

5. LEADERSHIP STYLES

In business, a leadership style called "transformational leadership" is often the most effective approach to use. Transformational leaders have integrity, they inspire people with a shared vision of the future, they set clear goals, they motivate people towards these goals, they manage delivery, and they communicate well with their teams. (You can find out more about transformational leadership at the end of this article.)

However, leadership is not "one size fits all" thing; often, you must adapt your style to fit a situation or a specific group. This is why it's useful to gain a thorough understanding of other leadership styles; after all, the more approaches you're familiar with, the more you can shape your approach to the situation.

Let's take a look at some of the leadership styles that you can use. (For ease of reference, these are shown in alphabetical order.)

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership is an extreme form of transactional leadership, where leaders have a lot of power over their people. Staff and team members have little opportunity to make suggestions, even if these would be in the team's or the organization's best interest.

The benefit of autocratic leadership is that it's incredibly efficient. Decisions are made quickly, and work gets done efficiently.

The downside is that most people resent being treated this way. Therefore, autocratic leadership can often lead to high levels of absenteeism and high staff turnover. However, the style can be effective for some routine and unskilled jobs: in these situations, the advantages of control may outweigh the disadvantages.

Autocratic leadership is often best used in crises, when decisions must be made quickly and without dissent. For instance, the military often uses an autocratic leadership style; top commanders are responsible for quickly making complex decisions, which allows troops to focus their attention and energy on performing their allotted tasks and missions.

Bureaucratic leaders work "by the book." They follow rules rigorously, and ensure that their people follow procedures precisely.

This is an appropriate leadership style for work involving serious safety risks (such as working with machinery, with toxic substances, or at dangerous heights) or where large sums of money are involved. Bureaucratic leadership is also useful in organizations where employees do routine tasks (as in manufacturing).

The downside of this leadership style is that it's ineffective in teams and organizations that rely on flexibility, creativity, or innovation.

Much of the time, bureaucratic leaders achieve their position because of their ability to conform to and uphold rules, not because of their qualifications or expertise. This can cause resentment when team members don't value their expertise or advice.

Charismatic Leadership

A charismatic leadership style can resemble transformational leadership because these leaders inspire enthusiasm in their teams and are energetic in motivating others to move forward. This ability to create excitement and commitment is an enormous benefit.

The difference between charismatic leaders and transformational leaders lies in their intention. Transformational leaders want to transform their teams and organizations. Charismatic leaders are often focused on themselves, and may not want to change anything.

The downside to charismatic leaders is that they can believe more in themselves than in their teams. This can create the risk that a project or even an entire organization might collapse if the leader leaves. A charismatic leader might believe that she can do no wrong, even when others are warning her about the path she's on; and this feeling of invincibility can ruin a team or an organization.

Also, in the followers' eyes, success is directly connected to the presence of the charismatic leader. As such, charismatic leadership carries great responsibility, and it needs a long-term commitment from the leader. Democratic leaders make the final decisions, but they include team members in the decision-making process. They encourage creativity, and team members are often highly engaged in projects and decisions.

There are many benefits of democratic leadership. Team members tend to have high job satisfaction and are productive because they're more involved in decisions. This style also helps develop people's skills. Team members feel in control of their destiny, so they're motivated to work hard by more than just a financial reward.

Because participation takes time, this approach can slow decision-making, but the result is often good. The approach can be most suitable when working as a team is essential, and when quality is more important than efficiency or productivity.

The downside of democratic leadership is that it can often hinder situations where speed or efficiency is essential. For instance, during a crisis, a team can waste valuable time gathering people's input. Another downside is that some team

members might not have the knowledge or expertise to provide high quality input. This French phrase means "leave it be," and it describes leaders who allow their people to work on their own. This type of leadership can also occur naturally, when managers don't have sufficient control over their work and their people.

Laissez-faire leaders may give their team's complete freedom to do their work and set their own deadlines. They provide team support with resources and advice, if needed, but otherwise don't get involved. This leadership style can be effective if the leader monitors performance and gives feedback to team members regularly. It is most likely to be effective when individual team members are experienced, skilled, self-starters. The main benefit of laissez-faire leadership is that giving team members so much autonomy can lead to high job satisfaction and increased productivity.

