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What are the Characteristics of a Great Development Manager?

Clearly selecting the right people to be a Development Manager is critical. What kinds of people should we look for? Great Development Managers exhibit the following characteristics. They are:

- Lean-agile Leader: The Development Manager must “walk” the role of a lean-agile servant leader. The summary from SAFe help understand this. Development Managers must be seen to be leading the change, to emphasize lifelong learning, to help inspire and align with mission, to help minimize the number of constraints in the organization that get in the way of delivering value (especially the ones that have built up over time), to help decentralize decision making, and to unlock the intrinsic motivation of knowledge workers.
- Trusted: Have you ever worked with someone who you have implicitly trusted? You know that in everything they say and do, no matter how small, they are consistent, open, and honest, in their approach and are deserving of the trust you place in them. To be effective, Development Managers must to be worthy of trust.
- Inspiring: In many ways Development Managers need to treat their people like they are a group of volunteers. To keep a volunteer group in place usually requires a common, understandable and relatable vision, and an engagement approach that truly respects the value of the knowledge worker’s opinions.
- Likable: We need our people to want to discuss things with their Development Managers so they can be effective. This means there should be no personal barriers to having a discussion which means that the Development Manager must be likable. You want people to go out of their way to have a discussion with the Development Manager, not just because it is useful, or part of the process, but because they want to.
- All about their people: The Development Manager needs to put the interests of their people first and, in particular, their people’s interests over the interests of the Development Manager.
- Properly blunt: The Development Manager will sometimes need to discuss difficult subjects with their people. Perhaps there is something that needs to be addressed to help a team, or perhaps there are issues associated with individual behaviors that need to be addressed, but whatever the case, sometimes things need to be said.
- Local: The Development Manager needs to be physically located with the people who report to them as much as possible. Let’s face it, whereas traditional managers handled task assignment to their subordinates and so should have a pretty good handle on what the person is doing, this is not the case with the Development Manager and so they should be co-located as much as possible. This will also help the Development Manager work cultural issues in multi-nationalorganizations, and work local issues (e.g. expectations, legal issues, and soon).

Want to Know More?

- Part of a series:
  - What Are The Characteristics of a Great Product Owner?

- What Are The Characteristics of a Great Scrum Master?
- What Are The Characteristics of a Great Manager?
- What Are The Characteristics of a Great Development Manager?
- What Are The Characteristics of a Great Agile Coach?

FAQ, organization, managers, structure, people, executive, developmentmanager

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Last update: **2020/06/04 12:09**