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eBook:

Closing the New Manager Leadership Gap

Table of Contents

- A CEO’s Story: The Journey from New Manager to Company Leader 1
- Chapter 1:** Support New Managers Who Are Feeling Squeezed 3
- Chapter 2:** Top Capabilities for First-Time Managers in the Digital Age 7
- Chapter 3:** 3 Mindset Shifts New Managers Need to Make 11
- Chapter 4:** Beyond Mindset: 2 Things Every New Manager Needs to Master 16
- Chapter 5:** How to Transition from Inexperienced New Manager to Effective New Leader 21
- Chapter 6:** How HR Can Help Turn New Managers into Strategic Leaders 24
- Chapter 7:** Executives Must Have Critical Conversations with New Managers 29
- Chapter 8:** 3 Reasons Leadership Coaching Should Replace Traditional New Manager Training 32





A CEO's Story: The Journey from New Manager to Company Leader

Landing a new manager role can feel exciting at first, but as the real work begins, doubts and fears can quickly take over, impacting your effectiveness as a leader. It's something I understand all too well.

Before I launched [Sounding Board](#) in 2016, I worked for a company called Tapjoy, a mobile engagement and monetization platform. This was in 2009. I was there only six months before my first promotion, and not long after that, I became one of the youngest vice presidents. My responsibilities and team size increased rapidly. Then I was promoted again to Senior Vice President. With each promotion, there were new challenges, and I found myself doubting my capabilities. The stakes were high: I led a team of almost 40 people, with oversight for 15% of the workforce globally, from sales, account management, and strategic operations to technical support. We drove 70% of the company's revenue. It was a big job.

My challenges as a new manager

Transitioning from a high-performing individual contributor to a new manager, I had zero training or experience and, quite frankly, I was way out of my comfort zone and unprepared to lead. To make the situation even more challenging, I had to lead individuals who were my buddies, people with longer tenure, and some who were far older than me. I remember literally having moments of panic because, aside from Google, I had no guidance on how to formally navigate my new role — or my career in general — and leadership coaching simply wasn't an option at that time.

Learning how to lead wasn't my only challenge. After being promoted into our executive management team as a VP, tactical leadership, remotely hiring highly experienced general managers to run regions, and finding new and better ways to manage emerging stressors also topped the list. Reporting to one of the co-founders left little room for day-to-day tactical support – I had to figure out tactics myself. This, too, increased my stress levels, and people could see it.

My inexperience and discomfort were also apparent when attending and presenting at board meetings. It was my first time, and it became glaringly obvious to everyone, including my CEO, that I needed coaching. Fortunately, once I was part of the executive team, the company gave me a leadership coach. That's how I met my future business partner and Sounding Board Co-founder, Lori Mazan. She helped me walk through scenarios and practice them, and together we got through many of my challenges. This development was huge for me, and it alleviated much of my stress and stress for those around me.

Lori helped me to communicate strategically, and I learned how to influence others much more effectively. The impact leadership coaching had on me was immense. I had new skills and capabilities with which to address the leadership gaps I previously had. I could finally manage the pressure, and communicate about issues in ways that helped my CEO understand their importance. Lori also worked with me on being a tactical leader and how to show up, prepare, and present more effectively in our board meetings.

Fast forward to today

Leadership coaching helped me to make a greater organizational impact on business growth at Tapjoy, and ultimately, it led me to start Sounding Board. Coaching has helped me communicate issues more clearly and effectively, and translate priorities to help set the right direction and guidance for managers and their teams. As the CEO and co-founder of a leadership development platform that helps coach enterprises how to develop their leaders, I'm keenly aware of new managers' stress and what we as leaders can do to better support them in their journey.

If you're a senior-level learning and development or HR leader, or a talent leader looking to address this growing leadership gap, this ebook will help you outline some of the key concepts that should underpin your L&D strategy for new managers. Leadership coaching is a proven way to expand crucial leadership capabilities, and improve how new managers lead themselves, lead others, and lead for impact. It worked for me.

Chapter 1: Support New Managers Who Are Feeling Squeezed

Today's managers are dealing with a lot: inflation, the economic downturn, accelerated digital transformation, changing employee expectations, intensifying talent wars, remnants of the pandemic, the need to do more with less, and the list goes on. In light of these challenges, the workplace can be even more troublesome for new managers who are thrust into leadership roles without support. They're left to figure out the nuances of effective leadership and management independently, while being squeezed from all directions. This creates a leadership gap – between the skills they have and the skills they need – that has consequences for employees at all levels as well as the organizations they support.

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“54% of employees who are looking for a new job say their manager doesn't know how to lead.”

- [2022 SHRM Global Culture Report](#)

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Poor management results in poor culture

In their 2022 Global Culture Report “[Strengthening Workplace Culture: A Tool for Retaining and Empowering Employees](#),” SHRM surveyed employees from 12 countries. Their findings illustrate the difference between success and failure for managers and companies in a post-pandemic world.

United States

- 50% of employees in America indicated their manager allows workers to get away with bad behavior.
- 32% rate their workplace culture as poor.
- Of the 32%, 70% are most likely to dread going to work.
- 50% of employees say they thought about quitting at some point in their career.

Global results

- 42% of employees say they have witnessed a manager's inconsiderate treatment of a co-worker in the past year.
- 54% of employees who are looking for a new job say their manager doesn't know how to lead.



Despite the increased frequency of leadership transitions, senior and mid-level management receive minimal support or leadership development, and this is the heart of the problem. This leadership gap exists because there is a definite need for development, yet the audience for that development is being systematically neglected.

For instance, SHRM's 2022 Culture Report found that only 50% of employees globally said their workplace provides explicit training on empathy for all people managers. Empathy, the ability to understand or appreciate another person's feelings, is a critical skill for someone leading a team for the first time. So, while the numbers say they may or may not get it, new managers do require support. Leadership coaching is a proven way to prepare them for success.

Find a leadership style that fits

Helping new managers to transition effectively from an individual contributor to a leader often requires guidance to ensure they can see and embrace the big-picture, how their role helps to shape it, and the myriad pieces therein. This transformation likely won't happen overnight, but new managers can start their journey on the right foot by:

- Developing an effective leadership style
- Understanding the role of commitment vs. compliance
- Learning how to delegate

The capabilities and behaviors needed to become an effective new manager can be learned, which is why dedicated development is so beneficial during this career transition. For instance, without support, determining their leadership style can be challenging, but it's something new managers need to do immediately in a way that reflects their personality. Each leader has strengths and weaknesses, and their leadership style should promote the former, minimize the latter, and match the leader's abilities. Otherwise, the new manager role will feel like putting on a set of ill-fitting clothes. Leadership development tools like one-on-one or group coaching can then address weaknesses that might inhibit effective performance, collaboration, or teaming.

Creating a leadership style isn't about just choosing a managerial identity or imitating a style admired in previous managers. Although this tactic might prove effective, it can be problematic if that style doesn't match a manager's inherent traits and characteristics. In their 2020 Harvard Business Review article, "[How to Develop Your Leadership Style](#)", Suzanne J. Peterson, Robin Abramson, and R.K. Stutman wrote that "a great leadership style can make people appear more competent than they truly are, and a poor style can drag down a superior skill set."

