Debra Allcock Tyler

IT'S MURDER IN MANAGEMENT

The no-fibbing guide for new managers

What they said about the book …

'Being a middle manager, you're not only responsible for your team but also accountable to those above you – it is a major juggling act. Debra's accounts of her own management journey and the astute advice she has to offer serve as a useful resource for everyone managing in the voluntary sector.'
Mark Davis, Chief Executive, Middlesbrough Voluntary Development Agency

'It's Murder in Management is a veritable tour de force and an excellent resource for new and aspiring managers, and even for seasoned managers who need reminding how to deal with the difficulties of their job. Debra provides clarity about roles and responsibilities and gives the reader tools to help work through what is often a huge to-do list. It should be included as part of all new managers' inductions.'
Sarah Hughes, Chief Executive, Centre for Mental Health

'In this book Debra's wise insights are made available to all – you can hear her voice in every sentence and, best of all, she gives really good advice without ever shirking the difficult realities of being a manager. There is so much in here that you can apply to your daily practice with real benefit.'
Jane Ide, Chief Executive, NAVCA

'In *It's Murder in Management*, Debra has pre-digested all the tough lessons of management for you and turned them into essential learning points and sound advice. I might make this book mandatory for all middle managers in my charity!'
Kate Lee, Chief Executive, CLIC Sargent

'Reading this, I became aware of the gentle sound of pennies dropping – and this after over 30 years in the leadership and management of people! Honest and candid, this book reassures leaders of all levels that it is OK to fail; in fact, it is probably compulsory! A great ready-to-use reference: one to dip in and out of to dispel those niggling doubts.'
Alex Lochrane, Chief Executive, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Air Ambulance

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About the Directory of Social Change

The Directory of Social Change (DSC) has a vision of an independent voluntary sector at the heart of social change. We believe that the activities of independent charities, voluntary organisations and community groups are fundamental to achieve social change. We exist to help these organisations and the people who support them to achieve their goals.

We do this by:

■ providing practical tools that organisations and activists need, including online and printed publications, training courses, and conferences on a huge range of topics;
■ acting as a 'concerned citizen' in public policy debates, often on behalf of smaller charities, voluntary organisations and community groups;
■ leading campaigns and stimulating debate on key policy issues that affect those groups;
■ carrying out research and providing information to influence policymakers, as well as offering bespoke research for the voluntary sector.

DSC is the leading provider of information and training for the voluntary sector and publishes an extensive range of guides and handbooks covering subjects such as fundraising, management, communication, finance and law. Our subscription-based websites contain a wealth of information on funding from grant-making charities, companies and government sources. We run more than 300 training courses each year, including bespoke in-house training provided at the client's location. DSC conferences and fairs, which take place throughout the year, also provide training on a wide range of topics and offer a welcome opportunity for networking.

For details of all our activities, and to order publications and book courses, go to www.dsc.org.uk, call 020 7697 4200 or email cs@dsc.org.uk.

About the author

Debra has been the Chief Executive of the Directory of Social Change (DSC) since 2001. She is a Trustee of In Kind Direct, a charity founded by HRH The Prince of Wales, a Trustee of the Berkshire Community Foundation, Vice-President of the Soldiering On Awards, and an Ambassador for women and girls at risk of or affected by female genital mutilation and other harmful practices for the Africa Advocacy Foundation (AAF). She was the founder Chair of the Small Charities Coalition, served as a member of the Charity Commission's SORP Committee for seven years and was the Vice-Chair of Governors of Whiteknights Primary School for some years. Her first volunteering role was at the age of 16, in a local hospice, helping the staff with basic duties such as cleaning and changing beds.

After a brief stint in the private sector, Debra has spent most of her career in the charitable sector. Following a short period as a management consultant in her 20s, she moved into leadership roles covering a range of functions including campaigning, policy development, sales, product development, media relations and training. She is particularly proud of her 14 years as a voluntary Trade Union Officer and the year she spent working with Youth at Risk – an organisation that works with young people suffering severe social disadvantages. She was the first female Programme Director of the Runge Effective Leadership programme and is a mentor and advisor to a number of CEOs and chairs of trustee boards.

