

Juggling and Controlling Your Team's Day-to-Day Effectively



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Just this year, one of my new-to-leading managers, Jamie, came up to me and said they needed help. Jamie has the definition of traits that will exceed in leadership; leads by example, innovative, empathic, ambitious, and the list goes on. With that being said, I was curious what I could help with as they were off to a fantastic start. Their concern was that, behind the view of the model leader, they were overwhelmed with questions endlessly thrown their way, helping others with their day-to-day bandwidth, and feeling that their teammates are understanding objectives at first, but coming back later needing further details.

Surprisingly, a lot of research on the challenges of being a new leader leaves out these pitfalls. The top 5 or 10 new manager challenges normally include imposter syndrome, building authority and respect, and items like inspiring others. All of those are fantastic to build on, but if you are like Jamie here, you may have built up those areas even before moving into the "official" leader role. So what to do in this new manager's case? Let's break it down in steps.

The basics of balancing your team's workload:

- **Create a Routine** – A routine is a necessity for you to succeed. It will help you manage workloads, provide a healthy work/life balance, and outline an organization template for your team to follow (lead by example). Gaining insight from Raymond McIntyre, Manager of Learning & Development at Collabera, he shares the best practice of utilizing your calendar to block off time to write out a to-do list in the mornings and then schedule sessions to complete the tasks on the list throughout the day and week. This way you set aside the dedicated time to complete the needed tasks. Ray combines this with AI tools and reminders to build predictive habits even further. Additionally, a popular strategy with my team is finishing the toughest projects first, allowing them to avoid procrastination and start their day with a sense of accomplishment.
- **Be Digitally Present, But Responsible to Yourself** – Being responsive and available is crucial at any level of management. Time and again, we hear that employees positively remember and reference the managers who were available to help when urgently needed. Being digitally present means having a brand of being accessible not only through scheduled meetings, but also through online platforms like TEAMS, Slack, or other forms of instant messaging. It also means being proactive in seeking out opportunities to engage with your team through digital channels. It creates a sense of support for those working remotely and reduces the need for frequent meetings. However, new leaders need to remember to sign off when their workday is over or when they are blocking off time for focused work, like Jamie will start doing!

Once you feel comfortable with those two steps, targeting the below should be smoother:

- **Delegate Clearly and Hold Accountable** – When giving direction to your team, ensure that it is clear and concise, leaving no stones unturned to avoid repeat questions. Encourage a culture of note-taking and asking questions, and set clear goals while tracking progress along the way. Let your team members know that they own the objectives and hold them accountable for their responsibilities. Set clear goals through creating an environment of transparency.

- Understand How your Teammates Learn – I’m consistently uncovering new ways that teammates may best be able to digest or receive direction. Realizing that each person will not learn the same way and how you, as a leader, must adapt is a challenge, but a rewarding one. Ask your teammates how they feel they are most successful in understanding, be it through more visuals, detailed words, captions on webinar meetings, or follow up notes from them to you. By understanding your teammates’ learning styles, you can effectively minimize repetitive meeting topics and cut down on those duplicate follow-up questions/items.

The last step may be the hardest for some:

- Learn to Say No – As leaders get to this stage I usually share Covey’s Time Management Matrix to help define and prioritize tasks (figure below). When you get into the role, even more tasks start coming your way and your own day-to-day responsibilities aren’t going anywhere either. Learning to say no is absolutely important for you to focus where you are most needed, provide time to your strength areas that will benefit your team/company, as well as avoid burnout. I know, I know, you are superhuman and don’t worry about burnout, however it is a real thing and learning to say no was one of my most grateful skills I ever obtained. Keep in mind professional approaches here and bonus points for providing valuable reasons for why you are delaying or saying no to tasks.

Overall, new managers need to be attentive to their team's needs without being overwhelmed. While building authority and inspiring others are critical, addressing the day-to-day issues that new leaders face are just as important and often overlooked. By following these essential steps, new managers can create a foundation to support their team, provide clear directions and goals, understand how their teammates learn, and avoid burnout. With these practices in place, rising leaders can take on their role with confidence and avoid these speed bumps on their way to leading their team to success.

Interested in having a conversation about Leadership?

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