Meaning, a new manager shouldn't try to be a strict disciplinarian if their personality is warm and personable. Nor should they try to be a transformational leader if that doesn't play to

their skill sets. Instead, it's more comfortable and more effective if the individual works to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and values. This requires self-reflection and keeping two things in mind:

1. A leader's style should be flexible and promote the idea of asking for help.
2. Consistency when applying a leadership style builds stability within an organization.

Being authentic is also important to build trust with direct reports because it helps them to learn who their leader is and what to expect.

Understand commitment vs. compliance

Being a new manager is more complex than simply becoming "the boss." There are other nuances at play that can impact outcomes and performance. For instance, HR and learning leaders should help new managers determine how organizational needs align with their team's skills. This will inform how new managers influence their direct reports to complete necessary tasks.

New managers also have to understand the difference between enforcing compliance and promoting commitment. An ineffective manager might abuse their power and discipline employees too harshly to instill compliance. This can backfire because it may incentivize employees to follow blindly. This behavior is undesirable in the optimal organizational culture because it stymies diverse thinking, innovation, and creative problem-solving. Human beings and their motivations are complex, and relying on compliance can also result in team members who offer the bare minimum by way of engagement and effort, becoming insubordinate, and quitting quietly after reaching their breaking point.

On the other hand, new managers who engender employee loyalty by encouraging their commitment will reap far better outcomes. In this context employee loyalty is a mindset that fully aligns an individual with the organization, guiding them along the journey from compliance to commitment, according to Marcel Parker and Vijay Sivaram in their [People Matters article](#) with the same name.

If new managers are to encourage their teams to complete their best work, they need to build trust, and leverage a strong understanding of interpersonal dynamics. To accomplish this and produce strong business outcomes over time, new managers:

- Need to recognize their role in setting the tone for work culture and how their behavior influences employees' behavior and standards.
- Demonstrate interest in employees' input and expertise.
- Show vulnerability and honesty about their capabilities to strengthen workplace bonds.
- Recognize the tone they're setting for the workplace culture.

- Find ways to let employees know they value their contributions and how important they are to the organization.

New managers shouldn't wholly abandon compliance, however. Their roles come with an inherent power dynamic, and neglecting it entirely can be perilous. For example, some new managers try to maintain the same relationships with peers they had before they were promoted. Recall Christine Tao's story where she found herself leading friends and peers who were older than she was. While leaders should be sociable, they must understand the new responsibilities and expectations placed upon them once they step into a managerial role. Tao's story might have turned out differently had she not learned how to navigate relationships more effectively via leadership coaching.

These and other kinds of relationship complexities that new managers face emphasize the significance of building strong, dynamic leadership skills. When new managers can shift their mindsets, few challenges are insurmountable. However, they must remain open to growth to simplify taking on responsibilities in a new role. It's also important to factor in the broader scope of their role beyond their direct team. With a firm eye on organizational goals, new managers can become more effective in leading their teams — and make the transition to leadership less stressful on everyone involved.

Transition from doing-it-all to delegating

A new manager's biggest challenge may be recognizing that they no longer have to do all the work themselves. Delegation is a surprisingly multifaceted skill, yet many new managers downplay it. When viewed objectively, [delegation is a process](#) with several moving parts. When struggling to delegate, leaders can take these steps to assign tasks successfully:

- Generate a vision, direction, or outcome.
- Divide the overarching goal into specific tasks.
- Assess team capabilities to identify those best suited to complete each task.
- Communicate delegated tasks and deadlines clearly to ensure they're understood.
- Periodically review the delegation process to ensure it's gaining momentum.
- Evaluate the outcome for each task, and follow up with positive and/or constructive feedback.

New managers who were once high-performing individual contributors may default to completing tasks themselves, believing it's quicker. In reality, they end up overworked with an underutilized and unmotivated team. Their effectiveness as new leaders means learning how to access the leadership capabilities necessary to level up their soft skills, which is key for effective delegation, and coaching is a proven way to acquire these capabilities.

Chapter 2: Top Capabilities for First-Time Managers in the Digital Age

Shifting demographics in virtual and hybrid workplaces, changing cultural norms, and increasing reliance on digital workplace technologies have changed how managers and employees interact. The importance of soft skills cannot be underestimated.

In fact, since the pandemic, companies are increasingly prioritizing social, emotional, and advanced cognitive skills and capabilities, according to a 2021 McKinsey survey shared in their article "[Building workforce skills at scale to thrive during—and after—the COVID-19 crisis.](#)" Many of these skills are critically important for new managers:

- Leadership and managing others
- Critical thinking and decision-making
- Project management
- Adaptability and continuous learning
- Interpersonal skills and empathy

While communication, adaptation, and teamwork have always been crucial soft skills for new managers in any industry to succeed, global events and the speed of change in an increasingly digital world have accelerated demand. Soft skills like these can seem tough to measure, but it's essential that talent leaders know [which soft skills to develop](#) and what are the desired outcomes.

Leadership coaching is a proven way to acquire, develop, or to accelerate use of the soft skills that will better position this critical workforce cohort to face diverse challenges they'll encounter on the job. What follows are a few of the critical facets of leadership where soft skills have significant value for new managers.



Communicating in a trust-deficit environment

While virtual and hybrid employees struggle with the realities of social unrest and misinformation, their managers are also grappling with this. New managers have the added stress of learning how to build trust through effective, timely digital communication in a trust-deficit environment. They are likely to find this even more challenging, as conditions are rapidly changing. They may feel overwhelmed, and some may opt for not communicating at all. This is one of the biggest mistakes a new manager can make, as it increases distrust.

Communicating in a trust-deficit environment requires that new managers develop capabilities that allow them to share information, assumptions, and ideas to make their reasoning more explicit. They need to listen, remain open and willing to explore, and encourage others to provide diverse views.

Communication should enable others to gain a clear understanding. It's essential that new managers develop ways to communicate with their teams that don't promote defensiveness. That will also require them to enable/facilitate conversations around issues that impact diversity, equity, and inclusion, establish standardized communication practices, focus on clarity, and communicate in ways that don't overwhelm their employees.

Remember, new managers must elevate their communication capabilities so they can:

- **Establish standardized communication practices:** This will determine whether tasks will be assigned by email or product management tools like Asana. Determine or identify how co-workers should ask for assistance. Will it be via Slack chat or email?
- **Avoid bombarding employees with messages:** Employees likely won't appreciate getting a dozen chat messages for something that a single email could resolve. Managers will need to know how to distill communications into the most digestible format.
- **Focus on clarity above all else:** It's easy for inexperienced managers to miss subtle details when reading or sending text messages, for instance. They should account for this by sending clear, easy-to-understand directives that leave little room for error.

Of course, digital communication is a two-way street. New managers should refrain from using technology solely to make directives. They may need to be taught how to listen to feedback as well. Whatever communication channel they use, they'll need to create opportunities for employees to share thoughts on current projects and initiatives. Development exercises like coaching can be particularly helpful here, as a skilled coach can guide the new manager on how to apply active listening principles, and reiterate key points to ensure everyone involved is on the same page.

If handled correctly, digital communications can move beyond messages between individual team members and be used to improve the entire work culture.

Creating a workplace culture that supports a digital workplace

New managers must develop the capabilities to create a workplace culture that cultivates a sense of connection for their remote employees. To do this, new managers not only need the right leadership capabilities, they need the right technologies to adapt to the digital environment. They also need to identify where and how to pivot to better support their remote and hybrid employees; this requires companies to create a culture of continuous learning.

