

Good Management Is Predictive Management Not Reactive Management

By [F. John Reh](#)

Many managers believe that their job is to resolve problems that arise. While that is true, it is only the lesser part of the job. More importantly, a manager's job is to prevent problems. This is the difference between reactive management, which solves problems as they occur, and predictive management, which tries to prevent many problems from arising in the first place.

Reactive Management

Reactive management deals with problems as they come up. It is a management style that is much admired for its ability to quickly get the resources back into production, whether those resources are machines or people. If you are good at reactive management, you are:

- Decisive and able to act quickly,
- Able to find the root cause of events,
- Creative and able to develop many solutions,
- Innovative and able to find new ways to solve problems, and
- Calm and in control in the midst of a "crisis".

Someone who is good at reactive management is able to remain calm, quickly analyze the problem, and find its root cause. Rather than getting lost in the symptoms, they are able to think up many possible solutions, some proven and some new, and select the best choice. They are equally quick at implementing the solution to resolve the problem.

A reactive management style clearly is a desirable skill set for a manager to have. By quickly solving problems they are able to get the people and/or machine quickly back to work and productive again. However, it's not the best style. Managers should concentrate on improving their ability in predictive management as well.

Predictive Management

Predictive management focuses on reducing the number of problems that require reactive management. The more problems that can be prevented through predictive management, the fewer problems will need to be solved through reactive management. If you are good at predictive management, you are:

- Thoughtful and analytic,
- Not likely to go chasing after the current panic,
- More aware of the important than the merely urgent issues,
- Able to identify patterns in data and patterns of failures,
- More focused on "why" did something go wrong, rather than "what" can be done to fix it, and
- Able to keep the big picture in mind when working through the details.

Someone who is good at predictive management is sufficiently detached that they can identify the conditions that lead to certain problems and can implement procedures to reduce or eliminate the problems. Rather than being concerned about the immediate problem, they are able to relate current conditions to earlier information and predict when problems might arise.

A predictive management style is an important ability for a manager to have. The more problems that can be prevented through predictive management, the fewer resources will need to be spent on reacting to problems that have arisen. Predictive management does not replace reactive management, but it reduces the need for it.

Getting Better At Predictive Management

How does a manager get better at predictive management? The best way is practice. Focus some time every day on predictive management and on developing the skills listed above. Here's an example of practicing the predictive management behaviors so you can get better at it.

- Schedule a meeting with yourself so you can block out a half hour of time. [li[Close your door. Set your phone on do-not-disturb. Turn off your cell phone and pager.
- Pick the problem that has been the biggest headache for your organization. Then allow yourself to just think about it.
 - When did it happen most recently?
 - What caused it?
 - What warnings or indicators did we have before it happened?
 - What did we do to fix it?
 - What could we have done to prevent it?
 - What can I do now to reduce the chances of it happening again?
- Start monitoring the warning signs you noted above.
- When those signs next appear, apply the previous solution before the problem gets big. [li[Evaluate the results and adjust as needed.

The more you practice predictive management the better you will be at it. You will still need your ability in reactive management, but just not as much. Your resources will be used more on getting things done than on fixing problems and you'll have more time to think about and prevent more problems from arising.



[F. John Reh](#)

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