

Key insights

- 1 Understand how effective managers allocate resources
- 2 Understand what constitute important leadership qualities
- 3 Learn how effective managers organise their time

CHAPTER 8

Habits of highly effective health club managers

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Introduction

This chapter focuses on what separates a competent club manager from an exceptional one. It outlines the traits and skillset of a successful manager. It describes how management objectives can be categorised and the broad knowledge base that managers now require in order to develop and lead a successful team and club business.

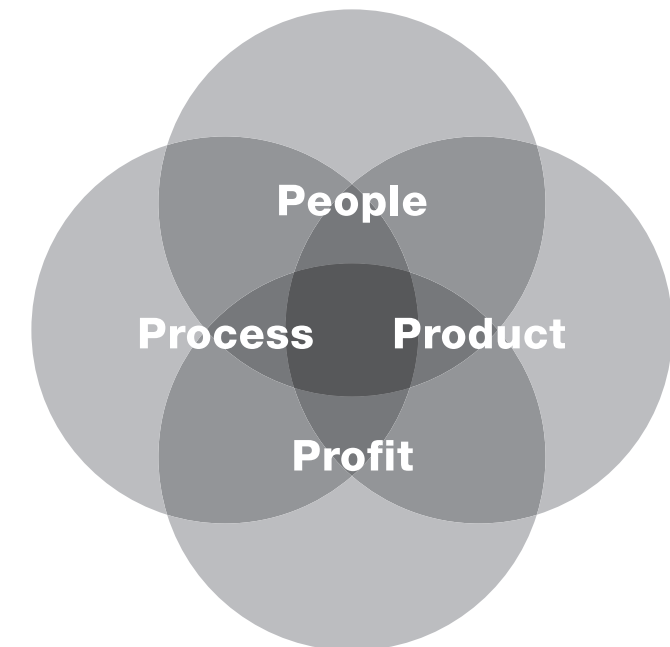
Organising management objectives

Management processes should be structured into four key areas, which help to direct the manager and the team's focus. These include:

- **P**eople
- **P**rocess
- **P**roduct
- **P**rofit

Ensuring the team fully embrace these four Ps is an important part of the delivery plan.

Figure 19 Organising management objectives



People

We need **people** to work and operate our club and these critical people must share a common value system. We also need people to use, pay for and enjoy the activities, club ambience and social perspective of being a club member. Everyone has their own reasons for joining a club and we have to strive to fully understand their personal objectives and then enthusiastically work towards exceeding them.

Process

All clubs have systems and **processes** to ensure that staff know how to effectively operate the business. Standard Operating Procedures bring confidence to staff and members as they encourage a consistency of service delivery. Member expectations are now very high and they expect exceptional service on every visit. This builds rapport between members and the club and is a key building block for above-normal retention.

Product

To deliver a great **product** to the member a club has to be:

- Operationally friendly
- Safe
- Consistent on standards
- Well organised
- Hygienic
- Equipped with a health and fitness activity/function that helps all members to achieve their personal goals

The product can have a unique selling proposition (USP) or a number of distinctive qualities to create differentiation from competitive clubs. Be proactive and work with your team to develop your club's unique points of difference. The product must be constantly maintained, kept 'fresh' and up-to-date. The club needs to plan and commit to an investment programme.

Profit

Ultimately, the club has to make a **profit**. This means that effective managers will always align costs to the needs of all its stakeholders. The price of a membership must balance the needs of members with those of the club. Secondary revenue must be maximised and key performance indicators continually evaluated. To have a

successful business, profit is what everyone should be striving towards. The staff will deliver the standards, build upon relationships with the members and maintain them within the business. Deliver the above to the stakeholders and operational excellence is assured. An effective club manager successfully coordinates and delivers all four Ps!

