

## Effective Management of New Teams

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You can feel overwhelmed when you start a new Management Position. Establishing your authority among the staff you've never worked with or those you don't know very well can be intimidating. Getting people to work together isn't easy, and unfortunately, many leaders skip over the basics of team building in a rush to start achieving goals (O'Hara, 2014). But your actions in the first few weeks and months can have a major impact on whether your team ultimately delivers results (O'Hara, 2014). What steps should you take to set your team up for success? How do you form group norms, establish clear goals, and create an environment where everyone feels comfortable and motivated to contribute?

You need to build a professional relationship with them if you want your team to trust you and respect you, learning about their interests and needs as workers. Whether you are in a new position at your existing company or joining a new company, here are tips from research on how to manage a new team:

### 2. Schedule brief one-on-one meetings

Get to know the staff better, and discover their strengths, weaknesses, goals, and ambitions. Familiarize yourself with one-on-one meetings with your new team, so you can understand how to handle them best.

According to Sandhir (CEO of Higherground 2019), "By scheduling frequent meetings with employees, managers are proving that they care about their [employees'] development". "Plus, it gives managers the opportunity to communicate changes so that the entire team is working towards shared goals," Sandhir said.

One-on-one meetings give you a consistent, private, candid line of communication with each team member. Specifically, when you're starting out building your relationship with each of them, these questions can spark priceless conversations that are perfectly suited for your one on one meetings.

Below are good questions to ask your new team during the one-on-one meetings:

1. What are your favorite things to work on? What do you feel are your strengths?
2. What have your past managers done that you'd like me to also do or not do?
3. What are your career goals and where did your last manager leave off with them?
4. How do you like to receive feedback? What works best for you?
5. How do you like to receive praise or recognition?
6. What's something you do regularly outside of work that's really important to you?

### 2. *"What are your favorite things to work on? What do you feel are your strengths?"*

As a new manager especially on a large team, you'll be surprised how often what one person hates

doing, another person will love. By getting to know the work that excites each of your team members most, you can make it much more likely people get to work on things they enjoy at least part of the time. You can also then avoid the dreaded situation where you assign work to one person who hates it and another person wishes they could have that task. More importantly, you're tapping into research that shows clearly that the teams that perform the best lean on the strengths of their teams. When Deloitte reported overhauling their management approach in [Harvard Business Review in April 2015](#), they found:

***“Three items correlated best with high performance for a team:***

1. *“My coworkers are committed to doing quality work,”*
2. *“The mission of our company inspires me,” and*
3. *“I have the chance to use my strengths every day.” ...Of these, the third was the most powerful across the organization.”*

The sooner you find out your team's strengths and work they enjoy, the sooner you can start maximizing their potential and that of your entire team. When you're starting out managing a new team, the easiest way to discover those strengths and work interests is to make time to ask. When you do, take note so you remember later, and ask some follow-up questions to deeply understand what they enjoy.

***3. “What have your past managers done that you'd like me to also do, or not do?”***

This question will instantly give you credibility with your team and shows you care. Whether their last manager was a saint or devil, they'll provide valuable insight for you. If the last manager was great, they'll give you insight into what they appreciated most, short-cutting finding some of the most effective ways to lead and motivate them. Meanwhile, if the last manager was poor, you reset their expectations and give them a reason for optimism.

The best thing you can do when starting managing a new team is to get their buy-in and trust. From there, the promises you keep, and the things you deliver on for them will help keep your team bought into you as their leader. Asking what their past managers have done well or poorly is a great way to start building a great foundation for working with them. It also helps you understand what makes them tick. Learning things that were influential in their past helps you know what to give them more of, and just as important, understand what to avoid, or that will upset them.

***4. “What are your career goals and where did your last manager leave off with them?”***

One of the biggest challenges companies face when they do re-orgs or have management changes is the subsequent morale drop that hits most teams. Morale is damaged for a variety of reasons including the fear and uncertainty of change, no longer working with people they liked and having to start over on the relationship with their manager. A key part of this relationship with their manager is their career development. Your manager is your biggest advocate at promotion time and the main coach to help you get there. Too often, when you change you, managers, you have to start over on your career progress. This is especially a key factor for retaining your young and rising stars in your company.

Given all the uncertainty and concern having a new manager can bring to your new team, picking up the conversation on their growth and goals can ensure any loss of momentum on their key motivators is as short-lived as possible.

