VP level."
- "**Trust** that allows **freedom/creativity** to do my job and the resources to support my ideas"
- "I am fortunate to work at a great place for a great supervisor. She **does not put up with drama** and that **helps with overall attitude** of department. In the words of Julius from the movie Remember the Titans..."attitude reflects leadership, captain." Our leader is great and that filters down to make this a great place."

Strategies for Supervisors

- ❑ Involve staff in strategic goal-setting
- ❑ Focus on what can be done and what benefits can be achieved
- ❑ Communicate privileged information regularly

Mentoring, Feedback & Mobility

“There really **isn't anywhere for me to move up** unless I get out of housing. I feel that I am **taken for granted** by many in my department. I would like to receive **timely and genuine recognition** for my accomplishments. I would also like to have a much **better balance between work and personal life.**”

“There is a great deal of **pressure** placed upon mid-level managers at my institution. We know there is **no chance for promotion**, very **little chance of increased resources**, and **no chance of a realistic work situation** that will allow for work/life balance. Many of my colleagues have left the institution in the last 15 months and, of those who are left, I am one of the only ones not job searching right now.”

“As much as my supervisor seems to pay attention to what I am doing, I **do not get the frequency or type of feedback that I need from him**. It makes me feel that he has time to micromanage me but not time to consider my professional growth.”

“**Not a lot of feedback**, potential for growth, or promotion/mobility. I also **do not have a mentor** here at this institution and that is challenging.”

Strategies for Supervisors

- ❑ Stop creating so many entry level positions
- ❑ Connect employees to mentors at the institution and beyond
- ❑ Opportunities for more challenging and visible work
- ❑ Create flexible assignments, job sharing opportunities, and special projects that relate to employee's passion
- ❑ "Stay" interviews

Recognition & Relationships

"**No recognition**, only when something has not been done correctly is there attention or mention given."

"Again, **we all have fun together** and enjoy one another, it's a **flexible and light hearted** work environment, I **feel supported** by my supervisor in the face of problems and **willingness to help or listen** when I need her, but **don't always feel that our good work in recognized and rewarded** accordingly without "prompting" the conversation, which isn't comfortable. As far as a "good job" in an e-mail or in staff meetings, we get that regularly, but sometimes, I feel that a more **permanent and / or viable response** to the work that we're doing is in order."

“Positive work environment for the most part. As a general rule, **we enjoy one another**, both departmentally and within the division and are part of a very supportive environment. We have developed a **very open dialogue** and often engage in some very intense conversations, but **learn from one another** through that process. Because of the nature of what we do, we have a very flexible work environment regarding work time per say.”

“The **interactions I have with my students**, the support of my colleagues and the **autonomy** I have in my position”

Strategies for Supervisors

- ❑ Offer a relationship on an individual level
- ❑ Regular feedback, both positive and constructive.
- ❑ Recognition for expertise, knowledge, experience, competence rather than praise on specific tasks
- ❑ Formal and informal systems of recognition. For ideas, see the book 1001 Ways to Reward Employees by Bob Saunders. Recognize often!
- ❑ Take FUN seriously: plan regular staff fun events that create community

Top Ways to Reward Employees

1. Money

6. Advancement

2. Recognition

7. Freedom

3. Time off

8. Personal growth

4. Piece of the action

9. Fun

5. Favorite work

10. Prizes

Final Thoughts

"I am fortunate to work at a great place for a great supervisor. She **does not put up with drama** and that helps with overall attitude of department. In the words of Julius from the movie Remember the Titans... "**attitude reflects leadership, captain.**" Our leader is great and that filters down to make this a great place."

"The **students I interact with and advise are the reasons I stay in this position** and plan to stay for a few more years. We've accomplished some great achievements by **working together** and I think we are on a course that will take our community to a good place by the time I leave my position."

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