

Management fallacy: If I send people email, then they will work harder

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A project many years ago neared the conclusion of one of its project milestones. Things were getting down to the wire, and upper management was concerned that the project may not reach the milestone on schedule. To ensure success, they decided to send email.

From: Senior Manager

Subject: READ NOW!!!! More than one bug

Please see the attached spreadsheet. If you are on the To: line you can look at the Assigned To: column and find your name.

You are in this spreadsheet if you have 2 or more bugs assigned to you. At this stage of the project as we are winding down and entering Milestone Z, people with a high number of bugs assigned to them end up being the long poles for the release.

We have a lot of teams getting to zero bugs, so we have people who can help you. If you need help, then ask your manager. Your manager should be on the Cc: line. It's key we get all the bugs fixed (with quality) as soon as we can. If your manager agrees you can use help, and doesn't know where to go for help, then ask me.

Because as we all know, you can get people to work harder by sending email.

I happened to be one of the recipients of this message, and I sent back a simple reply:

I have more than one bug because my manager asked me to help out other people who have more than two. Thanks for your concern.