The downside is that it can be damaging if team members don't manage their time well or if they don't have the knowledge, skills, or motivation to do their work effectively.

People-Oriented/Relations-Oriented Leadership

With people-oriented leadership, leaders are totally focused on organizing, supporting, and developing the people on their teams. This is a participatory style and tends to encourage good teamwork and creative collaboration. This is the opposite of task-oriented leadership.

People-oriented leaders treat everyone on the team equally. They're friendly and approachable, they pay attention to the welfare of everyone in the group, and they make themselves available whenever team members need help or advice.

The benefit of this leadership style is that people-oriented leaders create teams that everyone wants to be part of. Team members are often more productive and willing to take risks, because they know that the leader will provide support if they need it.

The downside is that some leaders can take this approach too far; they may put the development of their team above tasks or project directives.

Servant Leadership

This term, created by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s, describes a leader often not formally recognized as such. When someone at any level within an organization leads simply by meeting the needs of the team, he or she can be described as a "servant leader."

Servant leaders often lead by example. They have high integrity and lead with generosity .

5.1 COMUNICATION SKILLS

In many ways, servant leadership is a form of democratic leadership because the whole team tends to be involved in decision making. However, servant leaders often "lead from behind," preferring to stay out of the limelight and letting their team accept recognition for their hard work.

Supporters of the servant leadership model suggest that it's a good way to move ahead in a world where values are increasingly important, and where servant leaders can achieve power because of their values, ideals, and ethics . This is an approach that can help to create a positive corporate culture and can lead to high morale among team members.

However, other people believe that in competitive leadership situations, people who practice servant leadership can find themselves left behind by leaders using other leadership styles. This leadership style also takes time to apply correctly: it's ill-suited in situations where you have to make quick decisions or meet tight deadlines. Although you can use servant leadership in many situations, it's often most practical in politics, or in positions where leaders are elected to serve a team, committee, organization, or community. Task-oriented leaders focus only on getting the job done and can be autocratic. They actively define the work and the roles required, put structures in place, and plan, organize, and monitor work. These leaders also perform other key tasks, such as creating and maintaining standards for performance. The benefit of task-oriented leadership is that it ensures that deadlines are met, and it's especially useful for team members who don't manage their time well.

However, because task-oriented leaders don't tend to think much about their team's well-being, this approach can suffer many of the flaws of autocratic leadership, including causing motivation and retention problems. This leadership style starts with the idea that team members agree to obey their leader when they accept a job. The "transaction" usually involves the organization paying team members in return for their effort and compliance. The leader has a right to "punish" team members if their work doesn't meet an appropriate standard. Although this might sound controlling and paternalistic, transactional leadership offers some benefits. For one, this leadership style clarifies everyone's roles and responsibilities. Another benefit is that, because transactional leadership judges team members on performance, people who are ambitious or who are motivated by external rewards – including compensation – often thrive. The downside of this leadership style is that team members can do little to improve their job satisfaction. It can feel stifling, and it can lead to high staff turnover. Transactional leadership is really a type of

management, not a true leadership style, because the focus is on short-term tasks. It has serious limitations for knowledge-based or creative work. However, it can be effective in other situations. As we discussed earlier in this article, transformational leadership is often the best leadership style to use in business situations. Transformational leaders are inspiring because they expect the best from everyone on their team as well as themselves. This leads to high productivity and engagement from everyone in their team. The downside of transformational leadership is that while the leader's enthusiasm is passed onto the team, he or she can need to be supported by "detail people."

