

From Techie to Manager in 12 easy steps! Part 2

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The careers experts at Lawson Williams continue to offer tips, tricks and advice on building your chosen career.

As I was thinking about this article someone threw this statement out into the twitter sphere: “Too many technical managers fail because they believe the facts will win people over.”

And so we begin Part 2 of Techie to Manager, the final 6 steps – more things that you can do to improve your performance now, and make a difference to your career going forward.

Last month we presented the first 6 steps which were

1. Expand your vision
2. Think outside your company and industry
3. Be a motivator
4. Solve problems
5. Get in front of managers
6. Network

7. Wield Influence

With the flattening of company structures and the increase in cross-functional activity within companies, we are all required to be more influential to get things achieved.

Influence comprises two sub-competencies, Impact and Persuasiveness.

Having impact means making an immediate first impression on others – having presence and credibility.

Being persuasive means changing the opinions of others: negotiating

skilfully to gain agreement to proposals, plans and ideas.

As the tweet above implies, technical people often rely too greatly on data or facts in order to influence.

8. Tune up your Emotional Intelligence

We covered this in a previous issue. As individuals working in business, our success today depends on our ability to read other people’s signals and react appropriately to them. Therefore each one of us must develop the mature emotional intelligence skills required to better understand, empathise and negotiate with other people – particularly as the economy has become more global and the pace of change increases.

9. Stretch yourself

Businesses want to see would-be managers step up to the plate, even if it means seeking out projects at the edge of their abilities.

“Take on assignments that take you out of your comfort zone.”

10. Be a communicator

Would-be managers, “have to embrace the idea of learning how to write, learning how to speak and learning how to behave within meetings.”

Even emails should be crafted with care and sensitivity in order to demonstrate your intelligence, knowledge and thoughtfulness. “The earlier you pick up these skills, the better the career trajectory you can set up for yourself.”

11. Get educated

Don’t discount your education. Standards vary from one industry (and company) to another.

We know that there is no correlation between education and manager performance but education is important, it is seen as a key selection criteria for managers.



Let's catch up for coffee?

Set aside your bias against networking, and step into 'natural networking' for building real relationships with people who can help you get where you want to be. Gregory Ciotti.

In my last ramblings I was discussing Networking. I can already hear you say, "Who has time for Networking?" Reports due, research to be completed, KPI's to be met and, gulp, I still haven't written my article for NZIFST.

More than ever, Networking is very important. As companies become flatter and less hierarchical we are expected to work across more complex projects and tasks. Whilst not expected to know the solutions, we are expected to be able to source the ideas and answers. How is this achieved if you haven't raised your head from your computer screen? There are myriad articles on Google around Networking and they all tend to have a similar theme so I'm not going to bore you with detail, you know where to look. What I can offer is the gems I have taken on board.

It's about finding the Networking skills that work for you.

I love good coffee and I am not afraid to say to the universe that I am a coffee snob. Any chance to get out of the office and find amazing new coffee spots on the pretence of networking – that's me. What a great excuse. I'm also quite nosy (I think it goes with the territory.) but I am inherently shy, so heading off to the latest seminar or breakfast meeting by myself with the purpose of networking is daunting. As I mentioned in my last article the best piece of advice I received was to invite someone of interest to accompany me to an industry event. Once I have established contact in a group setting I find I am much more successful in developing long lasting networks by catching up over coffee to get to know people, and more importantly, to listen.

So a couple of last minute tips:

- Get off your computer – You can't network effectively from your desk. Taking a new professional relationship offline as early as possible is the single best way to set you apart from the constant flow of internet noise.
- Forget you are working – It's great to be strategic about meeting people, but once the interaction has been initiated, just talk. And listen. You know your business and your industry well enough to let the conversation happen organically. You're almost guaranteed to have a better time, and make a better, lasting impression if you do.

I'll leave the last piece of advice for Greg again.

"Be sure to network outside of your industry from time to time! We often get so focused with business related networking that we never reach out to people who may be doing cool stuff in other fields of work... and you never know what may come of it."

P.S And if you need an excuse for great coffee you know where I am!

I am Raewyn Brown. You'll find me on LinkedIn and Twitter @raewynbrownNZ. I have over 15 years experience in all aspects of the Recruitment Industry. I am comfortable in my own world, called quirky in others' worlds.



But it's not just about qualifications, its about being educated about the important factors impacting on New Zealand industry.

What factors are critical to your company? Supermarket behaviour, globalisation, Lean, Supply Chain, S&OP?

12.Determine if management is for you

Techies must also consider whether management is the right choice for them. "Most techies love what they do. They have been recognised and promoted due to their technical expertise. Moving into management can mean giving up what you love best."

So, where to from here?

Some of us have natural ability: some of us need to do some work.

Here are some questions you might ask yourself to help your understanding and development. You can substitute any behaviour into the following.

- In what past situations have I been most/least influential?
- What did I do specifically that was effective and what did I do that detracted from my effectiveness?
- What supportive conditions were present?
- What could I have done differently?
- Think of someone who is particularly effective at being influential. What do they do exactly?

Remember

Management is a reward for performance. It's not something that you will choose to do in the future – it is a reward for what you do today.

The New Zealand food industry needs you to be the best you can be today.

What behaviours will you work on?

Will management become the reward for your performance?

John Lawson is founder of Lawson Williams Consulting Group. He initially studied Biotechnology at Massey and is a professional member of NZIFST. He now enjoys leading a team of recruitment consultants, helping people like you develop satisfying careers.