Debra is a renowned authority in the field of leadership and governance in civil society and an internationally published author of several books. She writes 'The Last Word' column for *Third Sector* magazine which reaches around 123,000 people per publication. Her interests also include theoretical physics, behavioural economics and politics. Debra has a degree in psychology and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a member of the Royal Institution. She admits to being a slave to a basset hound called Arthur.

Acknowledgements

There are so many folk who help you to learn along the way. Below is a list of the ones who have been most involved in my thinking over the last year or so.

But in particular I would like to mention Ian Lawson, who died far too young in early 2018. Ian was a huge part of my leadership journey for over 30 years and I owe much of what I have achieved in my leadership career to his support and wisdom.

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Jill Thornton
Tom Traynor
Suzanne Tubb
John Wallace
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Gabriele Zagnoj

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Foreword

There are a million reasons to read this book if you are either entering into your first management role or have been in the role a little while and are wondering why it is not as straightforward as perhaps you thought it would be.

If I could go back to my first management role and apologise to all those staff on whom I unashamedly practised my leadership style, I would. Of course, I didn't know that what I was doing at the time was learning through practising, and my first two years in the management arena were fraught with a mixture of self-doubt and unbridled exhilaration.

For many of us, the pathway that takes us into management is something we work towards and covet. Friends and families congratulate you on achieving the next stage of your career and, if you are anything like me, you dream about changing the world and making a difference on an expanding stage.

Therefore, it is often quite a shock when the move into management signals the need for you to rethink how you are at work. It sees you entering a completely different space that often is not as you previously perceived it. In this book, Debra focuses on the nuts and bolts of becoming a manager in her usual no-nonsense way. She gets right to the heart of what you need to know, how you need to behave and what will help you nurture your team. There is no hand-wringing or tortured self-examination here but rock-solid and positive advice with a sprinkling of humour.

I encourage you to embrace your management opportunity as the start of a career-long journey of developing your own leadership style and your levels of confidence. Arguably, it is a chance to create a firm platform for your future as a leader. Becoming a manager does not mean you receive instant wisdom and get all the answers overnight, but it does give you the responsibility to nurture, develop and inspire the people who need you to manage them. To achieve the highest levels of success, you will need to invest in developing your inner manager – and reading this book is a great way to start.

Catherine Johnstone CBE
CEO, Royal Voluntary Service

Introduction

If hindsight was foresight, we'd all be geniuses!
Proverb

Why this book? During my career I've operated at all levels in management roles – from team leader all the way up to CEO and chair. Of all of the roles I've been in, I can honestly say that by far and away the hardest and most challenging role is that of a leader at mid-management level. I remember many, many days when I came close to murdering my bosses, my team or my colleagues! I expect you have similar days.

Day in, day out, you will need to find a way to sit alongside your team (either literally or metaphorically) and create a happy, effective working environment which feels warm and friendly while, at the same time, maintaining enough distance that you can effectively deal with poor performance or poor attitudes. This is not easy. It's all very well for those of us now in more senior positions, who probably are able to be a little separate from our teams, to spout on about how you've got to get the balance right – but getting it right? Whole different board game!

But I haven't forgotten how hard it is. And how challenging it can be when you're responsible for implementing decisions that some people may disagree with but where you have to hold the management line, even though you may not have been involved in making those decisions. You have to influence those folk more senior to you, including trustees if you're in a smaller organisation, and yet they're under no real obligation to listen to you. You have to work as part of a wider management team where you may find some of your peers more challenging than others, yet you have to find a way to get on because there's no avoiding it and you can't achieve your team's objectives without others' input. This comes with a whole raft of challenges – but I don't need to tell you that.

I remember when I got promoted to my first management role. I was very young, about 21 or 22 as I recall. I was promoted from within the team I was already in and my teammates were really supportive about my appointment. So I started the job on a wave of enthusiasm – both mine and theirs. It didn't take long for it all to go horribly wrong. I was incredibly inexperienced, hadn't had any training at that stage and was basically winging it. Within three months of being appointed, I had managed to turn a high-performing team of happy people into a low-performing team of seriously pissed-off people! I was being bossy rather than being the manager and it took me a while to understand the difference.

