

FROM BOSS TO COACH: A Playbook



SCAN ME

For digital access to
From Boss to Coach:
Playbook,
scan the QR code!



Empowering Leaders for
Productivity, Passion, and Peace.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1	3	Introduction
CHAPTER 2	5	Understanding the difference between Leadership & Management
CHAPTER 3	7	Leading with Humility and Empathy as a New Manager
CHAPTER 4	9	How to Build Trust in the Workplace as a New Manager
CHAPTER 5	12	Coaching Skills for Managers 101
CHAPTER 6	15	How Automated Micro-Coaching is the Future of a Thriving Workplace
CHAPTER 7	17	How To Give Positive & Constructive Feedback with Examples
CHAPTER 8	20	Conflict Resolution Through Difficult Conversations
CHAPTER 9	23	Motivating Employees as a New Manager
CHAPTER 10	25	Performance Management Tools Every New Manager Needs
CHAPTER 11	27	How Managing Virtual Teams is an Essential Skill for Leaders
CHAPTER 12	30	Leading During Change & Uncertainty
CHAPTER 13	32	Managing High Performing Teams



Congratulations! You're a leader—whether you've just become a leader or are seasoned within your organization, this can be an exciting time. You've received your “how to manage people in all circumstances” handbook right?

Managing humans is something we aren't always prepared for. We might be highly skilled in our industry, but have a lot to uncover about being a great leader. It's an ongoing journey.

You may have heard it said that people don't leave jobs, they leave their boss. In Gallup's research, featured in the 2019 publication, “It's the Manager,” one of the most important data points is that **an overwhelming 70% of variance between high workplace engagement and workplace disengagement can be directly attributed to quality of the leader.**

What does that mean for you?

Being a “boss” might conjure up images of status and power, but being a “coach” presents you as a champion for your team. Your job as a leader is not about checking off boxes when things get done, but ensuring that each team member is engaged, productive, and continuously being developed.

You don't have to learn to be a master coach, you still have your own job to do. This is more about learning to take a coaching approach to leading, or moving from a boss to coach mindset. It's not something you learn overnight. It's almost like learning a new language, the language of leadership.

What does a boss say vs. what does a coach say? Here's a quick example:

Boss: “That report needs to be complete asap no matter what. There's no other option than to get it done.”

Coach: “That report is priority. What support do you need to prioritize to ensure we can meet the deadline?”

We've gathered some of the most important tips to empower first-time managers in their new role and to help you go from boss to coach. Along the way, we'll share bite-size practical management skills that you can use right away. Here's a sneak peak:

- **Leadership Vs. Management:** We'll help you discover the difference between managing and leading. By learning this distinction you'll get clarity on when you use which approach.

- **Humility, Empathy, and Better Communication:** Discover optimal communication strategies for multiple situations. By gaining clarity on how to leverage humility & empathy appropriately, you'll create a work environment built on respect.
- **Building Trust:** Create a deep understanding of what building trust in the workplace looks like. Learn practical repeatable strategies on how to build trust with your team as you manage.
- **How To Coach As Leader: Coaching Skills 101:** Learn how to coach as a manager using quick and easy techniques to have impactful conversations with your team. Learn how to coach on the fly in almost any situation.
- **How To Give Feedback:** Find out how to prepare for providing consistent positive and constructive feedback. Apply specific approaches to giving good feedback that contributes to developing a culture where feedback is solicited.
- **Conflict Resolution & Having Difficult Conversations:** Walk away with specific difficult conversation starters you can use for tough topics and how to manage conflict. Strategize and create your own signature process for tackling team conflict and difficult conversations.
- **Motivating Employees in the Workplace:** Learn how to tap into employee motivation to get the best work out of everyone. Discover micro-recognition activities that can fast track igniting employee motivation.
- **Performance Management:** Discover a new and innovative approach to performance management through multiple touchpoints and coaching conversations. Find out how to use goal-setting effectively to help team members get results and develop their careers.
- **Virtual Team Management:** Uncover simple strategies to create healthy communication and productivity with virtual teams. Find out how to recreate "water cooler moments" when your team is dispersed.
- **Leading During Change / Uncertainty:** Leverage key approaches to leading people during change to support performance and engagement. Uncover important pitfalls to avoid while managing change.
- **Managing and Developing High Performing Teams:** Now that you have your playbook of things to remember, uncover the strategies on how to manage and develop high-performing teams. Help people win individually and together.

One of the most important places to start is distinguishing between leadership and management. We may use these terms interchangeably, but they are different concepts. Once you have "leader mode" articulated you can be aware of when to leverage it for success. This awareness will help guide you through all of the other information about coaching employees we are going to share. Here's to your success.

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

Leaders and bosses: are they the same thing? At first glance, no one would blame you if you did think these two words were interchangeable. As a new leader, understanding the key differences between leadership and management can dramatically impact how you excel in and even enjoy your new role. (Yes, you are allowed to have fun)

To keep it short and sweet, managers drive work getting done and leaders develop people. Great leaders know how to do both of these things, and know WHEN to manage vs. lead. When we are managing we are consumed with the functional aspect of the work that gets done. This might involve things like planning, budgeting, evaluating data, decision-making, and facilitating the operational aspects of our day-to-day work responsibilities. As good leaders, we prioritize developing relationships and trust with our teams, we select and develop talent, motivate, and yes...we coach.

What does leadership look like?

The answer to this one is a little tough to put in a neat little bow. In the book, *The Leadership Challenge*, authors Kouzes and Posner studied effective leadership across industries and cultures and found that great leaders have the following 5 practices in common:

1. **Modeling the Way:** Leading by example, displaying behaviors you would want other people to follow.
2. **Inspiring a Shared Vision:** Rallying your team around a common goal or purpose.
3. **Challenging the Process:** Seeking innovation and taking risks to challenge the status quo.
4. **Enabling Others to Act:** Fostering collaboration through developing trust and competence.
5. **Encouraging the Heart:** Recognizing the contribution of others and showing appreciation.

You'll notice in all of the above best practices, they are expressed in a way one outwardly interacts with others. It's about WHO people know you to be vs. WHAT you do while you are staring at a spreadsheet all day.

In general, your leadership qualities are reflected back in the experience others have of you. Through feedback and ongoing development you can start to see your strengths along with the places where you have an opportunity to grow.

You might want to ask yourself, which of these exemplary leadership skills or practices am I the strongest in? Which one do I need the most support around?

What does management look like?

You're running late to a morning meeting after a night out with friends and you just got an email from YOUR boss about additional data and reports you need to have ready for the start of a presentation. You arrive at your desk with about 10 minutes

to prepare (or barrel down the stairs to your virtual office in sweatpants, business casual on top). You quickly pull some spreadsheets and a few PDFs that your team has been working on and you have just enough time to get them to your boss. Management looks like getting work done when it needs to get done. It's not always pretty, it's sometimes daunting but it's outcome and results driven. We manage processes, we lead people. We manage data, we develop others to use that data to tell a story. Managing is what you do when you are up against a deadline, troubleshooting a challenge, or organizing information. "Manager is a title. It is a role and a set of responsibilities. Having the position of manager does not make you a leader. The best managers are leaders, but the two are not synonymous" says leadership coach Doc Norton.

Why you need BOTH Leadership & Management

When you focus on developing leadership qualities, managing gets easier. The art of getting work done happens as a RESULT of forming relationships and working to inspire people. All of the things that you have on your plate will get done better and faster TOGETHER, but this requires connecting with people at a human level.

A great leader knows what motivates individual team members so they can better understand how to guide them when times are tough. A great leader understands the career aspirations of their team members, and can assign relevant projects and tasks that will engage (and retain) them. And a great leader builds rewarding relationships with team members, and as a result doesn't have to work so hard to get buy in. Great leadership makes managing EASIER. This "easy button" requires a little bit more focus and reflection, so let's explore some things you can do right now to develop yourself.

