*Trends*                              *06/22/2010*

## Workers Don't Aspire to Management

**Paula Santonocito**

*A survey conducted by global staffing firm Randstad finds employees do not want to be managers. For HR and other management professionals, the lack of interest in leading has significant implications.*

**Survey shows**

Indeed, the survey finds that although 52 percent of employees say there are not enough qualified managers in their organizations, and 45 percent believe there is going to be a qualified shortage in the future, would-be leaders aren't interested in leading others.

Forty-nine (49) percent of those with the experience to become managers don't want any part of it. Among older employees, there is even less interest. Fifty (50) percent of boomers (ages 45-63) and nearly seven out of 10 mature employees (age 64+) say "no" to the prospect of becoming managers.

The number one reason for lack of interest in management is increased stress. Additional top reasons include handling disgruntled employees, dealing with increasing paperwork, and having to lay off employees.

The Randstad survey also asks employees to identify what they think would be the attractive elements of management. Perhaps surprisingly, increased power, recognition, and more money aren't enticing, at least to survey respondents. Instead, 89 percent indicate sharing knowledge and experience with others appeals to them. In a similar vein, the survey shows 85 percent of surveyed employees cite being responsible for the success of an organization as a positive. The same number of employees, 85 percent, points to the ability to influence decisions as an attractive aspect of management.

It is worth noting, however, that being responsible for a budget is not as attractive (only 47 percent see it as a positive). Working in a high pressure environment ranked even lower, with only 37 percent of employees indicating the pace would be a plus.

**Other reasons for avoidance**

Randstad conducted its survey mid recession, so it might be assumed that widespread layoffs and perceived pressures of management responsibilities influenced employees' responses.

But how much of management aversion is economy-induced?

Michael Kublin, founder and president of PeopleTek, a coaching and leadership development firm, suspects the recession influenced responses somewhat. However, based on his experience, which includes work with many IT firms, he sees the situation somewhat differently.

A lot of IT people are reluctant to go into management because it will take them too far away from technology and they will lose their edge, he tells *HRWire*. They are fearful that when there are management layoffs, they won't be able to go back to staff positions because they are too far removed.

Kublin also works with companies in other industries, and in these organizations too he finds lack of interest in management. "People don't like to give feedback; it's a hassle," he says.

In addition, because managers have to work extra hours, the positions are not appealing. In fact, Kublin knows of several instances where people have taken downgrades so they don't have to put in extra time.

And then there is the location factor. "A lot of people want to work from home and do their own thing. They don't want to bother with coaching and development," Kublin says.

**Finding solutions**

None of it bodes well for HR and managers seeking to groom employees for management roles.

But, according to Kublin, there are solutions.

"I always come back to we're all really leaders, everybody. And we all need to take ownership and accountability, to run our jobs as if it's our business," he says. "You want as much accountability and responsibility as possible. Technically, every person is already a leader."

Yet Kublin finds a lot of people want to have others tell them what to do, and this is part of the problem. HR and other leaders in the organization have to coach and help others to take ownership and be good leaders, he tells *HRWire*.

Arguably, leadership is even more important in today's work environment, where people have to take greater responsibility for their careers. "We're all independent. We can all be fired and leave at anytime. Now there's risk in that, but there's reward in it," Kublin says.

Still, how do you get people to make the leap from leading themselves to leading others?

The definition of leadership has traditionally been someone who wants to move up, and Kublin acknowledges that most of the people he's seen who have moved ahead knew what they wanted and were really clear about it. As important, they were willing to let go of what they were doing and willing to improve themselves.

In order to lead, people have to be more comfortable with change and with risk, he says.

Although it may sound logical, numerous surveys show one byproduct of the recession is that workers crave security. How do employers encourage change and risk, particularly in the current environment?

Kublin recommends that HR and leaders of companies align their rewards systems to reward more independent thinkers.

Employers should also reward management skills. With this in mind, HR and leadership need to help people understand exactly what management is, and is not. A person may have a title, but may not be a leader all the time, Kublin says. At some point, management involves passing the baton.

Defining management in the context of delegating, and rewarding managers who delegate and develop others, addresses some of the perceived pressures of the job.

To help people embrace management, Kublin also suggests that organizations use more of a team concept. The message should be that a manager is a leader working with other leaders. This is doesn't mean managers should let go of the reins, Kublin says, but it allows for coaching and assistance from others in the organization.

HR and other members of the leadership team should likewise acknowledge that some people are better leaders at certain types of tasks.

There is a perception that when you get into management you have to be everything to everyone, Kublin says. Here again, it's important to emphasize to managers, and to employees who observe managers in the workplace, that no one in the organization is alone.

By creating a culture of camaraderie, while focusing on leadership as opposed to management, people will step up and take responsibility for themselves, and some will even lead others.

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