That's why, in many organizations, both transactional and transformational leadership styles are useful. Transactional leaders (or managers) ensure that routine work is done reliably, while transformational leaders look after initiatives that add new value. It's also important to use other leadership styles when necessary – this will depend on the people you're leading and the situation that you're in. You've just finished training the newest member of your team. Now that he's ready to start working, you give him the data he needs to enter into the company's database, and you hurry off to a meeting. When you return later that afternoon, you find that he hasn't done anything. He didn't know what to do, and he didn't have the confidence to ask for help. As a result, hours have been lost, and you have to rush to enter the data on time. Although you may want to blame the worker, the truth is that you're as much to blame as he is. How can you avoid situations like this? Management experts Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard argue that these things happen because leaders don't match their style of leadership to the maturity of the people they're leading. When style and maturity aren't matched, failure is the result. In this article, we'll review the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership® Theory, and we'll explain how it's used in different leadership situations. Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory the Hersey-Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory was created by Dr Paul Hersey, a professor and author of "The Situational Leader," and Ken Blanchard, author of the bestselling "One-Minute Manager," among others. The theory states that instead of using just one style, successful leaders should change their leadership styles based on the maturity of the people they're leading and the details of the task. Using this theory, leaders should be able to place more or less emphasis on the task, and more or less emphasis on the relationships with the people they're leading, depending on what's needed to get the job done successfully. Leadership Styles According to Hersey and Blanchard, there are four main leadership styles: Telling – Leaders tell their people what to do and how to do it. Selling – Leaders provide information and direction, but there's more communication with followers. Leaders "sell" their message to get people on board. Participating – Leaders focus more on the relationship and less on direction. The leader works with the team, and shares decision-making responsibilities.

Delegating (S4) – Leaders pass most of the responsibility onto the follower or group. The leaders still monitor progress, but they're less involved in decisions. As you can see, styles S1 and S2 are focused on getting the task done. Styles S3 and S4 are more concerned with developing team members' abilities to work independently. Maturity Levels According to Hersey and Blanchard, knowing when to use each style is largely dependent on the maturity of the person or group you're leading. They break maturity down into four different levels: M1 – People at this level of maturity are at the bottom level of the scale. They lack the knowledge, skills, or confidence to work on their own, and they often need to be pushed to take the task on. M2 – at this level, followers might be willing to work on the task, but they still don't have the skills to complete it successfully. M3 – Here, followers are ready and willing to help with the task. They have more skills than the M2 group, but they're still not confident in their abilities. M4 – These followers are able to work on their own. They have high confidence and strong skills, and they're committed to the task. The Hersey-Blanchard model maps each leadership style to each maturity level, as shown below.

5.2 LEADING AND MOTIVATING VOLUNTEERS

How to Motivate Volunteers: A humorous and effective training game that I often have participants play is the feedback game. I have the participant's line up on an imaginary line in the training room. I mark one end of the line as January 1st and the other end of the line December 31st. Then I ask the participants to get up out of their seats (this works great when we have a class of about 25 students) and line up on that line according to the day and month of their birthday in relationship to everyone else in the room. The only rule is that they cannot communicate to anyone about their birthdays. They can only guess. The January babies immediately go to one end and the December babies the other. Everyone else is trying to figure where they stand. After a few minutes of trying to figure out their places on the line, I ask them to speak to each other and take their proper place. In most situations, over half of the people have to change places. When they have taken their spot, with everyone standing in the proper place, then I say: "If you forget everything else I say today—don't forget this. When you get back to your seat, write it down. This one statement can change how you manage and motivate people. The statement is this: 'Without feedback you don't know where you stand.'" Of the many motivators, the number one motivator is feedback—and it's free. It doesn't cost a thing.

I then ask if any of them coach little league or soccer. Several always raise their hands. I ask them if they wait until the rewards banquet to give feedback. They say, "No way." I ask them when they give feedback and the coach's say, "Every day—all the time." That is essential for great coaching.

Try the following assignment for one month.

- Write down each volunteer that you supervise.
- Put a number by the number of tasks they do a month (i.e. 50).
- Write down the number of times each week you recognize a person for that task (i.e. 2).
- Subtract the second number (i.e. 2) from the first number (i.e. 50) = 98.
- Try to close the gap.
- Think of how many ways you can give them feedback.

Give Regular Rewards and Recognition

Another effective way to stimulate the inner motivation is through rewards and recognition. It is important that we understand the difference between these two terms. People often confuse them.

Recognition: Recognize a person for the job they were recruited to do. I volunteered to arrange the meetings for the last year, and I did my job. I am recognized for doing this job.

Reward: Recognize a person for going far above what was asked. Mary volunteered to arrange the meetings for the last year and planned ten outstanding programs. Our attendance doubled because Mary arranged for outstanding programs. She had us go to the zoo with our families and friends. We had fantastic speakers who donated their time. She did it all under budget, and with a growing membership, the organization increased its income. Mary was rewarded for doing much more than we expected and when she was given the reward, all of the membership gave her a standing ovation. No one questions the value of the reward. The president of our organization called Mary and her husband up at her last meeting and gave her an engraved plaque for her office and two tickets to "Phantom of the Opera."