Making this shift in mindset requires new managers to migrate the current work culture to a digital environment using principles and technologies like email, Slack chats, and video conferences. This ensures their remote employees can still easily engage with them through various channels.

The same digital technologies that facilitate instant communication can also be used to foster workplace camaraderie and support. When establishing these channels, new managers need to consciously factor in the type of culture they hope to create to build powerful work relationships and enhance organizational performance.

However, with so many digital communication channels available, it's also important for new managers to understand that work-life balance is more important than ever. It's essential for them to acknowledge that the digital workplace is still for human beings. They must ensure their employees have opportunities to celebrate victories, recognize special occasions, and have a safe place to share their frustrations. Further, team members are just as likely to get sick, respond to emergencies, and face out-of-work challenges as local employees. New managers should make every effort to optimize work hours, encourage their team members to take breaks, and let employees fully unplug on weekends and holidays.

Listening skills play a huge role in digital communications. Instead of rushing to speak or type out a directive, encourage new managers to take the time to listen to team members. Talent leaders can help them learn different employee perspectives, and respond in ways that address their needs. New managers may need to learn how to show employees their contributions are valuable, and how to enable direct reports or peers to suggest improvements or ask for help overcoming barriers.

Managing performance conversations

With the increase in virtual workplaces, managers have less visibility into their employees' work, which can lead to potentially inaccurate and biased performance ratings, according to Gartner article "[11 Trends that Will Shape Work in 2022 and Beyond.](#)" In the article, Gartner shared findings from their 2020 survey of nearly 3,000 managers. The data showed that 64% of



managers and executives believed employees who came to the office were higher performers than remote employees. Respondents also saw in-office workers as more likely to be promoted. These beliefs were solely based on employee proximity rather than actual business impact.

Conducting performance evaluations requires soft skills such as empathy and knowing how to set goals. Fortunately, performance evaluations have notably improved thanks to digital technologies. The aforementioned Gartner article said the same tools used to work remotely will also become the tools that will measure and improve performance in the future. It makes sense. Performance management tools can track workflows, summarize completed objectives, highlight progress tied to key benchmarks, and align with high-level goals. Once a new manager has a high-level picture of their team's workload, they can provide additional resources and support, and insights can be scaled to benefit individual employees or an entire organization as necessary.

As communication technologies continue to advance, companies can speed up soft skills development in new managers to keep up with workplace evolution. It's important to remind new managers that soft skills aren't outdated. In fact, it's more important than ever that they apply them to digital work cultures in new ways. Some of these soft skills include:

- Communication
- Active listening
- Team engagement
- Empathy

New managers who can critically evaluate the role of digital technologies, consciously invest in team culture, make the necessary shifts in mindset, and change their behaviors for the team and the organization's benefit, will excel and achieve greater success.

| Pro Tip

"Time management in leadership is more than putting a to-do list in order. It's about managing your attention as well. . . Your time and attention are the most precious resources you have. It's time to put them to their highest and best use."

- Alan Heymann, Leadership Coach, Sounding Board

Chapter 3: 3 Mindset Shifts New Managers Need to Make

Excelling in a managerial position requires a shift in mindset. A new manager could think of it as teaching someone how to drive instead of being a student driver. The student driver may have spent years as a passenger, watching others navigate long distances effortlessly and believing that driving isn't difficult. They might have read every training manual and feel prepared for any situation. However, that confidence often changes the instant they merge onto a busy highway, and that familiar car suddenly feels different from anything they had imagined.

New managers who previously stood out as motivated self-starters with demonstrated individual achievements must now shift their attention toward their team's performance and how to help them succeed, Dana Wilkie said in her 2020 SHRM article "[Developing the Mindset and Skillset to Be a New Manager](#)." It takes time, self-reflection, patience, mentoring, and coaching.

At Sounding Board, we frequently work with clients entering management roles for the first time. If there's one thing they can all agree on, leadership differs from what they imagined as employees. Reading books or Googling as Christine Tao once did doesn't sufficiently prepare someone for a new leadership role. Senior leaders must help prepare new managers to adopt the following three specific mindsets to enable them to tackle new challenges and avoid counterproductive old habits. The shifts are:

1. From individual contributor to leader

If someone was a high-performing software engineer and then suddenly, without time to prepare, they're promoted to the head of engineering and asked to lead, strategize, and delegate tasks, it could be a problematic transition. Most of their prior experiences are rooted in individual hands-on contributions. As a result, many new managers shift back to doing the day-to-day hands-on work because it feels simpler; they already know how to contribute as an individual.

While this is understandable, new managers must [deploy a greater sense of self-awareness](#), and immediately make a mindset switch because now their organizational success is based on team contributions, not personal accomplishments. Their new role involves hiring capable employees, delegating tasks, and providing resources to help teams work as effectively as possible.

A new manager's past expertise is best utilized as it relates to measuring a team's success — not by completing tasks themselves; otherwise, they could end up overwhelmed managing two full-time jobs at once. Eventually, they may find they can't fulfill either role effectively. A better approach is to practice delegation daily.

Talent leaders can help managers cultivate a habit of matching each task to team members with relevant skills. This helps leverage the abilities of an entire organization to complete tasks as effectively as possible. Effective delegation is a skill that takes time to learn and ensures the right people are working on assignments that fit their knowledge and skill sets. It frees a manager's time to focus on higher-level tasks that help the company grow and thrive.

2. From a focus on daily objectives to a broader, strategic perspective

Some stereotypes allude to executives and managers not taking on “real work” compared to ground-level employees. The truth is, leaders still work — it's just rooted in high-level strategy. Managers are responsible for generating and implementing directives that benefit the entire organization, which requires strategic thinking beyond immediate tasks.

Strategic thinking works the same way as planning a long car trip on a Global Positioning System (GPS). You enter the destination — or in business strategy, a high-level goal — into the system, and it generates a list of routes, factoring in distance and traffic congestion — high-level strategies. Once the route is determined, the driver focuses on a short-term destination, which is the journey's first step, or to continue our business analogy, a more immediate outcome.

A driver who plans each stop before picking a final destination is unlikely to reach their goal. This is the same concept for company leaders. Goals and strategies are set first before employees can execute immediate plans to reach small tasks and larger goals. Often, new managers who focus on daily tasks struggle with strategic thinking, but making a shift in mindset helps them lead their teams and the business more effectively. Coaching is an excellent way to promote this kind of real-time development using the new manager's actual work as the appropriate framework for learning.



3. From a near exclusive self-focus to a team-focus

Whether a team is composed of hundreds of employees or just a few, all managers represent the organization's public face. They are the figures who will be recognized for the brand's success and associated with its failures. This image of one manager determining a company's future is seldom accurate – businesses often succeed or fail as a team. But this story of one leader taking a company to the pinnacle of success is so compelling that it's not uncommon for some leaders to believe it.

Top managers are successful because they often attribute their achievements to their teams. Rarely do they say it's because of their individual skills or attributes. However, self-focus is about more than just a leader's overconfidence. Sometimes it's the opposite; managers assume too much responsibility for incidents beyond their control, and attach the company's successes and failures to their actions. This can appear as though their ego is at the center of all activities.

It's essential for new managers to develop a team-focused mindset. However, it's easy for them to forget this because much of the language they use daily is rooted in themselves, making it easy to slip out of a team mentality. They must develop the habit of making every communication – even casual conversations – about the team instead of themselves.