In the end, the team revolted and there was a horribly uncomfortable meeting where they made it very clear what they thought of my management skills! I went home that night in tears. At the time, I was living at home and my

father gave me some fantastic advice that I've never forgotten and have used over and over again: tell the truth. He asked me whether there was any truth in their criticism of me. And of course there was – I was a terrible manager! So he suggested that I call the team together the next day and tell the truth: that I could see I wasn't doing a great job but that I really wanted to, and I needed their help to be the best possible manager I could be. That conversation completely revolutionised our relationship and I can now say, hand on heart, that the couple of years that I spent managing that team – when we were all learning together – was one of the happiest working times of my life.

The lesson I learned is to trust people. Most people are on your side and want you to do well – you just have to allow them to help you.

And so I've written this book because I too am on your side. I want you to know you're not alone and there are things that you can do to help make your managerial journey a little bit easier. I want to share with you the practical advice that I so needed when I was learning my management skills, not the relentless theorising that most books present.

I hope that there are things in this book that you will find useful. But, most importantly, remember that you are managing for a great purpose. Remember that, if you do your job well (which you will), you are helping to make society a better place for people. That's got to be worth it.

1 What do managers do?

So much of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to work.
Attributed to Peter F. Drucker

It can be a bit of a shock – that first time you experience what it feels like to be a manager. When it hits home quite hard that, as a manager, you are not judged on the quality of the work that you personally produce but on the work of your team. When you realise that other people's performance affects yours in a much more personal way than it ever has before.

Here's the thing: everything has now changed. Before it was just you. Others could of course influence your output as a worker, but the actual quality was basically down to you. And you probably did a pretty good job, which helped with you getting promoted. But as a manager your job is fundamentally quite different. It is to get others to deliver. Because you can't do all the work yourself and how well you get others to work is what you will now be judged on. Unfortunately, so often we arrive in our first management or team leader position wholly ill-equipped to deal with the complex and difficult task of getting others to perform.

Many of us get promoted into management positions because we were particularly good at our technical or specialist job. We were the best fundraiser, therapist, accountant, caseworker or some such. However, it's fairly rare that we arrive in our new job with sufficient management training or experience to hit the ground running. Most of us have to learn the hard way and so, if you're reading this book prior to getting your first promotion to a management role, then yay! That gives you a head start. But I strongly suggest you ask for some training in management skills. A basic level of training will help you to avoid some obvious first-level mistakes. In fact, even if you've been in the role for a while, get some training as, I absolutely promise you, it will help.

At the simplest level, there are essentially three core skills of management in most organisations: technical knowledge, administrative abilities and people skills. There are also, generally speaking, four levels of authority. As either a **front-line worker** or a **technical specialist** (for example, a purchase ledger clerk or a fundraiser), what you are hired for is your technical competence. At that stage you are not managing others, although you are probably working within a team. At **team leader level**, you are expected to have a degree of technical speciality, but you also have to know how to manage people and how to administer stuff (i.e. you have to be able to plan, report, budget, etc.). At **middle and senior management level**, your technical competence is less a part

of the role. At this level you are largely focused on helping others to deliver on their technical competences and making sure there are plans, projects, monitoring and so on. Finally, at the **CEO level**, you spend the bulk of your time leading people. (For more on what CEOs do, read the sister book to this one: *It's Tough at the Top.*) Of course, in smaller organisations there is a bit more overlap, but you get the gist. The diagram in the next section shows what I mean.