The following are some recognition and reward programs that organizations have found effective:

- Graduation certificate
- Five year, ten year, fifteen-year pins/plaques
- Outstanding volunteer reward in each department
- Published results
- Free coffee and food
- Lending library

Send Volunteers to Conferences

One of the mistakes we can make is to announce a training program for our volunteers. Many people who volunteer feel that they know how to do their job. People who lead effective businesses often think that they are well trained to lead a volunteer team. However, managing a volunteer team is very different than managing employees. How do we motivate them to learn? I have had to stand before a board of directors who were at a retreat where the executive director had decided to put in a four hour board training program. As a trainer it is not an easy job to teach people who feel that they already know what you are teaching. This is a real problem. How do we solve this problem?

One is to put money in your budget to send your leaders to conferences. Most conferences are at resort towns and offer a getaway. They are filled with activities and helpful seminars for the volunteer leaders. I have spoken and led workshops at these conferences, and the enthusiasm is high. People leave pumped and filled with ideas. Most of all they network with other volunteers just like them who are struggling with some of the same issues. They exchange ideas.

These conferences offer two benefits: training and motivation.

The American Society of Association Executives and the state chapters offer continual training. As a regular trainer for these conferences, I see volunteer board members who are challenged and encouraged as we work together. The California Travel Parks Association sends its President to the CalSAE (California Society of Association Executives) training sessions. I talked with their president after attending one of these sessions, and he was excited.

Provide On-the-job Vocational Training

Student interns are another source of volunteers. Some students will work for an organization to add the experience to their resume when they graduate. Other

students get college credit. I find that when I talk about student interns, I get a lot of groans from volunteer managers who have had nothing but trouble with student interns. The interns have been unreliable and frankly caused more stress and problems than having a full-time employee. The problem is the lack of passion and motivation. If the intern is not passionate about your cause, it is just a job—a job in which they don't get paid. They are in your place of business for a grade. And some students don't care if they get a "C" when we want "A" work.

We need to follow all of the recruiting techniques we follow with other volunteers, and perhaps add a few more. In addition to developing a very specific position charter, we could also develop a signed letter of agreement. The letter of agreement would spell out the terms of the contract and include the following information:

- Appearance/dress/uniform expectation
- Performance expectations (i.e. four hours one day a week/on time)
- Policy on absenteeism
- Lines of communication
- Volunteer manual containing policies and procedures
- Career path
- Performance reviews
- Privileges and perks

Be Available to Volunteers

I hear this one all the time from the paid staff of an organization—whether the Girl Scouts, hospital staff, or local churches. Volunteers expect to spend time visiting with the paid staff. And often the paid staff get frustrated with the interruptions. But spending time with these volunteers will help enormously with their morale and motivation.

One successful organization invites the volunteers to the staff coffee times during breaks to spend time interacting with them. Then as they walk back to their workstations the staff takes a few minutes (usually not more than about 90 seconds) to comment on their work and how much they appreciated it. The wise staff member will make it a point of being very specific by saying, "Connie, thanks so much for that report you prepared for me last week. I was able to use the information you provided to write this article for our national publication and the article will be coming out next month. I'll be sure you get a copy." When the article is published, send Connie a copy with a handwritten message across the top of the page saying, "I couldn't have written this without your help."

Provide Free Food

What is it about food that is a motivator? This is true in the workplace as well as with volunteers. One summer I was leading management workshops in five locations of a government agency. Headquarters was concerned about the lack of motivation in the five offices. And their concerns were founded. But what I found, and I spent about three days in each branch office, was that four of the places were dead and one was alive. The difference—food!

Offering free snacks for our volunteers will go a long way in motivating and encouraging volunteers. Bringing bagels, donuts and fruit to a volunteer meeting, or refreshments to a long evening meeting is a winner. My wife and I belong to a monthly volunteer committee that meets once a month at 5:30 p.m. We all leave our places of work and have either Pizza or Sub sandwiches waiting for us when we arrive. I don't know how many times I have been tempted to skip our 5:30 meeting because I had had a really rough day. When I thought of the great food our chairperson always brought, it was just enough incentive to be faithful—and frankly some days I needed that incentive.