Making these mindset shifts are just the first of many steps in the new manager's leadership development process. Mastering these steps helps these individuals learn to delegate, motivate employees, create high-performing teams, and much more. As with any habit, changing these mindset shifts isn't easy. It requires time, practice, and guidance for new managers to develop these three mindsets that will [effectively support and develop others](#) on their team. However, when combined with the right soft skills, they can become confident leaders while building and managing highly effective teams.

| Pro Tip

“The most important time management lesson for a leader to learn is the one about saying no. If you have too much to do, then you need to find a way to have less to do. It's about knowing what you can do and delegating the rest – clearly and effectively.”

- Nicki Leaper, Leadership Coach, Sounding Board



Bob Oberleitner is a coach at Sounding Board. What follows are his thoughts on some of the struggles new managers encounter, the advantages leadership coaching can offer, and how it can help to bridge the leadership gap.

New managers are especially receptive to leadership coaching

By Bob Oberleitner

New managers have understandable angst. They're new to their role, and there's some worry there that they may not be able to succeed – especially if they were formerly a high performing individual contributor, or they're new to managing a team. New managers are often very concerned about what people are thinking and saying. They worry that what they say to someone from HR might get back to their manager. Coaching provides them with a trusted contact outside of their immediate work circle who they can confide in, and who can help them work out their role-based challenges in a safe space.

Having an external sounding board enables a new manager to:

- Share their frustrations
- Express and expand new points of view, ideas, and opinions
- Safely discuss organizational processes or policies

Topics that benefit new managers:

- Delegation
- Micromanaging, especially as they transition from a contributor role
- Gaining confidence in their new role

Formerly as successful individual contributors, new managers are often overwhelmed when

they have to rely on others to get things done. They're spending a lot of time in meetings and fielding questions— with little time to meet old responsibilities and a new job description. It's vital for new managers to learn to delegate.

Newer managers have anxiety about whether they can do the job because of complexities. There's self doubt around the skills they're trying to attain and being in a growth mindset.

I've heard some say they thought being in management would be easy, and now they have much more responsibility than they thought, and they're uncertain how to deal with the problems that everyone is bringing to them.

It's important for new managers to recognize that internally, they have more room for growth, whether it relates to maturity, skills, growth in how to utilize skills, or realizing that it's okay not to be the expert in everything and still be a valuable contributor. Learning also factors in, along with expanding your existing knowledge.

One common goal for new managers should be completely transitioning from being an individual contributor to thinking of success through the achievements of their direct reports and how best they can facilitate their team's success. It's about distributing the work and ensuring it's effective for the whole team.

They should also trust themselves in their new leadership position. After all, they were hired because someone saw their potential and felt confident in their abilities. By achieving these goals, the overall performance and impact of the team are enhanced.

4 advantages of leadership coaching

Traditional generalized training is good, but many courses last only a few hours or a few days. On the other hand, coaching provides the following:

- A personalized opportunity to work one-on-one with a coach who is vested in unlocking the special sauce they bring to their organization.
- Benefits for leaders and organizations over a much longer time period.
- Opportunities to dive into more situations that are directly applicable.
- The awareness and skills needed to advance to the next level as a leader.

People are busy and not always aware of their skills and capabilities or where coaching is needed. Sounding Board has identified 16 leadership capabilities that stakeholders and leaders should make developmental priorities. These are essential to filling a growing leadership gap. Most organizations and leaders can benefit from these to help provide insight into what they need to work on to level up.

What does successful coaching look like?

There are a number of leadership coaching success stories, but one, in particular, comes to mind. One of my coachees was working very hard and was in line for a promotion, but she didn't get it. We discussed and worked through the feelings and the emotions that went into that rejection and ultimately got to a place where she saw things from a different perspective. She recognized these two aspects that were impacting her life and career.

- Skills that she needed to improve upon
- Common patterns relating to how she handled stress

All of this was impeding her progress. She began focusing more outwardly and examining what was happening through her verses. She identified characteristics that she had previously thought were strengths but were actually not suited for the promotion. Coaching facilitated this realization and changed how she approached leading her projects.

The end result

Ultimately these realizations resulted in her being promoted during the very next promotion cycle. I also felt confident that she was on her way to a promotion cycle. I could see the light go on and those 'aha' moments. As everything came together. There was now a "What can I do" attitude in future sessions, approaching everything from a much stronger position.



Chapter 4: Beyond Mindset: 2 Things Every New Manager Needs to Master

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“The Great Resignation is a crisis of belonging.”

– [Anthony Silard, Fortune](#)

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When managers develop the right mindset, they can lead with purpose; but more is needed. New managers may continue to feel overwhelmed about leading a team for the first time – and for a good reason! Managing people is a skill that needs to be purposefully developed. One of the most critical reasons for this is the new manager’s impact on people.

Talent retention has become a big concern for many organizations amid workforce mobility patterns like the Great Resignation, and it’s rooted in employees’ feeling like they don’t belong. It’s created a crisis that new managers must address. In his Fortune article, [“The Great Resignation is a crisis of belonging. Here’s the real way we organize ourselves at work,”](#) Anthony Silard shared this example of how one leader impacted an employees’ sense of value and belonging: “I felt alone because my boss had favoritism and spent a lot of time outside of the office with the sales manager. This caused unfair treatment and made me feel excluded.”

New managers can play a significant role in helping to create a greater sense of belonging for their employees. Adopting the following strategies can develop the capabilities that can reduce team stressors and increase talent retention:

1. Improve communication

Strong communication skills will make or break new managers. Why? How they work influences other people on their team – and the organization as a whole – so having open lines of communication and clearly understanding their peers, direct reports, and senior leaders is key to establishing themselves as a strong leader.

Organizations are composed of individuals with varying skills and experiences. New managers must demonstrate soft skills like empathy and communication to ensure their



employees feel seen and heard, and feel comfortable asking questions and contributing their ideas. Helping new managers develop better communication can:

- Increase the ability to share information, reduce assumptions, and share ideas to make employee reasoning explicit.
- Improve listening to ensure they remain open to consistently exploring and encouraging others to provide different views.
- Help draw out others' reasoning to garner clearer understanding and clarity.
- Increase consistent feedback and ask questions in ways that do not promote defensiveness.
- Initiate and encourage courageous conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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“High-performing teams don’t just happen. They require keen recruitment, staffing, and training strategies.”

– [“5 ways diversity and inclusion help teams perform better,”](#) CIO

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This last point is vital because diversity can help to build high-performing teams. But this requires intentional activity; high-performing teams don’t just happen. They require recruiting, talent management, and development strategies that explicitly focus on creating a diverse and inclusive (D&I) culture, according to a 2021 CIO article by Moira Alexander, [“5 ways diversity and inclusion help teams perform better.”](#) New managers who receive this kind of development can expect to contribute to the following organizational benefits:

- Access to top talent and reduced turnover
- Increased sense of belonging
- Higher levels of trust
- Better decision-making
- Increased employee engagement

Especially during times of change and business disruption – which are more common these days than not – employees must feel that their needs are a priority. If a new manager’s communication skills need work, or they’re unsure how to communicate empathetically, individual or group coaching can provide them with the support they need to become effective

communicators. Coaching can support managers' real time efforts to create open lines of communication by celebrating as a team, supporting employees when they share ideas or ask to take on new tasks, and respecting their good intentions and effort if things don't go exactly to plan.

