

MANAGING to Change the World

**The Nonprofit Leader's Guide to
Getting Results**

**by Alison Green and Jerry Hauser
The Management Center**

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Introduction

The Job of a Manager

I bet you had trouble finding the time to read this. If so, it's probably because, like many of the nonprofit leaders with whom I work, you're feeling serious stress. You're under pressure from funders, from your staff, from constituents, and ultimately from yourself, to be getting more done. Too much of the burden of making things happen is falling on you.

Effective management – how you get things done through other people – could help you accomplish more with less stress, but you may not know where to start. And if that's the case, you're not alone. Nonprofit leaders often end up in their roles not because they're skilled at management, but because they're talented, dedicated people committed to a particular issue, or because they have excelled at a specific function like policy analysis or communications. Up until now, you may have been fantastic in getting results on your own, but you might not have had to get results through others.

*Effective
management lets
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Fortunately, good management isn't rocket science. In fact, it's pretty straightforward. My co-author, Alison Green, and I have tried to create an easy-to-use manual that will help nonprofit managers get better results by equipping them with hands-on, practical advice and tools. We'll cover a range of skills, representing what we think are the most important areas

for managers to master – from delegating tasks, to setting and holding people accountable to clear goals, to hiring and firing, to staying organized and using your time effectively, to managing your boss. Exercised properly, these practices will make your life much easier.

Most importantly, though, not only does good management make your life easier, but it also makes it easier for you to get results. And that brings me to the fundamental premise of this book, which I want to be clear about from the start: **your job as a manager is to get results.**

While this probably sounds obvious, I didn't always fully grasp it. My first real management experience came at Teach For America, a large national nonprofit where, as the chief operating officer, I was responsible for managing the day-to-day work of the organization. As a former teacher myself, I had been drawn to management partly because I liked seeing people learn and develop to their full potential. I wanted staff members who were happy and fulfilled in their jobs, and I viewed it as my job to mentor them so that they grew and developed.

That was fine as far as it went, but at Teach For America we had very ambitious aspirations: we were trying to triple in size, raise the quality of our teachers, strengthen our alumni network, raise more money, and build a stronger organization to make it all happen. Early in my tenure, when I was more focused on mentoring and viewing my staff members' satisfaction as an end goal, I wasn't producing the kind of progress we needed. Most of my staff members worked extremely hard, but not everyone did. And many excelled at their jobs, but in several critical cases the organization's needs had outgrown my staff members' skills.

One day I was complaining to a friend about how much pressure I was under and how difficult it was to get things done without making people hate me. She looked at me and said, "Well, if you're doing your job, you might just be the least popular person there." With those not-so-reassuring

words, my friend helped me realize that I was thinking about my job the wrong way. The organization was never going to achieve its aims without my making some people unhappy. I needed to hold people to more ambitious goals, I needed to be clearer with people when they weren't meeting expectations, and ultimately, I would need to tell some of my staff members that they weren't the right people for the job.

Through this stage in my work, I came to more fully appreciate what my true job was as a manager. Yes, it was good to develop people, to empower them, to help them be fulfilled at work, and to mentor them. Those things helped make my job enjoyable, and in some cases they helped make my people better at what they did, but ultimately, they were means to an end. *Fundamentally, my job was to make sure we got the results we aspired to.* That's why we existed as an organization, and it's what I was getting paid to do. Our donors funded us to help expand opportunities for students in low-income communities, not to make our staff happy. If I wasn't doing what it took to make us as effective as possible in pursuing our mission, then I wasn't doing my job.

As it happens, I believe you can get things done *and* be well-liked, at least most of the time. In fact, by being clear about what you expect, helping people meet your expectations, ensuring people are in roles in which they excel, and getting everyone aligned around a common purpose, you'll build your staff's morale in the long run. Treating people well also happens to be the best way to sustain your results over the long haul, because you'll never get good people to work for you otherwise. Time and time again, though, I've found that managers confuse being "supportive" bosses who "empower" their people with being effective managers who actually get things done. And in the short term, getting things done sometimes requires you to do things that will make people unhappy with you.

Too many managers confuse being "supportive" bosses who "empower" their people with being effective managers who actually get things done.

Two examples from clients of ours might help illustrate what happens when managers do – or don't – fully feel the weight of responsibility for getting results in their realms. In the first case, a manager directly oversees the field operations for her organization. The organization realized that it needed to put more energy and resources into one part of the field program in order to improve its results. The manager, however, made only incremental changes in staffing levels to meet that need, changes that would almost certainly not suffice to generate the results needed. At a meeting with the head of the organization, she explained her plan, saying, "Imagine the uproar if I had proposed really shifting people around." Her explanation made it clear that she was weighing the potential staff reaction to changes (or perhaps better put, her own discomfort with that reaction) more heavily than the important results that the organization needed her to generate. Fortunately, the senior manager's own manager caught the issue before it was too late.

