

Born versus made; the management skills debate

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One of the greatest areas of dispute in the study of human behaviour is the nature versus nurture debate. The nature argument is that behaviour will be determined by an inherited, genetic structure. This is also known as innate behaviour and focuses on genetic, hormonal and neuro-chemical explanations of behaviour. The nurture argument is that behaviour is the result of learning and experience resulting from outside factors, such as parents, media, peers and religion. This is also known as learned behaviour and focuses on behaviour being adopted through conditioning.

Similarly, this debate rages on within organisations that are divided as to whether management skills can be taught. According to author and scholar, Warren G Bennis; "Success in management requires learning as fast as the world is changing." While certain personality traits will certainly make the path to effective leadership easier, these traits are not what make a successful leader. The training of soft-skills is as important as that of hard- and technical-skills, especially in a management role.

In order to be successful as a manager, certain key elements must be considered. These include being an effective leader, being able to motivate the workforce to mobilise itself to reach the organisation's goals and the ability to delegate tasks effectively. Leadership is defined as "the process by which an individual exerts influence over other people and inspires, motivates, and directs their activities to help achieve group or organisational goals," Jones *et al.* (2000, 463).

Although some believe that leadership traits are in-born, certain elements herein can be trained. In leading, managers determine direction, state a clear vision for employees to follow and help employees to understand the role they play in achieving goals. Therefore, a manager must be able to communicate effectively and build sound relationships with the employees that s/he is leading. Not all natural-born leaders have the capability or skills of effective leaders, for example, a leader may be able to influence others but this does not mean that s/he can plan, organise and control; this is where training comes in. While there are various different leadership styles which can be adopted, no single style is effective at all times and training will assist managers to know which approach to utilise in varying situations.

The ability to motivate employees, although certainly tied to a charismatic personality in some instances, involves leading through experience and competence, not through title or position (according to Forbes Magazine). Effective training will underpin this competence and enable the workforce to trust its manager and his/her judgement. Another essential element to motivating staff is to be a great listener and an even better communicator. Again, these are soft-skills that can be taught and honed through appropriate training.

The importance of the ability to delegate cannot be overstated. Effective delegation frees the manager up to focus on the more important aspects of the business. With efficient relationship skills, managers will be able to delegate in a manner which will garner support from the workforce and lead to the task at hand being completed successfully. Delegation is

by no means an easy task, especially considering the manager will be held responsible for the excellent (or poor) quality of work supplied by his/her staff, but choosing the right staff member to delegate to and giving clear direction will go a long way in ensuring success.

Every organisation relies on management to build, sustain, maintain and improve the business and its staff. Management training should be utilised to forge a strong foundation for current and potential managers while teaching them how to build morale, engage with others and communicate effectively with their teams. While unique leaders may be born, exceptional managers can be made through well strategised and pointed training. A well trained manager will flourish through effective leadership, appropriate motivation and efficient delegation, because "Knowledge is power. Information is liberating. Education is the premise of progress, in every society, in every family," Kofi Annan.