



The Practical Coach: Management Skills for Everyday Life

By Paula J. Caproni

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Paul Caproni's clearly written, interesting new book will give you ideas, tools, and outstanding practices that can make you a better manager - and improve your life. If you would like to feel more fulfilled with your home life and advance in your career, this inspiring book can help you utilize your role as a manager to bring out the best in yourself, others, and your organization. In addition, Caproni will show you how to: *manage in a diverse, global, technologically driven and fast-changing environment *balance work and life when your firm expects a "24/7" commitment *build the skills you need to move from an individual-contributor mindset to a managerial mindset *build trust, respect, support, and influence in all your relationships *become a critical consumer of managerial knowledge, and avoid falling victim to managerial fads

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Editorial Review

Review

"The Practical Coach is a wonderful book that takes cutting-edge theory and research on thinking, learning, and motivation and translates it into language anyone can use to improve his or her effectiveness in life... an ideal blend of solid research with anecdotes that will enable anyone to stay on track or get back on it."—Robert J Sternberg, IBM Professor of Psychology and Education, Yale University

From the Inside Flap

Preface

My goal in this book is to provide ideas, tools, and best practices that you can use to increase your effectiveness, enhance your career (in terms of marketability, promotions, salary increases, and job satisfaction), and feel more fulfilled with your life in general. These are not small goals, nor are they impossible ones. Let me say this up front: If you are effective at your job but your family and friends can't remember the last time you paid attention to them, if you never take a vacation without worrying about your work, and if you are headed for poor health or an early death because of the stress of your job, that's not my idea of effective management.

So what is management? Management textbooks say it is about getting things done through others, but it is more than that, much more. For many of us, being a manager is an important part of our identity. It is how we spend our days, it is what we do with and to others, it is how we express (or suppress) our competence, it is our best selves and worst selves, and it is our contribution (for better or worse) to our organization's and society's future. Our experiences as managers can enrich or diminish us, broaden our worldview or narrow it, and make us feel whole, scattered, or broken. This book is designed to help you use your role as a manager to bring out the best in yourself, others, and your organization.

Several themes are woven throughout this book. The first is that managing in a diverse, global, technologically driven, and fast-changing economic environment requires a more complex set of skills than those needed by managers in the past. Unfortunately, even as we enter the twenty-first century, many management books and magazines are implicitly (if not explicitly) being written for the organizational man (with a spouse at home) in a gray flannel suit (except on casual Fridays, when he wears khaki) who works in a brick-and-mortar organization. However, today's manager is just as likely to be a man or woman in a dual career family who works in a brick-and-click (or just click) organization that advocates work-life balance and simultaneously expects a 24/7 commitment to work (in other words, being available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). This book is designed to help you navigate the opportunities and hurdles of today's—and tomorrow's—social and economic environment.

The second theme is that one of the biggest mistakes that managers can make is to assume that their technical skills and cognitive intelligence are enough to ensure their professional effectiveness and success. Professor John Tropman, my colleague at the University of Michigan, says that when people become managers, they tend to think of their new job as being "the same as their old job only bigger." In other words, they try to use the skills that worked for them as individual contributors even though their primary responsibility as managers is to create a context in which others can do their best work. This book is designed to help you move from an individual contributor mindset to a managerial mindset.

The third theme is that the ability to manage professional relationships is one of the most important skills that managers can have. Indeed, substantial research suggests that people with a broad and diverse network of relationships inside and outside of their work organization tend to be more effective in their jobs, have more successful careers, and lead happier and healthier lives than those who don't. Not surprisingly, the ability to manage professional relationships becomes increasingly important as one climbs the organizational hierarchy. Yet even though building effective relationships is critical to managerial and organizational success, many managers mistakenly categorize relationship-building skills as "nice to have" rather than "need to have." Consequently, they miss out on daily opportunities to build trust, respect, support, and influence—all of which can enhance their effectiveness, career success, and general wellbeing. This book is designed to help you develop relationship-building skills that will serve you well at work and at home.