Strategies for Managing & Leading

Develop as a Leader

1. Survey your team members and find out the leadership style that they are most motivated by. Do they prefer it when you roll up their sleeves and work alongside them or will they thrive with more autonomy?
2. Plan a quarterly team development event. This can be something social, but build familiarity through FUN!
3. Find ONE book on Leadership to help cultivate leadership qualities. Here are a few of our favorites:
 - *The Leadership Challenge* - Kouzes & Posner
 - *How to Win Friends and Influence People* - Dale Carnegie
 - *From Good to Great* - Jim Collins
 - *Leaders Eat Last* - Simon Sinek
 - *Grit* - Angela Duckworth
 - *Dare To Lead* - Brené Brown
4. Set ONE leadership goal for yourself and share it with your direct manager.

Develop as a Manager

1. Identify ONE process that needs to be upgraded or developed on your team and engage your team in a collaborative effort to make that process more effective.
2. Block out time on your calendar to perform specific management tasks like reviewing data and activities that are more transactional.
3. Keep an ongoing "parking lot" of operational areas for improvement to continually seek to uplevel your day-to-day operations.

You don't have to do all of these things, but pick at least one in each area. It's all about your continued leadership development. Developing as an effective leader and a good manager is an ongoing process. Along the way you will make mistakes but you will also gain confidence and experience joy as well. You've got this.

LEADING WITH HUMILITY AND EMPATHY AS A NEW MANAGER



Stepping into a role as a manager is something to celebrate. And at the same time, it's a promotion that should provide a confidence boost. After all, you're the boss now. You get to tell people what to do. Right?

But, what if the best way to approach this new position was to take on a more humble, empathetic approach rather than "buying in" to an ego boost and preparing a list of demands? What if great leadership requires a change in mindset that is not only more effective and makes you a better leader but is also how you can get the most out of the people you are leading?

One reason why this might seem counterintuitive is that our idea of a good leader is often informed by people we've observed or worked under in the past. And some of them led with plenty of outward arrogance and pride.

You've probably seen this in your life firsthand as well as on the big screen, in business leaders, and especially in the world of politics. And speaking of the ideas and influences that have shaped our opinions and actions, aren't traits like humility and empathy signs of weakness? Aren't great leaders tough and don't need any help?

Of course, there's nothing wrong with toughness, but the bottom line is that there is an increasing need for new managers to have a healthy amount of humility and empathy, especially as we move from The Great Resignation to what many are calling The Great Restructuring.

Your Team Wants A Humble, Empathetic Leader

A recent study from the University of South Australia Centre for Workplace Excellence spent time with nearly 500 team members spanning 120 different workplace teams. The research uncovered that "leaders who demonstrate humility through self-awareness, praising others' strengths and contributions, and being open to feedback" are creating more positive workplaces and curbing negative influences.

That compelling research, along with the shifts in the workplace in the past couple of years due to the pandemic should lead you to consider these competencies essential as a new leader. And whether you're already aware of this or haven't considered it until now, there is good news: both humility and empathy are skills you can learn as you become a more effective leader. Author Brené Brown says that "empathy is a choice, and it's a vulnerable choice. In order to connect with you, I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling."

In his book *Humble Inquiry*, former MIT professor Edgar Schein makes a similar statement about humility: "Humility is not a required major personality trait of good inquirers. But even the most confident or arrogant among us will find ourselves humbled by the reality of being dependent on others." And look at how author Carly Fiorina puts both of them together in

this statement from her book Find Your Way:

“We must be willing to say to the world at large, “I recognize that I don’t have all the answers.” (That’s humility.) “And I acknowledge that you can help me fill in those gaps.” (That’s empathy.) Humility is the understanding that we can’t go it alone. Empathy is the ability to identify with the challenges that have brought other people to where they are. Combined, these two traits invite us into authentic relationships with others, allowing collaborative energy to begin to flow. Humility keeps us open to new information, new insights, new wisdom. Empathy encourages us to unite.”

Can you adopt an attitude that acknowledges that you don’t have all the answers? How about a posture that can identify the challenges others have faced to get where they are today, just like you have? If we believe that this combination leads to more authentic relationships with others, where collaborative energy flows, it sounds like a fantastic approach for new leaders in every arena across the workforce.

Learning How This Works As A New Manager

With those things in mind, how can you step into this as a new manager that is getting used to your role and getting to know the members of your team? Here are a few ways to get started as you take on this adventure towards humble leadership.

Humble Leaders have a self-awareness that acknowledges they don’t have all the answers.

Are leaders expected to have it all figured out? Just because you’re leading others doesn’t mean you know it all, so why do so many of us pretend like we don’t need help? Taking an approach of vulnerability and admitting that you make mistakes and don’t have all the answers is a big step towards building trust with the people you are leading. This level of self-awareness requires having the emotional intelligence to look at yourself honestly and assess your strengths and weaknesses to build trust with team members.

Humble leaders include their teams in problem-solving, decision-making & are dependent on others each step of the way.

Another important step on the journey is to include your team more in problem-solving and decision-making. This not only provides you with a more diverse set of opinions but also helps team members feel more valued. Remember the quote from Schein that states “even the most confident or arrogant among us will find ourselves humbled by the reality of being dependent on others?” An effective leader depends on their team members to do much more than complete a list of tasks. Instead, they depend on their opinions, insights, and feedback to get the most out of each individual for the good of the team.

Humble leaders ask questions with sincerity and curiosity.

Asking good questions is a key throughout your learning process as you adjust to your new leadership role. But if you aren’t doing so with sincerity and curiosity, it won’t be received well. For example, if your questions come across to others like they are on a witness stand at a trial, that’s probably not going to create an environment of safe communication. Questions like “What should we do?” when you are facing a challenge is a better option. And how you ask and respond is important too. Team members will be able to figure out your level of sincerity quickly if you receive their responses with disinterest or move on to the next topic or question too fast.

And there’s more....

Leading as a humble, empathetic manager will give you a big advantage as you step into a role with a new team. And since these traits can be learned over time, they are powerful skills that are a huge asset to you during your leadership development. Setting the stage with this approach also helps build trust in the workplace, a topic you’ll learn more about in our next section.



HOW TO BUILD TRUST IN THE WORKPLACE AS A NEW MANAGER

Building a Culture of Trust

How much does trust REALLY matter? Let's do the math (Thanks [Workforce Institute](#))

- Nearly two-thirds (64%) of employees say trust has a direct impact on their sense of belonging at work.
- Employees who do not feel trusted are less productive: Two-thirds (68%) say that the perception of low trust hurts their daily effort.

Those are some interesting numbers but what does that mean for YOU, a new manager, faced with managing a group of humans waiting for you to guide them? You may also be thinking that employee trust is a two-way street, and you wouldn't be wrong. But right now, you only have 100% control over yourself, so let's start there.

Building Trust Starts with....Relationships

Think of the person you trust most in your own life. Maybe it's a partner, parent, or best friend. When you think of WHY you trust them, what comes to mind? You might feel that there is a lack of feeling judged, a feeling of being able to be yourself and they might even be great listeners.

While work relationships and employee engagement may be a bit different, having some of these aspects present between you and your team members can only be a good thing. This will be easy with some people. Others may make you reach for that second cup of coffee while trying really hard not to eye roll. Yes, sometimes we have to manage difficult people, people we would NEVER be friends with outside of work, and even people who utterly annoy us.

This is where you grow and build mutual respect. Where you get to shine as a leader is in how you build trusting relationships in your work environment with those that are the most difficult.

