

10  
MINUTE  
MANAGERCONOR  
HANNAWAY

ten minute | manager

# In praise of hierarchy

**Conor Hannaway** examines what happens when a senior manager can't do her own job because she is too busy doing the jobs of other managers

"You're looking pretty pleased with yourself. Has the cat got hold of the cream?" Hugh McGeahon had known Gemma Boyce, Director of Nursing since he arrived in St. Clarence's as Finance Manager three years ago. She was brilliant clinically and her staff loved her even though she had a reputation for running a tight ship. He knew that she had been up to something and he decided to get to the bottom of it.

Gemma told him what had happened. "I think I have every reason to be happy. Thankfully we have little trouble with absenteeism here in Clarence's but you can't be too careful. I've had my eye on one of the new nurses who transferred over from our friends in St Blaise's and I caught her good and proper. Luckily, she's still on probation and we're still in a position to do something about it. Good eh?" Hugh McGeahon didn't reply.

"I've got a feeling you are about to rain on my parade, aren't you? What's the matter? What have I done wrong this time?" She was used to his little chastisements. She called it her therapy. "I thought you would be pleased that we kept absenteeism under control."

"It is good, really good." Hugh conceded. "But tell me who is the 'we' who are keeping absenteeism under control?" "Nursing", she said. "Who in Nursing?" Hugh asked. "Well I don't know what you are getting at but if you must know,

Jennifer in my office runs the reports and I meet with the nurses to do the business." "What about the CNMs?", Hugh asked, "Don't they have a role in it". "Oh, they're too inexperienced. Tell you the truth, they'd be eaten alive. I have to do it and it works well. I have heard more excuses than a TV Licence Inspector and they are not going to pull the wool over my eyes".

"You missed the budget review meeting this morning and guess who had to fight your corner or the Pain Clinic would have been cut." "Thanks" she said. "At least you know I wasn't wasting my time." "No, you were wasting my time and the time of the CNMs. Look, I don't mean to be harsh but the starting point for all teams, including management teams, is that everyone does their own job as well as being part of the team. You couldn't do your job because you were too busy doing someone else's job. They in turn fail

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to develop the skills and become disempowered or disillusioned or both. This problem is not about a failure to delegate. It's worse than that. You actually took on the role of one of your subordinates. Have a look at the nursing management competencies which the OHM developed a couple of years ago. I still have the book of management competencies and use it to manage my staff and to keep an eye on areas for focus at each level of the organisation."

Gemma responded in her usual comprehensive way. She discovered that at each level in the organisation that managers should understand what their role is and how it values. Front-line managers are team leaders and their work is highly operational. Middle managers ought to focus on systems, monitoring performance, distribution of resources and relations with other parts of the organisation. Up top, managers should spend their time developing strategies and business plans, communicating at an organisational level and managing change. They need to make an impact at senior management team level. She knew that there was a job to be done, not only for herself, but also with her nurse managers to become a properly functioning management unit in which everyone knew what they had to do. **HM**

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