

Managing Methodically

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Management is an exhilarating profession. Planning, organizing, controlling and leading to reach our goals provides a feeling of confidence and competency. It's euphoric, just like Superman leaping from a tall building with a single bound; we can experience that same feeling of power when we manage methodically.

If you know how to manage, it's rewarding. If you do *not* know how to manage, it's torture! Managing a child care center requires the director to have a vast amount of management skills to create a system that supports the commitment to quality. Gaining knowledge is so critical to our success that scripture explains it very clear:

"My people are destroyed from the lack of knowledge."
Hosea 4:6



My prayer is that through this article your skills will increase, and you will grow professionally. My passion is helping you gain new knowledge that will lead to an incredible career in child care management.

Management is defined as the person or persons controlling and directing the affairs of a business, institution, etc. *Dictionary.com*

For the past 20 years, I have crisscrossed America providing management training specifically designed for leaders in child care - the director. My training specialty is teaching directors how to manage the big people in the centers; those people 'three feet and over' that keep us on our knees.

Staff management is one of the five core competencies a director needs to be proficient in order to implement excellent service and manage masterfully. Throughout the next few issues, I'll be sharing four competencies including: Fiscal (Money) Management, Customer (Parent) Management, Client (Children) Management, and Operational (Facility) Management.

Managing staff or human resources is like herding cats unless you know the fundamentals in the employment relationship.

- Center Staffing – is a mechanical or administrative process of employment including- recruiting, hiring, orientating, evaluating and separating employment.

- Staff Supervision – is the interpersonal interactions with employees. Directors skills should include how to observe, instruct, coach, guide, and give feedback to correct and motivate.
- Staff Relations- is another interpersonal skill level knowing how to communicate effectively, understanding staff's motivational needs to increase retention, and how to build productive teams.
- Fiduciary Responsibilities- are mechanical processes that have serious consequences if ignored. These are executing center policies and procedures, and complying with state and federal employment laws.

Child care directors manage a unique service – a human service educational business through the skill and competency of teachers and support staff. Directors create the center's culture; cast a vision, inspire followers and manage the rest.

Management requires a vast amount of skills. Policies and procedures, curriculum, income and expenses, human resource functions, enrollment, parents, grounds and facilities, along with state and federal responsibilities all fall to the person in charge of making the center a success.

Our challenge? Most directors, highly skilled in child development, have evolved into that key position with practically no formal education or professional development training in business management, which leads to a gap.

The results? Many directors may feel less confident and competent to manage effectively, turnover is higher than teachers, and burnout is inevitable. After training thousands, I have concluded, there are two areas where more training needs to be gained - staff and money management.

The solution?

Be encouraged knowing you are not alone. Jesus said He would never leave us or forsake us.

1. Think about the problems you are having in the center.
2. Make a list and note what core competency it seems to fit within.
3. Look for training in the specific subject matter.
4. Look up what the Scripture says about your problem- I use www.biblegateway.com to search topics- it's a great resource.
5. Then take action to get that instruction you lack, and put it into place through a methodical or orderly plan to manage the center efficiently.

What I've Learned in 33 years of Child Care Management

1. Being respected is much better than being liked, and that respect is earned from being consistently honest, fair, and trustworthy with all employees.
2. Being courageous and not afraid to manage when it's unpleasant.

3. Doing what is right for the children when it's in conflict with staff performance.
4. Extending grace - everyone has a tough (bad) day.
5. Think before speaking or promising -- always prevents BIG problems.
6. Listening requires closed lips😊
7. Knowing that even damaged relations can be repaired with a sincere apology.
8. Striving to understand what is being said before taking action.
9. Smiling when we don't want to.
10. Being a self-motivator.
11. Knowing managing people is an art ~ it is beautiful when it's done right.
12. Never looking to staff for approval.
13. Never reacting or making a decision in emotion.
14. Always remembering each staff member is a gift, not a curse.

Growing as a professional child care director requires skill, execution, and courage to get the training you need. Your position is vital to the people you serve. Please make the investment in yourself- take the time – spend the money- do whatever it takes to get what you need to experience that joyful life in managing children's care.