



Management is a profession – and professions must be learned

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Management is a learnable profession, not a personality trait. Promoting a high-performing expert into a management role without preparation is one of the most common and costly mistakes organisations make. Expert performance doesn't equal management ability. The two require fundamentally different skills. Managing means setting clear objectives, making sound decisions under complexity, organising contribution, developing others, and focusing effort on what truly matters. That is a craft. It has principles, tools, and standards. And like any profession, it must be deliberately learned - not assumed, not grown into, but taught.

In many organisations, management is still treated as something people simply 'grow into'. A high-performing expert is promoted, takes on a team, and is expected to deliver through others almost immediately. But this assumption is flawed.

Expertise and management are not the same kind of work. Being strong in finance, sales, operations, engineering or science does not automatically prepare someone to manage performance, make sound decisions under complexity, set priorities, organise contribution, or develop other people.

Management is the transformation of resources into value, and it is a **profession**. And like any profession, **it must be learned**.

Why this matters

When management is not understood as a profession, organisations often create **avoidable problems** for themselves.

Excellent specialists are moved into management roles without the preparation required for the job. Expectations remain vague. Performance is judged by activity instead of outcomes. Teams become dependent on individual effort rather than guided by clear tasks, accountabilities and objectives.

The result is familiar: too much busyness, too little effect. This is precisely why management education matters. Not as a soft benefit. Not as a perk. But as a **practical necessity for organisational performance**.

Management is not a talent. It is a craft.

There is a persistent myth that good managers are simply born with the right personality: charismatic, decisive, inspiring, confident. Of course, personal strengths matter. But they are not the foundation of right and good management.

A profession is not defined by status. It is defined by standards that can be learned, applied, improved, and assessed. Management meets that criterion.

The central standard: effectiveness

The most important question in management is not whether people are working hard. It is whether they are working on **what matters**.

Effectiveness means focusing effort on the **few things** that produce the **greatest contribution**. It means distinguishing the important from the merely urgent. It means aligning action with purpose. And it means avoiding the common trap of doing many things efficiently that should not have been done at all.

Efficiency is equally important. But **efficiency without effectiveness only accelerates waste**.

This is one of the major differences between unmanaged effort and professional management: **professional management creates clarity** on what must be achieved, what matters most, and what should be stopped.



Why experts need a different transition

Many organisations underestimate the shift from expert work (such as Finance, HR, Analyst etc.) to management work.

Experts are typically valued for depth of knowledge, personal contribution, technical quality, and problem-solving in their own domain.

Managers, by contrast, must create the conditions under which others can perform. Their work is no longer defined mainly by personal output, but by direction, coordination, prioritisation, decision quality, and the development of capability in the system around them.

That shift is **substantial**. It should not be assumed. **It should be taught.**

Without that transition, organisations often end up with managers who are still operating as senior specialists – overloaded, too close to the detail, and unable to create the leverage their role requires.

Why organisations should take this seriously

As complexity increases, the cost of weak management rises. Organisations need managers who can **think clearly, act systematically, and turn complexity into coordinated action.**

That is why management development should not begin with inspiration. It should begin with the profession itself: **what the principles** of good and right management are, **what tasks** need to be fulfilled, **which tools** to employ, and **what the responsibilities are** for the consequences of one's occupation.

A better starting point

The right starting point for management development is not the search for the ideal personality. It is the **recognition** that management is **learnable**.

People can learn **how to provide clear objectives**. They can learn **how to**:

- **organise for contribution to the Whole.**
- **make better decisions.**
- **review performance properly.**
- **develop others in a disciplined way.**

And they can learn how to do all this with a stronger orientation towards effectiveness. That is what professional management education should achieve.

Final thought

Organisations do not become more effective because they ask more of managers. They become more effective when they **equip managers to do the right work in the right way.**

Management is not a side effect of seniority. It is not a reward for expertise.

It is a profession. And professions must be **learned**.

This is exactly why management development matters. With **Leadership Readiness**, we equip leaders with the tools and tasks of effective leadership based on the proven Management Models of **Prof. Fredmund Malik** to perform their role as managers in a right and good way.