


It's time to check your management style – to validate why not to get rid of management

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By Sebastian Radics



Short before 2013 ends it's a good time to gather feedback on how management is doing. Seeing management as the servant for the teams – the teams are the ones to ask. The following provides a suggestion for a 20 question survey.

Heya Luis – this is to validate why not to get rid of management 😊

A collection of questions for the survey

All questions can be answered with 4 simple possibilities

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly agree

20 questions for your management

Italics below the questions are some hints what this questions is about and why it makes sense to ask it.

1. Management gives team members a clear picture of the direction (vision, mission, strategy) the company is headed
I guess there is a vision – but is it really visible and used in your company?
2. I am satisfied with the strategy direction of the company
Management gets a feedback if a buy in for the strategy by the employees is really given. Maybe it's time to foster more direct involvement
3. I understand how my work contributes to the company's overall goals and strategy
It's important to know your own contribution to check if it's aligned with the strategy and direction the company would like to go.

4. Management provides me a regular progress overview
Is management communicating about progress in their tasks? Maybe it's using Scrum or Kanban too and you already have full visibility – if not – how do you know what your management is working on?
5. Management communicates clearly, accurately and timely
As communication is one of the most important topics – management has to be an example and guide for all. Beside a clear understandable communication it must be accurate and in time to be really useful.
6. Management is aware of the problems we face in our jobs
Is management involved in your daily life? Does it know what you're doing and what problems occur. If not – how can it really help you ensuring a productive environment.
7. Management is available for questions and advice
Does your management show up in your working environment? Can you directly go there and clarify topics? Do you get valuable input and does it make sense to ask?
8. Management's tasks and responsibilities are transparent
Do you know who does what in management? Or do you have to invite and crosscheck always with many participants from management? For being efficient it's important to have transparency about your management's tasks and responsibilities.
9. Management resolves impediments in a timely manner
One of the most important tasks for management is to help all teams resolving impediments. Is your management able to solve them fast so that you don't get blocked?
10. My job makes good use of my skills and abilities
Management can/should help you using your skills and abilities. Are there enough channels and possibilities to bring it in?
11. Management actively acts on improving the quality
Striving for quality is one of the non negotiable parts in software development. But often managements build pressure on quality (not now, let's deliver it ... you can fix it later...). Is your management an active supporter for building quality in right in the beginning.
12. I'm satisfied with my work-life balance
Long running over pacing, too many over hours, all time most important projects ... Management is there to help avoiding these situations.
13. I am able to have an open communication with managers
Trust – level one to reach in teams. A trustworthy management simplifies a lot and avoids endless politics.
14. Mistakes are seen and treated as learning opportunities
Learning and improvement needs an environment where failing is allowed and seen as an opportunity to learn. Punishments and penalties for mistakes don't help and have to be avoided by management.

15. I am satisfied with my involvement in decisions that affect my work
Does your management make all decisions with informing you afterwards and having you not directly involved. Time to raise your concerns and think about more consensus driven decisions and the subsidiarity principle.
16. The decision making process is lightweight and visible
Are decisions taken by a visible decision making process. Is the process fast or a stop the world for some weeks monster?
17. A possible career path is transparent so that I can properly align my career development steps
Do I know where to grow and how to align it with my companies direction?
18. I am satisfied with the way management provides recognition for a good job
Does management provide feedback and celebrates success in projects with you? Are we fighting together?
19. I am working in an innovative environment
Can we try new things? Are we working with experiments? Are ideas converted to implementations.
20. Management avoids too much context switching
Multitasking does not support flow that well. Having many projects in parallel and on top additional not project related tasks and responsibilities – a situation management can step in to help streamlining and keeping focus.

Conducting the survey

The survey should support an anonymized participation – this way you can be sure that people don't optimize the answers to please management.

Provide enough, but not too much time – I suggest one week to participate. This provides the necessary sense of urgency and supports short term absences. And – you can still run it this year 😊

Share the survey results with all possible participants, in time after closing it.

Using the results – it's not about finding who answers what and how – it's about having a really valuable input for improvements in your way of management.

How to work with the results

The survey questions touch a high level perspective on different management topics. It does not differentiate all detailed management levels and tries to keep a balance between a fast to answer survey and providing enough input for follow ups.

A survey without real actions afterwards does not really make that much sense and you loose the opportunity for the next feedback session very likely.

Suggestion is to analyze the results in your management circle in time and come up with actions solving the most pressing and obvious problems. To generate more insight – you can ask your ScrumMasters to gather more detailed information about a problem area.

Maybe it's a good time to start sharing your progress and activities already and ensure proper involvement.

Consider – setting up the survey (via Google, SurveyMonkey or other free survey providers) is a matter of some hours. Running the survey is done fast. It's up to you to

use this easy and lightweight possibility to put some facts beside your gut feeling about how management is doing.

Have fun and I would be really interested in how it was working for you?