

Manage The Challenge

When Scientists Can't Manage People - Sherry Bakhtian, Ph.D.

- Steve is so smart and good at his job, why do people leave his group?
- Helen used to be so cheerful and ready to take on more responsibilities, she has changed since she became a manager. Now she's always serious and not sure about whether her team can handle projects.
- I thought when we gave Mel that promotion and a bigger team to manage, that he'd step up and take on the challenge. He seems to be drowning.

Highly educated, intelligent, analytical, and technical people who have spent many years perfecting their skills are now failing as managers of people. What went wrong?

Without training, learning, and practicing most people do not have the know how for dealing with "people" issues. In fact, in most science graduate programs in the U.S. there are no requisite psychology, or management courses. Let's face it, most employees have not learned what consultants and coaches are hired to teach them today.

A PhD level scientist who is highly competent and talented with good technical skills falls short in his/her dealings with human issues at work. These people are so good at what they do that they themselves are usually floored when they can't figure out why they can't be good managers.

They then may blame the individuals who work for them, not realizing what is really happening here. This attitude if not dealt with, can come across as arrogance, non-compliance and disengagement. Sadly, this manager will corrupt the entire team with his/her attitude and behavior.

Self-awareness is the first step in this scenario. The tough questions that the organization and the individual have to be ready to face are: **Does the scientist understand what it means to be a manager? And if the answer to that is yes, do they really want to be a manager of people?**

Instead of tackling the issue head-on, what do companies do? Many bring in a consultant/trainer and run a two day team building training session with hopes to solve the problems. The problem is now two-fold, poor management and inappropriate treatment.

Self awareness is not about whether your candidate has people skills or not, it is about whether he/she wants to step away from being a scientist or technician. This is a difficult issue to address, because for most it might mean giving up the chance for upward mobility. This is when the existence of a "real" dual-ladder system becomes crucial¹.

Let's assume your organization has a system to reward non-management people, and that the employee has decided to take on the management challenge, because he/she truly wants to. The next steps involve letting go of being a hands on technical expert and becoming more conceptual. The training process needs to address: **organization** (self and work), **communication** (intra and inter), and **coaching** (as a style of leadership).

What we at the **IAK** take pride in, is in our ability to **diagnose and treat** the real issues for **sustainable results**. We specialize in coaching scientists or technical people to become great leaders of people and high performing teams. We do this by first understanding your organizational structure and needs to come up with a custom-designed training guaranteed to deliver results. Through interactive exercises, we can help your technical stars transition gracefully into leadership roles your business demands. What sets us apart from our competition are two facts: First, our trainers and coaches have walked the walk, i.e., we were the scientists who became exceptional leaders and this fact helps us talk the talk with your technical staff. We've walked in their shoes and understand their language and challenges first hand. Second, we only work with organizations and individuals to help them become what they want to be. **IAK is in the business of creating and maintaining desired change for the betterment of the organization and the individual.**

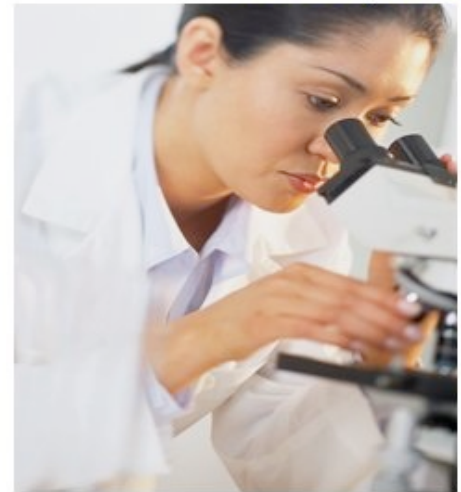
¹DG Jensen and E Dougherty: Converting Biotech Scientists to Managers, Bioentrepreneur, 27 January 2004, doi:10.1038/bi.

Next issue's feature article: What's Up With Generation Y?

Lunch & Learn Invitation:

If you are interested in a complimentary "lunch and learn" presentation on "Scientists as Managers of People" or any other coaching topic at your organization please contact us:

sherry.bakhtian@iak.com or
daniela.puzzovio@iak.com

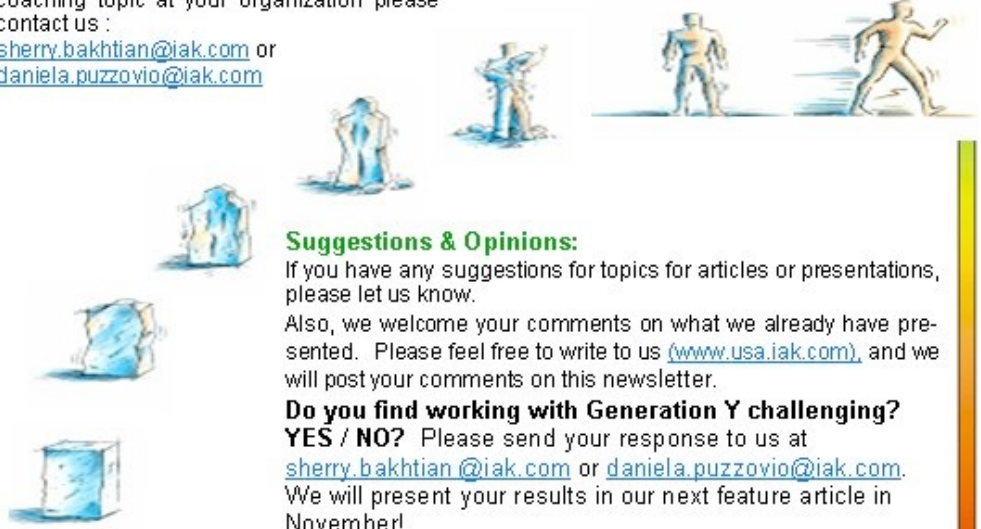


"I don't have a lot of respect for talent. Talent is genetic. It's what you do with it that counts." - Martin Ritt (American Director & Actor)

Seminar Dates:

"Lost in Translation" October 5, 2007 (7:30 AM—10:30 AM) at the Morris County Chamber of Commerce by Daniela Puzzovio. For more information, contact Daniela at daniela.puzzovio@iak.com.

Leadership Seminar November 13-16, 2007 (more information on our website at www.usa.iak.com)



Suggestions & Opinions:

If you have any suggestions for topics for articles or presentations, please let us know.

Also, we welcome your comments on what we already have presented. Please feel free to write to us (www.usa.iak.com), and we will post your comments on this newsletter.

Do you find working with Generation Y challenging?

YES / NO? Please send your response to us at sherry.bakhtian@iak.com or daniela.puzzovio@iak.com. We will present your results in our next feature article in November!

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