

THE ARTICLE

HILL, LINDA. "HOW NEW MANAGERS BECOME GREAT MANAGERS." *HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL WORKING KNOWLEDGE*. 18 AUGUST 2003. 21 FEBRUARY 2008.
<[HTTP://HBSWK.HBS.EDU/ITEM/3629.HTML](http://HBSWK.HBS.EDU/ITEM/3629.HTML)>

THE AUTHOR

Author Linda A. Hill is the Wallace Brett Donham Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School¹. This article is an excerpt from Hill's *Becoming a Manager: How New Managers Master the Challenges of Leadership*, an updated version of her 1992 book *Becoming a Manager: Mastery of a New Identity*, which *Library Journal* "strongly recommended for all types of business collections."¹

IN THIS ARTICLE . . .

The author addresses four challenges to the emerging leader: choosing the right position; getting off to the right start; landing stretch assignments; and building a network of developmental relationships.

Although some effective managerial qualities are innate, much of leadership is learned through on-the-job experiences. To find meaning in these experiences, managers must periodically "collect feedback on and analyze their behavior, attitudes, and values." By building "developmental relationships" with mentors and remaining open to taking risks and receiving constructive criticism, managers can obtain candid feedback to aid in self-assessment. ***Every information professional recognizes the value of professional networking and personal career planning.***²

The author suggests that, when making decisions about which job opportunities to pursue, managers evaluate the fit between themselves and the position and the fit between who they are and who they want to be. Developmentally the best assignments are ones in which the fit is a "stretch," talent-wise. The stretch should not be too big- "risk should be commensurate with the individual's ability to cope with and responsibly manage it"- but managers should seek out assignments that will help them develop and "acquire new knowledge, skills, perspective, and judgment." ***Every information professional seeks out challenges and capitalizes on new opportunities.***³

New managers can get off to a bad start by choosing positions and organizations that "do not fit their capabilities, motives, and values." The author suggests that, when trying to determine if they should move into a leadership role, people should ask themselves the following questions:

- Do I like collaborative work?
- Do I tend to become the leader of groups in which I find myself?
- Have I ever volunteered to coach or tutor others?
- Do I find it intriguing to work on thorny, ambiguous problems?
- Do I cope well with stress (e.g., extended hours, tough personal decisions)?

The author suggests that if one cannot answer most of these questions affirmatively, one may not have the qualities effective managers need. ***Information professionals excel at managing [organizations] whose offerings are intangible, whose markets are constantly changing and in which both high-tech and high-touch are vitally important in achieving organizational success.***⁴

Choosing the right position can initiate a cycle of success that becomes self-reinforcing: "they will be able to convert their general competencies into company- and job-specific expertise, develop relationships, and make a contribution to organizational performance in relatively short order. Once they begin to make a contribution... their network of relationships will grow. Some will be willing to sponsor and perhaps even mentor them, taking risks on their behalf and promoting them into stretch assignments. From these assignments, they develop more expertise and more relationships and therefore are in an even better position to contribute to key organizational objectives."

ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS FOR SPECIAL LIBRARIES:

The author asserts that management (leadership functions in particular), cannot be taught. She instead encourages budding managers to ask themselves and "Am I preparing myself to manage and lead?" and make career choices accordingly. Special librarians can apply the author's suggested framework for lifelong learning to their own career development, as evidenced by the relatability of the "four challenges" to the Competencies for Information Professionals of theⁱ 21st Century and the special library and information center environment.

INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS CONTRIBUTE TO THE KNOWLEDGE BASE OF THE PROFESSION BY SHARING BEST PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES, AND CONTINUE TO LEARN ABOUT INFORMATION PRODUCTS, SERVICES, AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES THROUGHOUT THE LIFE OF HIS/HER CAREER.⁵

¹ <http://www.amazon.com/Becoming-Manager-Managers-Challenges-Leadership/dp/1591391822>

²⁻⁵ <http://www.sla.org/content/learn/members/competencies/index.cfm>