**5. “How do you like to receive feedback? What works best for you?”**

As a new manager, asking the right kind of questions, in the beginning, is key because it helps you gather valuable data that you can use later to do things like:

- Gather and offer feedback more effectively
- Recognize them (see the next question below)
- And better support them

New managers should use variations of this particular question to find out the most effective way to offer someone feedback later on down the road. That includes finding out what medium they prefer to receive the feedback in (chat, email, in-person) as well as the timing they prefer (as it happens or in 1-on-1s). By asking this question before you have a bunch of feedback to give them, you’re able to dig up clues about how you can present your feedback in a way that they’ll be most receptive to when the time comes.

**6. “How do you like to receive praise or recognition?”**

This one has a similar angle as the previously mentioned question but the purpose is to learn how to most effectively give your team members praise and recognition. The simple act of appreciating your team members, whether through a few words of praise at the end of a tough week, or recognition for their critical role in a recent project, can make a big difference in their motivation. Praise is critical to effective leadership.

According to a study by Gallup (2016) found that offering regular praise has a major impact on both productivity and retention: “[Those answering “strongly agree to] “In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work” is responsible for a 10% to 20% difference in revenue and productivity. Employees who report that they’re not adequately recognized at work are three times more likely to say they’ll quit in the next year.”

A simple question can make all the difference in how your team feels about you as their leader. Asking how they like to receive praise is a fantastic way to make sure you can effectively use one of the easiest, and least expensive motivators.

**7. “What’s something you do regularly outside of work that’s really important to you?”**

Rapport is foundational to your relationship with your team members. It makes it easier to communicate, including giving and receiving feedback, as well as opening up about issues. Think about the difference you feel when a trusted friend or family member tells you something you need to hear versus a stranger.

This is so much more than a touchy-feely topic. According to Gallup's "State of the American Manager" report (2016), building rapport with your employees is one of the most effective ways to improve engagement. This question, however, isn't just about building rapport. You could ask a variety of questions to get to know them and build trust. There's another reason you should ask about their favorite or most important activities outside work: avoiding burnout. Balancing work and well-being is difficult, but it's not just an individual effort. You can help your team come into work happier, more engaged, and help them avoid burnout. And it all comes down to asking the right question now so you can avoid those potential issues in the future.

### **8. Establish open communication.**

Open communication breeds new ideas and collaboration, which are crucial for any team. Each person should feel they have a voice at the company, no matter their position. "It's an important step toward establishing that the new manager simply isn't a taskmaster but an advocate for team members' professional development and growth," Sandhir (2019) said.

### **9. Gauge current roadblocks, and offer solutions.**

As a new manager, you may feel discouraged by any vulnerabilities or problems that you encounter off the bat, but it's important to recognise any issues that arise and work with your team to solve them. "Ideally, managers aren't going into situations where they're blindsided by serious issues," Sandhir (2019) said. "However, if they're unexpectedly confronted with problems on a team, they might actually be at an advantage. New managers arrive with a clean slate and can ask honest questions about the issues" (Sandhir, 2019).

As a new manager, one should not be afraid to turn to their team members for support or guidance; after all, you are a team.

#### **What skills do you need to manage a team?**

There are many skills that are necessary to be a manager, but it is more important to think about what makes you a good leader. If you cannot lead, your team won't go anywhere. Plus, any skill that makes you a good leader will also make you a great manager. Here are four important leadership skills managers should focus on:

***Integrity:*** If your team members see you doing the right thing for the right reasons, regardless of who is watching, they will follow suit. You set the standard for your team.

***Communication:*** When you communicate often and provide regular feedback, your team will feel supported and motivated. This communication can come in many forms, including email, text messages and even conversations at the water cooler. Take advantage of your ability to communicate to ensure expectations are clear.

***Time management:*** Work efficiently, and respect your team members' time as well. If you plan

meetings that could have been emailed, you're not managing your team's time well. Set deadlines, let your timeline evolve and always have an agenda.

**Adaptability:** By adapting to changes, your team can adjust their goals and tweak their plans. Do not be afraid of change, but always be prepared for it. With your team, stay positive about any changes that arise.

Team management is a skill that has to be practiced. If you want to improve, shadow people you consider good leaders. What makes them stand out? Whether the person is a manager at your company or your favorite movie character, think about how they do what they do. Look at sports teams and their coaches and star athletes. Read books by your favorite managers and directors. Soak up as much information as you can, and use those examples to learn what fits with your personal management style. What works for Jeff Bezos or locally for Dr. Lance Mambondiani might not work for you. It will take time to improve, but the only way to do so is to practice.

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