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Do Managers Matter in an Organization?

There seems to be a general discussion in agile circles about whether managers matter. Early agile discussions seemed to be actively hostile to management, stating that you do not need anything like a management - just have self-empowered Teams.

What was interesting to me was that every agile transformation I was involved in was large enough that there was significant management structure in place, and that structure could either be an activist participant in the success of the transformation, or an active impediment to adoption. From my perspective it was always easier to engage with management to ensure good outcomes.

It turns out that others thought that managers might not be needed in an organization. “Google hasn’t always properly appreciated management. In 2002, Google ran an uncontrolled “experiment” by simply getting rid of all managers. It didn’t go well. So in 2008 a team of researchers set out to prove what some at Google suspected - that managers don’t matter. But very quickly the team discovered quite the opposite. Managers matter a lot.” More ideas can be found at [Google’s Research on the Role of Management (Project Oxygen)](https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/the-evolution-of-project-oxygen/)

While this research is applicable to Google’s context, this research helped confirm for me that there is a role for management in general. The Development Manager approach is one potential approach. The research also identified “Good Manager Behaviors” at Google:

1. Is a good coach
2. Empowers the Team and does not micro-manage
3. Creates an inclusive Team environment, showing concern for success and well-being
4. Is productive and results oriented
5. Is a good communicator - listens and shares information
6. Supports career development and discusses performance
7. Has a clear vision / strategy for the Team
8. Has key technical skills to help advise the Team
9. Collaborates across Google
10. Is a strong decision maker

Although some do not apply (eg “collaborate across Google”) these behaviors line up well against the characteristics we’ve identified for Development Managers.

DevelopmentManager, FAQ, people, managers, organization, structure

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