



First Time Managers: Stepping Up to the Mark

Description

I remember when I stepped up to managing a team in my late 20s.

I imagined that it must have been similar to being asked to captain the school netball team and that I would have the same sense of excitement and determination. After all, I possessed the same level of determination. I had learned from my manager, who like my coach was a great role model, and the team liked me. So it couldn't be easier. How wrong was I.

In reality, the journey to establishing myself as an effective, successful manager, took many years. I had to build my credibility with my former peers; new peers and senior leaders. I had to change my mindset; I had to start thinking commercially; realize that collaboration was essential; step away from the 'banter' and learn how to manage performance. Most of this happened by osmosis rather than through any guided development path.

Thankfully, many of the organizations I work with do offer managers some form of development. You get the opportunity to attend manager inductions, and you might also be enrolled in a management program to develop your 'people management' skills. And when things go awry, you might get a coach to support your personal development, resilience, and confidence.

This personal development does something to support managers, but where is the technical expertise? And where are the deeper behavioral insights? For example, where is the understanding of a P&L in manager development (I didn't understand one for about four years after I became a manager!)? Where is the teaching on how to make the best decisions and how to communicate in a clear and confident manner? Elements which are essential for any First Time Manager.

When I think back to being a First Time Manager, my team had a blast, were supportive of me – each other, and were "in it together". However, as a manager, I think I was doing half a job. My personal development needed a more rounded approach. I needed competence in the technical aspects of management and confidence when challenging and driving through decisions.

Half the development; half the job.

Organizations have a clear expectation of their managers and that is to deliver the organization's goals and objectives. Where clarity lacks is in their actual development. "Give it a shot and see" is often the way, we might even cite the 70:20:10 framework. Of course there is merit in such an approach – however, we develop through experience, and through trying something and stretching ourselves.

Our recent taster session offered a sample of our double helix approach to management development. It featured interactive simulations and talks aimed at demonstrating the importance of improving both technical competence *and* behavioral confidence.

We also asked a number of First Time Managers what advice they would give to others who were stepping up in their role. Here are the top 10 insights from their first-hand experience.

1. Understand your role and expectations (step in but be clear on what is required of you).
2. Understand who your stakeholders are and who you need to build relationships with.
3. Who can give you advice? Who is your go-to person? They have had the experience, allow them to share. Find some support!
4. Look after the people working for you, you need your team just as much as they need you.
5. Take your time to learn your strengths and weaknesses and where you need to develop.
6. Take some time to understand what it is you want to do and how you want to operate as a manager.
7. Think about how you want to structure your leadership. If you don't take the time, you'll forever be trying to catch up with yourself.
8. Listen and communicate – especially to those you are managing and communicate directly and clearly.
9. Always anticipate. When you've made a decision, ask yourself – So what?
10. Most importantly look after yourself.

Just imagine how successful our managers, and therefore our teams and our organizations, could be if we focused on the development of both sides of management – technical *and* behavioral.

Watch some of the highlights from this session.

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