BUSINESS MANAGERS MANAGEMENT

Should all confirmed Business Managers be developed towards management?

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Promoting an excellent Business Manager to management is not always a natural progression. Without a clarified role or tested skills, the company risks losing a good operative and weakening its juniors.

Making an excellent Business Manager a manager of young BMs seems like a natural promotion. Sometimes, it's a very good decision. It's also one of the most classic ways to lose an excellent operative and create a struggling supervisor.

In many IT services companies and consulting firms, the trajectory seems predetermined. The Business Manager starts as a junior, becomes confirmed when he masters his activity, and then Senior when he takes on one or more young BMs.

The journey is simple to explain. It provides a visible perspective for the teams and allows the company to create management relays without always looking for them outside. On paper, everything fits perfectly: more experience, therefore more responsibilities.

But this logic becomes risky when it turns into an automatism.

A confirmed Business Manager does not become Senior because he has waited long enough, because he exceeded his goals, or because he absolutely needs to be motivated again. He becomes one when he is capable — and willing — to change registers.

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Becoming a Senior does not mean doing more of the same job. It means taking on a different part of the job.

Why this promotion seems so logical

Promoting a good confirmed to management meets several legitimate expectations. For the Business Manager, the title materializes his progression and recognizes the path traveled. For his management, it provides a clear answer to a recurring question: how to give perspectives to the best without upsetting the entire organization?

The solution also seems economical. The confirmed already knows the company, its offerings, its clients, its habits, and its demands. He benefits from immediate credibility with juniors. He can show how to prepare a prospecting, qualify a need, conduct an interview, negotiate a deal, or handle a delicate situation with a consultant.

In some cases, this progression works very well. A Business Manager enjoys passing on knowledge, agrees to slow down to explain, knows how to observe a situation without immediately taking control, and finds satisfaction in the progression of another. The Senior function then becomes a coherent extension of his influence.

The problem is not about promoting confirmed Business Managers. It is about considering that their past performance is enough to predict their ability to supervise.

Operational performance does not automatically predict managerial performance

A good confirmed Business Manager knows how to develop a portfolio, secure relationships, manage a profit center, and advance multiple files simultaneously. He has built reflexes. He quickly recognizes situations and often knows what to do before even formalizing his reasoning.

However, supervising a young BM requires almost the opposite. You have to make that reasoning visible, break down a practice that has become intuitive, let the other try and accept that they will not go as fast or exactly in the same direction.

Thomas, for example, regularly achieves very good results in prospecting. He listens to his interlocutor, naturally bounces back, and finds the right angle without needing a script. When a junior accompanies him, Thomas readily tells him: "Be natural, listen, and adapt." The advice is sincere. It is also unusable for someone who does not yet have his automatisms.

To help the junior progress, Thomas must be able to explain what he listens to, the signals he identifies, the moment he decides to delve into a subject, and why he dismisses another path. His know-how is no longer enough. He must know how to transform it into learning.

Knowing how to do creates legitimacy. Knowing how to make someone else do requires an additional skill.

The trap of the Senior doing things in others' stead

When an excellent operative takes charge of a junior, his first instinct is often to help. He rephrases the email, takes over the call, corrects the proposal, intervenes in the negotiation, or directly resolves the situation with the client.

In the short term, the result is effective. The file progresses, and the risk decreases. The Senior even proves his worth, as he solves what resisted the junior.

But if this procedure repeats, the junior mostly learns that in case of difficulty, someone more experienced will take over. The Senior becomes the gateway for all sensitive decisions. His schedule fills up, his own perimeter slows down, and the autonomy he was supposed to build never arrives.

Supervising thus requires arbitrating between several postures. Sometimes, a method needs to be transmitted. Sometimes, questioning to allow the junior to build their own response. Sometimes, working with them. And in certain situations, temporarily taking control because the client or human stakes require it.

The difficulty is not knowing these postures. It consists in choosing the right one at the right time. A Senior who intervenes too early creates dependency. One who never intervenes in the name of autonomy lets the junior get bogged down. One who adapts his level of support genuinely makes progress.

Promoting to reward is a bad idea

The promotion to a Senior role is sometimes used to recognize results, retain a Business Manager targeted by the market, or give new impetus to someone who seems to be flagging. The logic seems generous: he has proven himself, he deserves to move to the next level.

But a function is not a medal. It entails responsibilities that exist independently of the recognition the company wishes to grant.

Promoting a collaborator to remotivate him is even more fragile. The novelty of the title can produce a renewed energy for a few weeks. Then the daily reality of the role appears: following a junior, taking over situations, giving difficult feedback, arbitrating priorities, reporting results that no longer depend solely on oneself.

If the desire to pass on and make progress did not exist initially, the promotion adds a constraint to an already weakened motivation. It does not solve the initial problem.

Recognition can take other forms: appropriate compensation, a more interesting perimeter, more complex accounts, participation in transversal subjects, or expanded autonomy. Systematically transforming recognition into hierarchical responsibility amounts to making the reward pay by a change of profession.

