

CMUJUC Professional Master of Software Engineering

Highlights on Managing Technical People


CMUJUC MSE



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Outline

- Define “technical people”
- Identify problems with leading technical people
- Evaluating Technical people
- Different leadership styles and how to use them effectively



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Technical people stereotype

- In slang may be called:
 - Techies, Tech Geeks, Geeks, Dweebs, Nerds...
 - Miss any? ☺
- Associated with Computers?
 - Not always...
- Badly dressed (and that is subjective ☺)
- Non sociable outside the “techie” domain
- More???

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Are technical people different?

- What they like?
- Affinity for technology?
- Knowledge?
- Ego?
- Stubborn?
- Team players?
- What is the stereotype?




Oh, so that explains the difference in our salaries!

And, does it matter to leadership?

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What motivates technical people?

- Internal or external motivators?
 - Traditional management?
 - Technology?
 - Need for “play”
 - Work hard, play hard




What motivates your employees?

Shouldn't you find out before they run away?

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How to lead technical people? (1)

- Tasking
 - Motivators?
 - Challenging
 - ...
 - De-motivators?
 - How to do it
 - ...



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How to lead technical people? (2)

Tracking of tasks

- Motivators
 - Don't bug them frequently
 - ...

De-motivators

- Meetings overload
- ...



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How to lead technical people? (3)

Working in groups

- Motivators
 - Mutual respect
 - ...

De-motivators

- Favoritism
- ...



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How to lead technical people? (4)

Foster loyalty

- Motivators
 - Trust
 - ...

De-motivators

- No reward
- ...



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How to lead technical people? (5)

Rewards and punishment

- How?



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De-motivators

- Exclusion from decision making
 - Hiding the big picture
- Inconsistency in rewards/punishment
 - "Pet", focus on individuals
 - Responsible for issues not under their control
- Poor use of extrinsic motivators
 - Examples?
- Micro management
- Focus on tasks, the "how" instead of results
- Evaluations without criteria

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Mentor, don't boss

- Manage by goals, not quotas
 - Leadership/guidance not oversight/control
- Recognize technical competency
 - Use it effectively
 - Accentuate the positive, but don't BS
- Foster work environment
 - Physical, annoyances
- Physical environment
- Promote interdependencies where appropriate

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Leading.....

- **Obstacles**
 - Conflict resolution
 - Annoying tasks
- **Promote culture**
 - Honesty, fairness, helping “team”
- **Facilitate communication flows**
 - Don't play/allow “I've got a secret”
- **Manage ambiguity**
- **Patience**
 - When to intervene?

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How to evaluate technical people?

- **Technical competency**
- **Personal productivity – not quotas**
 - Creativity?
- **Ability to multi task**
- **Understanding business context, drivers**
 - And be able to speak it
- **Speaking with business side**
 - And forging compromises

-- Paul Glen thoughts from “Leading Geeks” 2003

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Measures...

- **Manage/expand client relationships (MCE)**
- **Managing/leading technical people**
 - Training others, team player
- **Delegation, work through others**
 - Coach, mentor
- **Play positive politics**
 - Supportive of technical people
- **Manage time horizons**
 - Plan the big picture



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What team structure is best?

It depends... but what do you think?

- **Decentralized Democratic**
 - Participatory / Delegated
 - Just like Studio?
- **Centralized Democratic**
 - Participatory / Delegated / Decision maker
- **Controlled Centralized**
 - Authoritative / Delegated

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Leadership Styles (Daniel Goleman)

	Coercive	Authoritative	Affiliative	Democratic	Pacesetting	Coaching
Modus Operandi	Demands immediate compliance	Mobilizes people towards a vision	Creates harmony and builds relationships	Forges consensus through participation	Sets high standards for performance	Develops people for the future
Style in a phrase	"Do what I tell you"	"Come with me"	"people come first"	"what do you think?"	"Do as I do. Now!"	"try this"
When does it work best	In a crisis, problem employees	When there is a need for vision, or clear direction	To motivate people during stress	To get buy-in, consensus	To get quick results from a highly competent team	To help develop individual long-term strengths
Overall impact on climate	Negative	Most strongly Positive	Positive	Positive	Negative	Positive

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Leaders need many styles

- **Why would you want to master as many of them as you can?**
 - Flexibility
 - Different situations require different tactics
 - Different employees need different leadership
- **But, are some better for use with technical people?**
 - Which ones?

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Myth 1: Leadership = Management

- **Management:**
 - Project planning
 - Tracking and oversight
 - Organizational
 - Maintenance
 - Status quo
- **Leadership:**
 - Vision
 - Inspiration
 - Motivation
 - Character
 - *Influence*

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From Webster's.....

- **Leader**
 - "Person that leads"
- **Leads**
 - "To direct on a course or in a direction"
- **Leadership**
 - "Capacity to lead"
- **Manager**
 - "One that manages"
- **Management**
 - "Judicious use of means to accomplish an end"

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Myth 2: Leaders are born

- **Leadership can't be learned?**
 - There are natural leaders but...
- **Honest assessment of what you do know**
 - Seek expertise where needed
 - Mentors – Don't go it alone
- **Learn from mistakes**
 - Long term vs short term vision!

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Four phases of leadership development

- **Phase I:**
 - I don't know what I don't know ☺
 - Time to listen? Time to learn
- **Phase II:**
 - I know what I don't know
 - Time to structure your learning
- **Phase III:**
 - I grow and know and it starts to show
 - Paying the price, gaining respect
- **Phase IV:**
 - Paid the price, but can still improve; On auto

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Myth 3: Only smart people can be leaders

- "Project management is a people intensive activity, and for this reason competent practitioners often make poor team leaders"
-- Roger Pressman
- **How many university professors are leaders?**
 - How many presidents or CEO's have Ph.D.'s? ☺

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Myth 4: Must lead from the front

- **Can you lead from inside?**
 - Who is the true leader of any group?
 - Who has the influence?
- **Position doesn't mean in charge, or respected**
 - Pointy hair boss
- **All good leaders are also good followers**
 - Team concept

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Good follower

- Everyone is a follower
 - True/false?
- No one begins as a leader
- “You cannot be a leader, and ask other people to follow you, unless you know how to follow”
-- Sam Rayburn
- Must be learned, and fostered

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Myth 5: Entrepreneurs are good leaders

- Is it really the case?
- Not critical in entrepreneurs
 - Charisma
 - Personality



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Myth 6: Leadership is based on position

- You must be assigned to leadership positions?
 - With position do followers follow?
- Lead from the inside
 - “Critical” members of your team

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Remember...

- “If you must tell people that you are a leader, then you are not”
-- Margaret Thatcher
- “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader”
-- John Quincy Adams

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Recommendations

- Know who you are leading
- Don't try to impress them, but focus on them
- Facilitate their success
 - But hold them accountable for their outcomes
- Find and use the de facto leader
- Swallow your pride and learn

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Questions/Comments?

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