

INSPIRE

On Leadership

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Tips for First-Time Managers

Over the past 30 years, I've seen many new managers make mistakes, some of them irreparable, in the first days of their new role. Let's be clear about one thing: managing or leading other people is a challenging endeavor. For all of your years as a high-performing individual contributor; well, these years did not necessarily set you up to be successful in getting work done through others.

I would like to share tips for your first week. These days are critical. They are the first impression days that will have your employees feeling grateful for having a leader they feel good about or brushing up their resumes and putting their radars up nice and high.

Tip #1: Be 100% other centered.

On day one, the only kind of communication you will have with your team is the kind that involves asking questions and listening to answers. You may want to bring your team together for a very brief meeting. Tell them you're glad to be working with them and that you would like to begin meeting with them one-on-one to learn what they do and how things are going for them. As you begin these meetings, below are the kinds of questions you will want to ask.

- > Tell me about yourself. (yes, this is a question)
- > What do you do here?
- > What do you like? Not like?
- > What do you do outside of work for enjoyment and relaxation?
- > What is important to you in a leader?
- > What do you see as the priorities of the team?
- > What will be helpful for me to know?

Tip #2: Keep asking questions and observing

This is important enough to be your second tip, as well. In the beginning of your new role as a leader (or as a new leader for a team), do not move into the mode of deciding on things or taking action on things until you've observed, listened and learned from the team. I understand this may be slightly different if you've been a member of this team. Perhaps your direct reports were your co-workers up to your promotion. Do not take things for granted, however. You will still want to meet with your team. You may add a comment like, "I know we've been working together side-by-side for awhile, and I'm excited to be in a new role. I don't want to make assumptions, so I look forward to learning some things from you."

Tip #3: Share what you've learned from them, then share your definition of success. Bring your team together as a group and tell them, in general themes, what they've told you. Thank them for helping you understand what they do, as well as what they enjoy doing. Then, share some insights about you. What are you looking for as the manager and leader of this team? Think about this. Be confident. Your team wants your insight.

Your team will begin to form their impression of you immediately. Many new managers will withhold this level of intentionality because of their own insecurities. Confidence will be important for you. Lean in as if you have it. Your actions will foster confidence within you.

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