

# 9 Tips for New Managers to Succeed

Northeastern University Graduate Programs

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Your hard work has paid off: You've been promoted. Transitioning from individual contributor to new manager enables you to effect change at a higher level in your organization, empower others to exercise their strengths, and set a vision for your team.

It's exciting—but also overwhelming. After all, that's a lot to accomplish, and many managers never receive formal management training before making the shift to supervisor.

So, where do you even start? Here are nine tips to help you avoid the common pitfalls many first-time managers face.

## Top Tips for First-Time Managers

### 1. Start delegating.

Becoming a manager means you're no longer just a doer, checking tasks off a to-do list. You're now a leader and a coach, who needs to focus on helping others succeed. And that requires delegating responsibilities.

It's easy to fall into the habit of saying, "I'll just do it myself"—especially when faced with an assignment you've completed multiple times or a system only you know how to use. But you need to fight the urge to tackle tasks alone. The more time you spend upfront teaching direct reports how to solve a particular problem, the less time you waste when the assignment resurfaces later on.

By delegating, you prove to your employees that you trust them to get the job done and value their input—and that has a positive impact on morale. Gallup research shows an [annual decline in employee engagement levels](#), meaning there's a greater need for attentive [managers now more than ever](#). You need to provide employees with professional development opportunities and the chance to learn new skills. Remember: If your team fails, so do you.

### 2. Learn how to address difficult situations.

Given that employees in the United States [spend 2.8 hours per week on workplace conflict](#), it's inevitable that you'll find yourself in some tense conversations.

When you do, your instinct might be to ignore them in hopes that the situation will eventually resolve itself. Perhaps confrontation makes you uncomfortable or you don't want to hurt a subordinate's feelings. The more you avoid an issue, though, the worse it becomes, which is why you need to learn how to [effectively resolve workplace conflict](#).

If members of your team approach you with a problem, actively listen to what they're saying and practice empathy. It's important that you acknowledge your employees' feelings and understand their perspective so that you can get to the root of the issue and collaboratively work toward a proper solution.

### 3. Acknowledge changed relationships.

Workplace conflict often occurs when your relationships start to change. If you were promoted from within to a first time leader, it's possible that the person you routinely gossiped with is now a direct report, or that you're managing employees who were once your peers.

Finding a balance between friend and manager is hard—but important. Some information is too confidential to share, and you can't let personal relationships color your judgment. That's why it's best to proactively address any changes. It could be as simple as saying, "I value our friendship but, as a manager, I need the team to trust me and see me as fair and consistent."

While it won't be an easy conversation, it is a necessary one.

### 4. Focus on building trust.

[Research shows](#) that when employees feel trusted by their managers, they exert extra effort at work and are happier in their roles. So it's important to prioritize building trust.

Schedule one-on-one meetings with each of your direct reports. During those meetings, ask what their professional goals are and how you can help them take the next step in their career. If they want to learn a particular skill, is there a project you can assign them or training you can recommend? If you invest in their future, it's likely they'll feel more invested in the company.

Transparency can also help build trust. When decisions are made, speak openly about the implications and results of those decisions, whether positive or negative, with the team. Share important information, as well as what you're working on, and encourage others to do the same. That open and honest communication will foster trust amongst the team.

### 5. Offer timely feedback.

According to a survey conducted by PwC, nearly [60 percent](#) of respondents would like feedback on a daily or weekly basis. If there's an employee that needs feedback, make sure it's timely; don't just wait for the annual review. Subordinates can't apply advice if the project has passed, and you might cause additional roadblocks if you don't address the situation right away.

By offering timely feedback, you're giving employees the chance to improve their performance and grow professionally, which, in turn, will build trust.

### 6. Ask for feedback.

Just as you expect employees on your team to continuously learn from the feedback you give them, it's important that you also make an effort to assess your own strengths and weaknesses to help yourself grow over time.

Don't be afraid to ask your employees for constructive feedback so that you can identify areas where you may need to improve. Not only will this help you set goals for yourself, but it will also show your employees that you value their input and you have the interests of the team as a whole at heart.

## 7. Find a mentor.

The problems you're facing likely aren't new. Someone in your company or industry has already dealt with an employee who's underperforming or has been forced to tell someone who's overperforming the benefits he or she wants aren't guaranteed.

That's why it's important to find mentors you can turn to for advice or support when issues arise. By learning from their mistakes, you can avoid making missteps yourself.

## 8. Don't let yourself get discouraged.

If issues do arise, don't get discouraged. You're a new manager; you're not expected to know everything. Ask for help when needed, own up to mistakes, and graciously accept any feedback.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed in a new role. But when you do, remind yourself that you were promoted for a reason.

## 9. Hone your leadership skills.

Although the terms "leadership" and "management" are often used interchangeably, they are, in fact, distinct skill sets. It's likely that you've been promoted to your new role based on the managerial skills that you demonstrate, such as problem-solving, organization, and delegation. Now that you've earned the title of "manager," it's also time to [hone your leadership skills](#).

# Differences Between a Leader and a Manager

Leaders and managers have different approaches to achieving organizational goals. Managers focus on planning, organizing, and controlling resources to ensure tasks are completed efficiently. Leaders inspire and guide their teams towards a shared vision, often demonstrating key characteristics including a high degree of emotional intelligence, excellent interpersonal skills, and resilience.

This allows them to better understand the needs of their teammates and empower them to work toward a common goal. While not all leaders hold managerial positions, strong leadership skills are what make great managers.

Some important leadership traits include:

- Strong influencing behavior
- Emotional resilience
- Practicality

- Extroversion
- Self-control
- Ability to solve problems

## **Becoming an Effective Leader**

As a first-time manager, you're not expected to have all of the answers. Rather, it's your first opportunity to demonstrate your ability to continuously learn and grow while guiding your team toward your organizational goals.

Always be on the lookout for ways to develop your leadership skills so that you can be successful in your new role as a manager and continue propelling your career forward.