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## **Chapter V**

# **People Management**

People management is a really complex activity that is focused mainly on problem solving and team motivation. Problem solving is a typical daily activity of each manager that has responsibility over a group of people, since people often have problems that also can impact daily work activities. Often, the solution of a problem can solve a cascaded set of problems that are related to the solved one, increasing the quality of life and the chances of success of the project.

Sometimes, problems are not real problems but are related to a person's low level of satisfaction. These problems can be solved quite easily by motivating people. In this chapter, different manners of motivating people are presented.

The success of people management is bounded also to the instrument you use to face work organization and task assignment. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to such instruments.

## Values

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The basic values that must be considered for successfully managing people are communication and feedback. The reason is very simple, since communication always must be used, and you must receive feedback from both your manager and from the people you are managing in order to have a clear understanding of how well you are covering your role.

People management is mainly a psychological activity (Cockburn, 1996). Obviously, I do not want to cover management aspects from that complex point of view but only to give suggestions and best practices to face management problems. The management problems are always seen from the point of view of the team manager and if they can be adopted widely, since this book is mainly dedicated to this target.

When you are a team manager and people recognize this role for you, often the developers of your team will be influenced greatly by your behavior, especially in the moments in which they are under stress. When a critical moment is facing the project or a missing deadline becomes more and more probable, and your moods shift unpredictably, your people will start to deal with their tasks in a chaotic way. If you show or at least simulate a calm behavior, specifying that we are under pressure but that you are controlling the situation, then your team will work at its best, considering that you are facing the problem or at least hoping that you see some possible solutions for the problems.

## Communication

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In all situations in which you have to manage people, you must learn how to communicate with them (Myers, 1999). Oftentimes, people agree with you or support your choices, if you are able to communicate your will in advance to them in the right way.

In my experience, when you have to manage several people, you use (and not lose) about 30% of your time speaking with people. Sometimes, people do not speak with you about technical problems but often for personal matters, such as holiday organization and need for vacation time. These meetings are often marginally related to the task they are doing at that moment, but they are useful for enforcing you as a leader and for having people that trust you when they have some needs. It is important for you to listen to them and to understand what they

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