How Trust Opens Doors

We'll get to the HOW of trust in a moment, but ultimately, trust between you and your individual team members AND within your team just makes things happen. When you establish trust it opens the door to increased productivity, quality of work outputs, and yes, an ENJOYABLE experience at work. 50 years ago people went to work to get a paycheck. Now people (rightfully so) demand that they might actually get to enjoy what they do.

When trust is present 1-1 with your team members:

1. You'll be perceived as approachable and able to get ahead of problems that need to be solved ASAP.
2. You'll learn more quickly how to leverage the talent of your team members for optimal performance.
3. You'll keep people: If you've ever had to pick up the slack when a team member leaves, you know the importance of employee retention.

When trust is present AMONGST your entire team:

1. You might actually like going to work.
2. You'll all feel like you've got each other's backs. This leads to less stress and burnout when a company culture where no one is left to fend for themselves is in place.
3. You'll unlock creativity and potential in each other which has a ripple effect on collaboration, and productivity, while helping people do their best work.

How and WHY to Identify a Lack of Trust

You've just been promoted, and you sense that a member of your team is pretty stand-off-ish. In your first 1-1 with this team member they give a lot of one-word answers, don't make much eye contact, and don't seem too interested to let you in. We don't always know EXACTLY what is going on so be careful not to jump to conclusions.

When you sense a lack of trust, good leaders know how to get in there and open up the difficult conversations. If trust isn't present, you have to do the hard work and find out why. Now, this doesn't mean going full-on "Olivia Benson SVU" and interrogating the person as if they are suspected of a crime. It does however mean an honest conversation with a few powerful, yet tactful questions:

Start with: "I want to make sure you feel comfortable coming to me with whatever you need support with."

Followed by these options:

- How do you think we can work together best?
- Is there anything you need to share for us to have the most productive work relationship?
- What type of support do you feel you need most from me right now?

From what they share, LISTEN before responding, and know that this may take more than one conversation.

How to Build Trust With Your Team

Let's go back to what people are actually saying. In that same [Workforce Institute](#) research we shared earlier, they asked team members how their managers can earn their trust. Here are some of the top answers and some practical tips to go along with it.

Be Dependable

1. For people to count on you, they need to be clear and consistent. Do what you say you will, and if you CAN'T do it, communicate the change as soon as possible.
2. Be a calendar warrior. Include reminders for when you said you would check in with individuals or projects and don't

rely on sticky notes or your own memory.

3. Ask for help from YOUR boss when you need it. Don't try to be a hero or a lone ranger. Lean into teamwork and speak up when you need support.

Actively Listen

1. Active listening is an art. It means NOT thinking about your to-do list, your weekend plans, or your latest Netflix series obsession while someone else is talking to you. Trustworthy leaders FOCUS on what the person is saying.

2. Focus on what the person is also NOT saying. Observe their behavior, emotions, and body language. What is your gut telling you to say or ask next?

3. Clarify and reflect back on what you hear to ensure you understand: "So what I am getting from our conversation is that you don't have enough support from the team on this project and we might need to share ideas in a meeting to discuss this - is that accurate?"

Give Helpful Feedback

1. Give feedback on time, when it counts, and with an intention to contribute.

2. Criticism is not feedback. Constructive feedback with alternative approaches and solutions is helpful.

3. Don't stop at "great job!" Express the impact that a job well done has had on the team, organization, and specific individuals as well.

4. Empower your team members to solicit feedback when they need it to build high levels of trust.

The key thing to remember is building trust is hard work and takes TIME. Every person you manage is bringing their entire lives into this working relationship. Every person has their own challenges with trust, and part of being a great leader is navigating the path to building trust with confidence that eventually will all work out.



COACHING SKILLS FOR MANAGERS 101

Part of being a great manager is knowing when to use certain approaches to leading. While coaching isn't new, in the last 25 years coaching in the workplace has become more widely accepted. It's important not to overcomplicate what coaching is and to recognize what it isn't (it's not therapy or feel-good fluff).

In its simplest definition, **coaching is facilitating positive change with individuals and teams to unlock potential**. This happens through a subtle nuance in how the leader communicates and empowers the team member to own their experiences. Effective coaching is also learning by...coaching. You can't learn to coach by just reading a book or taking an online course. It's a leadership skill that is honed over time.

Coaching Skills: It all starts with Listening

Active listening is one of the most critical fundamental leadership coaching skills you can develop. When we are actively listening we are NOT interrupting, interjecting our own stories and thoughts. We are OTHERS focused. We might ask some clarifying questions and comment on what the person is saying:

- It seems like you are really frustrated with the current situation, is that fair to say?
- Can you say more about _____ (Insert something you aren't clear about)
- You've shared this challenge with me a few times, are you noticing any pattern?
- I want to thank you for coming to me with your feedback about the project. I really appreciate your attention to detail.

As you listen more intently, your team member will share information with you that can help clue you into asking the right questions. The coaching approach here is to keep the focus off of yourself, your knowledge, and your ideas. Yes, it's true. Coaching is not about you.

Coaching Skills: Asking & Goal Setting

Once we are empowering team members in doing their own thinking, it's important to support team members in making their ideas actionable. The next two critical coaching skills for managers to explore are powerful questioning and goal setting.

Powerful Questions

Part of learning this coaching style is ASKING before launching into TELLING. Many people believe that they are great coaches, but they are often great MENTORS, sharing expertise. Here are a few examples of powerful questions effective

leaders use:

- What is the next step here given the goal you've set for yourself?
- What would it look like if this problem were solved?
- What would be the impact on you if you received this promotion?

Goal Setting

Ideas die unless they become actions. A good coach helps team members transform ideas into action.

- What is a goal you could set to help avoid this problem in the future?
- How can I support you in your goal to be promoted to leadership?
- What best practices would you need to adopt to support you in accomplishing your goal?

When to use coaching...and when not to

That might all sound great, but am I constantly questioning everyone on my team? The answer is: NO. If someone asks you where a file is located, you are not going to respond: Well what would be the impact on you if I found that file?

You are going to give them the file or direct them on how to get it.

Part of understanding when coaching employees in the workplace is to understand more about its intent: to develop the competence and confidence within individuals by inviting them to do their best thinking. Here's when you want to use coaching:

1. When an employee is repeatedly coming to you with the same issue.
2. When a team member is having interpersonal issues with another team member.
3. When a team member expressed a desire to move up within the organization.
4. When preparing a team member to take on new responsibilities.

As you continue in your leadership role you'll develop the intuition and emotional intelligence to know when to coach and when not to coach.

A Model for Coaching: GROW

[The GROW coaching model](#), designed by Sir John Whitmore is one of the easiest to execute applications of coaching in the workplace. Follow these simple steps in a formal or informal coaching conversation for optimal results. With each step of the model, you'll find helpful questions to guide you at the facilitator.

Goal: The coaching process starts with establishing a goal. It could involve performance goals, development goals, problem-solving, decision-making, or a goal for the coaching session.

- What do you want to achieve from this conversation?
- What do you really want?
- What would you like to accomplish?
- What result are you trying to achieve?
- What outcome would be ideal?
- What do you want to change?

- What would the benefits be if you achieved this goal?

Reality: Next you want to get a read on the current state or situation. What is actually happening or NOT happening? Great managers take it slow here and leverage their active listening skills:

- What is happening right now in a nutshell?
- What steps have you already taken to reach your goal?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how confident are you that you can accomplish this goal/resolve this problem?
- What strategies have you used in the past that were successful?
- What is the single biggest obstacle standing in the way of you achieving your goal?
- What is working well right now?
- What could you do better this time?
- What could be another possible interpretation of what _____ said or did?

Options: Once you both have a clear understanding of the situation, the desired goal, or the problem, the coaching conversation turns to what the team member can do to reach their goal.