The promotion envelope

The promotion envelope is a commonly used visual representation of how the core parts of your role shift and change as you get promoted and move into more senior management roles.
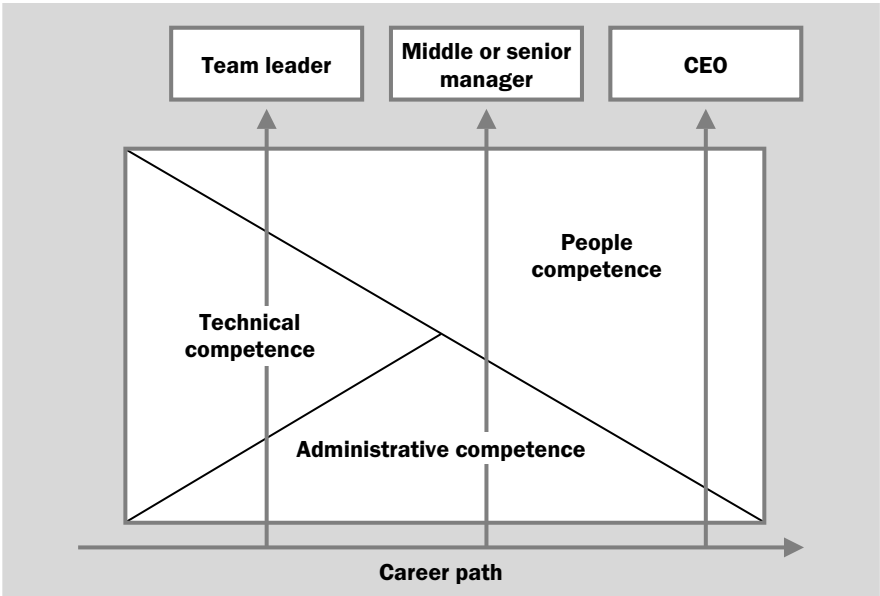
At the early stage of your career, you will probably spend most of your time honing your basic skill base. Some people prefer to stay at the technical or specialist level (for example, specialists in IT, finance or fundraising) and have no desire to move into management. Others, as they get better and better at the job they do, might end up coming to the attention of people in their organisation who are keen to promote them, or they might gain confidence and start applying for management posts in other organisations. Either way, if this is you, you are now in a management position. You have (hopefully!) a higher salary, but you definitely have more responsibility. Your job will have changed fundamentally from being almost solely technical to including a level of general administration of personnel, budgets, reports and so on, as well as leading other people.

The hard part!

The management part of the role, I think, is fairly straightforward. It's a technical skill to be able to budget or write a report and, if you don't know how to do it, these skills can be relatively easily taught or picked up. When it comes to leading people, however, my experience suggests this is probably the most difficult part of the management role, even with training. You become accountable for others' performance and motivation, the quality of their work and, probably the toughest thing to manage, their time-keeping and ability to stick to deadlines.

When your computer plays up, you can ring technical support, who will fiddle with it and make it co-operate. You can switch it off. You can chuck it out and get a new one. But with people? Much as we might quite like to turn them off sometimes – or reboot them to factory settings – we can't. We have to deal with their idiosyncrasies: emotions, fears, passions, strops, bad hair days …

When you're new to management, or haven't had appropriate training, it's all too easy and tempting to slip back down the envelope into the technical side of the job – which you already know you're good at and where you can hide from having to do the 'people thing'. I've been leading people for over 30 years and there are still days when I'd quite like to go and hide somewhere or when the thought of a job where I don't have to manage anyone is very attractive!

The difference in management levels

In all organisations except the very smallest (say, those of 15 or fewer people), there are generally easily visible levels of management and leadership. This is the case regardless of the type of organisation. There is always a board, for example, but how many hours they work and whether they are paid or not will vary dependent upon the technical construction of the organisation. In practice, however, the responsibilities are largely the same, regardless of the type of organisation and whether the role is paid or unpaid. Most organisations will have:

■ board of trustees (with a chair);
■ a CEO (or director or secretary general);
■ directors and/or senior managers;
■ middle management;
■ team leaders.

In some smaller organisations, there may not be team leaders per se but rather managers who probably have similar levels of responsibility to middle managers or senior managers in larger organisations. But, either way, you get the point.

What do managers do?

When I was on the front line, I thought I had a pretty good idea of what the level above me did ('not much' was my perception usually!). Then, when I got promoted, I suddenly realised that much of the work my manager did had not

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There will be days when you feel like murdering your bosses, your team or your colleagues!

Do not despair – if you have recently become a manager, or are in need of a skill refresh, this book will guide you to being more effective and confident in your role.

Through a combination of leadership theory, models with personal anecdotes as well as real-life situations, Debra Allcock Tyler illustrates how management can be both fun and fulfilling. With this book you can take practical, no-nonsense advice from an experienced manager and respected leader in the voluntary sector.

This comprehensive guide covers:

- Your role as leader
- Developing the talent and building the team
- Time management
- Understanding the money
- Learning from others

With Debra's trademark directness and humour, *It's Murder in Management* gives you the skills to ease the transition and to help make your managerial role a rewarding experience.

'I might make this book mandatory for all middle managers in my charity. Such sound advice from someone who has pre-digested all the tough lessons and turned them into essential learning and solid advice.'

Kate Lee
CEO, CLIC Sargent

With illustrations by *Private Eye, The Spectator* and *New Statesman* cartoonist Grizelda.

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