



Guide for First-Time Managers

As a leader, you know how critical team dynamics are. Yet there are few resources for new managers that teach them how to succeed. That lack of preparation is leaving individuals that are new to management in the dust, with 26% of first-time managers feeling like they were not ready to lead others to begin with, and almost 60% saying they never received any training when they transitioned into their first leadership role.¹

Whether you're a first-time manager yourself or you're a leader with some first-time managers on your team, we have some tips for you. To help your new managers excel, start by having them think about the people they have worked under in the past. What did the outstanding leaders do differently than those who were less effective?

Did the great managers trust them? Make time for them? Treat them as individual human beings? Did the poor managers micromanage, create a culture of suspicion or were they entirely inflexible?

Reflecting on their own experiences with different leadership styles can help first-time managers develop a game plan for the type of leader they want to be. In addition, there are several fundamentals that all new managers, regardless of leadership style, should focus on.

01. Growth Mindset

Becoming a manager is a whole new ballgame.

First-time managers often struggle with the radical change from being an individual player to becoming responsible for a team. Adopting a growth mindset from day one is an important first step any new manager can take. It means accepting that there is a lot you don't know, but dedicating yourself to learning and evolving.

It also means extending the same mindset to the entire team. Employees will make mistakes, but a growth-oriented manager sees those missteps as learning opportunities rather than failures.

02. Building Rapport

Individual relationships are the key to success, so it's important to build rapport with both team members and upper management right away. Rapport has several components, including:

- Open communication
- Understanding people as individuals, including their natural rhythms and what makes them tick
- Earning and extending trust
- Creating strong systems for giving and receiving feedback
- Finding commonalities, such as hobbies or interests

03. Starting 1:1 meetings

Even experienced managers sometimes discount the power of the 1:1 meeting.

But such meetings are the perfect opportunity to do everything from building rapport to developing team members for future promotions. They also help you catch emerging issues, allowing you to take action before they become crises.

04. Finding the quick wins

It's natural for both team members and upper-level management to be skeptical of any new manager, especially if you don't have much experience. Finding the quick wins can help you earn trust and build momentum that you can leverage moving forward.

- Gather feedback from the team on what is working and what's not, and tweak processes based on what you learn
- Find small ways to motivate your team
- Look for small ways that your team can help other teams be more successful

05. Communication skills

No matter how well you communicate, there is always room to grow. The two essential areas to focus on are asking the right questions and active listening. Asking the right questions means learning to draw out valuable insights. As a new manager, these questions will largely revolve around getting to know the existing work culture and processes and finding out how best to support your employee team members. For example:

- Learn how each person prefers to receive feedback.
- Ask about their career goals.
- See if the person is facing any ongoing issues with the tools and technologies they need to do their job.

Active listening means staying present in the conversation with whatever the other person is saying, rather than waiting for your turn to talk absorbing what they're saying and responding in a meaningful way. Become comfortable with pauses. Don't rush to give your perspective. Ask clarifying questions. Restate what you heard and ask the person to correct anything that you heard in error. Fully explore each topic before moving on to the next.

Every manager has their own style and goals. Reflecting on past managers can help them choose a direction to take their leadership journey. But regardless of the specific approach, all first-time managers can benefit from the steps above.

Another unique way to skill up your first-time managers is through leadership learning tracks. Ready to talk about using your tuition benefits to elevate your team?

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¹ 12 Challenges New Managers Must Conquer, Center for Creative Leadership (Oct. 2022)