- What are your current options?
- What is the best next step you could take here?
- What would happen if you did nothing?
- What has worked for you already? How could you do more of that?
- What is the most challenging part of this particular goal?
- What is a similar situation you've faced in the past and what did you do to resolve it?
- What has helped you achieve goals in the past?
- What's the upside/downside of your options right now?
- What option is your gut telling you to try first?
- How would you like things to go if there were absolutely no limits?

Will or Way Forward: You close out a coaching conversation by gaining commitment from your team member on specific actions they are going to take on. This is where the person begins to own their results.

- What do you think you need to do right now?
- What does success look like here?
- How can I support you with your desired result?
- Is there anything missing from your plan or next steps?
- What will one small step you take now?
- Is there anyone else you need to have a conversation with to ensure your success?
- Do you need to block time on your calendar for any relevant actions?
- When should we check back in on your progress?

It may seem like a lot of questions, and the truth is a successful coaching conversation is one where you don't say much. You teach others to lead themselves. At times team members may get frustrated and just want to be told what to do. This is the path of least resistance for some, but in the long run, it keeps them stuck.

And in the midst of it all, remember that there are times when a leader needs to step in and be very direct in their approach in order to add clarity to a situation. This isn't a coaching skill, but is a valuable tool that you'll still need as you lead.

We hope this list of effective coaching skills for managers has helped you.



HOW AUTOMATED MICRO-COACHING IS THE FUTURE OF A THRIVING WORKPLACE

Finding satisfaction in your career has become harder with the changing work landscape and a constant buzz of social media notifications. Companies are moving towards initiatives that include new and foreign hour structures, virtual meeting styles, digital workspaces, and more. For many, developing these new skills can be overwhelming.

Job coaching has come a long way from the days of fluorescent-lit rooms with slide screen presentations. Now, with new technologies and modern connectivity at our fingertips, learners have an opportunity to step out of those well-lit rooms and into a sunnier digital space of personalized, quality-driven, job coaching.

What is job coaching?

[Job coaching comes in many forms](#) and plays an important role in creating interconnected teams, improving employee communication and interpersonal skills, increasing work awareness, and understanding others' needs alongside one's own. From executive officers to new hires, there is a spot for everyone but not everyone has taken advantage of these new opportunities. Let's go over some differences in coaching styles and see some ups and downs.

What is Executive Coaching?

Executive coaching or executive development is an agglomerate phrase and a well-known term covering several mentoring subcultures. From one-on-one mentoring to executive seminars, these coaching styles focus on educating the top of a traditional org chart to better position the business for success or help the CEO make better decisions. In a sense, it's traditional coaching but there can be a variety of variations that tailor to the needs of the individual.

Despite the high profile, Executive coaching has ups and downs. It is a nebulous term that often encompasses wide-spanning terminology such as goal setting, personal development, and individual success. These terms are notoriously vague and many can see no improvement due to murky goal setting. Despite the terminology, Executive Coaching often leads to a highly focused coaching style that caters to the individual benefits of business leaders but at an often high price per session.

What is Coaching On Demand?

Coaching on demand is a version of executive coaching that is targeted to early and mid-career professionals. This type of coaching is typically booked online through an app or website. Most sessions are virtual, facilitated by a certified coach, and are offered at a steep discount compared to other types of executive coaching.

On-Demand coaching like this makes executive level coaching accessible to more people. A professional schedules an appointment at a time convenient for their schedule or for a specific challenge, and the two parties usually don't develop a long-term coaching relationship. This type of executive coaching works well to help solve a specific career problem or crisis, but doesn't allow for longer-term leadership development and progress.

What is Mid-Level Coaching?

This coaching style has been popular for a long time and has been the butt of plotlines and jokes across popular media for decades. With phrases like "Leadership Seminars" and "Success workshops" this coaching style widens its target demographics and focuses on the middle to upper-level management. From directors to the executive suite, mid-level coaching often takes place in groups and often follows the same ideas as executive coaching, but brings in a coach from outside the organization to offer help.

The goal of most mid-level coaching opportunities is to break down the boundaries that upper-level management places on themselves through work culture, stress, career style, and more. It is a calculated and coordinated second opinion that looks to improve decision-making, flexibility, and leadership skills.

These phrases and uses for Mid-Level coaches seem as vague as Executive Coaching, but it is far from it. The nebulousness of on-demand coaching comes from its large array of tools and uses. However, the cost typically associated with this type of leadership coaching is significant which makes it incredibly difficult to scale and does not offer the same impact that many get from executive coaching.

What is Micro-Coaching by Cloverleaf?


Cloverleaf's coaching style finds its success in the digital nature of most modern businesses where new technologies combined with teamwork are the driver's of a business' success. Micro-coaching or continuous micro-coaching or automated micro-coaching is the use of weekly, daily, hourly, or continual coaching in micro-doses. Think of it [as small snippets of helpful information](#) to optimize the day for success and increase the daily takeaway.

Micro-coaching, like a digital business, thrives on algorithms and data. Cloverleaf personalizes its professional development through personality tests like the Enneagram, DISC, Energy Rhythm surveys, Strengths Finder, and other metrics. These suggestions provide answers and integrate team-related content into its coaching sessions. This small tweak to the traditional model of coaching offers new approaches for team collaboration and employee development. By providing team analysis, Cloverleaf can take the Enneagram and DISC of each member and plot them on charts to better visualize how each member learns, works, rests, and creates, allowing for a more agile and high-performing team.

Ready to start micro-coaching for your work team? [Sign up for a free 14-day trial of Cloverleaf.](#)

Micro-Coaching extols the benefits of on-demand and executive coaching models but without the drawbacks and instructional exclusivity. Through Cloverleaf's usage of datasets and individual-driven coaching, entire organizations can benefit from a coach for far less than the cost of an executive coach. Some say that coaching is the future of work. And it's never been as clear and interactive as it is today thanks to customized profiles and automation from services like Cloverleaf.

More and more businesses have moved into a digital space. Now, more tools exist to facilitate learning and communication within digital spaces. Job coaching is nothing new, but the programs and opportunities that are being used to facilitate it are. From one-on-one job coaching to daily micro-coaching, there is something for everyone.



HOW TO GIVE POSITIVE & CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK WITH EXAMPLES

For some reason when you think of feedback examples you've received from a manager, one might instantly be transported back to a time in grade school when we were summoned to the principal's office. No matter how old you are, that memory always sticks with you.

As a leader, feedback is NOT about getting anyone "in trouble." While feedback can be positive or constructive (as opposed to negative feedback) the goal of employee feedback should always be to contribute to team members and the company culture. It's part of taking on that role of coach; not just boss. It includes performance management, communication skills, and work styles.

It's all about timing

One of the most critical things about how to give feedback is WHEN you give it (whether it's constructive feedback or positive feedback). Follow these simple guidelines:

- **Give feedback as CLOSE to the relevant circumstances as possible:** Holding onto feedback is a disservice to the team member and gives you one more thing to juggle on your calendar. Time may not always allow for it to be in the moment, but delivering the feedback in a timely manner (one week or less) is better than just waiting for the next performance review.
- **Know the time AND place:** Never give constructive feedback to someone in front of others. Period. Always make sure you are in a private space to share constructive feedback. Remember, the person you are about to talk to could be having a 3rd grade flashback, so be kind.
- **Read the room:** Take into consideration your own state of mind, frustration level, and the wellbeing of the rest of the team. (i.e. don't give constructive feedback if you are annoyed or if the person is visibly upset or feeling it and about to lose their lunch.)

It's what you say...

Feedback is not a two-word sentiment. It's not "good work, thank you, nice job, or stop that!" Sure, we should say thank you but giving good feedback requires giving SPECIFIC feedback. It's about what happened, what didn't happen, what went right, what went wrong and even what can be done better next time.

Before we even get into the "meat" of the feedback, let's start at the beginning. Choosing HOW to start a feedback conversation can set the tone for the entire conversation and employee experience.

