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Developing New Managers

Your Learning and Development Guide to Supporting New Managers

This guide explores how you and your learning and development team can support and guide new managers.

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Encourage new managers to support one another.

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When you hire new managers, you show great trust in them. But how can you harness their enthusiasm, and give them the best chance of success?

New managers are likely to be raring to go with their personal development – you'll rarely have a problem getting them to engage with it.

Instead, as you'll have discovered, the problem is to work out exactly what they already know, and to build on this.

Internal hires may have built up extensive knowledge as they've progressed within your organization, but how can you be sure what they know, so that you can identify what their next steps should be? Or, what if they've picked up bad habits that they don't know about – or want to admit?

The situation is doubly difficult if you're working with an external recruit. He or she may have "baggage" from previous roles, or wide gaps in knowledge due to having worked in a different environment. You won't have a formal record of what they know beyond their resumé, which is unlikely to provide a sufficiently detailed learning history.

Plus, with both groups, it can be a challenge to work out what knowledge and skills they **don't** have – without subjecting them to a baptism of fire, or wasting their time with learning that's too basic.

What Do You Need?

You can close that initial knowledge gap by mapping out your organization's key management knowledge needs in a [competency framework](#). What do all managers need to know, and to what level? Topics are likely to include [project management](#), [team management](#), [communication skills](#) – and many others.

Then, evaluate new managers' existing skills against your competency framework. This will give you a clear picture of knowledge gaps and training needs.

What Do They Need?

Be careful not to make any assumptions at this point. A new manager, keen to impress from the get-go, may be reluctant to admit to skills gaps, but it's essential that everything they need is in place for their new role to be a success.

So, don't just rely on a resumé: set up a confidential, informal conversation in which you can ask open

questions about their skills and knowledge, within the context of providing training to cover skills gaps.

Onboarding

As you might expect, [research](#) shows that formal onboarding programs lead to higher job satisfaction and reduced stress for new employees. If your organization doesn't offer this kind of program, consider [developing one](#), and also give new managers more informal forms of support, such as [mentoring](#), peer support groups, or buddying programs.

Support should come not only from learning and development staff, but also from managers and peers.

Essential Skills

You'll need a broad spectrum of management learning available to meet what may be a complex range of needs. Harness your new managers' enthusiasm by encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning from day one; by making them aware of the range of development opportunities on offer, both formal and informal; and by building self-development into their formal evaluation.

Management essentials are likely to include legal, financial, and risk management training, as well as broader training in management skills. Schedule sessions on these topics early on: these are complex topics, but it's important that they're understood, along with the implications of getting things wrong.

Don't overlook IT needs here, both for internal and external hires. This is especially important if they'll be training team members in their new role: they'll not only need to be on top of IT systems themselves, but they'll also need to be able to explain them to others.

About Your Organization

Also, don't overlook the importance of communicating the structure of management within your organization. Even new managers promoted from within will need this, now that they're making decisions and taking responsibility for other staff.

Catch Common New Manager Mistakes

You'll know that the step up to management is a big one. Unfortunately, to a new manager, it can look deceptively simple.

Many new managers are caught out by **small errors** that they thought they had overcome earlier in their careers, such as failing to delegate, or procrastinating. These errors can compound themselves and, over time, set a poor example to more junior colleagues.

"Just in time" training on these business basics can be hugely beneficial, particularly when it's instantly available online.

Dealing With People and Politics

It can be easy for new managers to step on people's toes in their keenness to get on. This is especially true of external hires, who aren't attuned to the politics of your organization.

Think about offering **mentoring** to offset this. A mentor can gently appraise a new manager of the intricacies of the workplace, and offer a sounding board to talk through difficult situations.

New managers also often comment on the difficulties of handling people-based situations. **Role-play** and

coaching can be helpful in these situations: these allow the manager to explore different scenarios and tailor a culturally attuned response to their situation.

Ongoing Development for Managers

Your new managers' learning needs will change as they are exposed to more responsibility, so encourage self-reflection to ensure that they're keeping up. If you offer a **mentoring scheme**, make sure that they understand how it could help them talk through difficult issues, and give ideas for self-development.

Likewise, properly structured feedback can offer valuable insights into future areas for development.

Ongoing Support for You as Well

When you do all of these things, you give your new managers the best chance of success. But, there's no denying that it can be challenging to keep on top of everything that you can do to help them, particularly when the backdrop of training offerings and technology is constantly changing.

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References

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