

# Unleash the Potential of New Managers with Leadership Development

**SUMMARY** (Click on italicized words below for links to additional articles)

- New leaders must be willing to learn, develop communication skills, and adjust relationships.
- Transparent information sharing establishes trust and repeats important messages.
- Listening is a key communication skill and should be prioritized.
- Treat everyone equally and objectively when making tough decisions.
- Be respectful of team members' perspectives and strive for self-improvement.

Making the transition from being one of the team to being the boss can be a challenge, and many managers are not sure where to start. As your business grows, it's normal for some leaders to feel stretched outside their comfort zone. But you don't want to leave them there. Help new leaders find success, retain your best employees, and develop a positive workplace culture when you emphasize and train around key leadership traits.

**A Willingness to Learn:** Often new leaders get promoted because they excel technically in their field. However, as managers, the focus shifts from personal performance to team performance. And this change requires leaders to learn the roles of everyone on the team and how they all fit together. New leaders who think they already know everything miss a vital learning opportunity. According to *Harvard Business Review*, "Managers often fail in their new role, at least initially, because they come to it with misconceptions or myths about what it means to be a boss." Employees will have more respect for managers who approach them both as a learner and a leader.

**Boost Your Communication Skills:** A good boss needs to have communication skills that go beyond those of their team members. Clearly delivering ideas and instructions requires written and oral communication skills that may be beyond new managers' incoming skill level. It may surprise some leaders that one of their most important communication skills is actually listening so that employees feel heard. *Insight Global*, an international staffing firm, recommends prioritizing listening, along with these communication essentials:

- Be transparent and establish trust by sharing information on time, with clear expectations.
- Repeat messages that are important to ensure understanding.



- Set clear calls to action with instructions on what, when, and why tasks need to be done.
- Make yourself available for collaboration and ideas.
- Think about the future when communicating to have mutually beneficial conversations.

**Review Your Relationships:** As employees become leaders, it's natural for their professional relationships to change. Projecting authority can be challenging when managers have friendly and relaxed relationships with team members. The transition requires some delicacy, and new leaders certainly want to avoid coming on too strong to establish authority. *One group of researchers* set out to discover the best ways to manage people who are also friends. After surveying 200 male and 200 female first-time managers across 17 countries, they identified these best practices.

- Acknowledge the power shift in relationships sooner rather than later.
- Be honest and open with friends who become direct reports.
- Ensure fairness by treating everyone equally, extending invitations for lunch, etc.
- Don't let emotions get in the way when making tough decisions; use objective data to treat everyone fairly.
- Manage how much information is shared on social media to maintain credibility and respect boundaries.

**The Bottom Line:** Becoming a successful boss and leader takes practice, but new leaders can develop these skills with the right expectations. Communication, listening, and creating a positive workplace are all important considerations for a new leader. Good leadership always begins with respect for your team members' perspectives, values, and needs. By taking these principles into account each day and striving towards self-improvement, new leaders will find their hard work and dedication rewarded.



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