Examples of Positive Feedback:

- “I’d love to share some good news with you.”
- “That was an incredible presentation, let’s unpack all of what worked.”
- “I’ve really noticed the extra effort and creativity you’ve been putting into this current project, let’s talk about what’s working.”

What to notice: All of these statements imply there is something MORE to discuss, share, and give positive feedback about. Feedback is a conversation not a one time ATM deposit.

Examples of Constructive Feedback:

- “There’s something I want to go over with you about our current project. Let’s put our heads together. “
- “I’ve noticed that some of your work isn’t at the level of detail that it usually is. Is everything ok?”
- “We obviously need to discuss the disagreement that you and Sue had in the meeting. Where would you like to start?”

What to notice: These types of feedback seek to create common ground and partnerships. They are inclusive, not handing down some disciplinarian edict from on high. When you include the person as an active participant in the conversation, feedback examples like this are easier for others to receive.

...AND how you say it

The HOW you say it is a combination of things like tone, body language, facial expression, and even volume. Here’s a list of do’s and don’t’s.

Do:

- Smile when appropriate.
- Be at eye level (either both seated or both standing).
- Watch your resting “you-know-what” face.
- Avoid the eye roll entirely.
- Inject humor when appropriate. It’s ok to laugh!
- Ask if the person has any questions.

Don’t:

- Raise your voice. Ever. (1950 called and wants their management style back)
- Avoid admitting anything that might be your responsibility.
- Interrupt. Just listen.
- Go on and on and on. Make sure it’s a dialogue.
- Do anything else while delivering feedback. Your exploding inbox can wait.
- Try to remember all of these things. Just be authentic and real.

Feedback is your friend: real strategies that work:

One of the most popular models for giving effective feedback that has stood the test of time is the [STAR model](#). For those of you who like acronyms and easy to remember words you can keep in your back pocket, this one’s for you:

S = The Situation T = Task A = Action R = Result

The STAR Model For Giving Positive Feedback

S = You've really gone the extra mile and done the hard work with the Smith account.

T = When they threw that last minute pivot at you..

A = You knew exactly what information to pull in to improve the situation.

R = Our main contact was thrilled and is planning on expanding their contract with us.

The STAR Model For Giving Constructive Feedback (with a twist)

S = I know things have been stressful since Sarah left our team..

T = And I realize that you were struggling with this last project..

A = It felt like you rushed as we got towards the deadline instead of asking for support..

R = Which means we have a few things to double back to make sure we have all the bases covered.

In SOME feedback models, it is suggested here that the manager GIVE direct reports the alternative result, but what can be even more powerful is to apply a coaching technique.

Follow up this constructive feedback with a coaching question. Here are a few examples:

- Is there something I could have supported you with?
- What would you do differently next time?
- How can the team better support you in the future?
- What do you think is the best place to start in "Q-Aing" the project?

Whether you are delivering a bouquet of compliments or have to discuss some difficult constructive criticism, simple tweaks to how you approach giving regular feedback can go a long way with employee engagement.

What matters the most is how someone feels once they walk away from the conversation.

In the words of Maya Angelou, *"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

CONFLICT RESOLUTION THROUGH DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

One of the most challenging things about being a new manager are the moments we have to have conversations we wish would...have themselves. Going from boss to coach means difficult conversations are an opportunity for growth; for you AND the team member. [You will learn more about](#) conflict resolution from the tough conversations than from the easy ones.

How do you learn to have difficult conversations? You have to have them. You have to be willing to be uncomfortable, make mistakes, and learn from them.

Why we hate difficult conversations

We all arrive in our roles bringing our entire lives up until this moment. The environments we grew up in shape our view of how to communicate, how to interact with conflict (or how to avoid it) and how to empathize. We don't teach kids in school all of these crucial conflict management skills. No offense to your favorite math teacher, but perhaps some communication skills could have gotten as much air time as the isosceles triangle?

The adults we become then show up in the workforce with varied viewpoints and have to magically know how to navigate these difficult situations. We hate difficult conversations because we:

1. Don't have the skills to navigate them.
2. Don't want to hurt someone's feelings.
3. Have grown accustomed to avoiding conflict.

There's actually a huge fallout to avoiding these conversations. According to [Bravely](#), 70% of employees are avoiding difficult conversations with their boss, colleagues, or direct reports. This actually costs companies [money, time, and employee engagement](#).

Types of difficult conversations

Maybe you've not come across a difficult situation just yet, but let's go dive into the deep end and make sure you are ready for these types of conversations:

Addressing differing perspectives and workstyles

1. These can be minor and based on interpersonal reasons or even work-specific perspectives that need to be ironed out.
2. An ongoing discomfort in your relationship with a team member (i.e. increased misunderstandings, tension, etc).

Identifying a workplace behavior that has a negative impact

1. You've got a super star on your team, but they tend to roll in Monday morning sharing about their weekend and are TMI gold medalists. Some team members feel a little uncomfortable and before it gets worse, you've got to address it.
2. You have a team member who has attendance or lateness issues.
3. A team member hasn't been pulling their weight.

Managing Conflict between two team members

1. Two team members regularly disagree during team meetings causing discomfort for the team and delaying team action.
2. There's been an actual incident in the workplace of conflict that must be addressed ASAP.
3. A project is stalled because of conflict between co-workers.

Having to fire someone

1. Negative performance has been a pattern and after all appropriate action has been taken according to HR. You have to let the person go.
2. Budget cuts or layoffs are impacting the company and a person's position is being eliminated.

The art of the difficult conversation starter

The reality is these types of conversations usually cannot wait. The impact of waiting can make the impact even worse for the individual, your team and yes...you. Similarly with giving feedback, how you START the conversation can really set the tone for a productive face-to-face interaction. Here's some conversation starters that help to level the playing field as you approach a conflict situation:

- "There's something I think we should discuss that will help improve our working relationship."
- "I'd like to talk about _____ with you, but first I'd like to get your point of view."
- "I think we have different perspectives about _____. I'd like to understand how you are thinking about it."
- "I'd like to see if we can come to a mutual understanding regarding _____. I really want to understand where you are coming from and also share my perspective."

These difficult conversation starters help to interrupt fear and make it clear that this will be an exchange. Notice there is no judgment about the differences that may be present. This is part of becoming a good leader. Embracing that there are people who have valid perspectives that you may not agree with and understand is critical to being able to create mutual respect as you collaborate and lead others.

Difficult conversation planning strategies

For all you color coded planners out there, YES you can plan for a difficult conversation. However you don't want to OVERPLAN. Let some of it be organic. It's tough to trust yourself but remember you can always criticize yourself with some self-deprecating humor later with a friend. Here's a helpful guide to preparing for these conversations:

- Determine the desired outcomes from the conversation, for YOU and the team member.
- Pick your conversation opener. Don't overscript it, but have a general idea.
- Remember to use your active listening skills to better understand the person's point of view, even if you don't agree.
- What are the MOST important things you need to get across?
- What information do you need (if any) to support the conversation?
- Anticipate some possible responses and consider how you will handle each one. This is not supposed to freak you out, it's just to give you some batting practice for the big game.
- What is the BEST case scenario? (Yes, let's get positive going into this. We often go to a place of gloom and doom, making crucial conversations like this more difficult than they have to be.)
- What are the next steps you need to communicate in conversation (i.e. does this conversation require any follow up?)

Remember our FEAR about these challenging conversations is usually bigger than the actual conversation. You will often let out a huge sigh of relief after you have one, so remind yourself of the COST of waiting. Go all Nike on this one and just DO IT!



Wait, now I have to motivate these people to work? What did I actually sign up for? Don't worry, there's some good news. You are not accountable to [motivate your team members](#) every second of the day. Part of leadership is knowing when and how to motivate employees.

