



**MOVING AHEAD**  
MANAGEMENT INSIGHTS FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS

## Deliver Results and Develop People at the Same Time

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As a manager, you know the importance of delivering results. Performance, particularly in today's hypercompetitive business world, is job one.

But what about the importance of developing your people? In every successful organization, this too is a do-or-die priority.

According to a recent study by Corporate Executive Board, senior executives say that only 5% of their employees have the ideal mix of skills to help achieve their company's business goals. And AMA's recent Critical Skills Survey showed that more than half of the executives surveyed reported that the majority of their workforce is average—or below average—in key skills areas: communication skills (62%), creativity (61%), collaboration (52%), and critical thinking (49%).

There's more: A survey by talent mobility firm Lee Hecht Harrison reveals that 86% of workers say they often (62%) or sometimes (24%) feel underutilized in their jobs. In other words, as corporate execs agonize over a skills shortage, almost nine out of 10 employees aren't performing to their full potential.

This deep divide has a simple solution: managers. Yes, as a manager, you are in a unique position to deliver results *and* develop people. What's more, you can do both *at the same time*.

If you vow to make every day a development day you can better engage and energize employees, attract and retain those eager to grow, and aid your company in achieving its business goals. As a bonus, you'll also advance your own career.

### **Here are three smart, simple ways to develop your people while delivering results:**

#### **1. Tuck development into real work.**

Development is especially meaningful when it occurs on the job directly tied to business results. By tucking development into real work—clearly connecting what's to be learned with what's to be done—you turn the work itself into a dynamic development tool. This can be as simple as adjusting or adding to everyday assignments. In this way, you grow employees' skills at the same time they're getting work done.

A software sales and marketing manager we know likes to tell his people that every project has one finish line but two ribbons—one for results and one for development. Who doesn't love a two-fer?

*Fast tip:* Think about a big deliverable that you can break down into small, new tasks that will expand employees' skills. Be sure to ask people, both now and going forward, what skills they would like to build on or acquire to improve their results.

#### **2. Stretch people just right.**

Exercise can cause tiny tears in muscle fibers. Afterwards, as the body repairs those fibers, the muscles

grow and become stronger. Exercise too intensely, however, and you will do damage, perhaps even permanent harm. Exercise too gently, and you will see little or no result.

A similar phenomenon occurs when developing people on the job. Rather than risk stretching your employees too much or too little, you want to stretch them “just right.” Like muscles, only then can their mix of skills grow and become stronger. This involves assessing people’s current capabilities and then assigning them work that enhances their skills without overwhelming them.

*Fast tip:* Stretch people with quarter or half steps instead of full steps. Before promoting someone, for instance, provide a lead-up, such as filling in for the person currently in that role while he or she is on leave or vacation. Also, be very specific about what the employee needs to learn. Vague directives such as, “develop better communication skills,” won’t do.

### **3. Seize small, everyday moments.**

Development isn’t accomplished through time wasters such as added forms, meetings, and conversations. It’s about seizing small everyday moments. Using quick, spontaneous acts, from giving on-the-fly feedback to turning mistakes into instant learning, is an effective way to develop people. You simply need to be attentive in the moment, resisting the urge to rush ahead to the next thing. The moments you “sacrifice” now are an investment in your people and will ultimately lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness.

*Fast tip:* As they say, “If you see something, say something.” Don’t put off a learning opportunity. Seize the moment, thoughtfully and tactfully, even if you have to continue the conversation later. One approach is to ask aha-type questions, such as “What did you learn in this situation?” or “What worked, what didn’t, and why?”

Delivering results and developing your people can be done at the same time, smartly and simply. The only thing left to do is...do it!

You can learn more about employment development in these AMA seminars:

[Advanced Training Strategies and Techniques](#)

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### **About the Author(s)**

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