

With organization problems, start & end with Management



Kerri Nelson is a principal at [Corona Consulting](#). She also serves on the programming committee of the [Organization Development Network of Oregon](#) and is active in the [Community Consulting Project](#).

Jathan Janove: Describe your work.

Kerri Nelson: I believe that everything is a management problem. And as someone who has been in management and leadership roles most of my adult life, I don't say that lightly.

Here is the scene that plays out over and over--We take our best technical staff and make them managers. We don't give them the training, coaching and mentoring they need to excel, we continue to rely on them to be technical experts and also expect them to be outstanding managers, capable of leading teams to unparalleled results. Then, we are surprised or disappointed when they don't catch on quickly, make rookie errors or falter in dealing with their employees.

I have been the victim of that methodology, have certainly perpetuated it and have seen it play out in numerous organizations. It is crazy-making. No wonder everything is a management problem! We don't equip people to be successful.

Jathan Janove: What's the good news?

The great news about it being a management problem is that it can be turned around by those very managers. We don't believe anyone wants to show up and be "that manager" that negatively impacts the workplace.

Through a combination of assessments, coaching and training, we help a manager grow his or her skills. Everything we do is based in Emotional Intelligence, from self-awareness to relationship management. We fundamentally believe in changing the conversations improves results—remaining curious, open to input, focusing on process issues and celebrating success.

And, although we know the theory, we really focus on the practical and give training and coaching that can be put into use immediately. The quick turn from learning to doing helps reinforce the knowledge.

In a nutshell, we work with managers and leaders to make them even more effective in their roles.

Jathan Janove: What makes you passionate about it?

Kerri Nelson: Most of us spend the best hours of the day and years of our lives in the work environment. For many, those hours are filled with stress and tension, leaving them drained when they return home. Not only does this impact productivity and morale, it sets the stage for long-term health problems.

Our goal is to work with the leadership to make the work environment as supportive as possible for everyone. It creates a real win-win—workplace stress and tension are reduced, productivity increases, and the employees look forward to going to work and then return home ready to engage with their families.

Effective managers are THE cornerstone to transforming workplaces. I like to say they are the “force multiplier” in an organization. Helping managers grow their skills and in turn grow their teams to achieve the results they want is energizing for everyone involved. It is incredibly rewarding to go into an organization and see the energy change. There is nothing like it.

Jathan Janove: Please share a specific example and its learning lessons.

Kerri Nelson:

The one that comes to mind is a situation with a young manager. He was brilliant technically and everyone was “wowed” by his work. He also had a young family at home. And, as you would expect, the more that he did, the more that was expected of him. He was clearly the “heir apparent” and when a management position became available in his unit, he was selected to lead that team.

Driven to “do more”, he admitted he gave it all at the office and had nothing left for his family. His children barely acknowledged his arrival home from work. His staff (his former colleagues) noted that he was becoming irritable and unapproachable. Something had to change.

In coaching this manager, we helped him shift his mindset for “doing more” to “being more”. Being more effective at delegating, leveraging his team’s strengths and setting boundaries was a game changer for him. He had all these natural talents, but when focusing on “doing more” he lost sight of the bigger picture. Within a short time, there was a positive turnaround in both employee engagement and productivity.

The biggest win of this experience was the fact he took the “being more” mindset home and it included being more present with his family. Tearing up slightly, he shared with me that his children now came running to the door to see him when he got home and tell him about *their* day. The dinner table became full of chatter and positive energy.

It simply doesn’t get better than that.

Jathan Janove: For readers with whom your message resonates, what do you recommend?

Kerri Nelson: We have a few basic principles that we fundamentally believe in.

First, relationship before task. Get to know the people you work with—what makes them tick and always have their best interests at heart.

Then, really think hard about the power of “being more” instead of “doing more”. Doing more tends to be a solo

experience and can become a grind. Being more allows you to grow in all aspects of your life and is energy producing.

Next, 99% of the time, it is a process problem, not a people problem. Engage your teams in problem-solving. Don't engage in the blame game and don't let your team do so either.

Finally, it is never too late to make a change. Your best thinking and skills got you to where you are today. If you find you are stuck, look for some new tools for your tool box.