In their Harvard Business Review article "[5 Tips for Communicating with Employees During a Crisis](#)," Brooks Holtom, Amy C. Edmondson, and David Niu explain that managers should communicate with urgency, transparency, and empathy. In this way, employees are more apt to adjust to constantly changing conditions, especially those associated with a crisis. Demonstrating empathy and creating hope also foster resilience for the future.

| Pro Tip

"Communication requires us to courageously set aside our assumptions, bias, or being right, for the sake of initiating and encouraging conversations and all voices being heard."

- Sue Jordan, Leadership Coach, Sounding Board

2. Create a supportive work structure

Setting up a framework or workflow process early on will pay off when new managers become busier. To help with this, here are some ways new managers can build a more supportive work structure:

- **Connect with other managers.** One common mistake first-time managers make is to solely focus on their immediate team. They may need guidance on how to expand their network, and invite their peers to participate in conversations about mutual support within their roles.
- **Start developing their leadership skills immediately.** New managers should start to identify their strengths and areas of weakness to see where improvements are needed. If they're unsure, they can and should ask for feedback from their manager, talent leaders, or enlist the help of a leadership coach. Working directly with a leadership coach can provide a much-needed external perspective to guide new skill-building, and help new managers measure and report their growth along the way.

Encouraging new managers to ask for feedback will make them more effective. Keeping the lines of communication open, checking in frequently with people they work closely with, and actively working to create an inclusive culture helps to increase trust and engagement and [foster a culture of belonging](#). All of these are vital for their effectiveness.

Coaching improves engagement and one-on-one support at Welkin

Welkin doubled in size as their solution catapulted the company into the marketplace. Many of their newly promoted managers lacked experience and struggled to support their teams adequately. Welkin needed help establishing an enduring leadership culture—a set of collective values that inform leadership attitudes and choices across an organization. They partnered with Sounding Board to improve engagement and to offer one-on-one support to its new leaders. Sounding Board would help managers build three core skills:

- Communicating a consistent, unified vision
- Delivering performance-enhancing feedback to direct reports
- Fostering inclusion, diversity, and well-being at the team level

Coaching helped Welkin achieve radical improvements in their Q4 2018 Engagement & Inclusion survey.

- 83% of Welkin employees rated management favorably.
- 91% of employees now believed their managers genuinely cared about their well-being.
- 86% of employees said their manager kept them well informed of high-level strategy.
- 72% of employees said their manager provided useful feedback on their performance.

As a result, Welkin plans to invest heavily in senior leadership, leaning confidently on its partnership with Sounding Board to drive results.



Sounding Board's proprietary 1:1 matching technology expertly matched leaders with their ideal coach—a person who could relate to the coachee and challenge them to approach issues from new perspectives. This enabled new managers to communicate a consistent, unified vision, deliver performance-enhancing feedback to direct reports, and foster inclusion, diversity, and well-being at the team level.

When it comes to driving results, one common mistake new managers make is thinking that they need to take significant action immediately. Rather than making big changes, they should plan out goals for their first 90 days and consider what high-level objectives their team will need to achieve in the next three months. They don't need to lay out a detailed plan yet – but having a general direction can be helpful as they plan next steps.

After connecting with their team and leaders across the organization, new managers should receive initial feedback from senior leaders about the most critical challenges and near-term objectives. From there, they can create specific goals around what they want to accomplish in that first 90 days. During this goal-setting process, they do not need to know precisely how to achieve every single task, but framing these goals is step number one to completing them.

Here's how new managers can create a 90-day goal list:

- They should break the plan into smaller, one-month increments.
- For each month, they can create goals and action items, and categorize each set of goals with objectives such as learning, leadership skill development, and performance goals.
- Once these goals are listed, new managers can identify strategies to address talent gaps.
- They should think about the technology and people they'll need, create manageable timeframes, and determine which other departments need to be involved.

The first 30 days in a new manager's role will fly by, but it's important they get the support they need to be effective. They also need to take the time to set themselves up for success. Following these tips can help. So, share this ebook, and encourage them to ask their manager or a leadership coach for support as they develop their leadership skills. Every great leader starts somewhere.

In the past, a manager's success was based primarily on their ability to manage and evaluate their team's performance. This is no longer the only factor. Over the next 10 years, HR leaders will hire and develop managers who are more empathetic, which speaks to how new managers interact with their teams – not just what those teams ultimately do for the business. According to a 2022 Gartner article "[6 Ways the Workplace Will Change in the Next 10 Years](#), new managers are increasingly "positioned to be great coaches and teachers." By prioritizing communication and empathy, establishing supportive work structures, and setting measurable goals, these individuals can excel in their first 30 days and beyond, enjoying a smoother transition from new and inexperienced manager to effective leader.

Chapter 5: How to Transition from Inexperienced New Manager to Effective New Leader

Once new managers have [successfully identified their leadership style](#), understand the role of commitment vs. compliance, and consistently delegate tasks, they need to start the more nuanced work needed to become truly effective in their new role. Achieving this will take deliberate effort, and new managers may need support to execute the following five steps.

1. Block off time to reflect and plan

Effective management is more or less a continual data gathering and analysis process. As they move through different projects, new managers need regular time to reflect on their wins, challenges, strengths, areas of weakness, and what capabilities they may need to develop in order to lead their teams better. They can start by asking themselves the following questions about their new role:

- Were they promoted to lead an existing team or to build a new one?
- Are they taking on a new role or an existing one?
- Were they given some context on the promotion and their new role?
- What are their high level goals for the next three to six months?

Then, they should compile a list of everyone who will or can impact their performance, including:

- Their direct reports
- Anything they know, or think they know, about each member
- Anything they'd like to know about each individual
- Anyone they need to work with outside of their team
- Executives who might be interested or vested in their work
- Leaders who might be potential mentors

The idea is to create a list of people they will engage with frequently who will play a part in their new role. It's also critical for them to list high-level goals their team will need to achieve over the next 3-6 months. A detailed plan isn't required immediately – but having a general direction can be helpful as they progress. Some guidance from their leader will likely be necessary as well to set clear expectations. This all starts with open conversations.



2. Engage in conversations with senior leaders about expectations

All managers and their direct reports need to know what is expected of them at work, but it can particularly impact how well new managers execute their responsibilities. Gaps between expectations and effectiveness often occur when there is a lack of clear, consistent communication and understanding between senior leaders and their managers.

These conversations with leaders should never be a “one-and-done” scenario. Senior leaders need to develop a relationship with their managers that allows for open communication and transparency. Business objectives and environments change. What should remain constant is their ability to discuss those changes together, and then to determine how to tackle them as a team.

3. Discuss expectations with teams

Often, these conversations are the most difficult for new managers, especially if they’re leading a team of former peers. It’s important for them to put themselves in their team members’ shoes, and think back to how they felt when they may have had a new manager. They likely worried about the same things. Although they may have already worked together, those individuals may be curious about how things might change now that their peer is the leader.

It’s essential that new managers take the time to listen to their team, encourage them to share their worries or fears, and ask them what are their expectations, goals, and ideas. If there are relevant insights or valuable context from a previous or current manager, new managers should make it a practice to share it with the team to keep them informed and in the loop. Detailing the value and execution of conversations with teams about expectations is also a great opportunity for talent leaders to step in and offer assistance or coaching opportunities for new managers.

4. Facilitate conversations with other managers or relevant stakeholders

Another common mistake first-time managers make is to focus solely on their immediate team. It can be easy to forget that along with their direct reports, they’re now part of a larger peer group of managers as well. They should think about all the people they need to work with and those they want to learn from. This is the time for them to step into their new role and have conversations that strengthen their internal network.

