It may sound premature to start thinking like a CEO early in your career, but it will help you begin to notice many things, including:

- Your department’s role within the company.
- The dynamic between managers in your business area.
- Employee-related philosophies such as training, internal employee promotion, cross-department employee movement.
- Key business process such as hiring, budgeting, salary planning and performance reviews.
- The relationship between managers and senior managers.
- The way your company treats its vendors.
- The movement of data, major processes and information.
- How company money is spent.
- Management philosophies related to solid line and dotted line reporting relationships.

Let’s first talk about why you will start noticing things like those listed above. Then I’ll provide some insights on the contents of the list.

The reason you will start to notice things that have been before your eyes for years is because thinking like a CEO will change your perspective on the company. Instead of simply paying attention to your department and people in the company you deal with on an ongoing basis, you will begin looking at the company as a whole. This is how a CEO thinks. He or she understands the industry in which your company resides, how the economy effects company sales, how all the departments in the company interact, how people are promoted, if people are happy and productive, and the flow of data, money, business processes and information through the company from beginning to end.
When looking at the list above, notice the types of items. They are not directly related to your specific job. They are related to the economy, your industry, companywide processes, internal company politics, and companywide philosophies. As you begin to move up the management ranks, these things will become much more important to you than the intricacies of any specific business process or task. You will also find that more and more of your time will be spent on companywide processes like budgeting, tasks related to major company initiatives, thinking strategically, rather than tactically, dealing with new industry specific laws and regulations, and coordinating your group's activities with activities in other parts of the company. If you are a techie, you will stop programming. If you are an accountant, you will stop processing individual transactions. If you are a marketing specialist, you will stop writing and proofreading marketing materials. In essence, you will be overseeing these tasks, but personally working on different things.

Another difference you will start to see is that most individual contributors and first line managers deal with performing and mastering a specific task. That is to say:

- What should I do?
- How do I do it?

In the management ranks you are asking other questions such as:

- What should be done?
- Why should we do it?
- Who should do it?

Lastly is the reason to start thinking like a CEO - after all, you are not in the role yet. The sooner you start broadening your view, the sooner you will begin to understand the subtleties of management, and potentially, the sooner you will be recognized as future management material.

The primary advice and takeaways from today’s column is to know that:

- Broadening your view of company activities will help prepare you for future management roles.
- Even now, seeing and understanding companywide trends, processes and philosophies can help you perform better in your job by having a better understanding of what is expected and why.

Until next time, manage well, manage smart and continue to grow.

*Eric P. Bloom, based in Ashland, Mass., is the president and founder of Manager Mechanics LLC. He is also a nationally syndicated columnist, keynote speaker and author of the award-winning book “Manager Mechanics: Tips and Advice for First-Time Managers.” Contact him at*
eric@ManagerMechanics.com, follow him on Twitter at @EricPBloom, or visit www.ManagerMechanics.com.