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Canada's Association of Information Technology (IT) Professionals

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Career Advice for Twenty-Something IT Managers

I want to mix it up for you and we have a broad audience. So here is some variety - a message or lesson and some fun too. Something a little "Frisky," as DJ puts it. DJ Dunkerley that is - he provided a post previously [Feb 27th](#) and [Feb 28th](#) on Project Management.

From DJ:

Career Advice for Twenty-Something IT Managers

Actually, I wanted to title this post "Questions & Conversations that I SHOULD Have Had When I First Became a Supervisor" but it was too long and sounds kinda bitter.

Not that I'm bitter about the first time I became a supervisor. Oh no, it was such a long time ago, about 1995, that I've been able to block out most of the horrible memories.

But you don't want to hear awful stories about other people's problems. Oh no, you are here to glean *useful career advice*. To suck me dry like a lemon. But that's okay, that's what I'm here for.

Questions You Should Ask (And Probable Answers You Will Get)

1. Do I have control over the budget over my department?

BTW, the answer will be no. Budget control is always in the domain of the mighty gods who live on Mount Olympus, never to be surrendered to mere mortals such as thee. But that's okay, question #1 sets up question #2.

2. So what IS the budget for this/next fiscal year anyways?

If the answer is a collective "nobody knows," then lean back and relax. You're screwed. Try to last as long as you can in the position before moving on. Don't worry about trying to keep the company alive single-handedly. You can't.

3. What's this number in the budget?

That's the salary of the guy who reports to you.

4. WT?!!! He makes more money than me?

You took the red pill. You could have taken the blue pill and lived a peaceful life but nooo, you wanted to move up into management ranks. He's older than you, so he makes more money. Now if you are a young female manager, you probably think he makes more money because he's a man. NOPE. It's just because he (or she) is older. Gender discrimination, race discrimination, religious discrimination is not allowed in today's workforce. But age discrimination is perfectly acceptable.

5. But I gotta tell that guy to zipper down when he goes to the john, he's so dumb! Can I fire him now I'm a supervisor?

No, of course not, my silly munchkin. Zeus would be furious if you usurped even one of his mighty powers. Now, if one of your employees comes into work drunk as a skunk and dances naked on your desk, you MIGHT be able to chastise them, but only in a gentle and sensitive fashion.

6. Oh man, this sux. So what am I suppose to do as a supervisor?

Very good, oh apprentice. You are now on the path to true knowledge and revelation. And I will now indulge in symbolic imagery to show you your true calling as rookie boss. Visualize YOUR boss sitting on a pedestal about 1 foot up off the ground. Now visualize the pedestal surrounded by half-a-dozen angry monkeys. The monkeys are squatting on the ground to perform a bodily function, and scooping up the result with their hands, getting ready to throw.

7. Yeah, yeah, I'm closing my eyes. It's sorta of a funny vision. Now what?

Your job is to get between the boss and the monkeys. With enthusiasm.

8. Crap.

Yes, pretty much that's what it is.

9. Oh well. Anyways, when do I get my raise?

You mean you didn't negotiate a raise before accepting the "promotion?"

10. No. I'm on probation. And the end of probation, they said they would give a raise.

In this case, I can tell you exactly when you will be paid like a manager. The day after you accept a managerial position at another company.

11. But that's not fair!!

Enlightment!! Well done, my young apprentice. You have seen the dark side. Now embrace it, my feisty Jedi.

12. This sux DOUBLE! I want to go back being a regular employee.

Not a chance. You're marked like Cain after he did his nasty business to his brother. Especially if you're competent. If you are a complete bonehead, like for example you came straight out of MBA school, there is a reasonable chance you can become an analyst. But not you. You got promoted from the line for competence under pressure, didn't you? Aha, they will not throw you back. Never. Ever.

13. Oh no (Whimper.) What do I do? What do I do now?

At last you have reached the proper emotional state of mind that now I can tell you the secrets of managerial wisdom:

A. As you travel through the valley of despair, don't play the game of "avoiding all contact with



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your employees unless you need something." Managers who do this are called "seagulls." Don't be a seagull. Say hello, ask them how are they doing. Don't ask them to throw themselves on a hand grenade for you (not yet, anyways).

B. Schedule regular meetings with your boss. Ask her or him what needs to be done for that day/week/month. Focus on getting the resources you need to get those tasks done. Minimize the conversations that focus on YOU: how are you feeling, what you're doing right, what you're doing wrong. Hey Hamlet, I've got a revelation for you: Nobody cares about how're feeling today, least of all your boss. You need to focus on your feelings, go see a shrink. Or buy a puppy.

C. Sign up for those management training courses/certifications/programs/whatever like a crazy fool. Punch those tickets and send the bill Mr or Mrs. Pedestal-Sitter. Only the most incompetent boob of a boss vetoes manager-training expenses.

14. But what great management books I should read?

What you should read is the economist magazine. Great gobs of good content and they actually indulge in fact-checking. Don't bother to try to keep up on your technical skill-set, that will only tempt to engage in middling in the affairs of your minions. Which drives them crazy, by the way. Lastly, you should take the time to read "The Gulag Archipelago" by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Trust me, it will make you a better manager and a better human being.

Thank you, thank you, oh great guru.

You're welcome. Now run off you'un, and stay out of those nightclubs. You have responsibilities now.

And thank you DJ for a lighter rendition...

Stephen Ibaraki

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re: Career Advice for Twenty-Something IT Managers

Wednesday, March 15, 2006 10:53 AM by [Adam](#)

Great post! So true. How do I know? I'm the 20-something brand new manager.

One question you left out though, what do you do when you report to the CEO, CTO and a VP? A: You're screwed.

re: Career Advice for Twenty-Something IT Managers

Wednesday, March 15, 2006 6:27 PM by [jointer](#)

Great post DJ. Very humorous (well my type of humour anyway) and absolutely right on the mark! You twenty-something managers better heed the good advice that is sprinkled throughout!

Graham Jones

What do you think?

Title *(required)*

re: Career Advice for Twenty-Something IT Manager

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