

TOP CAREERS



YOU ARE A FRESH, ambitious graduate embarking on your career with designs to become a manager in due course. To be successful in your quest, you must understand the role and the qualities you'll need to demonstrate you are worthy of it.

Ambition needs to be tempered by humility and a strong desire to learn, recommends Joyce Soo, managing director of executive search firm Bó Lè Associates. "Vocal announcements that you wish to be elevated are unnecessary. Achievements speak louder than words."

There are a number of traits in terms of both professional performance and personal behaviour which an employee must display to show he has management potential.

"Behave like a manager from the very first day," suggests Tore Nedregaard, chairman of Fjell Global Executive Search. "Demonstrate integrity and loyalty, communicate efficiently and dress like a manager."

Leaders are easily spotted, says Neil Satterwhite, founder and chief executive officer of employment services company Tiger Consulting Asia, adding courage, honesty, individuality,



forthrightness and presence to the list of managerial attributes.

A manager oversees and directs, explains Soo. He must inspire confidence in his team while showing that he can manage and delegate tasks clearly and effectively. Results must be consistently achieved and he must go beyond set goals. "Most importantly, he must demonstrate he can adapt to change, think out of the box and show responsibility and accountability when dealing with tasks," she adds.

To achieve this, strong communication as well as interpersonal skills are musts. The manager must be able to mentor and coach his team.



Timetable for growth

How long it takes to become a manager will depend on the employee's contributions and his professional and personal behaviour.

Satterwhite says a managerial candidate typically becomes an informal manager first, meaning that people will begin to recognise him as a leader and start asking him for direction. "This only happens through hard work and doing more than others. Then he'll be recognised by management to have leadership qualities and a formal promotion will follow."

If you perform well, you can expect to be a junior manager within five to ten years, says Nedregard, noting that this will vary with the size and culture of the company.

Companies typically have three

managerial levels, explains Soo. Front-line managers direct daily operations and ensure the department functions properly. Mid-level managers represent their department to top management, acting as coordinators and implementing the leadership's policies

and goals. Other duties will include staff evaluation, report preparation and forward planning. The highest management grade is the executive level and includes directors who formulate strategic plans and establish long-term goals and initiatives.

Whilst you need to be proactive and take a high degree of ownership of your career momentum, a good company will provide numerous channels and opportunities for employees to develop their career and grow with the business.

Soo lists orientation workshops, training seminars, education incentive schemes, formal on-the-job training and performance reviews as structures that help the employee on his upward journey.

"There must be a good coaching programme designed specifically for managers," says Nedregard. "Managing people is very challenging and all managers need continuous feedback and guidance."

Companies should also have systems to encourage individuality and creativity, adds Satterwhite. "This includes a policy to encourage people to speak up without fear of rejection or humiliation, and also to build people rather than bruise them."