Be proactive and work with your team to develop your club's unique points of difference

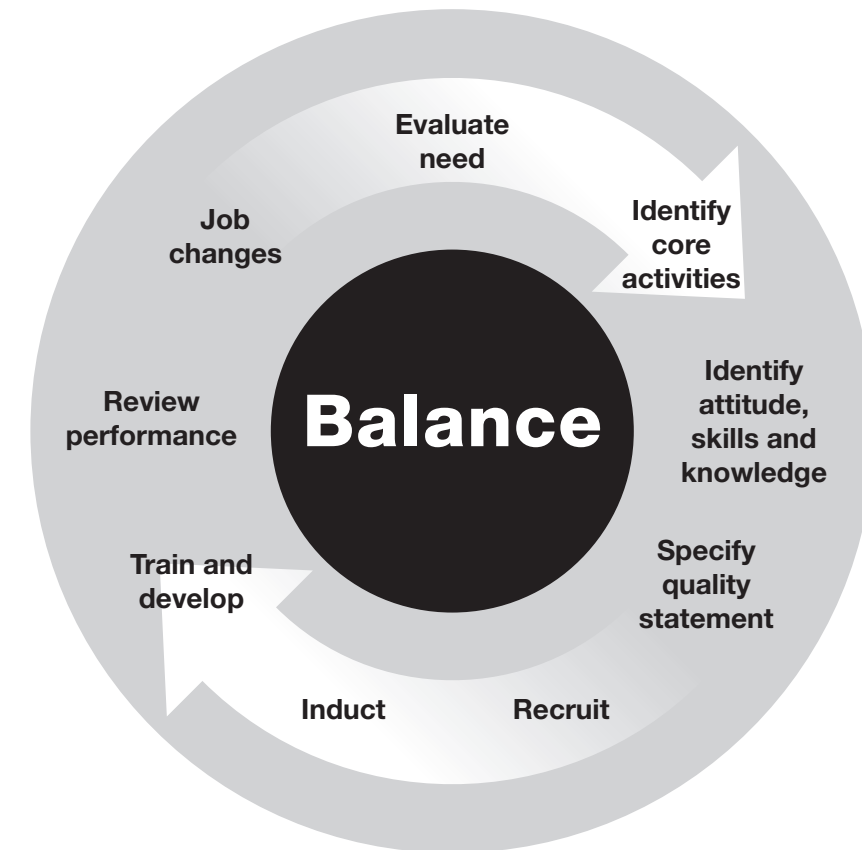
Performance management process

For a manager to be an inspiring, effective, dedicated and enthusiastic leader they must be able to implement:

- Marketing strategy
- Staff recruitment and retention strategy
- Club operations strategy
- Exceptional member service programmes
- Effective staff communications strategy
- Staff development plan
- Timely and accurate management information
- Member retention programmes
- The sales process
- All company and statutory procedures

These are core responsibilities of an effective manager and each is underpinned by their **A**ttitude, **S**kills and **K**nowledge.

Figure 20 Performance management



Attitude

Attitude is a complex phenomenon constituting demeanour, opinion, disposition, approach and personal outlook. To have the right attitude in delivering the core responsibilities is essential to success and the performance management process.

Effective club managers display many of the following characteristics:

• Businesslike	• Consultative
• Assertive	• Persuasive
• Positive	• Responsible
• Empathic	• Motivated
• Receptive	• Despise mediocrity
• Strong core values	• Innovative
• Consistent	• Methodical
• Understanding	• Results-oriented
• Patient	• Flexible
• Committed	• Proactive

Table 6 Management characteristics

How would your team score you on a 1–10 scale?

Skills

It is all well and good for a club manager to have the correct attitude, but they need to have the skills to implement the strategy. Many terms come to mind when defining ‘**skill**’, such as expertise, ability, accomplishment, adroitness, aptitude, artistry, capability, competence, dexterity, expertise, flair, mastery, talent and proficiency. Would your team use these terms to describe you? Developing your skills as an effective club manager requires a focus on both organisational and emotional qualities.