Have Fun

Fun is the great motivator. Volunteer work can be stressful. And fun is one of the most effective stress busters. Groups that play ball together, golf together, take a hike together, or even just have pizza together (food again), stay together.

Too often leaders who are passionate about their cause, forget to laugh. We become so serious about our causes and our mission that we forget to have fun. Tom Peters says, "The number one premise of business is that it need not be boring or dull. It ought to be fun. If it's not fun, you're wasting your life." I have to admit that this is one of the areas of leadership that I struggle with the most. I often became so involved in the daily running of an organization, meeting payroll, paying bills, meeting the expectations of members, and managing employees that I would not lighten up.

According to some sources, eighty percent of all illness is due to stress. Oh, people get pneumonia, bronchitis, and the flu, but the primary reason the majority of people get sick is because stress shuts off the immune system. And people are stressed! But laughter is a great stress buster.

John F. Kennedy said, "There are three things which are real: God, human folly and laughter. The first two are beyond our comprehension. So we must do what we can with the third."

Hire Staff That Are Committed to Volunteers

In most non-profit organizations, we depend on volunteers to carry out our mission. The role of the staff is to provide the resources for the volunteer staff. At the Sacramento Railroad Museum they do not differentiate between paid staff and volunteer staff. They are equal.

5.3 MENTORING

Leadership and Mentoring

Bozeman and Feeney (2007) define mentoring as “a process for the informal transmission of knowledge, social capital, and the psychosocial support perceived by the recipient as relevant to work, career, or professional development; mentoring entails informal communication, usually face-to-face and during a sustained period of time, between a person who is perceived to have greater relevant knowledge, wisdom, or experience the mentor and a person who is perceived to have less (the protégé).”

It originated from Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*. In the poem, Odysseus, King of Ithaca went to fight in the Trojan War and entrusted the care of his kingdom to Mentor, who served as the teacher of Odysseus' son, Telemachus.

Mentoring is often thought of as the transfer of wisdom from a wise and trusted counselor, normally in a leadership position, who helps to guide a person's career, normally in the upper echelons of the organization. The two most common terms used to describe the person being mentored are “mentee” and “protégé,” while two lesser used terms are “apprentice” and “student.”

A mentor cares about her protégés and goes out of her or her way to see that they get the best possible chance to fulfill their career potential. It involves teaching, coaching, and helping to build a high degree of confidence. But what brings out the full magic of mentorship is some degree of affection or warm friendship... such as what an older brother might feel for his kid sister.

Why the Need for Mentoring?

Capital Analytics found a 1,000% ROI, for Sun mentoring, using their most conservative measures of job and salary grade improvement (Dickinson, Junket, & Garcon, 2009).

Mentoring has been shown to have a positive effect on one's career. One study by Gerard Roche (1979) found that of the 63.5 percent of the 1,250 respondents who had a mentor (defined as “a person who took a personal interest in your career and who guided or sponsored you”) were on the average better paid, reached their

positions faster, and were more satisfied with their work and careers than their non-mentor counterparts.

Kram (1986) discovered that mentoring facilitates the socialization of new hires into the organization, reduce turnover, minimize mid-career adjustments, enhance transfer of knowledge and values, and facilitate the adjustment of retirement.

Who should be mentored? While most mentoring programs seemed to be aimed at the best and brightest, Delong & Vijayaraghavan (2003) reported that it makes more sense to go after the large middle-base (B-players) as they make up the great majority of employees (80%) as opposed to the top 10% of star A-players, and the bottom 10% of incompetent C-players):

“Like all prize-winning supporting actors, B-players bring depth and stability to the companies they work for, slowly but surely improving both corporate performance and organizational resilience... They will never garner the most revenue or the biggest clients, but they also will be less likely to embarrass the company or flunk out... these players inevitably end up being the backbone of the organization.”

The authors also note that an organization's long-term performance and survival depends far more on the contributions of their B-players. These steady performers counter-balance the ambitions of the company's high-performing visionaries, whose strengths, when carried to an extreme, can lead to reckless or volatile behavior. Thus, B-players stabilize the actions of the A-players.