As you learn about what drives each person on your team, you will develop a deeper understanding of how to motivate others when it's needed. Taking a coach approach to leading empowers managers to commit to developing their co-workers as part of their role.

Two types of employee motivation

This is where you get a little bit of a break. Each person has their [own intrinsic motivation](#). This is their own internal drive to succeed and develop as a professional. [Research](#) from a variety of notable sources show that intrinsic motivation can be energizing and boost the performance of team members. But what drives each person is different.

This is why it's important to get to know your team members to find out what motivates them. Is it a variety in their work, attending industry conferences, or maybe it's an opportunity to work on a really important project?

Extrinsic motivation refers to the potential rewards an individual might gain if they go the extra mile. This is not simply about incentives and perks. [Extrinsic motivation](#) depends on if the person actually believes their hard work will generate a reward, that they will actually be noticed for their contributions, and they have to WANT whatever the reward may be (a promotion, recognition, increased responsibility).

Learning what makes people tick

So what does this all mean for you? Are you supposed to become a detective and find out what makes each person work hard? The answer is...sort of.

First you need to be genuinely interested in learning what motivates people to do good work. Next you have to be consciously observing your team (not stalking them) to understand what is driving employee performance. Circumstances like these can help:

- 1. 1-1 meetings:** These meetings are excellent protected times you should have built in to be working with team members. After debriefing a project or discussing their responsibilities, listen for what makes them more energized. Yes, you can also ASK people about what motivating factors drive them. (crazy idea, we know)
- 2. How they respond to professional development:** You'll get to know who is more intrinsically motivated by how

how much professional development they seek to engage in. Are they keeping up with the industry or requesting speciality hard or soft skill training? People who seek to challenge themselves will do this wherever they go. These are usually. Your high performers who are on a mission to better themselves daily.

3. What they volunteer for: When people put themselves out there for opportunities, responsibilities, or projects with enthusiasm it's an important factor when it comes to what drives them. Maybe it's the desire to contribute and make a difference or the opportunity to have increased visibility in the organization. When they raise their hand, pay attention.

How motivation pays off

Imagine motivation as the first domino in a winding line of perfectly placed dominoes. When people are motivated at work, they are engaged at work. When people are engaged at work, they perform at work. When people perform at work and get recognition for that performance, they become loyal to an organization and the company culture. All of these things impact each other in a positive way.

Think about what is possible when each person on your team is motivated, engaged, and contributing? This is every manager's dream. It doesn't happen overnight, but if you continue to strive for tapping into each individual's motivation, you'll contribute to a win/win situation. You'll be surrounded by happy employees with a high level of job satisfaction who WANT to be doing what they are doing and that might actually make you happy too.

Coaching strategies for motivating people

You might have some questions about the "how" of motivating people, so here come your handy tips. Let's imagine you have been observing, listening, and coaching and you are starting to get an idea of what drives people on your team.

Here's how to sustain that motivation:

1. Make sure to check in regularly about where people are the most engaged with their work. Asking a simple question like "What about your current workload is most/least exciting to you" can help you gauge where an employee's motivation is currently being leveraged.
2. Collect opportunities to professionally develop. Whether they are external or internal professional development activities, make sure to bring these to your team for those who will jump at the chance to learn and grow.
3. Use information about what motivates your team to inform project planning. Where possible, try to draw on individual motivations to assign work. You can't always control this, but seize every opportunity to give people the kinds of work that drives them.
4. Get good at recognizing effort verbally. When people go the extra mile, say it in simple ways and share the impact. Even if every person isn't driven by this, roll the dice that they just might be. Most humans like feeling noticed. For the ones that don't, make sure to recognize them privately. For a small percentage of people, public recognition literally makes them want to hide under their desk so pay attention.

If this seems like extra work, it is - but the good kind. You may not have all of these initiatives and awareness built into your job description, but this is part of being a great leader and increases employee engagement in order to develop a fantastic work environment. It's an ongoing journey so give yourself some space and time to figure out what makes everyone tick - and yes, this includes you. And don't forget to share with YOUR manager what you need to stay motivated and lead by example.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT TOOLS EVERY NEW MANAGER NEEDS



As part of your new role, managing performance can be one of the most challenging and rewarding parts of being a leader. In the past, this was something that was more transactional. Managers filled out forms, issued ratings, and recommended salary increases.

In support of a coach approach to managing performance, [Gallup](#) shares: “Today’s employees want a manager who is invested in their personal and professional development. They want frequent feedback – and opportunities to do more of what they do best.”

So how can you offer continuous, real-time feedback that helps empower and motivate team members to help them do more of what they do best? [Here are some of the most important performance management tools you’ll need as a new manager.](#)

Your 1-1 Meeting Cadence

To evolve past a performance management system that relies heavily on “event-based” performance, it’s vital to have some regular meeting cadence with your team members. While every organization may have different performance management tools (and some may have none at all), it’s up to you to lead the way in your 1-1 meetings and [ensure they are valuable.](#)

Depending on the size of your team, your 1-1 check-ins may be weekly, bi-weekly, or at least monthly. The important thing here is that every conversation is an opportunity to develop employee engagement and employee performance. It’s the ongoing practice that makes the difference.

During your 1-1 meetings, It’s not uncommon to focus on urgent pressing matters that relate to the day-to-day of your work. However, a good practice to develop is to allow 25-30% of your meeting time for real-time individual employee development. This might mean setting or following up on goals, or even creating new ones as old ones are accomplished.

Speaking of goal setting....

Some companies may require setting annual employee performance goals that will come up on performance reviews. Annual goals sound great in theory, but there’s a reason why New Year’s resolutions don’t work. Feel free to Google this one to your heart’s content, but consider that goals with shorter timelines have a much higher chance of reaching the finish line.

Monthly or quarterly employee goals that support performance can be both DIRECT or INDIRECT. For example, Direct

goals may relate specifically to a person's role or function. INDIRECT goals may be general professional development activities that help a person to develop skills or behaviors that help to support career advancement.

Example:

- *DIRECT: Close 30% of current warm sales leads into paying customers.*

- *INDIRECT: Participate in an optional communications training with the Learning & Development team.*

Notice these goals are pretty specific. Goals never include terms like "more, better, or try to..." A productive goal has to be connected to a specific result or event.

When taking a coach approach to performance goal setting, remember not to insert your own agenda. When your team members design their own goals they'll exert a certain level of ownership over them. As you coach individuals to set goals, support them in designing action steps to help get them there. Don't forget to ask how you can support them as their manager.

The art of the follow up

The key to supporting goal accomplishment over time is following up. This isn't school and you aren't checking homework. You're leveraging coaching here to check in on progress. You're also inquiring about where you can continue to support goal achievement through continuous feedback.

Following up is a type of continuous performance management that also reveals when goals need to be tweaked or changed. Projects and initiatives pivot and change course all the time. This may change direct performance goals or organizational goals. As you follow up, you'll be able to help your team make goals customizable as needed.

Opportunities to improve skills may also arise as your team seeks to develop their own career. As a bonus tip, make sure you are aware of the training and development plans and opportunities your organization offers. This allows you to have them in your back pocket for the perfect time. Following up is about consistency. Do it often and listen for where you can make a difference.

Coaching strategies for effective performance management

As a leader, it's important for you to tap into your team members' highest potential. There are certain scenarios where it's up to you to listen for what's possible. Here are just a few coaching solutions:

- 1. When it might benefit the individual to stretch themselves:** "I know you can knock this month's OKRs out of the park. If you think about what you did last quarter, what outcome would really motivate you?"
- 2. When an individual does NOT accomplish a performance goal:** "Let's take a closer look at the metrics so you can refocus your goal. What worked and what didn't work? How can I support you?"
- 3. When you sense a professional development opportunity can advance a goal:** "I know you mentioned you'd like to become a manager someday. Of the trainings available to our department this quarter, what is one that interests you the most to support this goal?"
- 4. When a goal needs to pivot:** "What adjustment to your current goal would make the most difference?"

