

Managing Teams

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Managers in the workplace

Today's managers are responsible for the assembly, performance and development of a team in any area of an organization.

Traditionally, a manager's job description and responsibilities include:

- **Plan** — structure and organize the operations and functions of the team
- **Direct** — provide guidance and support to the team to ensure it accomplish its goals
- **Educate** — devote time and energy to supporting employee development and improvement
- **Monitor** — observe team members and follow up to ensure goals are achieved
- **Evaluate** — review and assess the team's performance to plan and realign efforts required to achieve success in the future

In addition to their formal responsibilities, managers set the tone of an organization. For example, whether a team is collaborative or self-driven, risk-taking or cautious, or upbeat or gloomy is a reflection of the manager.

In order to manage successfully, today's managers need communication, team building and organizational skills — all skills you have developed through your military experience.

Communication skills

Being able to understand your team members' perspectives and clearly express your decisions is vital to the success of a manager.

A manager must:

- Be a good listener:
 - Listen with the intention of understanding.
 - Demonstrate that you are listening and interested by stopping other work and making eye contact.
 - Provide feedback so that team members know the message was received, such as summarizing key points.
- Be persuasive:
 - Make yourself understandable. Clearly express the ideas and opinions that influence your decisions.
 - Make yourself accepted. If you have an unpopular decision, explain your rationale. Tie your decision back to commonly held objectives or look for points of agreement.



Team-building skills

The ability to recruit, develop and retain capable individuals is another required skill of today's managers.

A manager must:

- Recognize team members' individual strengths:
 - Uncover team members innate strengths and deploy them at the right time in the right place.
- Have empathy:
 - Be able to understand and share the feelings and perspectives of team members.
- Build team spirit:
 - Create an environment wherein team members want to contribute to the collective success of the group.



Organizational skills

The most visible responsibility of a manager is to organize and guide execution of the team's responsibilities.

A manager must:

- Plan work efforts proactively:
 - Advanced planning allows resources to be deployed more efficiently to achieve goals.
 - Organization lets team members know what needs to be accomplished and how it relates to other members' efforts.
- Define roles:
 - Role clarity enhances the motivation level of the team and allows team members to know precisely what they are responsible for delivering.
 - Defining roles and delegating accordingly ensures accountability and effective performance. It also allows the manager to provide the right type and amount of autonomy to boost efficiency.

A complete definition of roles and responsibilities for team members should include:

- Desired performance outcomes
- Importance of the job and how it fits into the organization's bigger picture
- Guidelines to follow
- Resources available for support
- Measurement criteria for outcomes
- Understanding of incentives
- Consensus and commitment

Developing team members

Developing the knowledge, skills and abilities of team members is one of the most important responsibilities for a manager to ensure the long term progress of his or her team and organization.

The following steps will help you identify how to develop team members:



Delegation

Delegating responsibility to team members is a productive way to encourage employee development while balancing a manager's workload. To delegate:

Choose the right person.

- Delegate to the people who want to take on more challenging tasks and develop their skills.
- Consider delegating to people who have a strength that you are missing or who can do the task better or quicker than you can.

Communicate the task.

- Take the time to convey the expectations of the task, the results required and all the information you currently have.
- Communicate clearly that you are passing on responsibility and authority for this task, discuss deadlines and identify how you will monitor progress.

Provide resources and remove barriers.

- Make sure the person has the time, people and technology to complete the task.
- Ensure that others know that you have delegated authority to this person and that they should work with him or her to meet objectives.

Guarantee understanding.

- Make sure the individual understands exactly what is expected of him or her.
- Clarify any misunderstandings and check that he or she feels enough direction and support is available to proceed.

Follow up and reward.

- Be on the person's side when dealing with clients and colleagues.
- Help the individual come to his or her own solutions rather than solving the problem or taking work back.
- Recognize and reward progress publicly, if possible.

Final tips

Effectively managing teams to achieve their objectives is a vital skill in today's workplace. Keep in mind the following tips when managing teams:

- Managing is about collaboration, not authority. To be a good manager, one must be an active listener, empathetic and understanding.
- Successful managers are able to achieve results by effectively communicating, building teams and organizing efforts.
- Managers not only determine what work will be completed by who but also how it will be done. Building and maintaining the team's culture and collective identity is a powerful responsibility.
- Delegation is an important tool for efficiently managing limited resources and developing talent.



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