

# An Inside Look at the Staff Manager's Role, Part 2

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Successful service-based companies depend on their unwavering ability to support their clients. This commitment to support is part of a company's 'DNA' and translates to fulfilling a commitment and establishing credibility. Simply put, it means doing what you say you are going to do -- and to the best of your ability.

At Astreya, our Staff Managers understand the value of commitment. We understand that in providing exceptional IT personnel, we have a responsibility not only to provide clients with the most capable systems admin and network engineering talent available, but also to ensure they are professionals with integrity who will follow through and get the job done right.

In part 2 of this newsletter on the Staff Manager's role, we look why the words 'commitment' and 'integrity' are the building blocks of any conversation with our prospective employees. In the following interview, Jason King, a former Staff Manager who was recently promoted to Program Manager, talks about the importance of these qualities, and why they matter not only within the Astreya organization itself but throughout all our client interactions.

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## Q&A

**Jason King**  
Program Manager



### **When did you begin your career at Astreya and what is your background?**

I started nearly four years ago doing desktop support work for one of Astreya's clients, and from there I went to managing the entire desktop team -- which was about 40 people total. Last year, I transitioned to a broader role within Astreya and now oversee almost 200 people around the globe who are dedicated to this same client.

I've been in the IT business for about 15 years, and something I feel that has benefited my career is my time in the Air Force. It instilled in me many of the basic, core values that I have built upon over the years. One key value is simply doing what you say you're going to do and following through with it - being a dependable asset to your team. At Astreya, we have people here who can not only do the job, but who back this up by constantly getting the job done within the deadlines set by the client - whenever that deadline may be

### **What does a Staffing Manager do?**

A Staffing Manager takes care of all of the client's needs: this entails recruiting and helping out with the hiring process, and ensuring that support teams perform their functions seamlessly. I make sure the fit between the Astreya consultant and the client is just right before sending anyone out to the client. I will meet clients ahead of time to make sure I understand what the needs are, and then I meet with my staff to plan engagement and support. As their staffing manager, I am the client's direct line to the support capabilities we provide. For my team, I am here to answer questions or address any needs that may come up -- starting on the very first day.

## **How do you approach staffing considerations?**

I have my own criteria, which I believe extend into Astreya's broader culture. I want to find people who are not only dependable and can get the job done, but also want to get somewhere in their life. One of the more important questions I ask prospective employees is 'Where do you see yourself in the next five years?' If they say they see themselves doing the same thing that I am interviewing them for, that's not going to cut it. I want to hire somebody who has drive and holds a desire to do something more for themselves. These are the kinds of people that we want to bring in to a client, who will help us succeed and excel. The best thing about Astreya is that we don't just find people who fit. We find people who want to do more. They want to go in to a client situation and make it better so they can better themselves.

## **Tell me how Astreya develops its employees**

We have very high expectations of our employees from the very moment they start at Astreya, no matter how junior or senior the position is. We also expect our employees to be learning on the job, whether directly from work they are doing at a client site or through relevant coursework. At Astreya, we have training courses in place and have the right programs to help our employees get to the next level.

When our employees gain knowledge or become certified in a certain technology, it always benefits us -- especially for the Astreya employees who are trying to add a new dimension to their careers. We always try to encourage growth in our employees and will do whatever we can in order to make it happen for them.

## **What skills are critical in making a hiring decision?**

One of the most important things we look for are people skills. We want to make sure that all of our people know how to handle the partner relationship. They must realize that they are not working with peers, but with the client. When we get this right, things operate more smoothly. One of the analogies I like to use with my staff is that our clients just want to see a duck gliding across the water and not the feet paddling like mad underneath. When I find people who can work extremely hard -- but make it seem easy for the client -- then it is a match made in heaven for both Astreya and the client.

## **How do you manage overseeing 200 people?**

A lot of what we do is considered managed services, which means that we put a team in place and have a defined management structure inside it. They don't all report directly to me, but I am here to interact with all of them. A very important part of the relationship between myself and my field employees is to make sure they know who I am and what I am here for -- if they have concerns in any facet of their jobs or client interaction, I am their point person.

We also leverage my staff manager role by assigning team 'leads.' Individuals in these lead roles are trained on how to handle day-to-day management of people on their teams, both domestically and internationally. This process involves discipline in communication and standardization and reporting of key metrics to ensure consistent performance. Ultimately, this approach gives us a far-reaching and structured management process for overseeing these employees, while allowing us to address client needs or local cultural requirements.

For our employees outside of North America we do a lot of videoconferencing to facilitate constant interaction -- which is very important. Having somebody to look at and talk to means a lot to them rather than sending their thoughts to an anonymous person on email. Also, as I develop a track record of helping them serve clients better, they are more comfortable bringing up any issues to me.

## **What processes does Astreya have in place that helps you manage international coordination?**

We have several metrics we use. Among these are progress reports and performance reviews, which are done by the local and regional management teams that we've put in place. Our regional leads and managers have a nearly autonomous role in managing their direct reports, and if there is a specific request that comes in from the client, we'll follow up on that. We trust the people we hire to run and manage our client positions properly.

Being in 23 countries, obviously you can't be everywhere all the time, but at Astreya, we have people that we trust in locations all around the world. We have such a thorough and rigorous recruiting process here that I know the employees that make it into these roles will do the right thing. This speaks directly to the quality of candidates we are hiring and the strength of our recruiting team. We're not simply a placement agency that fills openings for clients. The management services aspect of what we do means a lot, and we bring in an entire team and manage our staff for the best possible client outcome.

## **How do you measure success?**

The best measure of success for us is to have a hiring manager say, 'Hey, I need more people,' or 'I need you to take on these extra roles now too.' Obviously these requests come because you are doing a good job. Even better than that is having a hiring manager at a client say, 'Hey, I heard from so and so that you guys do a great job at this. Would you do it for me too?' That is the best complement you can get. We let our work speak for itself.

To benchmark specific performance, we take feedback from our direct managers on the ground as well as feedback from the client. We put all that together and this gives us a really good idea of how we are doing. If a client is asking us to do more tasks -- things they haven't done with us in the past -- this is always a good sign of progress.

## **how can we help make your world a more productive place?**

It starts with great people. A company's growth often requires enhanced IT infrastructure since technology is a competitive differentiator. For companies expanding internationally, businesses realize that it is essential to have highly capable in-country IT resources to support their business model. CXOs who have successfully navigated through different stages of growth know that successful performance can be complicated; the road can be fraught with pitfalls and stumbling blocks for the company that lacks focus or cannot execute. Learn more about our hiring process