

**JOHN ADAIR'S**

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**1000**

**GREATEST**

**IDEAS**

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**FOR BEING A BRILLIANT**

**MANAGER**

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CAPSTONE

This edition first published 2011

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Capstone Publishing Ltd. (A Wiley Company), The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

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*Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*

9780857081780 (paperback), ISBN 9780857082299 (ebk),  
ISBN 9780857082305 (ebk), ISBN 9780857082312 (ebk)

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Set in 10 on 13 pt Calibri by Toppan Best-set Premedia Limited

Printed and Bound in Great Britain by TJ International Ltd. Padstow, Cornwall

# Author's Note

Effective business people have fine-tuned leadership and management ability backed up by exceptional decision-making, communication and creative skills and the know-how to implement it all successfully. These six areas are the basis of the 100 Greatest series.

None of these skills stands alone, each is interconnected, and for that reason I've revisited key ideas across the series. If you read more than one book, as I hope you will, you'll meet key ideas more than once. These are the framework on which the series hang and the repetition will help you become a master of modern business.

Likewise, if you only read one book, the inclusion of key ideas from across the series means that you'll benefit from seeing your chosen subject within the wider context of Leadership and Management excellence.

Good luck on your journey to becoming an effective manager within your organization.

**John Adair**

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# Preface

Welcome to this book. The 100 Ideas it contains revolve around your role and responsibilities as a manager.

This isn't a textbook, it's an informal conversation between you and me about the subject of our mutual interests. All I have done is to break down the proverbial elephant into a hundred bites. Therefore you should feel free to start where you like and then follow your own course of interest through the book as and when you have the time to dip into it.

Like the late Peter Drucker, I think that the first question managers have to ask themselves is: 'What am I being paid to do?' By the end of this book you will, I trust, know the answer to that question.

Our whole understanding of management is undergoing a slow revolution following the great discovery of the generic role of *leader* in the 1960s. There is now a growing recognition that *managership* is one form – one among many – of *leadership*. Leadership doesn't begin and end with the CEO and their fellow directors. Managers are leaders at different organizational levels. All of your employees are leaders in their own way. That makes you into a 'leader of leaders'.

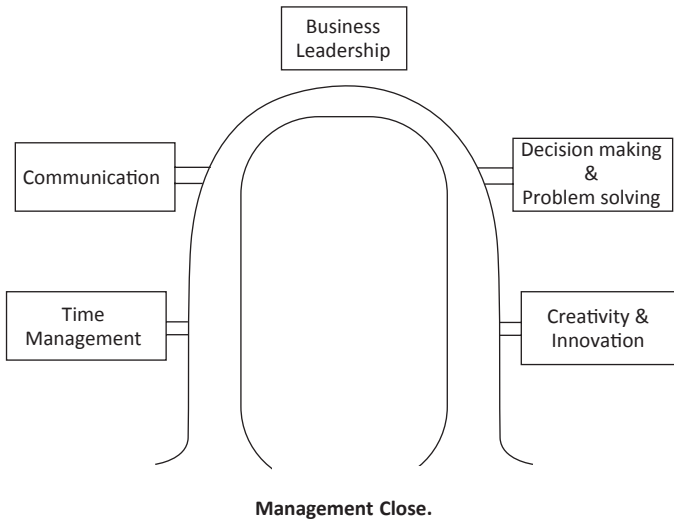
For that reason, although this book is about *being a brilliant manager*, you'll find I often use the term *leader* rather than the narrower term *manager*. If you manage people, you are a leader. You may not think of yourself in that way right now, but after reading this book, you will



be in no doubt. For greater and deeper insight into leadership itself, look out a copy of my *100 Greatest Ideas for Effective Leadership*.

There is a universal body of knowledge about the generic role of *leader* that I shall share with you in this book. But there are at least four other areas of generic knowledge in the human side of enterprise that I shall introduce you to – although not treat exhaustively – in these pages. Again, you will find those in greater depth in other titles in this series.

Imagine that, as a manager, you have now moved into a cul-de-sac called Management Close. Your house is called Business Leadership and it is No. 3. Here is the street plan and a list of your new neighbours.



Over time in this book you can visit your five neighbours' houses and learn all you can from their inhabitants.



