5 Essential Tips on How to Be a Great Manager



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Being a good manager is about more than just being proficient in your field — in fact, it's a distinct skill that requires its own cultivation. As Michael E. Gerber says in his classic business book, *The E-Myth*, not all good bakers should become bakery owners. Over the course of my entrepreneurial career, I've found this advice to ring true again and again, and it continues to motivate me to improve my own management skills.

In this article, I want to share five essential tips that will help you become an effective and successful manager. I apply these tips every day in my role as founder of cat brand tuft + paw, and it's led us to incredible results.

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1. Embrace radical honesty – high empathy + high directness

The foundation of effective management lies in radical honesty – a perfect balance between high empathy and high directness. This means being forthright and transparent in your communication while empathizing with your team members' feelings and perspectives. Avoiding difficult conversations can create more significant problems in the long run, undermining trust and respect – and frankly, wasting everyone's time.

Incorporating radical honesty into your management style can be challenging, especially if you're a naturally reserved person, but I promise the payoff is worth the effort. I recommend periodically checking the radical honesty graph from Kim Scott's book, *Radical Candor,* which serves as a reminder of the balance you're aiming for. Strive to address issues directly and promptly, keeping in mind that honesty is the highest form of integrity. By cultivating this open and transparent environment, you will foster a culture of trust and respect within your team.

2. Build trust and rapport through face-to-face interaction

While radical honesty is essential in the workplace, it's also important to build personal trust and rapport with your team. Make time for unstructured get-togethers with your team members, providing an opportunity for genuine connection beyond work-related discussions.

Listen actively to the conversation and participate. We're all humans with our own desires, concerns and experiences, and connecting on that personal level is the best way to show that you care. Over time, this approach fosters a sense of

belonging and strengthens the team's commitment to achieving shared goals. Building strong relationships with your team will not only enhance team morale but also enable you to better understand everyone's unique strengths and weaknesses.

3. Encourage open and honest two-way communication

Building upon your own radical honesty and rapport with the team, encouraging open and honest two-way communication is the next piece of the management puzzle. Establish a culture where team members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, concerns and ideas without fear of repercussions. As a manager, practice what you preach by actively seeking and valuing feedback from your team. Act on their suggestions when appropriate, which proves to them that their voices matter.

Additionally, create forums for open dialogue, such as regular team meetings or anonymous suggestion boxes. Emphasizing transparent communication will quickly lead to improved problem-solving and better team dynamics, and in the long run, it will build the foundation for a more innovative company.

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4. Give autonomy and flexibility to your team

Great managers understand the importance of giving their team autonomy and flexibility in their roles. Trust your team members to take ownership of their tasks and responsibilities, and empower them to make decisions and contribute creatively.

An excellent way to do this in our current work landscape is to offer flexible working hours or remote work options. By

allowing your team to build a schedule that works for them, you'll help create a workplace culture that prioritizes a healthy work-life balance. Employees who feel supported in their personal lives are more likely to be productive and engaged at work. However you choose to do it, giving your employees independence and flexibility will improve loyalty and motivation and will help you build a team that's committed to the success of the business.

5. Support team member growth and development

As a manager, your responsibility goes beyond day-to-day operations; you must also be invested in your team members' growth and development. Identify their strengths, weaknesses and career aspirations to help them reach their full potential (see the connection with tip #2?). Encourage continuous learning and professional development by providing opportunities for training and skill-building.

One of my favorite business quotes goes: "*What if we train people to be so good they leave us for somewhere else?*"

To which the response is: "*What if we don't train them and they stay?*"

You can see the problem here. No business can achieve its full potential without training its staff to achieve *their* full potential. When you invest in your team's growth, you're building a loyal and dedicated workforce that will contribute significantly to the organization's success.

In a nutshell, adopt the mindset that it's better to train people to be so good that they might leave for other opportunities, rather than neglecting their growth and having them stay in unfulfilling roles.

Becoming a good manager requires more than just technical

expertise; it demands a commitment to developing essential leadership skills. By embracing radical honesty, building trust through face-to-face interaction, encouraging open communication, granting autonomy and supporting team member growth, you can become an incredibly effective and influential leader. Remember, the success of any organization lies in the hands of its managers and the culture they cultivate within their teams. Lead with integrity, empathy and determination, and watch your team thrive.

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