

New Managers

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So, you want to be a manager?

Developing new
managers



New managers face a paradigm shift from one set of responsibilities to an entirely different set of challenges. Naturally, we want our employees to develop and grow and explore unknowns in their careers. We want them to set them up for success in whatever new endeavors they explore. If it turns out not to be for them, there are valuable lessons they'll walk away with.

The transition from engineering into management should not be the only way to level up. New managers should also not feel this is a less challenging job. They should be inspired by the complexities and uncertainties of helping diverse groups of humans navigate and conquer challenges.

Is Becoming a New Manager Right for You?

A great way to help engineers appreciate how different being a manager is from being an engineer can be challenging. Hopefully, you'll help them appreciate it's best to ease into a new thing before discovering if it's the right move. I like to start by telling them they should try before they buy. That starts with choosing management tasks they can take on to see if they like it and could succeed. To succeed, they need

time for the chosen task and hence let go of some of their engineering work.

They should consider things they do and which ones they'd like to let go to take on a management task. More importantly, they should be clear what they absolutely want to hold on to. Monday, ask them what they decided they absolutely didn't want to let go. Now, tell them, that is what you're asking them to let go. Yeah, that's their first disappointment as a manager.

It's critical they appreciate why this is a good choice. To succeed as a manager, you need to think more about making others successful than making yourself successful. How excited and engaged will someone be to work on your least favorite task? Conversely, the thing you didn't want to let go, is likely something pretty cool. It's likely something your passionate about. Something you'd hate to see fail, is something you'll be motivated to help someone else succeed with. Additionally, it'll be something they'll be excited to take on.

This is an opportunity to discover if you can find a passion for making someone else successful. It will be good to know if that exceeds your passion for doing it yourself. Here is one point where you might discover management is not as appealing to yours you first thought.

The Trial Period

Trial tasks are much less painful than making someone "acting manager" and then having it not work out. Also, a try-before-you-buy allows them to learn in gradual transition. There is value in making the first trial task/project an exciting and enticing one. So, you might want to model giving up something you enjoy.

People Management for New Managers

OK, so let's say you succeed at a few tasks and tests thrown your way and you're ready to try people management. It's not ideal to use existing employees as guinea pigs for your fantasies of becoming a people manager – that may not be a nice thing to do to them. It's less impactful to learn people management with interns. You need to commit to sticking with it through the internship. The interns gain the experience with a single manager for their internship. A good internship is also something that encompasses a project from concept to completion. This too is another good experience opportunity for a fledgling manager.

The Intern Trial

As a new manager managing interns, there are two primary objectives. The intern should love the experience, and the new manager must decide whether they should return.

Trial Objective

At the end of the internship, interns should be very excited to come back. You should leave them with this desire regardless of how they fare. A good experience will help sway them to return. Furthermore, a good experience for less stellar interns allows them to return to school saying good things about your company.

Trial End

At the end of the internship, you'll decide if we should make an offer to return full-time. Also, if they do come back and don't succeed, it won't reflect so well on your ability to assess their abilities. Much more importantly though, I will make it clear to you what burden of responsibility this places on you. Imagine a college grad all excited about their first job (if you did your job well in 1. above). You may have to disappoint them and let them know you won't be extending an offer.

Conversely, if you do extend an offer, they may have to move a great distance to start. It may be a job that they excitedly tell all their friends and family about. It is their first real job in the real world. Now imagine they don't succeed and you have to let them go. What did you just do to that human? What impact did you just have on them in their very first real job and start in life? How they will be viewed by friends and family? Imagine now that they end up in a strange city with few, if any, friends outside of work. Yeah, not such a great thing to feel you've just done to another human.

Trial Conclusion

Being a manager comes with tremendous responsibility that can feel like a real burden. Keeping them despite challenges after returning is also not a great experience for them or their colleagues or the business. Bearing the burden of such responsibilities for others is part of being a new manager. If, however, such decisions don't phase you then I'd also argue, management is also not a good choice for you.

New Managers – Starting with Trust



Many factors influence whether you'd make a good or great manager and whether you discover a passion for it. Some of us discover a passion for helping others grow and go through Human Transformation. Similarly, helping someone else discover if being a Transformer is the path for them can require some maneuvering. It's not the ideal path for everyone.

Help them appreciate that you have their best interest at heart in becoming a manager. This can also serve as good modeling for them. For them to have great relationships and success with their employees, they too should [Start with Trust](#). It is such a powerful starting place for any new manager

For managers in an Agile organization, you may also find [The Dark Side of Agile](#) of interest.

See Also

Other key aspects for being an effective manager

- [Start with Trust](#)
- [Radical Candor, Meaningful Conversations](#)
- [The Room Where it Happens](#)

- [*The Growth Whisperers podcast – 123 Seven important things to develop your mid managers*](#)
- [*The ‘Millennial Whisperer’ discusses what business leaders need to do to attract and retain their young talent*](#)
- [*The Direct-Report Whisperer: The Manager’s Role as Coach and Counselor*](#)
- [*Becoming a “People Whisperer”: How to Communicate So People Care About—and Act On—What You Say*](#)
- [*Forbes – Ten Things New Managers Need To Know*](#)
- [*Harvard Business Review – Becoming the Boss*](#)
- [*Business News Daily – Characteristics of a Good Leader: Tips for New Managers*](#)
- [*New managers: The complete guide*](#)
- [*9 Tips for New Managers to Succeed*](#)

Here are two good blog posts specifically for developing new managers in product management.

- [*Advice for New Managers and Leaders*](#)
- [*Crossing the Canyon: Product Manager to Product Leader*](#)