

## Transcript for The Career Accelerator podcast, Episode #8: The best advice I received when I was promoted to General Manager

Welcome to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others.

Hello. In today's episode you will hear about how the best advice I received when I was promoted to General Manager can help you accelerate your career growth. I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode, we covered the importance of understanding the process your company follows to evaluate and promote employees, as well as identifying who the key players are within that system. I also invited you to communicate your career aspirations and role preferences to your boss and senior executives. I recommended that you follow these tips so that you can become the manager whom your boss and senior management seek, and perhaps even fight for, to strengthen their respective teams.

In today's episode you will hear the best advice I received when I was promoted to General Manager, and the most effective way to use it to accelerate your career growth.

Have you ever been called to your manager's office without knowing the reason? This happened to me several times. And I never got used to the uncertainty: Did I do something wrong? Did I miss a deadline? Has somebody complained about me or someone on my team?

On one of those occasions, my manager requested me to close the door. I tried to quickly decipher if he had good or bad news. As soon as I sat down, and without much small talk, he inquired me with a straight face if I was ready to pack my bags...

Of course, my first thought leapt to: "Am I being fired?" But then a huge smile came across his face, and he told me that he was promoting me to General Manager in one of the company's operations in Latin America. I remember exhaling a deep breath.... What a relief!

After thanking him for entrusting me with these new responsibilities, I asked him what the next steps were for handing my job over to my successor and getting started on my new position.

Out of the long list of activities related to this promotion, I learned that the company had an onboarding program for new General Managers. One of the activities was to get tips and insights on the job from several standing General Managers. I received lots of great tips, but the one that I remember most was: "Your number one priority should be your leadership team". "Your number one priority should be your leadership team."

At the time, this suggestion made a lot of sense, so I took it to heart, and it guided my actions throughout much of my corporate career. But does that advice still hold true for today's corporate leaders? I want to highlight three lessons I learned as a general manager and, more recently, from coaching leadership teams.

First, I learned that subject-matter expertise is a key factor when determining who to recruit for your team. I hope this sounds as obvious to you now as it did to me two and a half decades ago. This is how I interpreted the suggestion of prioritizing my leadership team. And in hindsight, this was indeed an important aptitude to look for when choosing my team members. However, I also learned over time that although subject matter expertise was a necessary factor, it was not the only criteria to consider.

Second, I also discovered that a natural tendency of team members is to operate in silos. As I covered in Episode # 3, instead of trying to align their priorities and find ways to join forces behind a common objective, managers from different areas tend to prioritize their individual objectives over the collective ones. The few managers who learn to work with and through colleagues from other areas, tend to be the ones who achieve better results and accelerate their career growth. Unfortunately, now, as a leadership team coach, I continue to see this dysfunctional behavior across different geographies and industries. This will be the subject of one or more future episodes.

The third lesson I learned, is that a necessary complement to subject-matter expertise is to show the ability and desire to work effectively with others. I think that during my corporate years I had “a gut feeling” for the qualities required to work as a team. However, a few years ago, I had a big AHA moment when I read the book “The Ideal Team Player”, written by best-selling author Patrick Lencioni. In it, the author outlines three virtues displayed by great team players: humble, hungry and people-smart.

Lencioni defines HUMBLE as a lack of excessive ego or concerns about status. Humble people compliment others without hesitation and are not afraid of admitting their mistakes.

He describes HUNGRY as a virtue displayed by those who are always looking for more, more things to do, more things to learn. They don’t need to be pushed by a manager to work harder because they are self-motivated and diligent. They feel accountable to the success of the team.

Lastly, PEOPLE-SMART team players display common sense about people. They generally understand the feelings of others during meetings and interactions. They show empathy, good judgment and intuition regarding the impact of their words and actions on others.

I don’t think this kind of wisdom about the virtues of a strong team player was broadly understood and available when I was entering the corporate world in the 80s, or when I was promoted to general manager in the 90s. In hindsight, when I heard the suggestion: “Your number one priority should be your leadership team,” those were some great words of wisdom. But what I didn’t realize was that both sides of the equation were equally important.

If you value teamwork, and I hope you do, look at both sides of the equation when hiring and firing people: subject-matter expertise and team playing skills. If you factor in these two attributes, you will be able to deliver better results through your team members.

In fact, why don’t you run a quick assessment of where each member from your team stands on the three virtues of the ideal team player? You may have an AHA moment when you discover that

one or more of them rate low in at least one of these areas. Once you have this knowledge, it's a golden opportunity to share it with them, so they can work on growing in these areas.

But don't stop there: This is a good time to also run a self-assessment on your own ideal team player virtues. You may have a second AHA moment discovering your own growth potential in at least one of these areas.

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. In the next one, I will talk about how to generate trust between the people on your team and increase their capacity to deliver results.

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This is coach Percy Cannon, working to **help you make the rest of your life...the best of your life®**.

Thank you for listening to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others. Stay tuned for our next episode!

#### Percy's BIO

Percy provides corporate managers and leadership teams with customized coaching programs that help them develop the skills and capabilities needed to significantly increase their business results through others and accelerate their career growth.

Percy is an "alumnus" from three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, with whom he spent close to three decades.

Since 2011 he has been helping corporate executives, managers and employees **make the rest of their life...the best of their life®**.

Percy has worked in the United States and across several countries in Latin America as an Executive Coach, Leadership Team Consultant and Keynote Speaker, serving companies such as Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Citibank, Tiffany & Avianca.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC" and certified as a "Go-Giver" speaker & coach.

He published his first book in 2012-13 in English (*The Business Apostolate: Insights to Define and Achieve Your Mission in Life*) and in Spanish (*El Negocio Más Grande de su Vida*).

Percy is a Consulting Partner with Grupo Azimuth and the Chapter Director for the COO Forum in Southeast Florida.

He has lived in 9 different cities and 5 countries, and speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese fluently.

Percy is married, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren, and is a passionate runner & reader.

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