

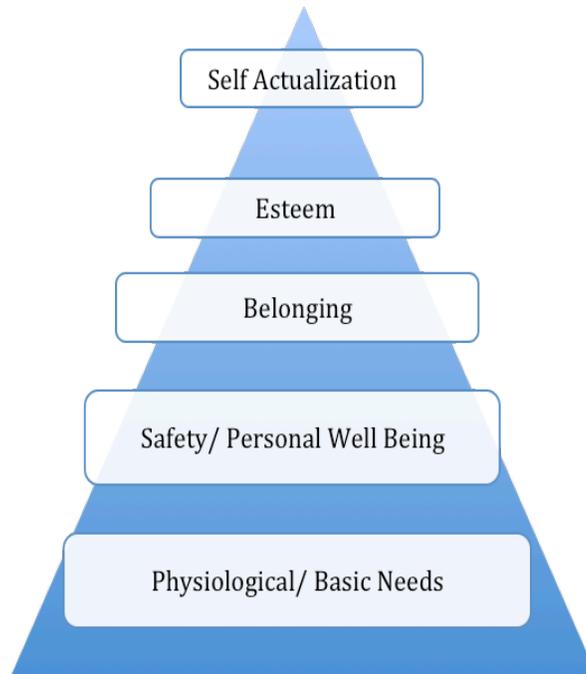
What Good is a Manager Anyway?

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This time of year brings opportunity for reflection and for many of us it is in the form of assessing our worth as managers and leaders of organizations, to take measure of the state of our organizations and work communities. Something we espouse knowing is that a successful organization is measured by the strength, skills, and creativity of its leadership. A creative leader has the skills and strength to lead not just from the head, but from the heart as well.

What do our employees want from their managers and their company? What is a good manager anyway?

There are numerous management models that identify what employees most want, such as being part of a community, feeling significant, being valued, respected and having a sense of excitement about their work. One such model that has prevailed in the field of psychology and the social sciences for many decades is Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs"; visually depicted below.



At the base of Maslow's pyramid/hierarchy are **Basic Needs**, such as food and shelter. When we think about **Basic Needs** in management terminology, we can relate this to our employees' need for the organization to meet their basic needs. What they are looking for is job security, benefits, a safe work environment, and adequate compensation.

Moving up Maslow's pyramid, we see **Safety**, interpreted as a sense of personal well-being. Having met the basic needs of our employees, they are now prepared to explore their own sense of well being, the reciprocity of good will between management and workforce, perhaps taking an interest in their co-workers and colleagues and the general work environment. The next step moves on to **Belonging**. Employees want to be part of something greater than themselves, to belong and be an integral part of creating and sustaining the community. **Belonging** is part of building a team of employees that are united behind advancing the mission of the organization or promoting the goods and services of the company. Believing in the integrity of company and its leaders is critical to creating a trusting environment. Many great leaders misunderstand the importance of the hierarchy of needs and they miss steps on the ladder, making reaching the pinnacle a 'mission impossible'. By the time your employees reach the level of **Esteem**, they should be fully committed and integrated into the philosophy of the organization and are working towards sustaining the environment and building a sense of belonging for newer employees, the future and growth of your organization.

Successful companies and great leaders understand the significance of establishing a foundation upon which to build their organization; first creating a sense of security and well being for their employees. Once this is accomplished, and only then, can we, as managers and leaders, turn our attention to inspiring and exciting our employees, allowing them to turn their 'job' into a 'calling', to feel pride in their contributions to the organization, which permits them to feel valued, important and capable of inspiring others. A sense of ownership will emerge as employees actualize their own potential for excellence and become stakeholders in the success of the organization. Motivation ceases to be solely externally driven (money, security, and benefits) to internally driven (feeling valued, important, and significant). This is the level of **Self Actualization**. The same employee that may have felt like a 'cog in the wheel' becomes a motivating force in determining the direction, outcome, and success of the company.

I am often asked, "What is the role of a CEO?" Obviously, a CEO has a multitude of roles; he/she is a visionary, the face of the organization, has a commitment to its financial success, but perhaps most importantly, that individual has a responsibility to create an environment where all aspects of Maslow's "**Hierarchy of Needs**" are met, to make the work environment a place where employees feel valued, critical to the success of the company, and significant in their contributions to the organization. Today, many CEOs refer to themselves as "Chief Inspirational Officer" and perhaps it is time to add "Chief Self Actualization Officer" - Every employee has the right to feel that their company is as invested in their personal success as it is in the bottom line of the company... That is the role of a good manager!

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