Leading With Confidence

Top Ten Tips Managers Need to Drive Success

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Whether you're a first-timer or a seasoned veteran, you don't want to mess up as a manager and let your company or the individuals you manage down. But try as you might to do your best, mistakes are still going to happen.

Even then, there are several leadership tips you can keep in mind that will help you reduce those mistakes and excel in your role. In the following eBook, we offer ten of our best tips for managers of all levels. If you want to improve your management game, drive results, and lead your team to success, read on.

Tip 1

Develop Yourself

Like any other set of skills, leadership requires consistent development and practice. And that's the real kicker—there's no way around the practice. Ever see an extremely intelligent person in your company get promoted only to fail in a leadership or management role shortly after? There's a reason for that. Again, leading as a manager takes more than intelligence. It takes practice.

Leadership doesn't mean having a high IQ. Successful managers use Emotional Intelligence (EI) to make informed decisions. Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, said,

> **IQ tells you what level of cognitive complexity a person can manage in their job: you need high levels for top management, the professions, [and] the sciences, while lower levels work fine in lower echelons. Emotional Intelligence [EI] sets apart which leaders, professionals, or scientists will be the best leaders.**

Emotional intelligence helps you develop your ability to lead and manage, whatever the conditions may be. To be a great leader, you must understand how to manage yourself first. If you understand who you are and what your strengths are (self-awareness) and you know how to lead yourself (self-management), then you set yourself up to lead others effectively.

Good leaders also know how to connect the people around them (others-awareness). People follow leaders they find approachable and relatable. If a leader has high Emotional Intelligence, they can use it to tune into the needs of others. As a result, their employees will feel more motivated and committed to them.

Leaders with high Emotional Intelligence generate excitement and enthusiasm as well. Leadership focuses on building relationships—a skill that depends on emotional connections and Emotional Intelligence. As a leader, having high Emotional Intelligence allows you to exercise more compassion, understanding, and effective communication. With a developed Emotional Intelligence, you'll be able to inspire, influence, coach, and handle conflict more effectively.

Tip 2

Set an Example People Can't Resist Following

There's no greater leadership responsibility than being able to craft and cast a compelling vision for your organization. And though crafting a vision isn't easy, when it comes to leadership, only one "vision question" really counts—are you actively pursuing your vision? The truth is, money and perks have their limitations in motivating the modern worker (just Google "motivate employees without money" if you don't believe us; Google will return nearly five million results).

The global workforce has changed, which means a paycheck every two weeks isn't enough to get the best effort out of increasingly detached employees. People want to feel like their work matters—they desire a vision that compels them to give their best effort to achieve a seemingly insurmountable goal. That's where vision comes in.

Simply put, vision is a picture of your preferred future. The picture that accompanies that preferred future is the driving force that motivates dreaming, ideating, planning, hard work, and achievement. Effective leaders know how to harness the power of vision to motivate themselves and others when money and perks are tight or non-existent.

Leadership guru John Maxwell said that a leader "knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way," and that "people buy into the leader before they buy into the vision." Do you have a vision? Do your coworkers and employees know what it is, and do they believe in it? Do they believe in your ability to get them there? Everyone likes to ride the rides, but eventually, even the most laid-back people want to get somewhere. Create a vision for the future that your employees can't wait to get to.

Tip 3

Understand that Communication Is Key

During a recession or a crisis, many companies make significant cuts to their workforces, which weighs heavily on their remaining employees. To get the job done with fewer workers, organizations tend to rely on a core group of employees whom they trust and believe in. How can you keep these individuals motivated and engaged for as long as possible?

According to research by Gallup, organizations with a high level of engagement report 22 percent higher productivity. In the words of Jim Harter, Ph.D., a chief scientist at Gallup Research,

> **Engaged employees are more attentive and vigilant. They look out for the needs of their coworkers and the overall enterprise because they personally "own" the results of their work and that of the organization.**

So, what does engagement have to do with communication and leadership? As you might've guessed—a lot.

If you want to engage the people you lead, then make yourself available to them. How many managers spend most or all of their time behind closed doors and away from their employees? Think about the amount of distance (literally and figuratively) between you and your employees. Even in the age of social distancing and remote work, find ways to connect with your employees one-on-one or on a more emotional level in a group setting. It's during stressful times that people need the support of their managers the most. Take time to put business aside and just ask how your team is doing.

