



A Willingness to Keep Learning



I believe the most valuable skill of a manager or leader at any level is their ability and willingness to learn. My wife calls this having a *teachable spirit*. Whether we are new to management or are a senior executive, we have to be willing to learn. I've taken lots of courses and seminars on how to manage and lead people but my most valuable teachings come from life experiences and studying other successful and unsuccessful leaders. Lessons that didn't come from textbooks or speakers have had the most influence on how I lead people. If there was one piece of advice that I could give to all new managers who want to be successful, it is to watch and learn. My first life lesson as a manager has stuck with me my whole career. I vividly remember when I first entered management. I had just completed a master's degree in management, and thought I knew what kind of leadership style best fit my personality and values. I quickly learned that one leadership style does not fit all people. Some people wanted to be empowered and left alone. Some people needed clear and daily direction. Some people needed more praise than others. In general, different people excelled or responded to different styles so I quickly learned the value of situational leadership. I think a similar thing can be said about how we manage projects. As large organizations, we tend to have rigid or one-size-fits-all processes. But we managers need to listen to our project leads and do what is going to make the project excel. It is easy to say that we have a process and we must follow it, but one-size-fits-all processes can be just as ineffective as one-size-fits-all leadership. Whether you are leading people or managing projects, the key to improving your contribution is your willingness to learn.

Let me leave you with a few applicable quotes:

- A leader who won't listen when his people tell him he is going the wrong way is destined for a head-on collision.
- A leader who doesn't learn to become a better leader might as well not be one.
- A leader who doesn't learn from his mistakes will certainly repeat them.

Kevin Stamey
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Basic Articles



This issue of CROSSTALK includes a broad range of topics in order to cover the needs of various software managers. We start this month with a comparison of management approaches for traditional and agile software development methods in *Are Management Basics Affected When Using Agile Methods?* by Paul McMahon. Next, Esther Derby shares her insights from working with numerous software managers in *Becoming a Great Manager: Five Pragmatic Practices*. In *Implementing Phase Containment Effectiveness Metrics at Motorola*, Ross Seider discusses a basic practice that I believe all software processes should include. Our final theme article by Michael F. Siok, Clinton J. Whittaker, and Dr. Jeff Tian discusses how to plan the number of defects being released to the customer in *Exposing Software Field Failures*.

For those wanting to delve deeper into management mysteries, we have David Lechner's article, *Software Recapitalization Economics* that provides useful formulas to help with decisions regarding sustainment of old software. If you are a fan of Walt Lipke's articles, you will find additional insights in *Earned Schedule: An Emerging Enhancement to Earned Value Management*, which he co-authored with Kym Henderson. While this issue targets software development and acquisition management, all software practitioners can gain insight from this month's CROSSTALK.

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