Investing in a mentoring program for high performers does not yield as significant a return as might be assumed. Rather, the better investment for Sun would be to spend the money on lower performers to help them raise their level of performance.” Leadership mentoring and situated learning are important components in the effective preparation of candidates for school principal ships. This study examined this assertion through responses to reflective writing prompts and to interview questions by students enrolled in three different closed cohorts in the same university-based preparation program. Readiness to assume a principal ship appears to be linked to an individual's (a) encouragement and support from leadership mentors; (b) opportunities to engage in authentic leadership activities; and (c) perceptions of personal competence to assume school-leadership responsibilities. To develop these elements, especially as pools of principals shrink, preparers should carefully select leadership mentors for aspiring administrators and organize authentic problems of practice in schools, which expand opportunities for aspirants to apply knowledge in practice. In this vein, three models of leadership mentoring during full-time authentic school-leadership practice are described.

5.4 TIME MANAGEMENT

So you've just got a new job as a manager. Congratulations! Or, maybe you've just been given the task of pulling a new team together. What a challenge!

Either way, whether your team exists already or it's your responsibility to create it, what do you do next?

This article looks at some of the key things that team managers need to do if their team is to thrive and succeed. These range from choosing the right people and deciding who does what, to communicating with, developing and motivating people. It also covers some of the most common pitfalls to be avoided.

First Things First

But before that, some definitions are useful. What is management, exactly? And how does it differ from leadership?

A good starting point is the Warren G Bennie quote that "Leaders are people who do the right things; managers are people who do things right." Leadership involves creating a compelling vision of the future, communicating that vision, and helping people understand and commit to it. Managers, on the other hand, are responsible for ensuring that the vision is implemented efficiently and successfully.

Of course, these two roles overlap – and, to be fully effective, you need to fulfill both roles. However, the focus of this article is on the specific skills and responsibilities of managers, and on the tools available to them. After all, there's no point energizing people to work towards a fabulous vision of the future, only to fall flat on your face when it comes to implementation.

The Importance of Delegation

The top priority for team managers is delegation. No matter how skilled you are, there's only so much that you can achieve working on your own. With a team behind you, you can achieve so much more: that's why it's so important that you delegate effectively!

Successful delegation starts with matching people and tasks, so you first need to explain what your team's role and goals are. A good way of doing this is to put together a team charter, which sets out the purpose of the team and how it will work. Not only does this help you get your team off to a great start, it can also be useful for bringing the team back on track if it's veering off course.

Only then will you be in a position to think about the skills, experience and competencies within your team, and start matching people to tasks. Read our article on task allocation for more on how to do this, and to find out how to deal with real-world challenges, such as managing the gaps between team members' skill sets. Developing Your Team

Teams are made up of individuals who have different outlooks and abilities, and are at different stages of their careers. Some may find that the tasks you've

allocated to them are challenging, and they may need support. Others may be "old hands" at what they're doing, and may be looking for opportunities to stretch their skills. Either way, it's your responsibility to develop all of your people.

Your skills in this aspect of management will define your long-term success as a manager. If you can help team members to become better at what they do, you'll be a manager who people aspire to work for, and you'll make a great contribution to your organization, too. The most effective way of developing your people is to ensure that you give regular feedback to members of your team. Many of us are nervous of giving feedback, especially when it has to be negative. However, if you give and receive feedback regularly, everyone's performance will improve.

Beyond this, our article on [Understanding Developmental Needs](#) will help you develop individual team members, so that they can perform at their best. [Communicating and Working With Your Team – and With Others](#)

Communication skills are essential for success in almost any role, but there are particular skills and techniques that you'll use more as a manager than you did as a regular worker. These fall under two headings: communicating with team members, and communicating with people outside your team. We'll look at each in turn.

Communicating With People in Your Team

As a team manager, you're likely to be chairing regular sessions as well as one-off meetings. Meeting of all kinds, and regular ones in particular, are notorious for wasting people's time, so it's well worth mastering the skill of running effective meetings.