There are also other nearby streets you will need to explore: for example, Information Technology, Financial Skills, Sales and Marketing, Production, Negotiating and Employment Law.

The reason you should invest time in getting to know your new neighbours is that managership is primarily about *people*, not things, numbers or money, as important as all three of these are. If you get the people dimension right, things and numbers and money have a way of sorting themselves out. You won't be disappointed.

*Pluck a feather from every passing goose, says an old Chinese proverb, but follow no one.* This particular goose has a hundred feathers. If you pull out ten of them and make them your own, I shall be more than satisfied. If it stimulates you to develop your own concept and philosophy of management, I shall be delighted.

**John Adair**



# PART ONE

# Understanding Your Role as Manager

My greatest discovery by far in my career has been the generic role of *leader*, the role that is common in all working groups and organizations anywhere in the world.

At the heart of that role lie the three overlapping core responsibilities of any leader:





## 2 100 Greatest Ideas for Being a Brilliant Manager

This model needs to be set in the particular environment or field in which you are working – only you can do that.

As a business leader you need to know your particular line of business, as well as recognizing the need to develop the qualities of personality, character and skills to provide eight generic leadership functions: *defining the task, planning, briefing, controlling and coordinating, evaluating, supporting, motivating and setting an example.*

The discovery of the generic role of *leader* and the three circles of leadership functions signalled the end of a long debate about the differences between being a manager and being a leader.

Being a manager – or managership – is simply one of many forms that the generic role of *leader* takes, and is an especially important one today. *Commandership, administratorship and governorship* are examples of other forms.

Leadership (or managership) is both a *role* and a *skill*. In order to understand your role and responsibilities as a manager, you need to understand both sides of the coin. Part One introduces you to the role and indicates the qualities (including abilities and skills) that you need to develop.



**Sixteen  
Greatest Ideas  
for Effective  
Managership**



## Idea 1: A brief history of managing and being a manager

*It is the mark of the educated person that in every subject he looks for only so much precision as its nature allows.*

Aristotle, *Ethics*

*Manager* and *managing* are impressive words in the English language, but that shouldn't prevent you from being clear about what they mean. By clear thinking you can avoid a lot of the confusion and empty modern disputes in business schools about, say, the difference between being a manager and being a leader.

Let's begin by trying to work out together what a manager is. The simple and most general definition is *a manager is a person who manages something*. So what does the verb 'to manage' mean?

The clue lies in the word itself. It descends to us from a combination of two Latin words: *manus*, hand, and *agere*, to do. Originally, then, to *manage* was to handle something, usually for a purpose and with dexterity or skill.

The management of horses was an early use in the sixteenth century. Indeed, the very first School of Management to open its doors in London in Shakespeare's day was attended by horses!

The skilful handling of any implement, ranging from a full-rigged sailing ship to a pencil, falls within the broad compass of this early definition.

Then the verb was applied to something far less precise, the managing of affairs of one sort or another. *Affair*, from the French *faire*, to do, is a very general word: it means something that is to be done, a matter to be attended to, a concern, business or professional dealings or public matters. Vague as business affairs are as objects of



*managing*, if we know the context, we are usually pretty clear in understanding what this entails.

Eventually in the slow-moving English language the noun *manager* followed the verb, like a cart trundling behind a horse. In the seventeenth century, for example, the members of either House of Parliament who were appointed to oversee some specified affair or piece of business that spanned the functions of the two Houses were called managers.

Finally, *manager* found its way into the expanding industries of the Industrial Revolution as a job title for those who occupied offices or positions below the owners but above superiors and foremen.

The first recruits for the offices of manager were drawn from the ranks of practical engineers and accountants. Their professional backgrounds would colour thinking about management for almost two centuries.

What did these managers do? The general word for professionals in their position was *administration*. Their form of administration was distinguished from other kinds, such as public, school or hospital administration, by calling it *industrial administration*.

As organizations grew larger, a distinction developed between *higher* and *lower* administration. The highest grade of the British Civil Service, for example, was the administrative grade.

In the field of commerce (industrial and financial businesses) the former came to be called *business administration*; hence a relic of those days, the degree of MBA (Master of Business Administration).



In what ways is being a manager different from being an administrator?



