



**Moving to Management (Part 1)** is a very big step that I'd like to discuss with you over the next five or so issues. First off, why would you do it? Secondly, are you sure that the move is right for you? That move is not for everyone as there are a lot of things you can be trained to do but without the right attitude you can end up in a job that you both hate and even fear. I have met more than one DOM that has

informed me that he was much happier "fixing them than telling other people how to fix them".

They felt trapped like that game we played as a kid called "dodge ball" or "pig in the middle". A player about 15 to 20 feet away from you threw a ball at you which you had to dodge. The ball was then picked up by a player about the same distant but 180 degrees from the first. He proceeded to try and hit you with the ball. This went on until the thrower's ball hit you, at which time you swapped places with the thrower. One of the throwers is your upper management and the other is the employees you manage. I actually found in my middle management days that more often than not, the upper management was the harder thrower than the employees. When moving to management, unless you are right at the top, you will sometimes find yourself being "the pig in the middle" and that may not be a pleasant position to be in. A number of years ago we were doing mandated HF training for a heli-logging company that had recently promoted one of their best workers to DOM after the former one quit following a dispute with the boss. I suspect it was a quit or be fired – Do you want a friendly reference from me or me working to see you don't get another job in this industry? During a coffee break he asked if he could talk to me privately. After class he explained that he was having a very hard time with the DOM position. All of his former friends were now shunning him as if he was now their enemy and he could do nothing without his boss's blessing. He didn't know what to do and felt he wasn't suited to be a DOM even if management had nominated him while the regulatory body had approved him. I assured him he had what I believe is the most important attribute for a boss. that I'll explain later. The rest he could learn. I promised to develop a workshop that would help him. However, as of today we have never used the two-inch binder draft for a two-day "Moving to Management" workshop. The

company went bankrupt about six months after our meeting. They had been in business for 86 years. They started in 1922 and at bankruptcy were mainly heli-logging with S-61 –“Shortskys.” (Old ex military short body 61s called Sea Kings) They left over 300 employees without a job.

The following articles will be coming from the material in that workbook. But, let me start with a model that we use in our Part 2 workshop. For want of a better name, I simply call it The Management Tree Model.

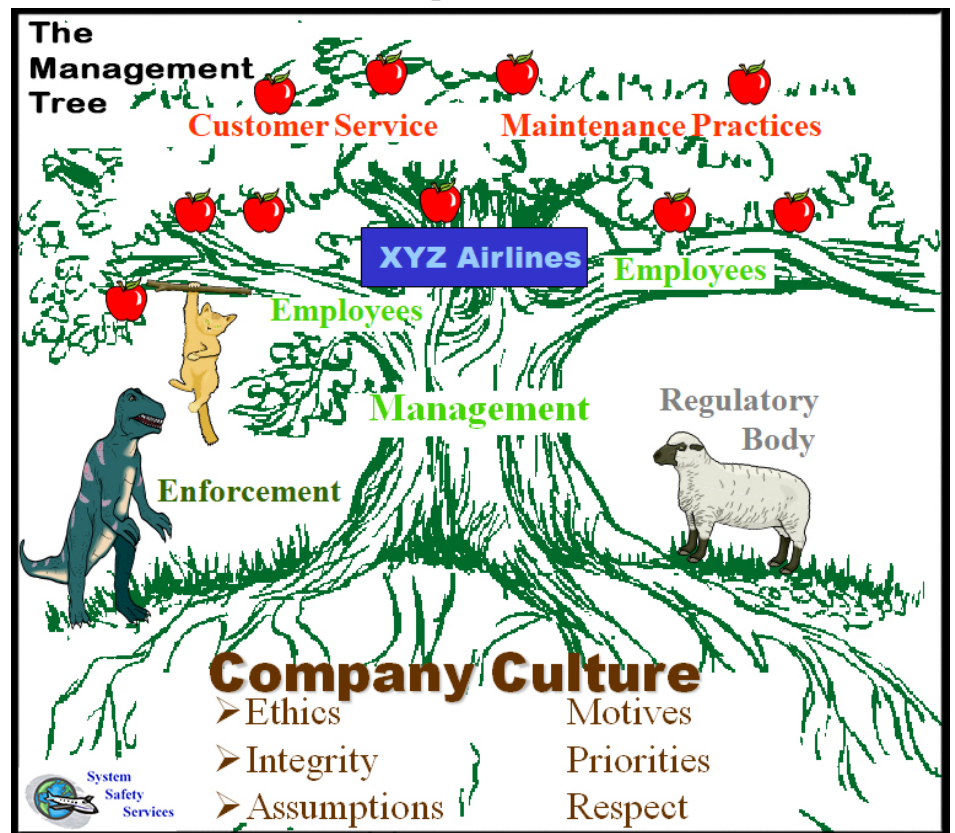
The complete company is the tree with its culture in the roots of the tree out of sight. They are what hold the tree upright come wind or storms as well as provide nourishment to the rest of the tree.