Regardless of your jam-packed schedule, maintain a culture of dialogue with your people. Each person is different, and each individual finds motivation in different ways. Rather than employing a one-size-fits-all approach towards instilling motivation, effective managers tailor their management style to elicit the best responses from each employee.

As a leader, manager, or boss, it is your job to keep the people you're responsible for engaged and motivated. Recognize that when you're feeling down and low, chances are your staff is too. Be careful not to drive a melancholy workforce even lower by mercilessly cracking the whip.

Likewise, avoid a posture of ignorance by getting out of your office. Instead, take opportunities to talk to your employees. By listening, you not only show you care, but you also receive real-time feedback on employee concerns and attitudes. From there, you can use this information to correct problems and find ways to motivate your employees.
The bottom line is that by communicating, you're also engaging your people. If your organization suffers from disengagement like many others, then you have a major challenge on your hands—one that leadership should address if it wants to help your company towards long-term success. The good news? You don't have to wait for leadership to boost engagement. Realize that each person can influence others positively as well as negatively. Increase engagement in your organization today by connecting with your employees, by listening to their needs, and by helping them connect to the sense of purpose in their work. You don't need to wait a minute to start engaging your employees at a deeper level. You can start immediately.

Tip 4

Help Your Team See the Big Picture

It's easy to get lost in the work we do as individuals and forget about what we're accomplishing in the larger world. To reconnect your team with the purpose behind their actions, take time to explain how their assignments and projects fit into the company's larger goals. Making the connections between work and goals helps demonstrate that every task your team completes can have an impact on the company's reputation, success, and bottom line. Build a shared vision in your department or organization. By doing so, you'll help workers focus on performance and find more meaning in their work.

To share a common vision that unites your employees through a sense of purpose, look at the why, how, and what. According to the Society of Human Resource Management's HR Magazine:

- The **"Why"** defines the organization's purpose. Once the **"Why"** is identified, it's your job as the leader to communicate the purpose and live by it.
- The **"How"** is the collection of values that inspire and guide behavior. It acts as the company's guiding principles. Consider what makes your business unique from others doing similar work.
- The **"What"** represents an organization's vision and goals. The **"What"** provides quantifiable information to measure results.

When individuals and teams understand the "why," live by the "how," and focus on accomplishing the "what," they start to see the big picture. With the big picture in mind, they won't need micromanaging (although they really don't need micromanaging to begin with). Motivated by the "why," guided by the "how," and targeted to achieve the "what," your employees can evaluate their daily activities and determine what they should do and how they should do it.

Tip 5

Encourage Feedback

Want to be an inspiring leader? Of course you do! Research shows that inspiring, charismatic leaders regularly gather ideas, opinions, and suggestions from the individuals they work with. In a study where 400,000 employees rated their 40,000 managers on their ability to inspire, researchers found that asking people for their input was one of the most impactful habits a leader can build.

Most leaders make the mistake of assuming they understand what's going on in the minds of their employees. Try to avoid making assumptions. There's no way of knowing what your employees think unless you ask. So, make it a point to ask for feedback from all your people regularly in both one-on-one encounters and group meetings. Keep these points in mind when seeking input:

- **Involve Everyone:** Some people have no problem providing feedback in your everyday meetings and other public forums, but others will shy away. Make it a point to seek input from individuals who hold back in group meetings. Most people who hold back do so because they lack confidence. Build their confidence by inviting them to share feedback every so often in group sessions—"What's your take on this, David?" or "How would you do this, Marie?" After they share, reiterate one of their points by leading in with something like, "So, you're saying..." Then, thank them for their contribution. By reiterating one of their points, you show that you're listening. By thanking them, you make the individual feel validated, and you encourage further feedback later.

- **Get Them One-On-One:** If you still find it difficult to get people to contribute in group settings or meetings, schedule one-on-one time with the people who don't often share. Making people feel valued is one of the most important roles of an effective leader. Simply ask for their input and suggestions on more specific items. In every conversation, make it a point to ensure that you've taken into account ideas, opinions, and suggestions of every party in the conversation before making any decisions. If you have a tough time getting people to share, stick with it. People won't always have something to say on every subject either, so you need to keep inviting people to share during each new conversation.