In contrast with this approach, our client in the second case did what it took to get results. This client is the executive director of an organization whose work gets carried out through multiple state offices, with those offices overseen directly by a regional director. The executive director and the regional director had agreed on ambitious new, critically important goals for what each state office would produce over the coming four months, before the organization's next fundraising cycle began. After even a couple of weeks, it was painfully clear that the regional director was proceeding under "business as usual," and that the state offices were nowhere near on track to producing the results they needed to.

In this kind of situation, many managers would continue to work through the regional director, checking in periodically, hoping the regional director would deliver when all was said and done, and perhaps blaming him if he didn't come through. In this case, though, the executive director understood that if things failed, he himself was ultimately responsible. He also understood that in this case the results *had* to happen: the organization

would not fulfill its mission without them, and it would not be able to raise funds to keep supporting itself. Given that, the executive director took a much more hands-on approach, insisting on daily calls with each of the state offices with the regional director and the executive director himself to discuss what steps the states were taking to produce the results. After a few days, the energy at the state level changed, and within a couple of weeks, dramatically different results began to appear. The regional director, who was initially not thrilled with the executive director's "heavy-handed" approach, learned a valuable lesson in how to generate results. Interestingly, he is not only more effective in his job but is actually more satisfied than he was before all this happened. And now that things are on track, the executive director is able to step back and take a more "normal" approach to managing by working through his regional director.

When we highlight examples like these and stress the importance of being results-oriented, people sometimes ask us whether that means we think nonprofits should be run like hard-nosed businesses. Our answer is that because the work nonprofits do is so important, we need to be *more* hard-nosed about management than for-profit enterprises. Given what nonprofits do, we have a moral imperative to commit to strong, effective management practices. What's at stake is much more important than a business's bottom line.

And that's the main reason Alison and I wrote this book. We want to see more strong, effective nonprofits that are out there changing the world.

The work of nonprofits is so important that we need to be more hard-nosed about management than businesses.

Inside this book, you'll find the tools you need to make it easier for you to get results. We intend for this book to be helpful to new managers as well as to those who have some experience, and to managers of individual teams or departments as well as to executive directors of entire organizations. You won't find information on fundraising or working with the media or other topics on specific functions already covered by myriad

other books. Instead, you'll find step-by-step guidance on how to effectively manage any single area or an organization as a whole.

As I noted earlier, management is *how you get things done through other people*. There are three components to that definition: there's getting things done, there's the other people, and there's you. We've divided the book along the lines of those three pieces, covering in each part the practices in which the best managers we've seen excel:

- Managing the Work. We begin with “getting things done,” because this is what most people think of when they think of management, and it's the most immediate challenge that most new managers face. We'll start with the most specific level of things you might want to get done, which is looking at how you delegate a discrete task or project. We'll then look at how you can assign bigger pieces of work and broader responsibilities by using clear goals with concrete measures of success. Then, knowing that beyond the things you discuss explicitly with your staff there are simply thousands of tiny actions that people take every day within your organization, we'll look at how you can use culture to guide your staff members on those items. Finally, we'll try to bring it all together by looking at a couple of easy-to-implement management systems that help you stay on top of it all.
- Managing the People. Using practices to make sure you have the right “other people” to get things done for you may be the single most important lever you have, and yet it's the area most neglected by managers. We'll discuss how to build a staff of superstars – hiring them, developing them, making sure you hold on to the best, and letting go of those who fall short.
- Managing Yourself. In the last section, we'll discuss how to apply to yourself the same rigor that you apply to your management of others, including using your time effectively, staying organized, working with

your boss, and exercising authority. As a manager, what you do in this area sets the limits on – or, hopefully, removes the limits from – the results you can get.

The practices in this book will help you build a high-performing organization that gets results over the long haul. And for nonprofits working to change the world – and the people who run them – that’s what it should be all about.

- Jerry Hauser
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Washington, D.C.

About The Management Center

The Management Center's mission is to make it easier for progressive nonprofit organizations to get great results. We do this by developing leaders' management skills through one-on-one coaching and, beginning in 2009, small group trainings. We ground our work in two core beliefs: that management is not an end in itself, but rather a tool to help people trying to do good do so more effectively; and that good management stems from a set of relatively straightforward and learnable practices that lead to great results when they become habits.

Founded in 2006 as a nonprofit private operating foundation, as of January 2009 The Management Center has worked with over thirty organizations. For more information, visit The Management Center's Web site at www.managementcenter.org.

If you like this book and are interested in additional copies or would like to learn more about our trainings, please email us at info@managementcenter.org.