Table 7 Management skills

Organisational	Emotional
• Communication skills	• Motivator
• Time management	• Understand different personalities
• Identifying priorities	• Supervisor
• Organisation	• Leader
• Delegation	• Visionary
• Sales	• Translate vision and mission into reality
• Administration	• Empower staff
• Recruitment competence	• Self-awareness
• Setting and measuring objectives	• Solutions-oriented
• Planning and evaluating	• Build rapport across all levels of the business
• Monitoring	• Manage stress
	• Gain respect and commitment from your team

Knowledge

You are well on your way to becoming an effective manager if you can tick most or all of the boxes in ‘attitude’ and ‘skills’, but knowledge of the environment and of general management is a fundamental part of a successful recipe.

Table 8 summarises some of the relevant knowledge required by an effective club manager.

Developing your skills as an effective club manager requires a focus on both organisational and emotional qualities

Table 8 Knowledge audit

Legal and systems	Staff issues	Club issues
Standard operating procedures	Objective-setting	Club vision, mission and objectives
Health and safety legislation	Staff induction and development plans	Environmental ‘scanning’ – trends, competition, demographics and local market
Employment law	Reward and recognition of staff and performance review process	Management reporting – sales, retention, finance, etc.
Company structure and organisation	Principles of coaching, delegation and supervision	Membership – selling, tracking, retention and price
Administration and tracking	Conducting effective meetings	Marketing – research, campaigns, public relations, promotions and events
Financial management	Interviewing and selection	Driving secondary revenue
	Problem solving	Programming
	Time management	Product knowledge
	Stress management techniques	IT systems
	Performance management process	

How do effective managers organise their time?

Time management, prioritising important activities and planning are key skills of a highly effective manager. An effective manager meets deadlines, looks ahead and delivers agreed outcomes with their superiors. However, the bottom line is that effective managers are intrinsically motivated to perform well and rarely need a carrot or stick to perform to their best.

There is nothing worse than being late for a meeting or missing an important deadline. I am sure that many readers will have their own examples where things did not go to plan (assuming there was a plan!). However, effective

managers plan and prioritise and execute their short- medium- and longer-term objectives. Their activity is constantly guided by focusing on things that will make a material difference. Things change and the swimming pool plant may inexplicably decide to break down just as an important meeting is about to commence, but effective managers can take this in their stride, because they often create 'windows' to deal with unforeseen circumstances. They also set themselves realistic, but stretching, objectives and manage their workload through delegation.

Creating an enthused and focused team

For a manager to gain respect and have a team of people working for them they need to be honest and build fun into the business. An effective manager involves their team wherever possible in building the club into a place where people want to work and members love to visit. There is a strong sense of team camaraderie and of a business where people have an exciting future. Departmental social events and team outings (dinner, evening cruise, bowling, horse

racing, theme parks or a visit to a key event) are all ways to develop a cohesive team.

All team members are empowered and encouraged to take ownership of projects. Daily communication and more structured weekly meetings ensure that all team members stay well informed. Effective managers use every opportunity to communicate enthusiastically with their team.

An effective manager involves their team wherever possible in building the club into a place where people want to work and members love to visit

Summary and key actions

Effective club managers should focus on people, process, product and profit. They plan, communicate constantly with their team, innovate and inspire people with their enthusiastic and consistent behaviour.

They continually seek to replenish their knowledge, which is applied to drive the club towards its business objectives

Key actions

- 1 Have you reviewed all the elements under each of the main headers — **A**ttitude, **S**kills and **K**nowledge — and established where you are in the scope of this Performance Management Process?
- 2 Does your personal performance review cover the aspects of your job role outlined in this chapter?
- 3 In what areas are you very proficient and where do you need to develop?
- 4 What attitudinal qualities do you need to develop (see Table 6 on page 124)?
- 5 What can you learn from the management styles of others?
- 6 What are your communications, timekeeping and motivational skills like?
- 7 Do you encourage your people and use their skills, and has every team member bought into your business values?
- 8 Do you deliver all the company processes to the standards expected?
- 9 Is the product clean, safe and operationally friendly?
- 10 Are you producing the expected financial (profit) results in line with the business plan?