- **Follow Through:** If you receive feedback, nod at the suggestion, and then proceed to do nothing about it, it won't encourage future feedback—and that's something that could hurt your team and your organization. By acting on feedback, you applaud the contributor and encourage more feedback.

- **Circle Back:** Circling back and explaining why feedback did or didn't result in any action is better than simply ignoring input. Stop and think—how do you feel when someone you respect, especially someone in authority, looks for your input on a key topic? Pretty good, huh?

Tip 6

Don't Underestimate the Power of Recognition

What gets us up and going to work every day? Is it just a paycheck? Salesforce.com argues otherwise. In their research, they found that nearly 80 percent of employees said that recognition in their careers motivates them just as much as a paycheck.

But there's a discrepancy between what employees want for their hard work and what they receive. Giving out regular recognition provides an effective way to motivate employees, and effective leaders know it. You can recognize your employees' hard work in several ways, but these are a few of our favorite tips:

1. **Make recognition direct and specific.** Be clear about what specific action you're praising. General praise, such as "you always work so hard" and "good work this week," is nice, but it doesn't let employees know which actions to continue. Recognize specific actions and how they contributed to improving your organization's success.

   Here's an example: "Karen, I'm so impressed with how you dealt with that upset customer yesterday. You did a great job of calming her down so you could explain why her package was delayed. You're the reason she didn't cancel her order. Nice work!"

2. **Make recognition sincere.** Do not rush to implement employee recognition programs without considering why employee recognition is important. The purpose of employee recognition is to motivate employees and show them that you appreciate them. It is not a task to simply check off a list. When you attempt to implement widespread employee recognition in your company while in a rush, it can come off as canned and insincere. Slow down.

3. **Accompany recognition with a benefit or reward.** Tying some type of reward to recognition motivates your employees to continue their hard work. These rewards don't necessarily have to be cash bonuses or raises. Rewards can be more like a paid day off after a long project, a free lunch paid for by the company, or a gift card to a local restaurant that your employee loves visiting already. To figure out which rewards motivate your employees, get to know the people you lead. Discover what gets them excited. Remember these motivators when it comes time to recognize and reward the efforts of your employees. Plus, getting to know someone shows you care about them in a more general sense, which creates a deeper sense of loyalty and boosts engagement. It's a win-win-win situation.

4. **Personalize recognition.** You cannot motivate every employee with the same types of recognition. Some people love public recognition while others find the idea mortifying. This is where knowing your employees helps. Build relationships with your team members so that you know their personalities and the best ways to praise them.

5. **Make recognizing achievements everyone's responsibility.** The entire responsibility for motivating employees cannot fall on leaders and managers alone. Everyone can take it upon themselves to recognize their co-workers for a job well done. Praise from executives lets employees know how their work contributes to the overall goals of the organization. On the other hand, since we work closely with our everyday coworkers, praise from them means a lot too. They know the daily sacrifices we make. Encourage your team to complement each other in specific and personal ways.

6. **Keep recognition simple.** Rather than making recognition a show, let go of the need to put too much planning or thought into how you recognize someone. The real work comes from keeping your eyes open for people who work hard and accomplish goals. After that, a department-wide e-mail or mention during a conference call will do the trick. Remember, recognition should come off as sincere and natural.

If you're looking for an easy way to motivate employees and boost engagement, start with recognition. Most people want to work for companies that appreciate and acknowledge their contributions. Get to know your employees, find out what motivates them, let them know what they're doing well, and watch them shine.

Tip 7

Act With Decisiveness

Although they're willing to be flexible, quality leaders make it a priority to stick with the decisions they make if it's within reason. They strive to be impeccable with their word, which means following through on commitments. People tend to question individuals who waver back and forth and who constantly change their minds. The amount of value you add to your organization depends on your ability to make decisions. Employees will gain more respect for you if you confidently and consistently assert your influence and then stand by your decisions as long as they remain within reason.

