

# How to Be Successful as a New Manager

Congratulations, you have just been named the new manager or promoted to supervisor. Now, how will you become a success and what will you do first? Whether this is your first time in a leadership role or even if you are a seasoned manager, you should proceed with your new transition carefully. It begins with a plan and proceeds one step at a time.

## 1. DON'T FALL INTO THE NEW SUPERVISOR TRAP

The number one mistake made by new supervisors is they keep acting like individual contributors. This is because it's what they know and how they have achieved success in the past. They're relying on the same skills that got them to a leadership role. Most haven't had formal supervisory training so they're doing the best they can with the tools they have.

Why is this a bad thing?

- ▲ They aren't supervising or leading
- ▲ Team has little or no direction
- ▲ Resources are underutilized
- ▲ Team is not learning or growing
- ▲ They are probably working themselves to burnout

Supervisors are responsible for much more than their own individual contributions. They are responsible and accountable for the contributions of their entire team or department.

Supervisors also represent the management side of the company and as such they bear responsibility to make sure all laws, regulations, policies and procedures are followed.

The skills required for supervisors encompass both "hard skills" and "soft skills."

- ▲ Hard skills represent the skills and knowledge needed to perform technical tasks such as preparing budgets, operating a computer system, interpreting policies and regulations or repairing a machine.
- ▲ Soft skills on the other hand are the skills you use when working with people. Examples of soft skills include communicating with other employees, delegating tasks, coaching and managing conflict.



New supervisors who have spent several years developing "hard skills" often find the "soft skills" area a more formidable challenge as they enter supervisory roles.

## 2. UNDERSTAND AND OVERCOME THE BUDDY/BOSS DILEMMA

Over the last couple decades, authoritarian type leadership styles have fallen out of favor. Modern leaders are expected to be more accessible and are encouraged to work more closely with employees. They spend more face-to-face time coaching, mentoring and developing

employees and as a result, the line between buddy and boss tends to be blurred at times.

Longer workweeks also mean that we tend to socialize more at work. Frankly, we're so busy with work that many of us don't have much of a social life outside of work. As a result, our coworkers become our close friends.

Getting promoted to supervisor can really strain these relationships. The reason we see the strain in these relationships is that there are natural contradictions between boss and friend roles. Your friends expect preferential treatment, openness and loyalty. However, showing favoritism to one employee over another tends to poison the team. As a supervisor, you control many of the conditions of employment including performance reviews, raises, promotions, assignments, etc. Your employees expect you to be fair and not show favoritism. If they even perceive you're showing favoritism it will significantly undermine your ability to lead.

Unconditional acceptance will prevent you from managing performance and giving tough feedback when needed. As a supervisor, you now have to keep some company secrets. Leaking confidential information to your friends will come back to haunt you.

Loyalties are tested when you have to choose between the company's interests and your friend's interests. As a supervisor, your first loyalty needs to be to the company. That's what you signed up for when you became a supervisor and what you're being paid for.

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The best advice is to be equally friendly to all. Don't play favorites and maintain some professional distance. You may need to have a heart-to-heart conversation with former coworkers to explain to them what has changed and what remains the same. Expect that there may be some relationship damage for awhile and that you will be excluded from the circles you used to be part of. Conversations may fall silent when you walk into the room. Don't worry about it too much. It's all part of the normal cycle. If you're fair and provide good leadership, your team will come around in time.

### **3. STUDY PAST SUCCESS**

Discover what major accomplishments your work team is proud of. A new leader will gain respect quicker when he or she recognizes and appreciates what the group has done in the past. By recognizing past accomplishments you will build a solid foundation for the future.

### **4. CONDUCT ONE ON ONE INTERVIEWS**

To be successful, leaders need to invest time in interviewing every team member possible. This can be a time consuming process that pays big dividends. This allows you to establish yourself quickly, gain respect, build trust faster and learn important information. During the interviews ask questions like:

- ▲ What can I do to help you accomplish your job?
- ▲ What is keeping you from doing your best?
- ▲ What makes you feel appreciated?
- ▲ What did my predecessor do that we should continue?
- ▲ What did my predecessor do that we should stop?

### **5. HOLD A MEETING**

Avoid having a meeting until you have something specific to say and enough background information to speak with authority. At the meeting highlight their past successes, some of the issues or problems affecting the work group and what your thoughts are for the future. Talk about some of the changes you are considering and why. Here are some other items you might consider for this meeting:

- ▲ Your background and experience
- ▲ Just enough personal information to show you are human
- ▲ Your expectations
- ▲ Your leadership style
- ▲ How they should approach you with problems
- ▲ What to do with new ideas and suggestions

### **6. GOAL SETTING GUIDELINES**

Many leaders have a basic idea of what they want to achieve with their work team. However, for some reason they do not achieve the desired success. Why? Most often it is due to the lack of setting clear, concise and achievable goals.

The team may have a general idea of what they want to accomplish, but the human mind does not work effectively with generalities. In order to be effective, goals must be written down in the present tense using clear, specific, descriptive words. For example: "Our work team will reduce our overall waste factor by 15% next month and maintain that level or reduce it further for the rest of the year."

Completing the following steps will help you set goals effectively so you can achieve positive results in your workplace.

**Decide what you want to accomplish.** The goal should be very specific. If you want to increase production, then what level do you want?

**Determine a deadline for accomplishment.** A goal must have a deadline. If you do not have a date on it, the goal is only a wish or a dream.

**Determine that the goal is believable.** The team must feel that the goal can be realized. If everyone believes the goal is impossible to achieve, no one will take the action necessary to make the goal a reality.

**Where are you now?** Take a current inventory. You will never know how far you have to go if you don't know where you already are.

**What obstacles do you need to overcome?** Is there something that may make it difficult to achieve your goal? Be aware of the obstacle so you can make plans to overcome it.

**Develop an action plan.** Determine the specific steps that will be necessary to achieve the goal. Start at the accomplishment of the goal and work backwards.

**Take daily action towards the goal.** Dreams and goals require action. The best goal in the world will never materialize unless consistent action is taken.

### **7. MAINTAINING YOUR FOCUS**

Once you have decided on the most important goals for your team which also must align with the Company's overall vision and mission statements, stay focused. One of your biggest challenges will come with maintaining group focus on achieving each goal while already juggling your heavy workload. Everyday issues fight for your attention while providing an infinite amount of ways for you and your team to get blown off course. If the Company has not communicated clear goals for your group, then establish goals anyway. Be it goals in production, safety, quality, shipping or even attendance. Track your progress and continually provide feedback to the team. Plan to be the best and communicate, communicate, communicate.