MANAGEMENT CRAFT · EPISODE 02

Five areas of the craft.
All of them learnable.

Management craft is not one ability. It divides into five areas, and the role asks for all five at once.

SWIPE →

THE FRAME

Five areas. One job.

Management craft divides into five areas of work.

Professional. Business. Financial. Performance. People.

This is not a sequence and not a hierarchy. Nobody works through it in order, and no single area outranks the others.

WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS

A map. All five are live at the same time, every day the role is held.

PROFESSIONAL

You are accountable for an outcome. You must be able to assure it.

In a senior role you are not expected to be the deepest expert in the room. That is not what accountability requires. What it requires is the ability to stand behind a result and know it will hold — through your own expertise, or through a team you have built and can genuinely trust.

WHERE THE LINE SITS

The route is secondary. The assurance is not.

BUSINESS

You lead a function. You answer for where it is going.

Not just what it delivers this quarter, but the direction it is travelling in — one that serves the corporate strategy rather than competing with it. You are expected to articulate that direction, adjust it as the business moves, and advocate for it when it needs protecting. And to hold a view of where the function should be in three years, and which priorities earn investment now for value that arrives later.

> **THE TEST**
>
> **A manager who only optimises today's operation is working tactically, however senior the title.**

FINANCIAL

You hold a budget. It is part of the craft.

Knowing your numbers. Estimating and controlling them. Speaking fluently in them, in rooms where they are the language being spoken. Considering financial and commercial aspects when shaping what gets done first.

WHY IT IS NOT ADMINISTRATION

Prioritising without understanding the financial implication is not prioritising at all.

PERFORMANCE

Holding a list of KPIs is not performance management.

Making them work is. Understanding how measures interact and where improving one might negatively impact another. Choosing what will be measured this year and challenging what is proposed. Judging whether a target is genuinely stretching or comfortably safe. Reading what the numbers are saying about the function.

AND BEYOND YOUR OWN BORDER

Using all of it where functions meet, not only inside your own.

PEOPLE

Everything above is delivered through people.

Articulating a vision, they can see themselves in. Setting goals clear enough to act on. Giving feedback and receiving it without flinching. Holding people accountable. Making deliberate time for development, and deliberate time for recognition — neither happens by accident.

> **AND THE PART NOBODY VOLUNTEERS FOR**
>
> **Carrying the decisions nobody wants, including letting people go.**

THE AREAS ARE CONNECTED

Strength in one area does not compensate for weakness in another.

It surfaces inside it. Financial weakness appears as performance decisions you cannot defend. Business weakness appears as a team working hard on the wrong things. People weakness appears as professional exposure — you cannot assure an outcome through a team you have not built.

WHAT THAT MEANS IN PRACTICE

The thin area does not stay in its own column. It shows up in the work you thought you were strong at.

THE HONEST POSITION

Nobody holds all five evenly.

Being uneven is normal. Every manager is stronger in some areas than others, and the shape of that is usually set long before they took the role. Being unaware of it is the problem.

WHERE THE REAL DIFFERENCE SITS

Not between strong managers and weak ones. Between the ones who know their own shape and the ones who don't.

HOW YOU KNOW YOU ARE GOOD AT THIS

Not from the promotion. From the people.

Promotions are decided by people who may not have examined the craft themselves.

You know because people want to work with you — because the ones who used to report to you still ask your view years later, and name you when someone asks who taught them.

And because you can name your own weak area without being told. The managers who keep getting better are the ones who already know where they are thin and treat it as work still to do.

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