

## *Preventing Derailment: What to Do Before It's Too Late*

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Many new managers rely too heavily on the technical or problem-solving strengths that have propelled them upward and fail to understand that new skills are required to continue to be effective as managers. The problem arises for both individual and organizational reasons and results in many managers failing to make the transitions required to deal with the increasing complexity they face. When this happens, many managers whose careers have been full of promise stumble and derail.

### **Executive Summary**

Many of the strengths that lead high-potential managers to early promotions become weaknesses and can lead to failure. Many new managers, for example, rely too heavily on the technical or problem-solving strengths that have propelled them upward and fail to understand the interdependence required, or the diversity of what they must cope with, in order to continue to be effective as managers.

The problem arises for both individual and organizational reasons and results in many managers failing to make the transitions required to deal with the increasing complexity they face. Sometimes those managers derail.

Derailment is neither topping out nor opting out nor not winning a promotion each time one is available. It is reserved for that group of fast-track managers who want to go on, who are slated to go on, but who are knocked off the track. Such managers are demoted, sidelined early, or fired.

Much derailment is an organizational and a human waste that is largely preventable. By implementing effective learning practices in management roles the loss can be stemmed. Those practices can be put in place by individuals or by organizations. When managers run into trouble they can look for ways to shore up their leadership capabilities by assessing their strengths and weaknesses and by examining the skills necessary for success in their current position and for positions higher in the organization. More systematic development in organizations can help these managers by providing developmental opportunities for building a portfolio of skills that can avoid the derailment trap.