

How Dare You Manage?

How Dare You Manage?

Seven Principles
to Close the CEO Skill Gap

NICK FORREST



Toronto & New York
www.bpsbooks.com

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Published in 2013 by

BPS Books

Toronto & New York

www.bpsbooks.com

A division of Bastian Publishing Services Ltd.

ISBN 978-1-927483-69-5

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data available from Library
and Archives Canada.

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Cover: Michael Clark/Daniel Crack

Text design and typesetting: Daniel Crack, Kinetics Design, kdbooks.ca

Graphic illustrations: Lori Harrison

Index: Gillian Watts

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Preface

I have written *How Dare You Manage?* to help would-be, new or veteran CEOs to close what I call the CEO skill gap. This gap exists because those who reach the very top of their organization:

- Have never been taught how to manage large groups of employees
- Have never been accountable for *everything* (until now, they have always worked for someone else – there was always a boss to defer to)
- Believe their role is to lead, whereas – and this may sound counterintuitive – it is primarily to *manage*

While I address CEOs directly throughout this book, I have written it for many others, as well, including:

- Executive vice presidents or vice presidents, some of whom may aspire to the top role, who run a division in excess of 250 employees
- Anyone who is part of an executive team that collectively manages a large workforce
- Board members (including the chair of the nominating committee) who work with executive leaders and CEOs. Members of a company's board are custodians of the company; they should understand what it takes to support those who manage large groups of employees
- Individuals who have been identified by the senior leadership team as high potential. Leaders and board members should be proactive in inviting senior talent in to the boardroom. If you are invited, you need to understand corporate leadership; you need to display how, in your department, you are doing all of the things that would be required of you in the CEO's position: developing and implementing a clear structure

for your department and a functioning succession-planning strategy, setting and defining the goals of your department and reaching them through your people, and, most importantly, aligning your department with company-wide goals and approaches

- Anyone who consults for, or provides services to, members of the C-suite (this includes executive coaches)
- Senior Human Resources managers

Furthermore, while I focus on the realities of corporate life, readers in other types of business will also find this book helpful, including heads of family businesses and entrepreneurs/owners.

How Dare You Manage? includes examples from my experience as a consultant to CEOs and other senior leaders. In particular, I follow the progress of Jos Wintermans of Canadian Tire Acceptance Ltd., who provides a powerful illustration of how CEOs can identify their skill gap and close it – and the amazing results that follow.

Allow me to speak to you, my reader, directly. I believe this book will help you focus on learning the *craft*, as opposed to the *techniques*, of management. (Say goodbye to the management flavour of the month.) I believe you will experience an increase in confidence by knowing there is a proven way forward, and “I can do this.” I hope your enthusiasm will spike at the possibility that “I can truly create a highly productive organization that can achieve spectacular results with an engaged, kick-ass workforce.”

Above all, I hope my boldness in identifying a skill gap in top leaders as one of the most serious problems faced by organizations today will be taken in the spirit in which it is meant: to help you unlock your own potential and the potential of *everyone* you manage.

Nick Forrest

PART ONE

The Gap

CHAPTER ONE

It's the CEO Skill Gap That Needs Closing

How dare you manage®?

I rarely say this aloud when I'm consulting for CEOs, senior managers and board members, but it is often on the tip of my tongue.

Why? Because the corporate landscape today is replete with top leaders who don't understand it is now their work to manage a large group of people. They don't know what is required for doing so: developing and implementing a clear structure, process and set of practices for managers and those they manage, and executing on these consistently. This management deficit is a serious matter. Senior leaders who lack this understanding, who lack this skill, do untold damage to their organization: they hurt not only their employees but also the prospects of their organization and of themselves, not to mention their customers' trust. Customers have always voted with their feet, but today they don't wait long to verify their perceptions, and they don't walk; they run.

Ironically, chief executive officers often tell their executive leadership team, board members, shareholders and the media that their organization is being held back by a skill gap among their employees. This almost always sounds good and right. And what happens next is logical, as policies and programs are developed to:

- Find, train and retain the best talent and align the talent with the company's products or services
- Teach everyone in the company to work collaboratively with customers
- Ensure that all of the company's internal and external communications underscore this approach

I contend, however, that, to move forward, companies and boards, and CEOs themselves, must address a prior skill gap: the *CEO* skill gap.

Who Trains CEOs to Be CEOs?

It has become painfully clear to me, in my twenty-five years as a consultant to the C-suite, that business does not teach managers how to be a CEO.

Why?

Partly because the aura surrounding the position almost guarantees that CEOs will not hear what they need to hear. Even from themselves.

Partly because some CEOs approach their role politically. They litter the battlefield with anyone who gets in their way, including those whose wisdom they so sorely need. If these CEOs have a gap, they don't notice it – and even if they did, it's doubtful that they would care.

And partly – mainly – because it has never occurred to most CEOs that there is a significant difference between managing a group of employees in part of an organization and managing *all* of the employees in the entire organization.

But there is good news. If I am right that a misconception about their role is behind the CEO skill gap, then CEOs who have the courage and tenacity to address and redress that misconception will release enormous amounts of talent and energy in the organization they lead.



In the next two chapters, I deal with three key insights that *you* as a CEO or aspiring CEO need to have about your own skill gap (chapter 2) and the necessity for you to see management as a lifelong craft, not a series of ever-changing, and often arbitrary, techniques (chapter 3). These chapters will prepare you for the second and third parts of the book, in which I discuss seven essential CEO management principles™ (note: I call these *CEO* management principles, to distinguish

them from general management practices) and show you how to apply them so you can guide, focus, control and manage the direction of large numbers of employees and achieve great results – and get lots of feedback from those employees while you're at it.

By doing this, you will:

- Become a successful CEO
- Win a reputation as a manager capable of positively transforming organizations and lives
- Build a sustainable organization – one that transcends you
- Set your company on a path of innovation and creative problem solving
- Watch your organization become sustainably profitable

Executive Summary

1. CEOs are in danger of never hearing what they need to hear.
2. Most CEOs were never trained to be a CEO.
3. Most CEOs do not understand that they now lead a very large group of people: *all of the employees* in their organization.
4. Addressing and redressing this misconception will help CEOs release the talents and energy of their entire workforce.