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Characteristics of a Good Leader: Tips for New Managers



Kiely
Kuligowski

Kiely Kuligowski
Staff Writer

Business News Daily Staff
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Management isn't easy. Even with hundreds of available resources, stepping into a management role for the first time can feel a little like jumping out of a plane, even if you have a parachute strapped to your back.

You're suddenly responsible for the well-being, production and success of a team of people, and you are the one they'll turn to if anything goes wrong, which can be a daunting change if you're used to looking to someone else for answers.

It takes time to adjust to a new position, especially as a first-time manager, and it's easy to get overwhelmed. Just remember that you're not alone and that everyone starts somewhere.

Characteristics of a good manager

We outlined four main characteristics of a good manager (and some to avoid), asked some experienced leaders for their best advice for new managers, and listed some personal development options to help get you started and flourish in your new role.

Collaborative

The creation of a collaborative environment where everyone feels heard, respected and valued is a key step for new managers. Having a team that works

together establishes a more welcoming, supportive company culture. As a manager, you can encourage this by demonstrating passion and positivity for your work as well as embodying the company culture.

Summer Salomonsen, former chief learning officer at [Grovo](#), suggested delegating tasks, encouraging communication and feedback through regular one-on-one meetings, and prioritizing [reciprocal trust](#) among the team.

Growth-oriented

As a manager, focus on helping your employees progress – individually and collectively. Get to know your workers on a personal level so you can help them leverage their interests and talents. Find what works and what doesn't, and work on identifying and removing obstacles so your employees can perform at their best.

Will Esdaile, vice president of marketing at [Homebase](#), suggests that managers "have a development goal that isn't about the business. Have one goal focused on the development of a person (or people) on your team that isn't connected to a business outcome. This could be developing confidence in presenting by sharing work to a big group or learning a new language."

Excellent communicator

Communication is a driving force behind nearly everything we do as humans, and being a clear communicator is vital as a manager. You should set clear expectations for your employees, be transparent about important topics, and establish guidelines for giving and receiving feedback.

Salomonsen said that in order to inspire original thinking, managers should create an inclusive culture where everyone can voice their concerns, opinions and ideas. Encourage authenticity and vulnerability by leading by example. Ask for help. Turn to your team when you're at a loss. Start a conversation, and be open to wherever it leads.

Impact-driven

Every worker wants to feel valued. If they don't believe their work is making a difference in some way, they won't be as motivated. [[Check out these 4 ways to incentivize your employees.](#)]

Yaniv Masjedi, chief marketing officer at [Nextiva](#), said new managers should "take some time to get to know each team member's strengths and where they need extra support. Use assignments as a learning process for you and your team. Then support where needed and lean extra hard when you're able to."

Masjedi also advised taking an iterative approach and continuing to learn alongside your team as you grow into your role. Employees will see that you're putting in work to improve, which will inspire and motivate them to do better in their own roles.

Behaviors to avoid

"It's all too easy for new managers to adopt bad habits in the busy early days of their new role," said Salomonsen. "Without the right guidance, we typically see first-time managers fall into common behavior traps. "

She noted six management behaviors to avoid:

- Only providing feedback during performance reviews or when issues arise
- Micromanaging rather than trusting your team
- Failing to ask for or address questions, feedback or concerns
- Being closed-minded to criticism or new ideas
- Avoiding difficult yet necessary conversations
- Setting expectations too high or too low, or not being clear with your goals

Management development opportunities

You should never feel lost or unsupported when taking on a new role, especially as a leader. Here are three ways you can learn and grow in your new position.

Management training

According to a research study by [Grovo](#), 87 percent of managers wish they were given the chance to learn and progress when they first assumed their role, and nearly half of new managers felt they were unprepared for their position.

Every company should offer training before hiring. However, whether because of the price of programs or lack of time, many don't prioritize management development as much as they should. In fact, some even reserve these programs only for senior leaders and offer workshops just a few times a year, said Salomonsen.

"These sessions may be rewarding and inspiring, but they rarely make an impact on day-to-day work," she added. "Moreover, sending every new manager to a management seminar their first week on the job is prohibitively expensive for most companies."

An option, especially for small businesses, is to turn to internal training. Host a few sessions with other company experts or managers to run through the

basics. Often, employees are promoted to a management role, so they already have an idea of company standards and what's expected of them.

Microlearning

Microlearning is a popular training method for small businesses. It's quick, intensive and collaborative. Managers can learn all they need to know in short bursts, without feeling overwhelmed.

"With microlearning, both new and experienced managers can access digestible lessons that focus on the critical behaviors they need to perform their best, right in the course of their day-to-day work," said Salomonsen. "Done right, a microlearning approach allows managers to quickly put new knowledge into practice and gradually improve their habits and skills over time."

Not only is this method of learning more efficient, it's also far more affordable than extensive training programs.

Mentors and L&D partners

Working with a mentor or learning and development (L&D) partner can set new managers up for success by providing them with personal support and expert knowledge.

"Each person is different, and every new manager has their own areas of growth in the early days of their new role," said Salomonsen. "Whether they need to develop their interpersonal skills, time-management skills, strategic planning skills or leadership approach, they will need support from senior colleagues ... Finding a management mentor or L&D partner early can help set a strong foundation for the new manager's development in their role."

Keep an open mind about colleagues, friends and professional connections, and network as much as possible. Once you work with someone who can guide you through the beginning process, you'll feel more confident in your role.

Brett Helling, owner of [Ridester](#), added, "Everybody needs a mentor. Find one and discuss the problems you are facing. Having a mentor or someone with expertise is the clear indication of growth within yourself."

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