Senior leaders will need to set expectations and goals that are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-specific. In turn, new managers also need to do the same for their employees. It’s critical to do so in the first 90 days to set the direction and vision for their team and ensure their activities are aligned.

5. Conduct check-ins with stakeholders

Another thing new managers will need to remember is that frequent check-ins with stakeholders should be a continuous process. As priorities change and they get caught up in their day-to-day work, it can be easy to lose track of what and where they should spend their time. Within the first 30 days, they should check in with any stakeholder who impacts or is impacted by their new role as manager. This can prevent miscommunication down the road. Stakeholders could be their team members, others in their company, or external parties. It's about developing relationships for productive and continuous collaboration.

| Pro Tip

In my previous managerial role, I set up weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, and quarterly meetings with various people across the organization to ensure we stayed connected about what was happening. It helped create alignment between my manager, my team, and other departments we relied upon.

Christine Tao, CEO and Co-founder, Sounding Board

Following these practices is part of a fundamental, broader mindset shift that new managers must make as early as possible in their transition. The idea is for these valuable talents to see beyond their immediate role and work to how these impact the organization as a whole. By developing a broader company view, they're priming themselves to become more strategic and effective leaders.

Chapter 6: How HR Can Help Turn New Managers into Strategic Leaders

After their first six months or so in the role, if the transition has gone fairly smooth, new managers should have taken steps to become more strategic. They may continue to have challenges. They're still new to their role, and there may still be some concern about whether they can succeed — especially if they were formerly a high-performing individual contributor. Often, new managers are concerned about what people are thinking and saying. They may even worry that what they say to someone from Human Resources (HR) might get back to their manager. Knowing these concerns exist and taking steps to mitigate them is one key way talent leaders in HR and different lines of business can play a pivotal role in getting new managers and [organizations future-ready](#).

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“24% of HR leaders believe their leadership development approach still doesn't adequately prepare leaders for the future of work.”

— [HR Top Priorities 2023, Gartner](#)

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HR plays a critical role in creating a safe environment where new managers can talk freely, and ensuring they have the support they need to develop optimal leadership capabilities. HR and other talent leaders must also encourage new managers to consistently model and demonstrate the following behaviors to cultivate a more strategic lens and operating system:

- Delegate and trust their teams' skills and capabilities
- Eliminate micromanaging tendencies
- Demonstrate confidence in their new role
- Stay focused on broader company-wide objectives
- Build and [foster a diverse and inclusive culture](#) where employees feel a sense of belonging

Global uncertainty, market volatility, and change are continually redefining the leader-employee dynamic. Yet, a [2022 Gartner study](#) shows that 24% of HR leaders believe their leadership development approach doesn't adequately prepare leaders for the future of work. There's some work to be done there. HR should consider building internal and external leadership development and coaching programs that encourage development and practice of strategic thinking, communication, and other critical capabilities new managers will need as they work to elevate their teams and organizations.

Mitigate pain points for new managers

As former successful individual contributors, it may be challenging for new managers to rely on others and trust them to get things done, but they must. Their new roles will require more time in meetings and fielding questions, so it's vital that new managers learn to delegate.

Talent leaders will have to clarify any complexities this cohort may run into in their new role that foster self-doubt or potentially stand in the way of acquiring valuable new skills that can make them effective. Further, it's okay to let new managers know that management isn't always easy, and to acknowledge that now they have many more responsibilities than they envisioned.



Encourage and facilitate new managers' efforts to deal with issues their direct reports bring to them. Leadership coaching can help them navigate these challenges and evolve as people managers, as it offers near real time, contextualized feedback this cohort can absorb and apply immediately on the job. Here are a few other priorities that coaching can facilitate for those who are new to managerial responsibilities and leadership.

Establish a growth mindset

Learning to expand a new manager's existing knowledge will require establishing a growth mindset. They need to recognize that internally, they always have more room for growth, and that's a good thing. Whether it relates to maturity, new skills acquisition, using existing skills in new ways, or accepting that it's okay not to be the expert, growth is something desirable they should actively and continuously seek out.

Set team goals and objectives

One common goal for new managers should be completely transitioning from being an individual contributor to thinking of success through their direct reports' achievements. How best to facilitate their team's success should be a focus. It's about distributing work appropriately, and ensuring processes are effective for the whole team.

New managers are promoted because their leaders see potential and feel confident in their abilities. Therefore, they should trust themselves in their new leadership position. This confidence can enhance their performance and that of their team, but they may have to be taught or encouraged how to do this. Coaching can help here too, as it offers a valuable external perspective that makes it easier for new managers to see their skills and abilities through a holistic, pragmatic lens.

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“Organizations with robust talent mobility programs that incorporate leadership coaching experience increased retention, lower turnover, and lower hiring costs, among other things.”

— [“Unlocking Talent Mobility with Leadership Coaching,”](#) Sounding Board

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Establish a smooth, thoughtful talent mobility strategy

Talent mobility requires change and flexibility as people shift roles and responsibilities. Adjustments will need to be made as new managers find their footing and establish necessary changes within their teams. The learning curve will vary with each manager, but offering leadership coaching will not only speed up leadership development for this valuable cohort, it can accelerate development at all levels as these new managers share what they learn, and demonstrate optimal behaviors for their teams.

Coaching is also helpful for succession planning, another critical facet of organizational talent mobility. To grow a leadership pipeline for the future will almost certainly require internal or external learning and development. Talent moves should be intentional, done with care and a clear eye on identifying which employees are interested in new career opportunities, which are ready, and which are prepared to do what it takes to become effective, productive new managers.

How can talent leaders identify the next great new manager?

It's not uncommon, however, for talent leaders to need guidance identifying when an employee is ready to be a manager. Choosing who to put into a management role is an important decision. It's a decision that requires careful and deliberate thought, as the organizational, team, and individual consequences for a faulty move can be costly.

For instance, it's not uncommon for companies to promote someone into management because they've been in a position for a long time, or they are a top performer. That can be a mistake, as these aren't always positive indicators that someone will be a good manager. Instead, the following demonstrations may offer more reliable indicators of who is ready and able to take on a leadership role:

- **The employee is thinking more strategically.** A significant part of being a manager is the ability to think strategically. If an employee demonstrates a broader perspective about the organization and industry, it's a good indicator that they're thinking beyond the scope of their specific job or function. Thus, an individual's ability to hold a long-term company vision is often an indicator of manager readiness.
- **The employee works well cross-functionally.** Being a manager also demands successfully working with members in different departments and functions. Offering cross-functional tasks and projects is a simple way to see how a potential new manager will work with other teams, and test their skillset as a manager.
- **The employee engages in open dialogue about his or her role.** Keeping lines of communication open with their employees is the easiest way for talent leaders to know if a candidate is ready to be a manager or even if the individual wants the role. Frequent, transparent communication will ensure that high performers are on the career path they want.

Once companies identify which employees are ready and interested in becoming a manager, talent leaders have to prepare them for that transition, especially if they'll be first-time managers. That will require internal or external leadership development if they are to move effectively into their new roles and willingly, skillfully meet the challenges they will find there.