So what is the rewarding part of all of this we alluded to earlier? Watching people grow, achieve and expand IS inspiring. Seeing the people you lead challenge themselves, and knowing you played a small supporting role can be extremely satisfying. So think of your team as a blank canvas of opportunities to contribute to and put these performance management tools to work. They might just come back and thank you later.

HOW MANAGING VIRTUAL TEAMS IS AN ESSENTIAL SKILL FOR LEADERS

High-quality relationships between managers and their teams are related to [a ton of important outcomes](#) including increased performance and reduced turnover. It's no wonder that we go to great lengths to learn management best practices. Being a virtual manager, however, requires [a different set of tactics and priorities](#). Along those lines, here are some management adjustments new managers should consider as they lead a virtual team.

Start with the Basics

- **Technological Know-How:** Managers need to [touch-up on their technical skills](#) as it relates to virtual communication. Understanding how to start and manage a video call is no longer enough. Managing virtual teams requires time understanding how to include a variety of collaboration tools into virtual meetings with your team.
- **Check-Ins:** Virtual managers need to encourage [social cohesion](#) through regular team check-ins. The cadence of the check-in depends on the type of work, the number of direct reports, and more. Have a conversation with employees about cadence and length. Then, experiment and adjust as needed.
- **Leverage Asynchronous Video:** Video conferencing allows us to put hundreds of people together in real-time across different time zones. But be careful, multi-tasking, turning off the camera, and disengagement starts to increase once you have around 20 people in a virtual team meeting. If you are considering communicating something to more than 20 people at a time, it might be better to use [asynchronous communication](#) because more than likely there won't be opportunities for much interaction.
- **Balanced Monitoring:** Over-monitoring employees is common when leading virtually. Leaders tend to overcompensate when they can no longer pick up on subtle signals during face-to-face interaction. Although some degree of monitoring ensures stability in productivity, too much will annoy subordinates and degrade trust.
- **Building Rapport:** [Communication apprehension](#) – [anxiety](#) due to anticipated communication with others – is more common in real-time virtual communication. This isn't the same thing as [introversion](#). In fact, it's often associated with uneasiness and even worry. Which means that some of the most critical, perfection-oriented team members aren't speaking up. Consider giving team members alternative outlets for to voice their suggestions and concerns if you notice their lack of participation in virtual settings.

Build the Foundation

- **Building Relational Trust:** Building relational trust, whereby you look out for each other's best interests, is a challenge for virtual teams. This is mostly because there are fewer opportunities for informal, impromptu conversations. Virtual conversations tend to be highly structured, typically in increments of 30 or 60 minutes. Further, there's never enough time to fit it in the professional conversations, let alone the personal conversations that help build relational trust. Why

is relational trust so important? It helps with team building and guides the way for a lot of the work your team will be doing together. Simply put, teams will fail without relational trust.

1. Allocate time. Building relationships takes time. The process is an investment. Although it might seem less important than the “real work,” it’s actually the foundation that allows the real work to be done well.
2. Share more candid information. Be thoughtful and strategic about the information you share with others. When given the opportunity, use it wisely to get “just personal enough.”
3. Create opportunities for others to share personal information. Never put others on the spot. Not everyone wants to share. Instead, be sure to “create opportunities” for colleagues to share as much as they are comfortable sharing.

- **Building Competence-Based Trust:** It’s also important to build competence-based trust, which entails trusting that each other is capable and reliable. When working with remote teams, it’s more challenging to get a clear view of where and how colleagues add value to the organization. It’s also easier to “drop the ball” when communication is scattered across virtual mediums.

1. Clarify your competence. Don’t hesitate to explain to colleagues what you believe to be your key skills or abilities. This helps others understand how you will best contribute to the team. Share your experiences, but do so without ego. There’s nothing worse than a colleague who introduces themselves to new virtual team members with a laundry list of accomplishments.
2. Timely responses. The easiest way to weaken competence-based trust is to be slow to respond. Set expectations upfront on turnaround times with your team. And at least be sure to acknowledge receipt and then explain existing priorities.
3. Keep others up-to-date. Another common challenge with virtual interaction is the lack of closure on specific conversations. Did they see my message? Are they ignoring me? Are they still working through the next steps? Giving regular updates is really important.

Strategic Virtual Management

- **Face-to-face onboarding:** Whenever possible, onboarding should be done face to face. Even if the onboarding is as short as 48 hours, it’s worth it. Team members will be much more comfortable speaking up, expressing concerns, and asking questions when they can read the room. Interestingly, turnover is at its highest during the first several months of an employee’s time with a company. When employees feel lost, emotional attachment is inevitably low, making it easier for them to leave.
- **Quarterly on-sites:** When employees were primarily face to face, company off-sites typically fell flat. Team members are less interested in spending time and energy doing activities with people they already see every day. But the tables have turned in the virtual environment. Virtual employees want to shake hands and get to know colleagues on a more personal level. They want to build trust, establish connections, and network—key components of affective commitment—all of which can be done during a one- or two-day event. Along those lines, the best practice nowadays is to do quarterly on-sites where all remote employees come to a physical meeting space, such as an event center or headquarters. The key here is to create an on-site experience that is enjoyable and useful. A bad on-site will do more harm than good. Thoughtful agendas, high-quality interaction experiences, and strategic information are a must.
- **Familiarity through technology:** Communication technologies are what has allowed us to have virtual teams. But the biggest obstacle for virtual employees is that they struggle to garner what’s called professional familiarity: understanding colleagues’ tendencies, strengths, values, and work-related preferences. Professional familiarity helps facilitates trust and high-quality team interactions, which are important precursors to affective commitment.

Organizations should invest in HR-tech that facilitates professional familiarity. Employees need accurate, actionable, and on-demand information about their colleagues' psychographics. Doing so will significantly heighten interpersonal understanding among team members

Good managers know that all employees are unique, and in turn, each person deserves a custom approach. This gives team leaders and employees the best chance of having a high-quality relationship. New managers in this era need to add yet another layer of customization, namely, whether the employee is primarily working virtually. Managers that can prioritize the basics, build trust, and engage in strategic virtual management with remote workers will have the best chance for success.



LEADING DURING CHANGE AND UNCERTAINTY

There is an old adage in leadership circles that “the best test for whether a leader is exceptional is how they handle a crisis.” Unfortunately, leading during crises is tricky. A crisis situation presents a ton of competing tensions. The best leaders manage these times of uncertainty by embracing [paradoxical leadership](#) — behaviors that manage seemingly competing, yet interrelated demands.

Outlined below are four paradoxes that can pop up during times of change. To help practicing managers understand how best to flex their “paradoxical leadership” potential, I offer some examples specific to the [coronavirus](#) pandemic. For managers, the outbreak was complex and confusing to overcome, making it a textbook opportunity to evaluate how best to lead during uncertain times.

Balancing Speed and Accuracy

When a crisis hits, team members want to know what’s going on and what the plan of action is. For example, as the pandemic spread across the U.S., leaders were struggling to make big decisions because the situation was constantly changing. They had to make big decisions, such as travel restrictions, remote work policies, and preemptive [cost-cutting](#) solutions.

The [challenge for leaders](#) is balancing the need to communicate with team members in a timely manner, yet provide information that is accurate and actually helpful. When leaders wait too long to communicate critical messages, employees fill the void with their own assumptions, and often lose faith in their leader’s ability. But when business leaders provide half-baked, unclear, or misinformed messages to their employees, it makes it that much harder to overcome the challenges as a team.

Leaders should proactively consider varying courses of action, ensure that they are in-the-know as critical information surfaces, and then immediately focus their [attention](#) on offering timely decision-making and direction, but never at the expense of accuracy.

