

Easing the Transition into Management

By [Danielle Bullen](#)

Being newly promoted to a management role is daunting. Or as Bill Gentry, senior research associate at the [Center for Creative Leadership](#) says, “Going from an individual contributor to a manager is the biggest psychological shift in a work career.”

First-time managers face unique challenges as they transition from worker to boss. Whether this scenario describes yourself or one of your employees, there are ways for corporations to ease the transition into management.

“They are worried about getting it all right,” Barbara Zung, director, global organization development and talent acquisition at [American Management Association](#), says about first-time managers. One of the main challenges new managers encounter is the lack of ability to delegate. They need to let go of doing everything all the time and move towards a more collaborative mindset, or change from an “I” way of thinking to a “we” way of thinking.

Employees who use “we” more often when discussing their workload are less likely to derail in their jobs. Such self-talk is related to how effective workers are and how their careers progress. “The most effective managers know their people’s success will bring them success,” says Gentry.

Leading a Multi-Generational Workforce

“The number-one challenge is switching from doing the job to leading people doing the job,” says [Emilie Shoop](#), a leadership coach and team culture creator. Going from peer to boss presents a unique challenge that needs to be addressed head-on. New bosses need to set clear boundaries and expectations. Playing favorites is, of course, a no-no. “Be aware that as a leader, everyone’s eyes are on you,” Gentry explains. New managers should be equitable with their time and attention, and put away any previous biases.

First-time managers should be cautious of how much authority they assert.

“The biggest mistake is assuming they have power over the other people,” notes Shoop. They need to be respectful and trustworthy to win over former peers. Relationships, especially with co-workers who are also friends, will evolve. But Zung suggests, “See it as something positive and hope they are cheering for you.”

Another challenge new managers face is suddenly leading employees who are older and who have longer tenures at the company. That can be spun into an advantage. “People with longevity have sets of skills that need to be tapped into,” says Shoop. Rely on their unique strengths, suggests Zung. Mentoring across generations, with workers of varying experience levels sharing their unique strengths, is a good way to lead a cross-generational team.

“Effective are the same no matter what generation you are in,” says Gentry. Ethical, team-oriented, participative bosses are what all generations want. New managers should ask everyone on their team, regardless of age, what motivates them. They should also ask what employees want to accomplish and how they, as the manager, can help them hit those goals?

Boosting Success

Companies can boost their new managers’ chance of success through training. However, according to the Center for Creative Leadership’s [research](#), 60 percent of first-time managers aren’t trained.

First-time managers can be trained on both company-specific procedures and more universal issues. Other managers’ behavior is an unspoken example of how they are supposed to lead, because as Shoop explains, “leadership looks different in each company.”

“Supplement training with a mentor,” suggests Zung. “Pick the pieces they do really well and then learn with them.”

Training to give employee’s feedback, training on how to delegate and schedule, and training on how to help employees set goals are all necessary, no matter the job. Besides hitting the universal struggles, Genty suggests customizing training to managers’ individual concerns.

Off-Site versus On-Site

Options for training delivery vary from intensive, off-site conferences to quick webinars people can watch at their desk. There is no best method; it depends on employee learning styles and the current task. Can they focus outside the office, for example? Giving performance feedback is best taught through role-playing. New managers need

to practice and make mistakes and learn from them. Policy training, on the other hand, is something they can read and absorb on their own time.

“I am a huge fan of classroom training. I have seen the magic happen when you begin shaping them. They learn a new skill,” noted Zung. She also supports a combination of online training and classroom discussions, where employees gather to discuss what they learned in webinars, to get different perspectives.

Gentry supports the claim, citing an [IBM study on millennials](#) showing they prefer learning new skills face-to-face, a finding that contradicts the always-wired persona of Gen Y. Absorbing information in real time with peers through on-the-job discussion groups and feedback opportunities makes it relevant.

No matter the teaching method, senior managers should give first-time managers the chance to apply what they learn before assessing its success. A one-time class doesn't cut it. The more sustained the training, the better.

Monetary Benefits

Organizations need to buy into the importance of training. It's not just beneficial to the individual workers, but to the company's bottom line.

“You put them in charge of a team to make it more efficient,” explains Zung. Training maximizes that efficiency. If new managers improve processes, it benefits the bottom line.

Proper training has a ripple effect throughout the organization. First-level managers are part of biggest leadership population, with direct impact on customer satisfaction, employee productivity and employee satisfaction.

“If they are future leaders and you aren't training them, you set them up for failure,” says Gentry. The less support they have, they more likely they are to leave. If leaders don't feel engaged, they can pass the sentiment down to workers, creating a negative work environment. Turnover costs have a strong impact on the organization's finances.

Those who supervise first-time managers can impact their success. “Focus on teaching them what success looks like,” advises Shoop. That definition might have changed as they move through the ranks. A successful salesperson and a successful sales manager, for example, have different skill sets.

Senior managers of novice managers should coach them and listen to them, making sure they don't burnout. They still need the space to develop their own skills, those that got them promoted in the first place. “Provide space for them to learn from their mistakes,” suggests Gentry.

First-time managers face many challenges when they ascend the ranks and become supervisors. With proper training they can grow to be more confident and ultimately, successful.

<http://www.skilledup.com/insights/transitioning-into-management-role>