Common challenges for new managers

With support, guidance, and formal or informal development programs, talent leaders can help new managers overcome the following challenges often inherent to new leaders:

Being inauthentic: Because they have not been taught how to tap into or develop their own leadership style, many first-time managers will mimic another leaders' style. This seldom works because simply taking the same approach that worked for someone else doesn't mean it will work for everyone. New managers should be encouraged to avoid sounding "right" and instead work on feeling and being more authentic.

Operating in silos: The desire to do well can lead many new managers to focus solely on their team and operate in a silo. However, talent leaders should make it clear that a manager's role is not only to elevate their team's presence, it's to support the entire organization's goals and vision. Being strategic is key. A manager should expand their perspective, and take a broader view of their role, and their team's role in meeting company-wide objectives.



Becoming a successful new manager is far more likely if individuals have guidance from their manager, talent leaders, and leadership coaches who can make the transition smoother, and develop the leadership capabilities they need, like strategic thinking, to thrive.

Sounding Board coaches were asked what advice they give their coaching clients on being more strategic. Here's what they shared:

- **Be thoughtful about when to ask vs. tell.** A general rule of thumb is asking flows down the organizational chart, and telling flows up. It may seem a little counterintuitive, but understanding this can create a fundamental shift in thinking strategically, and communicating a manager's point of view to senior leaders versus being more collaborative and enlisting input and buy-in from their team.
- **Make a distinction between strategic and tactical.** New managers may need to be reminded that they're leading now, and the higher up the ladder they are, the more critical it is to focus on strategic thinking and delegate tactical responsibilities.
- **Remind new managers of their opportunity to impact people.** Leadership coaches can help highlight the difference between intent and impact with this simple example: If the intent is clear communication, the impact it has will eliminate uncertainty within a team. The new manager's role is to close that gap, which means their intent translates to the impact they want.
- **Use an urgent/important matrix (the Eisenhower Matrix).** This can help new managers prioritize and reduce feelings of being overwhelmed. It's easy to implement and powerful in helping people see where they spend their time currently, and where they could spend it more fruitfully.
- **Expectations for the new manager should come directly from their leader.** New managers need support, so their leaders should set aside regular blocks of time to ensure they help them be successful immediately. These critical conversations are not only critical to help the manager attain team goals, they're vital to the organization's overall success.

Chapter 7: Executives Must Have Critical Conversations with New Managers

In a 2022 [podcast interview with the Wall Street Journal](#), Slack Senior Vice President and Executive Leader of the Future Forum, Brian Elliott, said that managers these days are feeling the squeeze because they're in a game of tug-of-war between executives and their direct reports. This can lead to burnout, especially in many newer managers. Worse yet, Elliott said 60% of executives are making future work plans with little to no direct input from their managers.

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“53% of managers report feeling burned out at work.”

— Microsoft's [Work Trend Index Annual Report, 2022](#)

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To alleviate the struggle between senior leaders and new managers, some critical conversations need to take place. For instance, executives must give managers, especially new managers, the tools they need to lead, execute tactically, and make work purpose-driven. A large part of this involves providing ongoing coaching and support.

Get new managers off to the right start

Executives can play a vital role in helping new managers acclimate quickly to their roles. A new manager might be self-motivated, disciplined, and organized. They may have exceeded all quarterly goals five quarters in a row and know an organization's products and services inside and out. That's why they were promoted. However, managing and running a team require a fundamentally different skill set and mindset than the ones used as a team's top contributor.

The good news is that leadership capabilities and behaviors are learnable. The bad news is that most C-suite executives don't take the time to properly teach their new managers how to successfully transition from being individual contributors. This is unfortunate as it doesn't require a sizable time commitment. Taking the time to have a few crucial conversations at the beginning of a new manager's journey can be a great way to set up an ongoing dialogue that will give this valuable cohort the best chance for success.

[A 2022 Microsoft productivity survey](#) found that 53% of managers report feeling burned out at work due to things like lack of prioritization and unclear purpose. The survey shows that prioritization must exceed simply reorganizing lengthy to-do lists. Clarity and purpose

around aligning work with the company mission and team goals needs to be communicated between senior leaders and new managers as well as to employees by their managers. These critical conversations need to take place early so that new managers and their teams are primed for success.

Set clear expectations

When leaders set expectations with new managers, it ensures they have a clear, mutual understanding around the following questions:

1. What are their manager's expectations of them?
2. What are their expectations of themselves?
3. What expectations should they have of their team and direct reports?

This lays the critical foundation that can serve as a guide they can return to frequently.

What are their manager's expectations of them?

It's unnecessary to lay out everything expected of a new manager. Some of this they will need to figure out as they go. The overall goals should be discussed between a new manager and their leader, but the plan should be developed by the new manager. They'll feel more ownership and commitment.

Share any executive or company-wide goals that their team activities support. For a sales team, this means knowing the topline number and potentially a range that they need to achieve. Their leader should avoid laying out all the details and instead gauge a new manager's skills and performance and provide insight. For a product team, this might be the broader product roadmap and the area you want them to own. It helps them see the bigger picture and understand how it fits together. But high-level guidance will likely be needed in areas such as these:

- Expectations around communication, collaboration, and reporting
- Expectations around internal and external processes
- Documentation and reporting processes
- Company-wide policies such as IT, HR, finance, legal, and others

Although many of these processes might already be in place, changes almost always impact them, so communicate as expectations change.

It's essential to recognize that, given all of the above, this is a new job for this person. Their leader will need to share that despite all the expectations, they understand this will be a learning process.



What are their expectations of themselves?

Often new managers fail because they set extraordinarily high expectations of themselves and what they think they “should” be doing as a manager. It’s important to know that some everyday things will always worry new managers. If promoted to management, they’re likely constantly pushing themselves to grow, learn, and generally “be better.” While this is incredible, it can sometimes become a hurdle with the executive team management because it’s inevitable and often visible when they make a mistake and miss the mark.

New managers can also benefit from their leaders’ understanding of what stresses them. In doing so, leaders can see where some expectations for new managers might be unrealistic or potentially too aggressive. It’s about making trade-offs, which can be eye-opening for everyone.

These early conversations can trigger discussions and breakthroughs, especially as new managers could be setting expectations for themselves that don’t align with their leader’s expectations.

What expectations should they have for their team and direct reports?

Setting expectations for their new teams is another consideration for discussion. This can range from how they should think about setting goals for their teams and how they should hold them accountable to those goals. They may need guidance around the following questions and others.

- How should they communicate their expectations to their teams?
- How do the overall department and team’s goals trickle down to each individual?

This conversation shouldn’t be focused on finalizing everyone’s Objectives and Key Results (OKRs). It’s about senior leaders sharing thoughts on how new managers can lead their teams in a way that aligns with high-level expectations and providing leadership coaching that can help them develop the right capabilities and [science-backed behaviors](#) for success.

Chapter 8: 3 Reasons Leadership Coaching Should Replace Traditional New Manager Training

Training is often a one-time event focused on teaching a skill so that managers know ‘how to do’ something. Coaching, on the other hand, creates an environment where managers ‘want to do,’ according to Tina Clements in her 2022 Training Industry article [“When To Deploy Coaching vs. Training vs. Consulting.”](#) Further, training and coaching complement each other well, as the latter provides managers with ongoing development. This facilitates their efforts to reach their full potential as leaders and achieve the desired business impact.

