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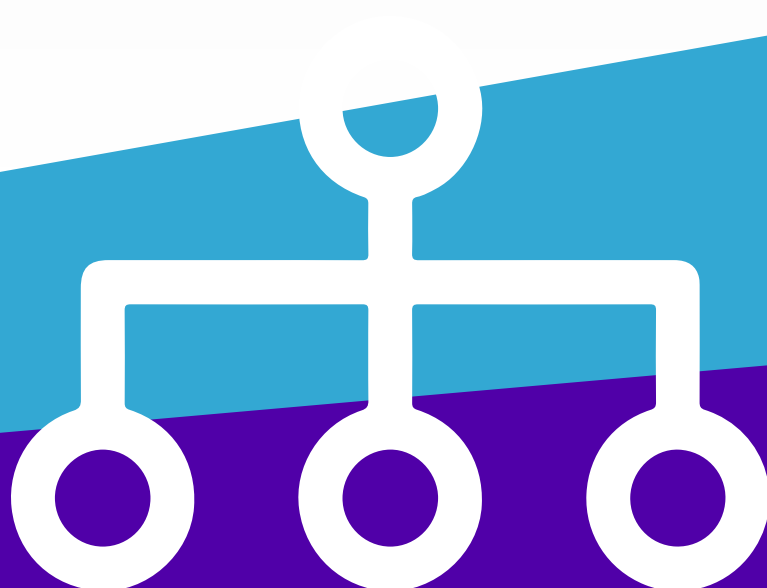
A practical guide to managing teams

Getting promoted to manager is a huge accomplishment—as well as a huge responsibility.

While being a manager used to simply mean supervising your subordinates while they completed their job functions, a manager today does so much more than that.

Managers today drive employee performance and engagement. They inspire, encourage, and motivate their teams. They answer questions and help their direct reports navigate difficulties as they arise.

Our goal in this guide is to help you become a great manager—one who inspires and fosters a positive, productive team culture. We'll walk through four areas of management that are critical to creating a high-performing team that gels, as well as provide recommendations for tools that will help you take your management to legendary levels.
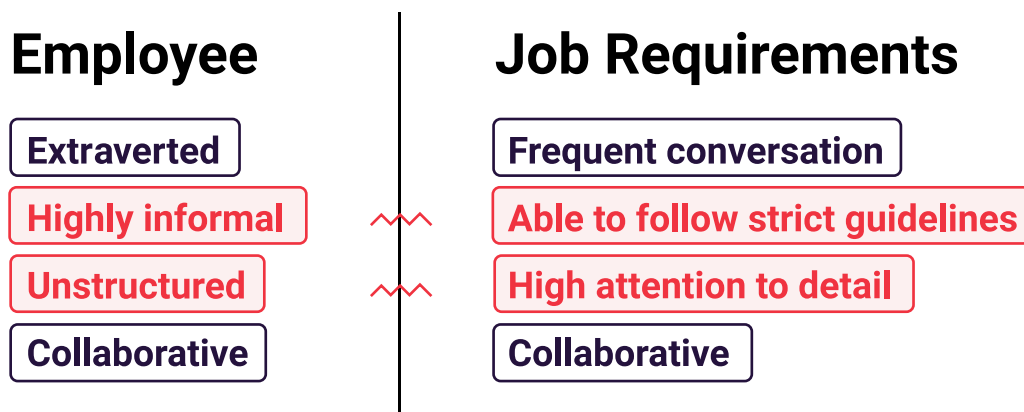
Understanding your employees

Regardless of how you found yourself in a managerial position—through a promotion, as a new hire, or as the result of an organizational change—it's crucial you start learning about your employees' motivating drives and needs. What gets them up and to work every day? What motivates them to push and try harder? What's driving the way they work? Getting to know these drives and needs will help you tailor your communications and managerial style to best support each member of your team.

While this may seem like an overwhelming task, science can help you glean these insights from your direct reports so you can most effectively manage your team.

The PI Behavioral Assessment™ is an untimed, free-choice, stimulus-response tool that measures a person's motivating drives and needs. The software generates reports that help managers better understand an employee's strengths and areas where they struggle. The reports also provide useful insights on how to most effectively manage employees based on their unique behavioral pattern. Managers can also download a Relationship Guide to compare their own behavioral drives with those of their direct reports to determine any areas of potential friction. This takes the time and guesswork out of managing your team, using science to provide immediate, actionable insights.

In addition to learning how to most effectively manage each employee, you'll understand why they behave a certain way and what they need to perform at their highest capacity.

For example, if a member of your team doesn't take a project and run with it like you wish they would, it could be because they have a high degree of formality (the desire to conform to rules and structure). They might need explicit instructions for completing the assignment because their motivating needs include clarity of expectations and freedom from risk of error. By providing them with more information and clear expectations, you allow them to feel confident they can perform the job well.