Many meetings include brainstorming sessions. As a team manager, you'll often have to facilitate these, so you'll need to be comfortable with doing this. There's more to this than simply coming up with creative ideas, as you do when you're just a regular participant in such a session: read our article [to find out how to run brainstorming sessions](#). Make sure that you understand where they can go wrong, and what you can do to avoid this.

Active listening is another important skill for managers – and others – to master. When you're in charge, it can be easy to think that you know what others are going to say, or that listening is less important, because you've thought of a solution anyway. Don't fall into this trap.

Most good managers are active listeners:

it helps them detect problems early (while they're still easy to deal with), avoid costly misunderstandings, and build trust within their teams.

Communicating With People outside Your Team

Your boss is probably the most important person you need to communicate with. Take time to understand fully what your boss wants from you and your team – if you know exactly what she likes, and how she prefers this to be delivered, you'll be better able to meet with her approval.

Don't be afraid to ask your boss to coach or mentor you: you can usually learn a lot from him, but he may not be proactive about offering this. If you're approaching your boss for advice, make sure you've thought things through as far as you can. Introduce the subject with a summary of your thinking, and then say where you need help.

Also, as a manager, part of your job is to look after your team and protect it from unreasonable pressure. Learn skills like assertiveness and win-win negotiation, so that you can either turn work away, or negotiate additional resources.

Another part of your job is to manage the way that your team interacts with other groups. Use stakeholder analysis to identify the groups that you need to deal with. Then talk to these people to find out what they want from you, and what they can do to help you.

Managing Discipline

However much you hope that you won't have to do it, there comes a time in most managers' careers when they have to discipline an employee. Discipline may be subtly different from basic feedback, because it doesn't always relate specifically to the employee's work. You can give feedback on their phone manner, for example, but handling problems with timekeeping or personal grooming can need a different approach.

Obvious breaches of the law or of company policy are easy to identify and deal with. But what of other situations? On one hand you don't want to seem petty. On the other hand, you can't let things go that should be dealt with.

Use these rules-of-thumb to decide whether you need to take action. If the answer to any is yes, then you need to arrange a time to speak to the employee in private.

Does the issue affect the quality of the employee's deliverable to the client (internal or external)?

A graphic designer regularly gets in to work late, although he stays late to make up for this. Customers are sometimes frustrated by not being able to get through to him at the start of the day, particularly when he's working on rush jobs.

Does the issue adversely impact the cohesiveness of the team?

Individual designers tend to work on their own projects, with few meetings between design team members, so cohesiveness is not impacted. However people

are noticing his lack of punctuality, and other people's timekeeping is beginning to slip.

Does the issue unnecessarily undermine the interests of other individuals in the team?

The designer sitting next to the latecomer is unhappy that she has to field calls from clients before he reaches the office, and is unable to give a firm answer to the question "When will he be in?"

In this situation, the design team manager decides to speak to the latecomer because of the impact on his co-worker. They agree that coming in to work late is not a problem (he has a long commute, with heavy traffic en route) but that he will commit to being in by 9.30 a.m. every day to reduce the number of calls his co-worker has to field, and also give her a fixed time to give clients. He will work late to make up time, and will take on a task she doesn't like to make up for her extra phone handling.

When you are faced with a potential discipline issue, take time to gather information about the situation, decide what you're going to do, and act. Discipline issues rarely go away of their own accord, and they usually get worse, often causing considerable resentment amongst other team members.

Traps to Avoid

There are a number of common mistakes that new managers tend to make. Take care to avoid them!

These are:

- Thinking that you can rely on your existing job knowledge and technical skills to succeed as a manager. It is essential that you take the time to develop good management and people skills as well – these can be more important than your technical skills!
- Failing to consult regularly with your boss, in a misguided attempt to show that you can cope on your own. Approaching your boss without having thought a problem through, and without having considered how the problem could be solved. Embarrassing your boss, or letting her get a nasty surprise. Follow the "no surprises" rule.
- Doing anything that requires your boss to defend you to others. This can cause your boss to "lose face" with his peers and superiors, and it makes it look as if his team is out of control.
- Failing to talk to your customers (whether internal or external) about what they want from yourself and your team. Using your authority inappropriately

– make sure that everything you ask people to do is in the interests of the organization. Many of these points sound obvious, however it's incredibly easy to make these mistakes in the rush of everyday managerial life.