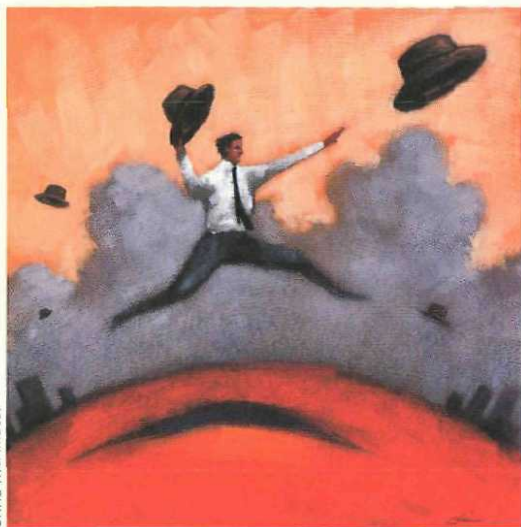


# Executive **EDGE**

## **THE NEW MANAGER**



Chris McAllister

As traditional business structures crumble, managers must develop a new mode of operations to make a relevant contribution. Those who resist may survive in the short run, but their inability to face the fundamental changes in their world will inevitably doom them.

One of these changes is the push by many companies to focus more intently on their core services, using outside sources whenever possible to accomplish other necessary tasks. This new approach will require managers to spend more time working with consultants or employees of other companies—and put a premium on human relations skills that were often unimportant in a more hierarchical setting.

Managers who can wear different hats will thrive in the new environment. A variety of talents and a flexible attitude will be critical

assets for professionals whose primary responsibilities will be to identify and meet changing customer needs. And as companies cut away layers of management, the measure of success will no longer be managers' position on the corporate ladder but their ability to move successfully from assignment to assignment.

In deemphasizing power and authority, successful new managers will focus more intently on matters that should always have been more important anyway. Accenting key corporate values (e.g., customer orientation, professionalism, respect, teamwork, continuous

improvement) will help managers weather some of the hard times they will certainly face as their companies go through difficult transitions.

But more sharply defined performance measures will also compel managers to face the traditional "hard" issues more creatively and productively. As companies come to realize that bottom-line performance often tells them little about the future, they are beginning to change their criteria for evaluating managers, focusing more on such factors as customer satisfaction and evaluation from superiors, as well as from those whom the managers

supervise.

Although companies are getting a clearer vision of what they will expect from the manager of the future, how to nurture the development of such individuals is less clear. One approach would be to require managers to contribute to the development of strategies they will be responsible for implementing. This would not only ensure that managers understand what is expected of them; it would also "force companies to develop and communicate sound strategies in the first place."

*From Robert Heller, "The Manager's Dilemma," Management Today, January 1994, pp. 42-47.*

## **PRODUCTIVE INVESTMENTS**

Investing in employee training and development can be one of the most productive uses of corporate funds. To get the most out of their training budgets, managers need to evaluate their programs' effectiveness.

A key step in such an evaluation is to identify how mature a company's human resource development program is. Programs typically go through five stages:

- **Reactionary focus.** Companies at this stage take an ad hoc approach to training, addressing needs as they arise. Companies are usually small, in a growing industry, and focused on sales and market share.

- **Training focus.** After an initial period of growth, companies begin to realize that white collar training will be necessary for them to continue making gains. Education starts to become part of the corporate culture.

- **Strategic focus.** At this stage companies begin to emphasize teamwork and employee

empowerment. Their standards rise, and they experience difficulty hiring good employees. Top managers begin to evaluate the effectiveness of the training department, which now has a sizable budget.

- **Customer focus.** As an industry matures and customers become more sophisticated, companies pay increased attention to quality and customer service. Managers in organizations at this stage become keenly aware of the importance of human resources development.

- **Profit focus.** With a well-established commitment to human resource development, companies at this stage have created a culture that recognizes and reinforces employee productivity. Training programs function well with little managerial oversight, producing benefits that will continue for years to come.

*From A. J. Scribante and Gould B. Flagg, "Managing the Stages of Human Resource Development," Manage, October 1993, pp. 4-8.*