



Championing Middle Managers

The Underappreciated Contributors to Business Success

By Prinny Anderson, CapPlus Senior Advisor

Earlier this month, CapPlus sponsored a workshop at the Africa Banking & Finance Conference, where I encouraged senior managers to recognize and leverage middle managers' importance to their institutions' success. Read on to learn how your middle managers can be providing the most value to your institution and how to best leverage their position to better equip them to play their essential roles. Let me know if you're interested in learning more or in hosting a training of your own!

The “middle managers” cohort differs from one institution to another, and their individual responsibilities are often unclear. They are also the least likely to receive training and development for their specific roles. This situation is unfortunate. Middle managers are keys to company success, and how companies value and support them is a major differentiator between successful and not-so-successful companies.

What makes middle management different from other levels is its unique “translator” function. Middle managers must synchronize completely and communicate effectively with both senior management – the institution’s “architects” who generate goals and strategy – and first-level employees who execute and complete tasks. Strong middle managers are the fulcrum on which the institution moves.

Goals & Results

In their role as translators, middle managers need to convert corporate objectives into meaningful guidelines and specific, measurable goals that their teams can achieve. They must receive the first-level employees' feedback, process the results, and then report back to senior management. Skilled middle managers are also able to propose adjustments to goals, processes and activities based on these results.

Policy & Regulations

Strong middle managers are capable of transforming overarching policies and compliance guidelines developed by senior management into specific policies and standards for the groups they lead. In turn, they collect feedback from branches on compliance and emerging problems, allowing them to recommend to senior managers modifications to policies and their application.

Talent & Institutional Capability

Skilled middle managers have the capacity to translate senior management's human capital strategy into action, developing all the talent in their groups from their potential successors to lower-level employees.. From their direct reports, middle managers receive input on staffing gaps, performance problems, and promotion readiness. This information gives middle managers the ability to recommend new opportunities for training and development, design and plan recruitment efforts, and make critical human capital decisions such as promotions, disciplinary actions, and terminations.

Culture & Values

Good middle managers function as the conduit for senior management's big-picture definition of institutional culture and ethics. They communicate and reinforce the standards to their teams while also serving as role models. In turn, they are able to collect positive examples and recommend rewards. Their unique insights can position them to propose additional activities to strengthen the institution's culture.

Leveraging Middle Managers' Unique Positions

Middle managers don't instinctively understand their role as translators and may not have the skills to play it well. The pay-off is high when companies invest in building managers' skills in these four essential areas. Contact CapPlus today at info@capplus.org to learn how middle manager training programs can strengthen your management team and help achieve your company goals.