Our [2021 Leadership Coaching report](#) found organizations that rate their ability to measure the business impact of coaching are:

- **Significantly more likely to report productivity** (72% versus 42%) and customer satisfaction (45% versus 16%) as positive outcomes.
- **Significantly more likely to report succession planning** (72% versus 44%), customer satisfaction (45% versus 17% , productivity (38% versus 17%), and ROI as metrics to measure the impact of leadership coaching (38% versus 11%).
- **More likely to report retaining key talent and gaining competitive advantage** among the principal needs for leadership coaching.

Despite this, many companies still invest in “one-and-done” training for their new managers.

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“Resilient and agile organizations that have people-centric strategies have increased their investment in coaching throughout the pandemic.”

— [“Leading Off,” McKinsey, 2022](#)

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What can be done to fill the growing leadership gaps and ensure new managers are future ready? Leadership coaching enables new leaders at all levels to develop their teams and cultivate a people-centric mindset yet, still focused on strategy and growth.

Senior leaders can help managers become more people-centric while remaining growth-focused. Coaching can help managers gain the trust of their employees and retain talent. In [2020 ADP research](#) showed that employees who trust their leaders’ capabilities are 14 times

more likely to be fully engaged at work, but establishing trust means new managers must develop the right capabilities as leaders. So, how does leadership coaching impact a new manager's capabilities and instill trust?

It's also important to remember there are a few different factors that lead to low retention in training. Here are a few that can help talent leaders and HR incorporate various features into development programs to increase their impact.

- Information overload
- Lack of frequency and consistency
- Relevance

1. Information overload

Most traditional learning condenses a significant amount of learning throughout a day or maybe a couple of days in organizations. It's no wonder many new managers might feel overloaded when they come out of training.

These days, most companies are moving away from sending new managers to week-long training and instead opting for shorter sessions or focusing on just one topic at a time to prevent information overload.

2. Lack of frequency or consistency

A common issue with traditional training is it happens once and never gets revisited. A good example is new manager training. Companies often spend much time developing new manager training for employees when they are first promoted. These are essential for laying the critical foundational information like how to run

Case study: Liffoff managers see trust scores sky-rocket through coaching

Liffoff had new managers with minimal executive experience. With increased management demands in the rapidly growing company, cultivating leadership and management capabilities quickly became a priority.

“Liffoff managers who leveraged Sounding Board coaching received higher survey scores in trust and team support and reported greater confidence in their abilities.”

Managers at Liffoff successfully leveraged Sounding Board's immersive, peer-based, coach-led leadership development experience to accelerate the expansion of crucial capabilities among new managers. They received higher survey scores in trust and team support and reported greater confidence in their abilities. Further, more than two years after their initial six-month engagement ended, 60% of the Liffoff participants requested additional coaching.

Since then, several participants have been promoted. Perhaps more notable, all employees who have completed the coaching program still work at the company.

After the success of the Sounding Board's coaching program, Liffoff expanded its commitment to leadership coaching with a new global initiative focused on director level and women leaders that will include 15 senior leaders and three executive leaders.

performance reviews, HR policies, and expectations around management style and approach. But then managers are left to their own devices to apply concepts and ideas. This can pose challenges for new managers, given how many different situations and challenges they face in their new roles.

| Pro Tip

Companies should think about breaking up the training so that it is spread over time. Managers get into a cadence and habit of constantly learning on the job. Leadership and Development teams should also have an approach for how the learning is reinforced post-training – whether that is coaching manager of managers to integrate concepts into how they run operationally, or even following up with post-training surveys, tests or bite-sized content/learning modules 3, 6 or 9 months after trainings.

3. Relevance

One of the most critical factors impacting a new manager’s learning and knowledge retention is the relevance of the content. If the information isn’t directly applicable or useful, they’re likely to become disinterested, and the likelihood of retaining and leveraging the content becomes very low.

Different learning styles, experience levels, and expertise also render “one-size-fits-all” training ineffective. Traditional non-personalized training can significantly impact a new manager’s ability to grow as a leader; the content and support they need can be drastically different.

With the pace of change, companies need to be even more thoughtful and intentional about the training and development programs they create and the alignment to employee skill sets and the organization’s current business needs. More companies recognize the need to migrate to more real-time, personalized development programs, which can be training-based or coaching-based. And many are testing different types of on-demand or virtual learning through mobile apps.

The good news is that many choices are available, and technology is helping to scale and bring down the costs of delivering that development. It’s very much the premise that Sounding Board was built on, and we’re excited about all the different approaches to develop your most important assets – your people, especially new managers.



Successful support fast-tracks the transition to leadership for new managers to set a clear direction for the first 90 days. It improves engagement and productivity during times of transformation by creating more supportive work structures and integrates new leaders into the company culture by creating stronger and more open lines of communication. The Sounding Board way involves:

- Customized coaching sessions
- Developing managers in the context of their leadership
- Shifting managers' thinking to sustain change in behavior
- Boldly leveling up each manager
- Elevating a manager's organizational impact
- Illuminating manager's development through technology



Many first-time managers have benefited from leadership coaching. They've been able to develop leadership capabilities and model the behaviors to lead their teams with impact.

Managers in companies like Liftoff and Welkin (see previous case studies) are seeing massive achievements as a result of leadership coaching. Yet, far too many managers in other organizations are still expected to achieve miracles with less training, less exposure to the rest of the organization, and fewer interactions with their direct leader and executives – all within a volatile environment. This is creating the biggest global leadership gap among new managers. Fixing this requires organizations to develop new managers with the leadership capabilities to successfully transition from being individual contributors on-premise to leading teams in a virtual or hybrid environment. This includes increasing their abilities in areas such as:

- Setting priorities
- Providing feedback
- Keeping teams connected
- Understanding broader goals

Managers want much more support from their senior leaders, HR, and external leadership coaches to develop the capabilities to overcome challenges and succeed. They want the capabilities to lead themselves, lead others, and lead for impact. Find out more about leadership coaching for new managers to help them adapt, function, and thrive optimally and close the leadership gap.

| Pro Tip

Think about how to personalize their development efforts cost-effectively with reasonable investments on time. While there's often a base foundation consistent across everyone, the individual gaps start to come into play as people move up in an organization. Pay attention to the phase and stage of a new manager's career. This can be a driver of the extent of customization needed in their training to get to the "next level." Either smaller groups, 1:1 coaching, or specific targeted training can address particular skill sets.

About Sounding Board

Sounding Board is the first tech-led Leader Development Platform designed to bridge the leadership gap.

Aligned with decades of behavioral science-backed leadership development, our award-winning SaaS technology develops the world's most impactful leaders. Offering unparalleled flexibility and the data today's talent leaders need to prove measurable impact for leadership coaching engagements, our Leader Development Platform and global network of certified coaches reduce administrative burden, and give enterprise-level organizations the power to develop leaders at scale.



Our unique approach uses our proprietary technology and predictive analytics to support the entire coaching experience, matching your business leaders with expert coaches, providing a roadmap for their success, and collecting real-time data to measure and report individual progress and organizational impact.

Our leadership coaching services include personalized, 1:1 executive-style coaching, as well as peer and group coaching. We offer a global network of professional coaches, dedicated to addressing leadership skills gaps and driving immediate business impact. We also supplement

and support in-house coaches, providing tools and framework they can use to generate insights and have more meaningful coaching conversations.

Our data, analytics, and reporting lifts the administrative burden of managing complex coaching programs, while providing greater transparency, data analytics and reporting - so that you can focus your time and resources on expanding your bench of business leaders.

Sounding Board is transforming talent development, setting a new industry standard for leadership coaching at scale.