Balancing Uncertainty and Clarity

Crises are unfortunate in that they cut to the core of a need we all have: [security](#). Although a leadership team might feel compelled to reassure their employees that everything is going to be fine during difficult times, in reality, they can’t make that promise.

Making statements, for example, about when pre-pandemic policies will go back into effect may have satisfied employees’ immediate concerns, but was a guess at best. What a leader can do is communicate what exactly they are doing to

manage the uncertainty. This, in and of itself, is a way to help people feel more secure. For example, leaders should have been outlining who they are working with or talking to in order to have an evidence-based recommendation for how to overcome each step of the outbreak.

Balancing Details and the Big Picture

Crises tend to have varying levels of uncertainty and a wide variety of implications. Specific to the pandemic, it affected individuals' health and livelihood, organizations' short-term profitability and long-term survival, and society's overall health and economic stability.

Leaders must carefully explain to employees why and how their choices affect these important and connected systems. It's a mistake to only explain to employees how the organization's decisions affect them individually. For example, it should have been clear that the reason employees were being encouraged to work remotely had just as much to do with contributing to the societal-level initiative to "flatten the curve" as it did with employees' personal health.

Balancing the Past and the Present

When the coronavirus was finally under control, lots of us stopped working 100% remotely, customers re-scheduled their canceled meetings, and supply chains eventually caught up. This was actually the best opportunity to evaluate crisis leadership. We tend to think of crisis leadership as an in-the-moment phenomenon. But this is only partially true.

When the dust clears, everyone will have plenty of time to critique the extent to which their leader was prepared to manage the crisis. It will be at this stage where great leaders admit their mistakes and create a plan for going forward, while weak leaders will spend so much time covering their tracks or justifying their decisions that they will squander the opportunity to re-group.

Crises, by definition, are complicated and unpredictable. Mistakes are inevitable. Effective leaders embrace the mistakes of the past, yet have a clear plan for the future.

Crisis Leadership Is About Balancing Paradox

Leading a crisis is an imperfect balancing act. The change and uncertainty that teams will face is loaded with paradox. That's why we need leaders that can embrace these tips in order to manage difficult situations.

Instead of judging your crisis leadership skills on whether or not you did one thing perfectly (e.g., speed), consider evaluating whether you simultaneously did two things well (e.g., speed and accuracy). And instead of judging yourself on whether or not your decisions were "perfect," it might instead be helpful to evaluate whether the way you communicated about your decisions included room to correct mistakes and acknowledge the complex realities of the situation.

By definition, it's impossible to "solve" paradoxes. All you can really do is acknowledge them and then do your best to keep afloat.



MANAGING HIGH PERFORMING TEAMS

When you watch your favorite sports team come from behind and win a championship game, there is usually all sorts of celebrating, popping champagne, and visible explosive excitement. The air is filled with the energy of what is possible when a group of people, ALL committed to the same end goal, use teamwork to succeed.

Leading a team towards high collective performance goes beyond managing individual members. It's more than meeting a common goal or completing tasks. Learning the leadership skills that can envision something greater than oneself takes courage, insight, solid decision-making, and the willingness to challenge yourself.

But don't let this grand vision freak you out. Though you've just started in your role as a new manager, the only difference between a newbie and a champion is PRACTICE.

What is a high performing team?

So what makes a high performing team? Is it just meeting tangible business goals? Do team members all have to like each other? [Patrick Lencioni](#), basically the Godfather of high performing teams comments *“Not finance. Not strategy. Not technology. It is teamwork that remains the ultimate competitive advantage, both because it is so powerful and so rare.”*

Lencioni outlines the clear things that high performing teams do...and the [dysfunctions](#) that plague the underperforming teams of the world.

A high performing team does some critical things that give them a competitive advantage. Here are some characteristics of high performing teams:

- They build trust.
- They are not afraid of conflict.
- They commit together and stay the course.
- They hold each other accountable.
- They keep their eyes on the end results.

In the beginning...

As you get started what does this mean for you? First, have some patience. You aren't going to establish all of this overnight. If there is one thing we forget it is that human beings are not devices. We don't just get updated operating systems to replace the previous version. We are living, breathing, complicated beings. When you put those complicated beings in GROUPS it gets even messier.

The ONLY thing you have to focus on at the start is building relationships.

Building relationships with each of your team members and facilitating the relationships between the entire team is a key part of building a more effective team. Relationships make ALL Of this possible. This means being yourself and allowing others to be themselves.

Just get to know the humans. Start there. Allow for the team with you at the helm to organically form itself. And pay attention. LISTEN. LISTEN. LISTEN. Listening is half your strategy. Listening to what people are saying...and not saying, will help you know how to proceed.

About that conflict thing...

One of the messiest things about high performing teams where it SEEMS like something is wrong is conflict. The most successful teams survive conflict because they do it with respect.

Respectful conflict doesn't get down and dirty. High performing teams can remain focused on the conflict at hand without resorting to personal attacks, over the top emotions, or behavior that isn't appropriate for the workplace. Successful teams ALLOW time for this type of conflict.

Did we just say ALLOW for conflict? YES. We did. If you avoid conflict, be prepared to be uncomfortable. This is not the end of the world. It's not like that terrible dream where you show up to high school late to take your final exams and forget your clothes. It just means we have to be ok with things NOT always being ok.

Healthy conflict generates better ideas, unearths problems in team dynamics that need solving, and can ultimately fuel innovation. So buckle up and make conflict your friend.

Strategies for building high performing teams

While you're focusing on building those relationships, here are some strategies for strengthening your team to be one of the best.

- 1. Create the space for teams to bond over non-work topics.** Yes, there's actually research on this. Whether it's allowing some quick sharing on a Monday morning huddle or all going to an escape room together, great team leaders allow the humans to actually be humans...together.
- 2. Try Lencioni's Team Effectiveness Exercise.** This is basically real-time, constructive feedback that your team gives to one another to hold each other accountable. You just need about one hour, but it's incredibly simple and worth it.
- 3. Track team goals.** Make sure there is some structure to track team goals. Whether it's built into your company practices or you just whip up a spreadsheet, track away.
- 4. Keep notes on trends that you notice.** Does Joe talk a lot and take over? Is Sarah afraid to speak up in meetings? Start to jot down your observations and design micro-actions around them. For example, ask Sarah a question directly in a group meeting rather than open it up to the entire group.

Developing and leading a high performing team takes time, attention, and diligence. Whatever consistent best practices you can install into your own team operating system, do that. If something works, keep doing it. When something tanks, toss it. Remember, you are your team's GPS. Sometimes you will change routes because of a traffic jam ahead, but ultimately everyone will reach their destination - together.

OUR TEAM

FROM BOSS TO COACH



Yannik McKie is a serial entrepreneur, author, philanthropist, founder of a non-profit, church planter, and CEO of Living in Purpose. His powerful story of using adversity to find purpose has been featured in ESPN's *The Undefeated*, *The Huffington Post*, *The New York Daily News*, *Good Day Atlanta* & TBN's *700 Club*, as well as being awarded the Change Maker of the year award from the New Leaders Council. Yannik's mission is to help entrepreneurs, small business owners, and non-profit professionals to take their pain and turn it into purpose.



Anna's Bradsher's Transformational Leadership & Coaching masters degree trained her in human potential, neuroscience, and psychology to help individuals and groups move past blocks to reach their potential. She is a child of successful serial entrepreneurs and feels passionately about helping small business owners scale and excel in a competitive marketplace.



Michael W. Newton Jr. empowers and equips servant-leaders to authentically achieve their purpose-centered priorities through new levels of integrity, vision, and skill. He is a dedicated husband, father, and mentor who enjoys fishing, reading, writing, and serving the community through his local church.