Dale Carnegie®

Leadership Guide for
First-Time Managers

Learning Guide

Leadership Skills for First-Time Managers

Congratulations! You've been promoted into a management position. Chances are, you've been chosen for this role based on your ability to deliver great results with exemplary performance – and you're ready to take on this new challenge and run toward success.

But – Where do you start?

Being a new leader requires a completely different set of skills than you had in your previous role. It requires adjusting to a leadership mindset, understanding how to hold other people accountable for results, and empowering a team of diverse, individuals to strive for a common goal.

Making the leap from being an individual contributor to a manager can be one of the toughest transitions in anyone's career.

To help ease that transition to management, Dale Carnegie has identified three areas of focus that will help new leaders avoid common pitfalls and achieve success in their new roles.

1. Self-Awareness: Understand how your work needs to change from "doing" to "leading".
2. Others Focused: Prioritize your focus on cultivating relationships that lead to a more engaged and productive team.
3. Accountability: Hold yourself and others accountable for results.

New managers will walk away with a better understanding of how to start thinking like a leader, engage their teams, and hold the people around them accountable for results.

The Leader's Mindset

One of the biggest pitfalls for new managers is their mindset. Most people struggle to immediately re-prioritize their values away from contributing individually and towards facilitating the contribution of others. In other words, first-time managers tend to still think about challenges and projects as what they need to "do" vs. how they can "lead" others to accomplish the tasks.

Changing that mindset is difficult because it requires constant reflection on daily responses to workplace situations. It is only through this reflection that self-awareness ultimately shifts your mindset. To help better reflect on your own approach Dale Carnegie has developed a Team Member vs. Leader Mindset comparison chart.

Team Members vs Leader Mindset

Team Member	Leader
Needs guidance and direction	Plans strategy, prioritizes, and channels action in the right direction
Conforms to structure	Provides structure and sets policy
Has short-term perspective	Has long-term perspective
Accepts and complies	Challenges, persuades, and influences
Demonstrates skills in particular areas	Finds opportunities to capitalize on individual strengths
Wants to understand "What's in it for me"	Motivates, energizes, and gains commitment and buy-in
Avoids risks and conflict and seeks continuity	Takes risks, continually reevaluates and embraces conflict and change
Uses analytical decision-making	Uses intuitive decision-making
Seeks to be heard and understood	Listens and seeks to understand
Identifies what is needed to excel on the job	Provides coaching, support, guidance, and resources to succeed
Seeks purpose	Provides purpose with enthusiasm, passion, and conviction
Craves trust, involvement, responsibility, and ownership	Asks for input, then delegates, empowers, and holds people accountable
Needs reassurance and feedback	Provides consistent performance feedback
Thrives on appreciation and recognition	Constantly builds confidence, shows appreciation, and shares the glory
Seeks a clear career path	Provides opportunity for growth

Using this tool as a type of self-assessment offers insight into your current mindset and provides recommendations for where to start changing behaviors and acquiring new skills in order to be more focused on leading rather than doing.
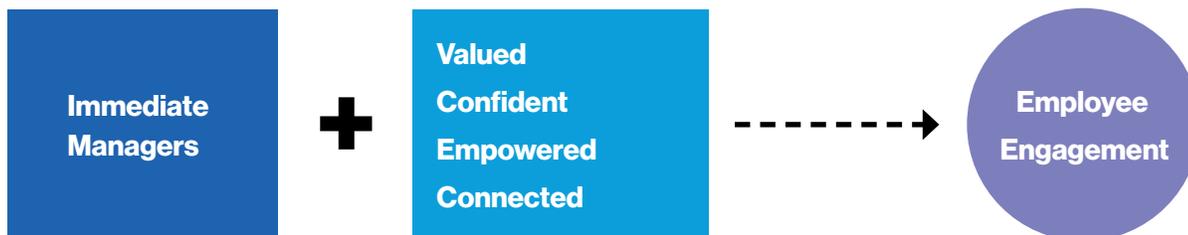
Your Role in Employee Engagement Equation

You've probably heard of, or even taken, an employee engagement survey at some point in your career. Employee Engagement is the level of mental and emotional commitment an employee has toward their job. As a leader, you are now critical in driving employee engagement of your team members. In fact Dale Carnegie's research identified the manager-employee relationship as one of the key factors in creating an engaged workforce. Leaders who can create more confident, empowered, enthusiastic, and inspired teams will have higher levels of productivity, collaboration, and retention.

As a new leader, it's important to know that in some ways you control your own destiny when it comes to your team's success. Yet, it's not enough to just know how to engage employees. New leaders must focus on making engaging their teams a daily habit, making it a priority in each and every interaction they have with them so they are able to develop meaningful relationships.

Dale Carnegie's employee engagement research also provides insights into how employees feel and the emotions in the workplace that can act as a leading indicator of engagement. As a first-time manager you will need to focus on building an environment that evokes four crucial emotions:

Confident   – My manager is clear so that I know where to focus and how to get the job done.
Empowered   – My manager allows me to get my work done with flexibility or with my own style.
Enthusiastic   – My manager creates an environment where I'm excited to go to work and contribute.
Inspired   – My manager knows that my work matters and that I understand how it impacts the
                         broader organization.

As a new manager, you are part of the employee engagement equation. You just need to make sure you have the skills to create an engaged workforce.

How to Hold Yourself Accountable for Leading

Simply put – accountability means holding employees responsible for completing projects, meeting deadlines, achieving goals and making important decisions. Organizations that get it right have a process in place that facilitates innovation and growth– and that process starts with an organization's leaders.

New managers grow from achieving personal goals to leading the success of team goals. Understanding how to hold others accountable to team goals is a pivotal component of a new manager's success.

A big part of keeping others accountable is setting a clear and compelling expectation of what each team member is responsible for achieving. The challenge, especially for new managers is that employees or situations sometimes undermine the clarity of the expectation of responsibility. As a leader, it's important to maintain that clarity for both you and the employee.

One critical juncture in holding yourself and others accountable comes in communicating with your team. As a leader, there are small things that you can say to either make the accountability stick or allow employees off the hook.

Our guide below highlights the common behaviors that create barriers to accountability and offers some insights into how managers can establish accountability with each and every team member by relating with clear, encouraging and positive expectations.

When Holding People Accountable, Do You …

Buy It Back

By Responding:

"Let me think about …"
"I'll let you know when …"
"Leave it here, I'll …"
"I'll check with …"
"I'll draft up …"
"After I finish …"

With phrasing like this, the assignment is negated. The assignment remains with you. There is no progress until you do something.

Put It In Limbo

By Responding:

"If you have time …"
"Let's wait until …"
"Why don't you check with …"
"See me later about …"
"Let me know if I can help …"
"We'll have to do something …"

With phrasing like this, the process is slowed. Decisions are delayed. The delegation is only partly completed.

Establish Accountability

By Responding:

"You're the right person for the job …"
"I'm counting on your leadership …"
"I gave it to you because …"
"What are you going to do …"
"What's your plan for …"
"I know you will get it done …"

With phrasing like this, it's clear that the accountability has been shifted. The assignment is complete. Progress is much more likely.

Understanding how you communicate with your employees is key when holding yourself accountable to leading and your employees accountable for execution.

As a first-time manager it is easy to get overwhelmed with all the new tasks that are required from leaders. As this guide illustrates, it is important for first-time managers to take the time to reflect on their new role and recognize their own opportunities to shift their mindset, build new leadership skills, and become aware of the impact they have on their new team.

Engage, Motivate, and Succeed by building your leadership skills in Develop Your Leadership Potential: Stop Doing, Start Leading.
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