Why it's the right time to move into management


ABSTRACT

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FULL TEXT

NOW could be the time to move into management. 'Government estimates show 800,000 new managers are needed between now and 2017. It is the biggest skill shortage of all,' says Ruth Spellman, of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI).
You may not even have to change jobs. Companies are increasingly choosing to save money by promoting staff from within rather than hiring in new managers, according to the CMI.
Moving into management is a bigger step than many people realise. It is not just about doing your existing job better, acquiring more knowledge of your own particular technical skills, ordering others about or delegating everything to give yourself an easy life.
In fact, it involves learning skills, such as team leadership, managing change and meeting customer needs. As a manager, you will need to understand how the whole company works, what its strategies are and how to motivate your team to meet the company's goals.
So before applying for a management job, find out what it involves in your company or in your sector.
Talk to managers in your company to find out what they actually do, and try to get a mentor. 'Mentors can give you access to tips and experience you can't get any other way,' says Mrs Spellman.
FAILING an internal mentor, check if you can get one from another company. The CMI, for instance, runs a scheme to find mentors for managers (see managers.org.uk).
Volunteer for committees or projects that enable you to find out more about what different parts of the company do. This will also make you more visible to a wider range of managers, so ensure you make a good impression.
Ask for management training. Some companies provide a formal management training system.
New graduates seeking management jobs should look for graduate training schemes that prepare you to be a manager from day one.
Graduate trainees at retailer Aldi, for instance, start shadowing store managers after their first four weeks -- and within a year are managing a store themselves.
Following that, they begin area manager training and usually become area managers after three years, managing around five to six stores and around 90 staff.
Graduate entry pay is Pounds 40,000, rising to Pounds 62,000 after four years.
All management jobs require evidence of leadership skills. This is vital to get on the Aldi scheme.
'We look for people who may have captained sports teams, led a debating team or been a student representative, and we prioritise those who can show evidence of work experience over those with no experience with a first class
degree,' says Richard Holloway, head of graduate recruitment at Aldi (see graduates.aldirecruitment.co.uk).

If you are not offered in-house management training, consider getting qualifications yourself. The CMI offers courses leading to qualifications in many aspects of management, or you could consider doing a masters in business administration (MBA).

Do not let stereotypes of the male manager affect your confidence if you are female.

Nicola Mendelsohn, the first woman president of the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising and executive chairman of advertising agency Karmarama, says: 'Be confident. Studies show that 70 per cent of male managers have high confidence, but that figure drops to 50 per cent among women.'

Staff expect managers to be confident and are less likely to perform for those who are not. Don't let having a family deter you from moving into management. 'Don't be afraid to negotiate with your employer for flexible hours. Use technology in a liberating way and have lots of perseverance,' advises Mrs Mendelsohn, who had four children while holding down a job as head of an advertising agency.

If there are no management jobs available in your own company, you may have to change jobs to get into management. This can be a big leap, because you will be changing your role at the same time as changing your employer.

Start preparing while still in your present role.

'Being selected for a management role depends on demonstrating your overall understanding of business and your leadership skills, so work to broaden your present role and get experience leading teams,' says Julie Waddicor of recruiter Hays (see hays.co.uk).

Revamp your CV to show evidence of management and leadership skills. Working with a recruitment consultant can help you do this.

Network with industry contacts to find out about management vacancies and consider online networking specifying that you want to move into a manager's job.

When the time comes and you are appointed to management, don't expect an easy transition.

Becoming a manager means changing your relationship with your former colleagues and takes time to get used to. Ensure you have support from your managers plus your family and friends.

I GOT MY BREAK WHEN MY BOSS WAS AWAY

VICTORIA BEADLE got a lucky break. 'My manager was on leave, and I was asked to step in,' says Victoria, 31, who works for OM Property Management.

'I realised I liked the extra responsibility and decided to focus on getting into management.' She told her line manager and was sent on management and leadership courses.

'My goal was to land a regional manager's job, so I spoke to existing regional managers to research the skills required and focus on developing them,' says Victoria, from Bromley.

'I also asked my colleagues for feedback about the skills I needed to develop and got coaching from my boss.' In 2010, Victoria was promoted twice and is now regional property manager for the South East, with a team of five.

'The initial transition from team member to manager was difficult. You have to distance yourself to some extent, but you soon get used to it,' adds Victoria.

MY FIRST FEW MONTHS WERE REALLY TOUGH

'I THOUGHT moving into management would be a breeze, but I found the first couple of months very stressful,' says Adam Clifford, 28. He had been one of the sales team at software company Sage until he was promoted to manage the team of 11 last November. 'I had already said at development reviews that I wanted a manager's job, and my line manager advised me on what to do,' says Adam.

Adam volunteered as a representative of the sales team at managers' meetings and shadowed sales managers so he could learn about their roles. 'If you do things like this, your name is going to be first on everyone's lips when a manager job comes up,' he says.

Credit: by Linda Whitney

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