

10 Hints and Tips for New Managers

Being new to managing others can seem daunting when you've only ever needed to manage yourself. The following hints and tips will get you started. They aim to help you on your way to getting the best from others – and from yourself.

1. **Eyes on – Hands off!** New managers often feel they should make changes straight away; 'out with the old, in with the new!'. Sometimes this thinking is justified, and it might simply be about timing. At other times, it is about a manager's own 'comfort' – usually not a valid reason to enforce change.

Instead, watch and listen. Talk to people individually. Give everyone a 'clean slate'. Ask: *What's working and what isn't?* Find out what is 'sacred' and seek the stories that make it so. You may not be 'moving matter in space' when you arrive – but you will be paving the way for trust and more positive change when it does need to happen. Start where people are. You will leave your own fingerprints in time.

2. **If you can't define it, you've no right to ask for it...** Be crystal clear in your expectations. What does 'good' look like in both the results they need to achieve, and the behaviours they need to demonstrate?

If you want someone to 'improve their communication skills'...what do you really want to see and hear them doing that they aren't doing now? Ask them specifically for what you want, rather than merely hoping for it. Agree future behaviour together to minimise disappointment, and a crunchy conversation, further down the line.

3. **Make giving feedback 'the way we do things around here'** It is crucial to catch people getting things right, and almost right. This is about being balanced in your feedback - ensuring you are fair and not 'one sided' in your observations.

When you need performance to improve, be clear on issues and kind on people, so they know what to change:

'During the meeting, I heard you interrupting and talking over colleagues two or three times. A couple of the team stopped contributing after a while. I'd like you to give people more time to put across their view point before you offer your own opinion.'

When you want to praise someone, add real value by being specific, so they know what to repeat:

'When you presented your idea, I saw you looking at everyone around the table. You asked lots of open questions to understand their concerns. I saw people nodding and they seemed really engaged. It worked really well – thank you.'

- 4 Listen to understand, not to judge.** People don't usually get up in the morning planning to say things of little importance – they tend to say what is normal and true for them. Their normality is equal to yours. We don't necessarily have to *agree* with someone to *understand* their position. Resist the temptation to use 'but' or 'however' when offering up your opinion against theirs. Hear and recognise what they are saying, and then offer your own view alongside it.

Unhelpful/knocks down: 'I hear what you're saying but/however it won't work/I don't agree'

Helpful/builds: 'I see this is important to you. I have some concerns about ... let me check my understanding...'

- 5 Encourage the 'heart' of your people.** Celebrate team success both within the team and on the outside. How are you talking about the team? How can you increase its exposure? Look for opportunities to give it the spotlight.

Be creative when rewarding individuals. What would sincere reward/motivation be for *them*? If you're not sure – ask them! *What do you like to be appreciated for? How do you like that appreciation to be shown? What can I do to get the best from you?*

- 6 Spend time with your team.** What do they do for fun? What is important to them? What can you do that increases their happiness at work?

- 7 Know your Management 'Brand'.** What do you stand for as a manager? Share and model it with your team. Ask yourself the following questions:

- a. What do I want to be known for as a manager?
- b. Why would people choose to work with me?
- c. What makes me unique as a manager?
- d. What do I do really well?
- e. What do I still need to learn as a manager?

- 8 Managing Change.** Communicating an appropriate 'Burning Platform' to your team is vital if you want them to change from what they are doing now to something different. It is tempting to focus solely on the Vision without helping people see that their current position is no longer viable – even unsafe.

People have to feel dissatisfied with the current situation before a successful change can take place. Without dissatisfaction, no one is likely to feel very motivated to change.

- 9 Build Bridges with other Teams.** Invest time in building relationships and networks. If they're not coming to you, go to them. Seek feedback about how your team is viewed. Celebrate with the team where it is already working well and identify areas where it could improve its effectiveness

- 10 Be Consistent** As business grows more complex and uncertain, your people should never have to guess how you'll react. Instead, they should view you as someone who'll provide a fair hearing and honest feedback. Otherwise, they'll invariably tell you what you want to hear rather than what you need to hear. And silence is a far greater threat to any business than honesty.