A promotion granted for the wrong reasons does not become a good decision because the title is rewarding.

What the company loses when it makes a mistake

The first loss concerns the promoted person. They find themselves evaluated on skills they have not yet built or never wished to exercise. They can quickly doubt themselves when they excelled in their previous role.

The second concerns the field. The organization takes part of its operational energy away from one of its best Business Managers. His portfolio receives less attention, clients see him less, and some deals progress more slowly. If he continues to produce as much while supervising, the overload simply appears elsewhere.

The third concerns the juniors assigned to the new Senior. They need a framework, understandable feedback, and regular support. They sometimes receive in its stead quick advice, corrections, or emergency interventions from a Senior first absorbed by his own objectives.

Finally, the company sends an implicit message to all its confirmed: to continue progressing, one must eventually supervise. The one who wishes to stay close to clients and commercial development understands that their choice will be interpreted as a lack of ambition.

By valuing a single trajectory too much, the organization pushes some collaborators towards a role that does not suit them and weakens those who could have built a sustainable career in the field.

Senior, manager, and excellent confirmed are not synonyms

Part of the confusion comes from the words. In some companies, "Senior" simply designates a very autonomous Business Manager capable of managing a large perimeter. In others, the title involves supervising juniors. Elsewhere, it mixes commercial performance, reference role, training, decision validation, and hierarchical responsibility.

As long as the role remains vague, everyone projects their own definition. The leader imagines a management relay. The confirmed expects recognition for his performance. The junior hopes for daily support. Three different expectations are locked into the same title.

Before choosing a person, the organization must therefore describe the role. What decisions does the Senior make? What is he responsible for in the juniors' progression? What part of his time remains dedicated to his own perimeter? On what results will he be evaluated? What is under his responsibility, his manager's, and support functions'?

For example, asking a Senior to supervise two juniors while keeping exactly his previous commercial objectives does not constitute a clearly defined promotion. It's an addition of responsibilities. The risk is predictable: when an arbitration arises, his own figures will take precedence over time spent advancing others.

If the Senior role does not state what changes in responsibilities, decisions, and available time, it does not describe a job. It only describes a status.

Not all progressions must lead to management

A solid career path should allow a Business Manager to progress without being forced to become a supervisor. This does not mean immobilizing the confirmed in the same role. It means recognizing multiple forms of value.

A confirmed can take charge of more complex accounts, sensitive negotiations, or larger perimeters. He can become a reference in a practice, contribute to structuring an offering, occasionally work on difficult cases, or share certain skills without ensuring the continuous management of a junior.

This trajectory maintains proximity with the field and values what makes it strong. It can be as demanding, recognized, and rewarding as a management trajectory.

In parallel, the managerial path should be offered to those who show a genuine desire to make others progress and who display initial necessary abilities: ability to explain, quality of listening, patience, requirements, ability to provide useful feedback, and ability to arbitrate without systematically resuming production.

The two paths can cross. An excellent confirmed can test a supervisory responsibility before choosing. A Senior can retain a reasonable operational perimeter to remain credible and connected to the job. But neither path should be presented as the superior version of the other.

Testing the role before granting the title

Declared desire is no more sufficient than past performance. The most reliable way to evaluate a progression is to put the confirmed in a limited perimeter situation.

He can accompany a junior in preparing a meeting, observe a call then conduct a debrief, help structure a week, or work with him on a specific difficulty. The manager then observes less the immediate result than the way the confirmed proceeds.

Does he ask questions before giving his answer? Can he explain his reasoning? Does he give precise feedback without devaluing? Does he leave room for the junior? Does he identify the moment to intervene? Does he accept that the other's progress is slower than his execution?

These situations provide much more useful evidence than an interview in which the confirmed explains that he likes to transmit. They also allow the collaborator to discover the reality of the role before committing to it.

If the trial is conclusive, the company can gradually build up the increase in responsibility with explicit expectations and support for the future Senior. Knowing that one must help others progress does not mean immediately knowing how to go about it.

The question is not: who deserves to be Senior? It is: what responsibilities does the organization need, and who can assume them?

>Creating a solid path begins by accepting that not everyone will enter it

Thus, not all confirmed Business Managers need to evolve into management roles. Some do not want to. Others do not yet have the skills. Others bring more value to the company by staying very active in the field.

This finding is not devaluing. It becomes so only if the organization reserves the titles, recognition, and raises for those who take a team.

A coherent progression policy begins by defining roles before naming people. It distinguishes operational excellence from the ability to supervise. It allows experimenting with responsibilities before confirming the promotion. And it supports those who genuinely choose this change of register.

Seniority is not a right. It is also not a reward for past services. It is a function, with specific responsibilities and expected skills.

It's not by letting all good confirmed enter that one builds a solid career path. It's by giving each a trajectory in which their progression does not force them to abandon what they do best.