Here are some tips for how to exercise decisiveness:

- Hold back on making and sharing decisions until you gather all the necessary facts. Avoid acting on impulse or emotion.
- Delegate workload based on the expertise, interests, and qualifications of your employees. Let go of the impulse to micromanage employees. While that comes out of a good place, micromanagement shows that you don't trust employees or fully understand their capabilities. It can hurt the confidence of your employees and cause them to resent you and your organization—symptoms that lead to disengagement.
- Be accountable for your decisions. Speak with conviction, see your decisions through, and own your failure. That shows confidence and accountability. It takes strength to admit you made a mistake.
- Operate with purpose. Sound leadership decisions need to be value-based and driven with a purpose.

Tip 8

Create an Environment of Constant Learning & Development

Have you ever heard someone give career advice along the lines of, "If you're not learning anything, it's time to move on"? Even if you don't agree with that statement, what's keeping your employees from agreeing with it? And if they realize they're not learning and that your organization isn't encouraging or making space for learning, what's keeping them from leaving your company?

Essentially, learning incentivizes people to stay with an organization. It's the cherry on top of the paycheck. If employees are learning and sharpening skills that can help them earn more, get their dream job, or get promoted, they're going to want to make the most of that opportunity. That means remaining with your organization.

So, give your employees learning opportunities. Encourage your team to explore new methods of reaching their individual goals and those set by the company. Allow them to make and learn from mistakes. Unless you're working with a bunch of robots, your coworkers and teams are going to make mistakes. So, let go of the frustration that comes up when they do. Do you know what's more frustrating than making a mistake? Not learning from a mistake—that's frustrating.

See mistakes as opportunities to develop your employees and as opportunities to exercise patience and understanding. Give them the benefit of the doubt. After all, *we all* make mistakes. When you judge someone for making a mistake, you might not have the entire story, and that leads to needless suffering. You don't like being judged for your mistakes, right? Return the favor.

Here's another bit of advice—reward new and innovative ideas. Each member of your organization sees the world from a unique perspective. They might see something that you and everyone else missed—a clever solution, a loophole, or an opportunity bubbling just below the surface. If your employee wants to experiment and try something a bit different, encourage them to go for it. If it doesn't work, that's okay. Learn and move on. The point is not to have things work on the first try. The point is to try things, learn from the failures, and set yourself up for the eventual successes in the process. Encourage innovation. It's your friend.

Tip 9

Provide the Professional Guidance that Your Team Wants

We want to be around our mentors and the leaders we look up to. So, be the manager who's also the leader and the mentor people want to be around. If you provide mentorship for members of your team, they'll find more incentive to work harder for you and stay with your company for longer. Make yourself available to staff members and show interest in their career development, especially as it pertains to your organization.

Remember the motivational power of positive reinforcement. If employees hear positive feedback from mentors they respect, their confidence will soar. They'll spend less time doubting themselves and stressing and more time focusing, pushing themselves, and getting things done. How does that sound?

Tip **10**

Exercise Patience With Yourself

Developing strong managerial skills takes time—especially as you adjust to your new position. Seek guidance from colleagues, your manager, and your professional network when you need it. In doing so, you'll develop your leadership abilities and make strides toward becoming an effective and respected manager.

In the same way that you give your employees the benefit of the doubt with the mistakes they make, do the same for yourself. You're not going to be perfect, so let go of that expectation. Again, save yourself the stress and heartbreak. If you make a mistake, learn from it and move on. And remember, you've got this.

As a Recap, Remember to:

1. Develop yourself as a leader
2. Set an example people can't resist following
3. Communicate directly and clearly
4. Help your team see the big picture
5. Encourage and invite constant feedback
6. Recognize and reward a job well done
7. Act with decisiveness
8. Encourage learning and development
9. Provide the guidance your employees want
10. Exercise patience, especially with yourself

Be the Leader Your Organization Needs

Here's a bonus tip—you already have what it takes to be a successful leader and manager. The real trick is in accessing your potential and your employees' potential by getting to know your employees and yourself. That can be a daunting task, but the PXT Select™ suite of solutions makes it easy.

The PXT Select assessment and the CheckPoint 360°™ feedback survey help you as a manager by gathering accurate, objective, and reliable data so you can confidently hire, manage, develop, and retain productive employees and effective leaders.

With the right people in the right roles, developed to their full potential, your organization can build a high-performing workforce that drives results. In the end, isn't that your goal as a manager?

Interested in learning more? **Contact your Authorized PXT Select Partner today.**

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