Anyone who works for the company soon knows what this culture is even if it can't be seen. This is the home of the upper management; the ones that you seldom see in a large company, but who

dictate how things are done in the organization. They control the “purse strings” and bear the responsibility for the viability and survivability of the company.

The trunk of the tree is the working management and where you will start. The purpose of this management is to support the employees above. Your function is to provide them with what they require to produce the product that makes the company money. The apples are the company product that brings in the money to support the organization.

The regulatory body (sheep) are the ones who do audits to ensure the organization is complying with current regulations. As they nibble around the company they will likely be dealing with you but have no idea about what the company culture actually is out of sight under the ground.



Then we have enforcement who are looking for anything being done that is contrary to regulations. In the past when an infraction of a regulation was discovered, it was common to blame the individual who made the infraction, (the kitten), prune it from the tree (fire him) and claim they knew nothing about it, but have now solved the problem. Today, with a SMS in place that excuse won't hold as the accountable executive is now required to put a system in place so he/she knows what is happening using a non-punitive hazard reporting system, internal audits and the like. Thus as middle management you can find yourself dodging balls and feel like you have a target on your back. This is exactly how the heli-logging DOM felt as he struggled to understand exactly how to react to everything being thrown at him.

The first thing I asked him for was his job description. He didn't have one. The previous DOM was gone so he was expected to "learn on the fly." With the company in crisis mode, he had no mentor to go to and was in an impossible situation.

Why would anyone take a thankless job that was way over his head? His response was he thought he could improve the function of the maintenance department and the pay was much better.

Each company is different but before taking that leap there are a few things to seriously contemplate.

1. Take a close look at yourself.

a) What are my strengths?

b) Do I like dealing with other people and their problems?

c) What weaknesses may I have to work on?

d) Do I have the **empathy** to care about other people and the organization?

2. Look carefully at the job description. Will you be comfortable and learn what is expected of you? Depending on the company size, if there is no job description think long and hard about if it is right for you. Sadly, there are DOMs out there that are that in the position only to satisfy the regulatory body's requirement. If that should be you, keep in mind that it is your reputation that will be on the line if the company screws up in the area that you are supposed to have responsibility for. In my opinion, our discussed DOM was a figurehead only to satisfy the regulatory body, but had no authority to make any changes.

3. Be aware there will likely be a negative change in relationship with your former fellow employees. They will likely blame you if things don't go right as you are now the face of management.
4. While the pay increase may be great, the fact you will now be salaried means you will likely find yourself working a lot more hours, especially at the beginning, for what ends up being about the same pay per hour as before but with a lot more hours and responsibility.
5. Keep in mind the old saying: the higher you go (in management) the closer the door. (being fired) You can be let go at any time with no seniority clause or union to back you up.
6. Be prepared for change. It can be difficult to make the change of managing others to do the same job that you once did. You will find yourself outside your comfort zone for awhile
7. Do not be afraid to admit that you may not have all the answers, but you'll work on getting them. Then do it.
8. Take the job if you like a challenge as there will be many to begin with.
9. Take the job if you can see yourself being part of making the company more productive and a better place to work.
10. Take the job if you feel the experience will benefit you in the future.
11. Find a mentor among the management. The right mentor who has "been there – done that" can make all the difference in the world and help prevent you from having to learn lessons the hard way
12. If you think you can or you think you can't, you're right. (Henry Ford)

The heli-logging DOM had the right attitude for the job in that he had a lot of empathy. He was concerned for the company and wanted to improve the lot of the employees. This is the number one attitude you will need if you are going to be a successful leader. He had a lot of empathy towards what was happening in the company and given the opportunity and training would have made an excellent DOM. If you get the opportunity to become a DOM give it serious thought. It can be very satisfying work and given the training and opportunity, you can make a positive difference.