



turning managers into leaders

Merge's Monthly Mega Minute – June 2010

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Merge Gupta-Sunderji turns managers into leaders. Through engaging keynotes and facilitated workshops, she gives people specific and practical tools to achieve leadership and communication success. Contact her at www.mergespeaks.com or 403-605-4756

Which juggling balls do you keep aloft?

If you're in a position of leadership, then you're certainly trying to balance your professional with your personal life. And just in the workplace alone, you no doubt are organizing and managing a myriad of varied and far-reaching responsibilities. So it's safe to say that at any point in time, no matter what your individual situation, you're juggling countless tasks and duties.

For a moment, think of yourself as a juggler, and all these responsibilities as balls that you're attempting to keep aloft. At any given time, you likely have scores of balls in the air, and on some days, it feels like all you're doing is struggling (and scurrying from one place to another) to ensure that none of these balls hit the ground. Now imagine that some of these balls are made of rubber and some are made of glass. Rubber balls are elastic and resilient; when they fall, they easily bounce back. But the glass balls are rigid and inflexible; when they fall, they shatter! If this were indeed true, then you'd make it a point to take special care of the glass balls, wouldn't you? If you had to drop any balls, you'd let the rubber ones fall because you know that they'd bounce right back up.

So let's take this metaphor further. Your various day-to-day responsibilities can be sorted into glass balls and rubber balls. For the most part, anything related to people relationships – with your employees, peers, managers, family and loved ones – are equivalent to glass balls. If you drop these, then the impact can be far-reaching and in some cases devastating. And largely, anything related to administrative tasks are equivalent to rubber balls. While it certainly isn't a good idea to drop an excessive number of these too often, the impact is nevertheless not as great as if you dropped the glass balls. This metaphor would suggest that if you had to drop a ball or two, it should be the rubber ones. Yet so many people, when faced with this very predicament, let their relationships falter. They work at keeping the task-related rubber balls in the air, but they let their people-oriented glass balls fall. It sure doesn't make sense, does it? What about you? Which balls do you keep aloft, and which ones do you let drop?