Employee | Job Requirements

Employee	Job Requirements
Extraverted	Frequent conversation
Highly informal	Able to follow strict guidelines
Unstructured	High attention to detail
Collaborative	Collaborative

Conversely, you might provide clear instructions to a team member who never follows them. If this has ever happened to you, you know it can be incredibly frustrating. But if you know that employee has a low degree of formality, you understand that they're not trying to bend the rules; they have an innate need to be free from rigid structure, rules, and controls. In this case, you'd benefit from giving them an assignment and allowing them to figure out how they'll produce the expected result.

Understanding each core drive and its motivating needs will help reduce interpersonal conflict and frustration while increasing productivity, teamwork, and results.

Creating a high-performing team

An organization's success is largely determined by its employees' ability to work together efficiently to achieve goals. As a manager, part of your job is to cultivate and coach your team to become high-performing.

The basis of a high-performing team goes beyond strong work ethic—it has to include self-awareness and transparency so the team can best communicate, make decisions, and execute the business strategy the team is responsible for.

From a talent optimization standpoint, leaders are responsible for designing and maintaining team dynamics and culture. This includes effectively managing current team dynamics, as well as making sure every new hire adds to the team in a positive way.

Using the results of behavioral assessments, you can determine the strengths and weaknesses of your overall team dynamic.

Let's say you have a number of individuals who are independent and assertive. That can be great when your business strategy calls for people who take charge, take action, and make things happen. However, having a large number of independent people on a team may create tension, indecision, or discord on a team if these employees aren't willing to concede to an idea that's not their own, or if they talk over quieter team members.

As a leader, knowing and understanding the behavioral drives and tendencies of your team members will help you predict potential pitfalls in the team dynamic.

As your team grows and you start hiring additional team members, you'll want to consider how these new hires will mesh with your existing team. Fit doesn't necessarily mean that they must have the same drives and tendencies as other members of the team. In fact, sometimes you'll bring in new team members who think and work in a completely different way. This can add incredible value to your team, as long as you consider how you'll integrate that new team member into existing work styles and workflows. For example, if you have lots of action takers on your team—but projects are getting started and not completed because people don't want to handle the details—you could bring on someone who is more process-oriented to project manage and ensure project completion.

Building your team's culture

Alongside team dynamics is team culture. While we usually think of culture at an organizational level, it applies on a team level as well.

Team culture should reflect organizational culture, which ultimately should stem from your business strategy. So if your strategy is rapid growth and innovation, your culture should, in turn, value risk-taking, action, and drive.

But in addition to reflecting organizational culture, teams often have a culture of their own. This is derived from their role in the business strategy. For example, if the business objective is growth and profit, the finance department's role may be to accurately track profit and loss, provide insights and reports on revenue-generating campaigns, and keep the business in the black. While the overall organization might value risk-taking and action, the finance department is expanding those values to include precision, accuracy, and organization so they can successfully achieve their objectives.

Team leaders have a responsibility to monitor and manage the well-being and productivity of their team members. These are vital signs of the health of the team. Team issues tend to arise when awareness of behavioral differences is nonexistent or ignored.

Managers can drive team culture by holding each individual accountable to the organizational and team values and by helping employees to better understand one another.

A key characteristic of good managers is self-awareness.

But for a team to be truly successful, self-awareness must move past the managerial level, down to the individual contributor level. Each member of the team should know their own behavioral preferences and abilities, as well as understand the behavioral preferences and abilities of other members of the team.

Employees can't maximize their effectiveness if they don't know their own preferred working style, strengths, and blind spots. They also can't work effectively with their coworkers if they're not aware of each other's working styles, preferences, and what their combined strengths or caution areas are.

Leaders also need to set the expectation that individual differences are welcome and diversity enhances the team's overall performance. Each behavioral drive adds unique value to the team. Cultivating an environment of transparency, awareness, and a willingness to work together will set the tone for each team member to show up and contribute fully.

Onboarding new team members

Another critical (often overlooked) aspect of management is onboarding new employees. Good onboarding is critical not only to the success of your team, but to new hire retention as well.

When a new hire starts, you'll want to focus on two key components: getting them up to speed and integrating them with your existing team.

When onboarding a new employee, think about everything they need to be set up for success. Ask yourself: What do they need to acclimate to company culture? What do they need to get up to speed in their role? This includes passwords and access to technology you use, calendar invites to any company-wide or team-specific meetings, training in any platforms they'll be using, a glossary of any insider terminology your team uses, and insights on their roles and responsibilities.

You'll also want to think about their individual behavioral needs. For example, someone with a high degree of dominance and a low degree of formality might want to jump right in and teach themselves the ropes. An employee with a high degree of extraversion may want to set up meetings with their new colleagues to get to know everyone, their role, and how they can work best together. An individual with a high degree of formality might prefer working through a manual to understand exactly how to perform their job functions and reading through rules, policies, and systems so they can play by the book.

Finally, consider how you'll integrate your new hire with the rest of the team. This could be through scheduling one-on-one meetings with each member of your team or sharing Relationship Guides with them to help them navigate their new working relationships. Here at PI, we share a document of "fun facts" about different members of the team. It allows new employees to get some personal insight into their teammates so they can start connecting and building rapport.

Want to become a legendary leader?

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