

Promotion to Management – Pete Walsh: NPI Applications Engineering Manager, Semtech

UK



About Pete

Pete's forte in engineering is silicon chip design, simulation, test and integration, with over 25 years' experience as a key technical contributor. He had developed most of this experience with the ASIC design team at Hewlett Packard (HP) R&D in Bristol, then took on a similar role at Semtech UK in 2014.

Pete had been interested in taking up a management position at Semtech and an opportunity came up the following year. He was keen to follow his career ambition but also had some concerns about taking on leadership and having direct responsibility for the people in his team. He would in effect become a manager of his ex-peers.

The Challenge

Pete certainly had the potential to grow into a very effective leader, but he also had two questions which are very common for anyone taking their first step into management.

1. Is this the right career move for me?
2. Will I be able to learn and use the necessary people skills and make this a success?

One could roll these into one single question: "Just what am I letting myself in for?"

When I have worked with others in a similar situation, it's been very clear that working with an external coach is something of great value, helping them to become much more aware of the various aspects of the new role, and to gain clarity and commitment on their decisions.

Our Coaching Meetings

Phase 1: Deciding to commit

Pete and I met twice in this phase.

At our first meeting, we laid out all of the questions which needed to be answered before Pete could wholeheartedly commit to making his application for the role. In most cases, I explained that the skill gaps which concerned Pete were all coachable topics that we could cover in phase 2.

However, one clear action arose from this first meeting, he needed to meet his senior manager and answer the question: could Pete continue to be himself, and maintain the same set of values where people are affected?

Our second meeting confirmed his commitment to the new role, knowing that he would be able to stay true to himself, and to learn the skills which would make him effective without undue stress or life-style compromises.

Phase 2: Making it work

We kicked off this phase with a 3-way meeting, which included Allard, Pete's new boss, and laid out expectations;

- Of what Pete needs to achieve and how he needs to perform and behave.
- Of how Pete will be measured in 6, 12 and 24 months from his starting point.
- Of the four main elements of Pete's balanced score card; team, customers, products and personal development.
- Of what's expected of me as Pete's coach.

Pete and I then met 1:1 for about an hour every month over the course of the next 9-10 months each time addressing a particular leadership topic or personal challenge. I brought management tools such as delegation, feedback and difficult conversations into Pete's awareness, then focused the bulk of our time on how to implement that learning and insight in the most effective ways for him.

The Results

Observed benefits for Semtech

With Pete's successful transition into management, this division of the company was able to make some important organisational changes, and by doing so, accelerate the process for bringing new products to market.

Here is what Pete's manager had to say:

"With John's help, Pete made a very successful transition from individual contributor to team manager and leader. He is focused on making sure the right people are doing the right thing, and supports the team members in their plans, decisions and results. This has already resulted in a number of people growing in their role - showing more independence and contributing more to the company. The coaching John provided did give Pete the clear understanding that a manager does not have to take control of everything, but has to enable people and support them. He has been doing this and this has provided a clear benefit to the company."

Observed benefits for Pete

Through this whole coaching period, Pete's confidence grew, he earned greater respect from his team, and with each challenge overcome, he was able to confirm that this career decision had been absolutely the right thing to do.

In his own words:

"John supported me through the decision to take my first leadership position, by first helping me to set boundaries with my own manager, so that I could manage my team in my own way.

He also helped me to overcome some common mistakes, such as struggling to let go of the technical work, feeling guilty about delegating and trying to please everyone. I learned to understand what my team needed from me to make delegation second nature, and I learned how to interact with my team in an honest way, even if the message I was giving felt uncomfortable.

One year into management, I feel comfortable in my "leader's skin". This is in large part due to John's brilliant coaching.

I would thoroughly recommend John as a coach as he provides great insight and support, but also challenges you to look at yourself honestly and help you get out of your comfort zone."

Learning points for the coach

Every new client brings learning and insight for me as their coach. I think in Pete's case, I learned to place greater trust in my own intuition.

On several occasions in our 1:1 meetings, I found myself sharing what came up for me in the form of a metaphor which Pete related to very effectively. This helped me to formulate better questions which then helped us to explore a scenario in more depth and to co-create a solution and action plan.

Useful resources

Delegation: There's a [great article](#) by Michelle Randall, an executive coach and management consultant, describing 6 clear steps to delegating successfully.

Leading change: Although many writers and thought leaders have covered this topic, the [Kotter 8 Step Change Model](#) is always a great reference point.

Giving Feedback (the SBI model): The 3 steps, Situation, Behaviour and Impact are described in [this article](#) from the Centre for Creative Leadership.

There are also a number of useful articles on my LinkedIn profile <https://www.linkedin.com/in/john-hardwick-msc-acc-18547ba> and some of the more relevant ones include;

- Expectations Matter
- The (HE)ART of Letting Go
- Don't wait too long for that difficult conversation
- Thank you, and I mean that most sincerely