## Idea 2: Case study – Henri Fayol

One of the earliest attempts to map the role and functions of the modern manager was made by a Frenchman. Henri Fayol's *Administration Industrielle et Generale* (1916) is still regarded as a landmark in thought about management.

Fayol began as a mining engineer. He then moved into research geology and in 1888 joined a medium-sized coal, iron and steel company called Comambault as director. Comambault was in difficulty, but Fayol turned the operation round. On retirement he published his work, a theory of how to organize commercial business operations and administer them effectively.

Fayol divided a business into six core activities: technical, commercial, financial, security, accounting and administration. The latter he analyzed into just five functions:

- 1 Forecasting and planning: looking ahead and drawing up plans for action.
- 2 Organizing: dividing up work and allocating duties; building up a structure for the undertaking.
- 3 Commanding: maintaining activity; giving orders or instructions so that policies are carried out.
- 4 Controlling: setting up policies, rules or standards; checking that everything done conforms to these; taking corrective action where necessary.
- 5 Coordinating: binding together, unifying and harmonizing activity and effort.

### *Why commanding?*

For us the word *command* has military overtones. It suggests an old-style 'command-and-control' style of management. It is worth



recalling that when Fayol's book was published in France in 1916, the northern part of the country was a battlefield of mighty armies. The military was then the dominant institution of the day, and as such it was influential for all other types of organization.

### *The military model*

'The leaders of Industry', Thomas Carlyle wrote in 1843, 'are virtually Captains of the World.' Great engineering projects, such as those undertaken by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in England, and the rise of big business organizations in America created new armies.

Their captains or generals were men like Andrew Carnegie or John D Rockefeller. Business executives or managers were the new officer class; supervisors supported them as the senior 'non-commissioned officers', with foremen (from *fore*, being in front) as the corporals, or leaders of ten.

### *The limitations of command*

*Command* emphasizes the official exercise of authority. It is not a word that touches the strings of the heart or mind.

Fayol was aware of this fact. Although in those days there was no word for leadership in the French language (it was imported recently from English), Fayol expected the general manager or director to seek willing obedience. A director, he said, should:

- ◆ Have a thorough knowledge of employees.
- ◆ Eliminate the incompetent.
- ◆ Be well versed in agreements binding the business and its employees.
- ◆ Set a good example.



## 8 100 Greatest Ideas for Being a Brilliant Manager

- ◆ Conduct periodic audits of the organization using organizational charts for the purpose.
- ◆ Bring together his chief assistants for meetings to ensure unity of direction and focusing of effort.
- ◆ Not become engrossed in detail.
- ◆ Aim at making unity, energy, initiative and loyalty prevail among all employees.

Institutions and organizations are designed to run on command and compliance; leadership is far too unpredictable a fuel to be relied on alone. However, wise armies – and wise businesses – do all in their power to ensure that those who occupy leadership positions are able to secure the *willing* cooperation of their people.

*Your example is stronger than your orders.*



## Idea 3: Understanding Groups and Organizations

*A picture is worth a thousand words.*

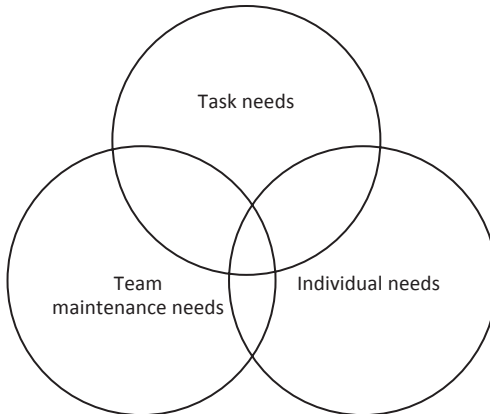
Chinese proverb

Working groups are more than the sum of their parts: they have a life and identity of their own. All such groups, provided that they have been together for a certain amount of time, develop their own unique ethos – their *group personality*.

The other side of the coin concerns *what groups share in common* as compared with their uniqueness. They are analogous to individuals in this respect: different as they are, working groups have in common certain needs.

There are three areas of need present in all working groups and organizations. They are:

- ◆ the need to achieve the common *task*
- ◆ the need to be held together or maintained as a *team*
- ◆ the needs that *individuals* bring into the group by virtue of being human beings.





