



How do you cope when management strategies are not enough?
by Kim Pettit



For Supermanagers

It is pointless to come up with a plan," says Joe. "They never come true anyway. Besides, things change too fast." Dina says, "A plan is too restrictive. It stifles initiative. What if I want to pursue an opportunity that is not in the plan?"

Matthias chimes in, "We never needed a plan before." Around the room, heads nod, bodies shift, and there are murmurs of agreement.

John, the publisher, shakes his head. "No matter what I try, I keep running into a brick wall with this bunch," he thinks.

If you have any experience in management, you know that publishers have plenty of opportunities to experience anger, frustration, annoyance—and also pleasure, excitement, and satisfaction. It all comes with the territory. Whether it is the mechanics of writing a plan, developing a budget, or setting a schedule, a manager must get the team on board—and often does not feel adequate to the task.

What to say when all has been said

This issue of *InterLit* gives plenty of suggestions and ideas for preventing and handling negative attitudes, and fostering a positive team spirit. Comprehensive coverage of a topic leaves me in a quandary. What can I add to what the writers in this issue have already said? I appreciate Lee's emphasis on listening to God, Ouko's frank discussion of loyalty, Iles' take on the importance of clear communication, and the helpful exercises Stickler and LeFever provide on dealing with confrontation. What I'd like to draw attention to, however, is something that is present in every article, but which I tend too often to forget: God's grace.

Managing well is hard work. It takes commitment over the long run, honest and ongoing self-assessment, people skills, courage to take risks, openness to new ideas and ways of doing things, and much more. Managing well requires vision, the ability to analyze budgets without having your eyes glaze over, endurance for strategy-planning sessions, and optimism to handle meetings with a team made up of people like Joe, Matthias, and Dina—even when you feel like John. Managing well requires follow-through, accountability, integrity... and I could go on with a list of a hundred more indispensable qualities every manager should have.

Managers are only human! I've been at Cook for over five years and have read the biographical information sent by numerous participants in our International Christian Publishing Institute. I've yet to come across a bio that reads like this: "The sole survivor of the doomed planet Krypton... Faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive, able to leap buildings in a single bound... Look up in the sky. It's a bird. It's a plane... It's Superpublisher!"

Our Superhero

Consider this description instead: "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity... surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted." (Heb. 2:14-18)

Jesus, our superhero, doesn't expect us to be superhuman. He helps those of us who are flesh and blood. Whenever we fail in our efforts to be angels, when we lack patience and grace with those around us, when we become frustrated, when we did our best and it still wasn't enough... Jesus is there.

"Let us... approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:16), we are urged. For managers who need help—for all of us who are definitely not Superpublisher, Supereditor, Superdesigner, Supersalesagent, or Superanything—let's not forget God's grace. ♦