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10 Leadership Tips For First-Time Managers

When the time comes to promote strong, capable individual contributors into their first role as a manager, how do you prepare them? Although their performance has been good and you've assessed that they are a fit for the job, leading others will be an adjustment for most. Don't assume that an effective worker will automatically become an effective manager – especially if he's to manage a group of his peers. Here are 10 leadership tips to help your first-time managers succeed and avoid failure:

1. Accept that you still have much to learn. You will have worked hard for your promotion and have ample expertise in your chosen field, but you may find that you lack self-confidence in your ability to lead. Be prepared to learn from others – including your new team.
2. Communicate clearly. Always keep your team fully informed of project goals, priorities, and those all-important deadlines. Effective communication will be essential in both establishing your credibility and gaining the support of your team, so be sure to provide clear direction and always welcome questions and feedback from others.
3. Set a good example. Demand from yourself the same level of professionalism and dedication that you expect from others. If you expect the team to be upbeat and friendly, then make sure you are! If you expect written reports to be error free, then double check your own work!
4. Encourage feedback. Sometimes employees are unwilling to speak up about certain issues unless they are prompted. Canvass for opinions on issues such as support, training, and resources while maintaining an open-door policy so that your team knows that you are willing to listen to their concerns and ideas as well as help provide solutions to any problems.
5. Offer recognition. By publicly recognizing the efforts and achievements of your team, you not only build up their confidence, but also encourage future contributions and effort. Praise does not always have to be formal – praising employees can be part of your day-to-day communication with your team. In the video below, Ken Blanchard suggests that managers take an extra minute to offer praise, criticism, or make sure that instructions are understood.
6. Be decisive. A quality leader needs to make decisions and stick to them. People do not feel comfortable with someone who changes his or her mind on a whim. You only have to look at public opinion of government U-turns to see how easily confidence in a leader can be weakened or lost altogether.



7. Help your team see the "big picture." Take time to explain to your team how their assignments and projects fit into the company's larger goals and overall objectives. This will help demonstrate that every task they complete can have an impact on the company's reputation, success, and bottom line.
8. Create an environment of constant learning and development – and include yourself in this process. Encourage your team to explore new methods for reaching their individual goals and those set by the company. Allow them to make – and learn from – mistakes and be sure to reward new and innovative ideas.
9. Provide professional guidance. A good manager and leader will also be a mentor. Make yourself available to staff members and show interest in their career development within the company. Don't overlook the motivational power of positive reinforcement – your staff will appreciate your commitment to their progress.
10. Be patient with yourself. Developing strong managerial skills takes time – especially as you adjust to your new position. Seek guidance from colleagues, your line manager, or your professional network when you need it. In doing so you will enhance your leadership abilities and make strides toward becoming a great manager.

While this list is intended for new managers, you could likely share these tips with your seasoned managers to remind them of the basics and help them avoid derailing. As is true with most things, the longer the person stays in a role, the more set in his ways he becomes. Reminders such as these might help to give them a new focus or outlook on their daily job, which will not only improve their own effectiveness, but increase the performance of those whom they lead.

Learn more about how to assess and prepare first-time managers, so they can become effective employees. call us today at (661) 810-2446 or visit us on-line at www.azarandassociates.com