Can I think of any working group that does not have one or more of these three areas of need?

### ***Task need***

Work groups and organizations come into being because there is a task to be done that is too big for one person. You can climb a hill or a small mountain by yourself, but you cannot climb Mount Everest on your own – you need a team for that.

Why call it a need? Because pressure builds up a head of steam to accomplish the common task. People can feel very frustrated if they are prevented from doing so.

### ***Team maintenance need***

Many of the written or unwritten rules of working groups are designed to promote unity and to maintain cohesiveness at all costs. Those who rock the boat or infringe group standards and corporate balance may expect reactions varying from friendly indulgence to considerable pressure.

This need to create and promote group cohesiveness I have called the *team maintenance need*.

### ***Individual needs***

Thirdly, individuals bring into the group their own needs, not just the physical ones for food and shelter (which are largely catered for by the payment of wages these days) but also the psychological ones:



recognition; a sense of doing something worthwhile; status; and the deeper needs to give to and receive from other people in a working situation. These individual needs are perhaps more profound than we sometimes realize.

### *The three circles interact*

The three circles model suggests quite simply that the task, team and individual needs are always interacting with each other, for good or ill.

To understand this dynamic positive or negative interaction, think of the knock-on effects in the other two circles of any change in one circle.

For example, if a group achieves its task, that in itself will tend to draw its members closer together.

On the negative side, if a group lacks harmony and has internal communication problems, it will be less capable of effective work on the common task, as well as being less likely to meet the social need of individual members.



circles.

Each of the circles must always be seen in relation to the other two. As a leader you need to be continually aware of what is happening in your group in terms of these three



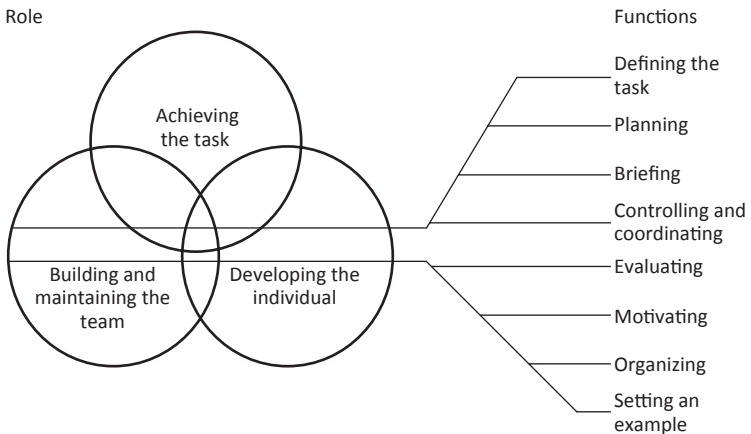
## Idea 4: The central functions of leadership and management

*Not the cry but the flight of the wild duck leads the flock to fly and follow.*

Chinese proverb

In order for the three overlapping areas of needs to be met, certain *functions* have to be performed. A function is what you do, as opposed to a trait or characteristic, which is what you are.

The generic role of leader can be refracted into three broad functions: *achieving the task, building and maintaining the team and motivating or developing the individual*. It can be further refracted into rather more specific functions. The diagram shows an indicative list.





## Idea 5: Eight functions for brilliant managers to master

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DEFINING TASK	Correctly specifying what needs to be accomplished and breaking this task down into its discrete parts.
PLANNING	Formulating an effective plan for achieving the task. Organizing people, materials, time and resources in such a way that the objectives can be met.
BRIEFING	Allocating tasks and resources to subordinates in such a way that all the people involved (a) know what is expected of them and (b) understand the importance of their contribution.
CONTROLLING AND COORDINATING	Keeping things to plan. Being sensitive to problems and delays and quick to respond to them. Coordinating the work of the team.
EVALUATING	Making accurate and insightful judgements about proposals. Evaluating past performance and being a good judge of people.
MOTIVATING	Creating and maintaining the team's commitment to, and interest in, the task.
SETTING AN EXAMPLE	Exemplifying the values and behaviours they wish to see in others.
SUPPORTING	Encouraging the group and individuals. Building and maintaining a good team spirit.

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