**Are there too many managers?**

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**Once upon a time there were only workers and owners, but then the age of the manager dawned, explains Lucy Kellaway.**

There are five million managers in the UK today, 10 times as many as there were 100 years ago. Even if you don't actually manage anyone, your title pretends you do. A conductor is a train manager. An administrator is an office manager. A technician is an IT manager.

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We've all become obsessed with management. No-one thought of management then - the very word manager wasn't widely applied to business until the 20th Century.

In The Wealth of Nations, author Adam Smith shares his suspicions.

But at the end of the 19th Century an engineer from Philadelphia came along with a very clear idea of what management was all about - efficiency. Frederick Taylor was the world's first management consultant and his fad became known as scientific management.

He believed that for any given process, there was one best way to do it. The average worker, he thought, was pretty dim and hopeless and so the answer was a rigid system with a manager in charge of making it happen.

After World War II, all our proudest companies were run not by people who had the first clue about business but by generals. There was one apiece at British Railways, British Airways, at Vickers, and even at the BBC. They believed in one thing only - hierarchy.

When the British heard of the new management science being developed in the US, their response was to laugh. They had their own methods of reinforcing the office pecking order.

But with the growth of corporations in the first half of the 20th Century, the march of management wasn't to be stopped. And with so many more managers, some of them need to be managed themselves - hence the middle manager. Being effective in this new role required a whole new set of skills.

According to the sociologist William Whyte, managers required a range of qualities.

Hire the No-man as well as the Yes-man. Be the tolerant Maybe-man and they will cluster around you filled with hopefulness

"Today the executive must appear to enjoy listening sympathetically to subordinates and team playing around the conference table," he said.

"It is not enough that he work hard now, he has to be a damn good fellow to boot."

As for work-life balance, there wasn't any. One sales manager confided in Whyte: "I sort of look forward to the day my kids are grown up. Then I won't have to have such a guilty conscience about neglecting them."

1. How many managers are there in Englad ?
2. When the word « manager » appeared for the first time ?
3. Who managed british companies after WW2 ?
4. What kind of behavior is required to be a good manager ?