

ATTRIBUTES OF A SUCCESSFUL MANAGER

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Introduction

Management skill sets of agri-business or organizational managers vary as much as the types of businesses or organizations in which they manage. Successful managers possess and demonstrate various levels of effective skill in specific management attribute areas. How to assess management skill and a manager's ability to demonstrate effectiveness has been accomplished through management assessment centers.

What is an Assessment Center?

Businesses and organizations have used the assessment center methodology to select, evaluate and develop individuals for managerial positions for many years. The assessment center method is unique in that it combines standardized procedures in which competencies for a specific position are identified and assessed using both individual and group simulations and activities. Individuals are observed and evaluated on their performance against competencies/attributes in several exercises by a team of trained assessors, using a multiple assessment technique. This means that the feedback provided to an individual participant is based upon pooling of information, multiple observations of assessors, and consensus decisions.

Assessment Centers are based on a thorough job analysis of owners and managers and the competencies/attributes necessary for effectiveness and success. It incorporates activities and simulations that enable a participant to demonstrate his or her skills and abilities on nine job-related dimensions. These attributes include:

Communications	Managing Resources	Creativity
Planning and organizing	Empathy	Teamwork
Decision Making	Initiative	Leadership

The activities in an Assessment Center include a group discussion with non-assigned roles, a group discussion with assigned roles, a background interview, an in-basket activity, a written case study, and a personnel discussion.

Once an assessment center has concluded, assessors are expected to synthesize information and participate in a consensus discussion with other assessors within a short time following the actual Assessment Center. This consensus building exercise is where the Assessment Center participant is rated in the nine different attribute areas.

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Following the rating process, each assessor develops two written reports, which become the basis of the feedback session with his/her lead participants.

This verbal and written feedback is delivered to the participant as soon as possible following the actual Assessment Center. Suggestions are discussed with the participant for self-improvement in order to increase their effectiveness in any of the nine attributes.

Attributes Assessed at Management Assessment Centers

Communications

The extent to which one can communicate orally, listen and respond appropriately, or clearly express his/her ideas in writing. Specific behaviors include: effective use of speaking skills (i.e. express oneself clearly, quality of speaking voice, eye contact, hand gestures); uses active listening skills; comments and ideas are clearly stated and understandable-both orally and in writing.

Planning and Organizing

The process of establishing a course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific plan, goal or outcome. Specific behaviors include: ability to conceptualize ideas; approach problems systematically using time and organization management skills; set priorities; organize and plan for solutions; handle strategic issues and provide follow-up necessary to assure implementation and evaluation.

Leadership

The ability to influence and/or empower others to move toward the attainment of a specific outcome. Specific behaviors include: set goals; define and solve problems proactively; demonstrate vision; create motivating environment and work conditions; use techniques such as modeling, delegation and motivation.

Decision-Making

The process of identifying problems, securing relevant information, developing courses of action, and making a decision from information gathered. Specific behaviors include: focus on overall decision rather than individual items; have good arguments to support ideas; question problems instead of accepting at face value; approach problems systematically; set priorities; be objective when considering alternatives.

Managing Resources

The extent to which one maximizes and monitors the use of all resources (e.g. personnel, financial and material) to obtain effective outcomes. Specific behaviors include: delegates work to others appropriately; clarifies expectations especially with personnel; demonstrates financial and production knowledge and applies it effectively to problems.

Empathy

The ability to consider the feelings, emotions, situation and needs of others when making a response or decision. Specific behaviors: recognize stress in self and others; use active listening skills; demonstrate patience and diplomacy; maintain confidentiality; and take time to draw out thoughts and ideas from others.

Teamwork

The degree to which one is willing to work cooperatively with others.

Specific behaviors

Works effectively with team members; oriented toward working with others rather than approaching situations alone; is supportive of others; willing to share with others and consult on important items; uses consultants effectively.

Initiative

The ability to begin actions without stimulation or support from others.

Specific behaviors: offers ideas in group discussions; determines options without encouragement; proactive; speaks up in group settings.

Creativity

The capacity to generate or recognize novel courses of action that are useful in reaching management solutions. Specific behaviors: innovative thinking; generating unique solutions to a problem; asking probing questions of others and themselves; considering multiple solutions; flexibility and openness to change.

For more information or questions about Management Assessment Centers contact:

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