The fourth theme is that as today's managers are becoming saturated with information and are being exposed to a seemingly endless parade of management theories, fads, and gurus. Consequently, they need to become more critical consumers of managerial knowledge. Indeed, *The Futurist* magazine wisely warns that this deluge of information can actually "decrease our thinking skills" and "future generations may be more easily led astray." I took this warning seriously when I wrote this book. I present what I believe are some of the most insightful and useful theories and research studies available to managers today. My purpose is to provide you with food for thought, trigger your imagination, and offer useful frameworks and techniques. As socialist Kurt Lewin said, "There's nothing so practical as a good theory."

But keep in mind that few, if any, theories work for all people and all situations all of the time; theory shouldn't replace thinking. Too often, management theorists, researchers, and educators tend to present their ideas as universally applicable, even when they are culturally biased or limited to particular situations. This is particularly important to keep in mind when a theory promotes one way of seeing or acting as universally normal, effective, or moral. When presenting theories and research studies in this book, I have used phrases such as "research suggests that" and "researchers have concluded that" to avoid falling into the "theory is truth" trap and to leave room for alternative views. When I have forgotten to do so, I hope that you continue to keep the theories, research conclusions, and advice in their place—as useful conceptual tools that enable you to respond thoughtfully and quickly to the routine and complex situations that you face in everyday work life. The words of Maya Lin, architect and designer of the Vietnam memorial in Washington, DC, best express the spirit of this book: "I create places in which to think, without trying to dictate what to think."

In addition to the researchers and theorists cited throughout this book, I am indebted to many people at Prentice Hall. David Shafer, management editor, and Leslie Oliver, sales associate, enthusiastically and persistently encouraged me to write this book. Michael Campbell, Michele Foresta, Kim Marsden, Kelly Warsak, and many others skillfully nurtured this book through the production process. I also thank Sharon Anderson of BookMasters, Inc.

I offer a special thanks to my friend and colleague Maria Eugenic Arias who I had initially hoped would be a coauthor of this book. Unfortunately for me, she decided that her heart is in consulting. However, she continues to offer me valuable advice and encouragement. I am also thankful to Clayton Alderfer, Ella Bell, David Berg, and Linda Smircich, my early mentors at Yale University and the University of Massachusetts who inspired me to think critically about managerial knowledge and to encourage others to do so as well. Although they may not agree with everything I wrote in this book, I believe they would agree with my reasons for writing it.

I owe sincere thanks to the many people who stimulated and clarified my thinking, recommended books and articles; read and edited chapters, and provided technical and emotional support, especially Roann Altman, Julia Davies, Gelaye Debebe, Deb Mondro, Dan Denison, Jane Dutton, Jane Fountain, Joe Garcia, Suzanne C. de Janasz, Ellen Kossek, Graham Mercer, Karen Newman, Dina Pasalis, Gene Penner, Lance Sandelands,

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I am grateful to my other friends and colleagues at the University of Michigan Business School, Organizational Behavior Teaching Society, Helsinki School of Economics, and Joko Executive Education Programs who regularly provide me with opportunities to develop a wealth of new and creative ideas for management education. I am also grateful to the MBAs and executives in many countries—Brazil, Finland, Nigeria, Poland, Sweden, South Korea, and the United States, to name a few who have taken my classes and workshops. I am particularly indebted to the students in the Managing Professional Relationships class that I created for the Michigan Business School almost a decade ago. Their wisdom, warmth, and good humor have made teaching a joy and a privilege.

I offer many thanks to the staff at Community Day Care and in particular to Trudi Hagen, the director, and Tara Sturgeon, our baby-sitter. I was able to focus on writing this book only because I knew that our two daughters, Julia and Leah, were safe and happy in their loving and competent care.

I am deeply thankful for the support that my mother, Cecile Caproni, and sisters, Sandi and Laura, have given me throughout the years. I am appreciative of the many sacrifices that my late grandparents and father made to come to the United States many decades ago to give their descendants a better life (I have a great life). Most of all, I offer a million thanks to my husband, Charlie Penner, who read and commented on most of this book and who wholeheartedly supported this project, and to my wonderful daughters, Julia and Leah, who are clearly proud that their mom teaches around the world and has written a book. Indeed, Julia wisely suggested that I call this book Management Skills for Smarty Pants. I only wish I had been courageous enough to use her clever title. Paula J. Caproni

Ann Arbor, Michigan
July 2000

From the Back Cover

In addition, Caproni will show you how to:

- manage in a diverse, global, technologically driven and fast-changing environment
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