

The First Time Manager
by L. Belker, J.
McCormic & G. Topchik |
Book Summary by Paul
Minors

INTRODUCTION

Who is this summary for?

The First Time Manager by L. Belker, J McCormick and G Topchik is a great guide for anyone looking to step up in their career and take on the role of a manager. They cover different types of managers, different types of employees and discuss how to handle the transition from employee to manager. With plenty of tips and tricks on what to do and what to avoid this is a must-read!

About the authors

Belker worked as an executive for a large insurance company for over 30 years, he used his management experience as the guidelines for this book. McCormick was an author, speaker and most interestingly, a professional skydiver. Topchik, also an author is well known for his books on management and team building.

In this summary

This summary really is your go to for management, it will cover everything from how to handle your staff, building trust, being confident, things to avoid, hiring new staff members, discipline and much more. The First Time Manager is well written and full of detail so this summary will only scratch the surface!

BOOK SUMMARY

MANAGING PEOPLE

The authors point out that many companies promote staff from within to managerial positions. The staff member may have performed excellently at their role, but that doesn't mean that they will necessarily make the best manager.

"The theory is that successful past performance is the best indicator of future success. However, management skills are very different from the skills one needs to succeed as an individual contributor."

It's important that managers shift their focus from tasks to people, they also need to be team-orientated and have the ability to have a broad focus. However, an individual staff member will be detail-orientated and have a narrow focus. Shifting from an individual staff member to a manager can be a difficult change as you need to change the way you work.

Not everyone is cut out to be a manager, however, many companies simply throw people in the deep end and expect them to learn on the job. The authors explain that this is not the best approach and will likely end in disaster.

Delegation is key

As a manager, it's so important to be able to delegate tasks and jobs. You simply cannot have the attitude of doing everything yourself. It's important, as a manager, to trust your staff members and have faith in their abilities. If you have no trust, then you won't feel comfortable delegating tasks.

The authors explain that often people believe that if something needs to be done right, then it's better to do it yourself. However, what they really mean is that they don't know how to train people very well, they aren't good teachers.

A manager who cannot delegate will often face a high staff turnover issue, as the staff become frustrated with their trivial tasks and feel as if they are never given any responsibility. This is the situation you want to avoid as a manager, staff turnover is never good, it just leads to more money, time and admin.

Leadership

When choosing someone for a managerial position, you should be looking for leadership qualities. The authors define leadership as someone that other people look to for direction, and someone who is respected for their judgement because they are usually on the right track. A leader needs to be able to visualise results and make important decisions about the future.

SO YOU'VE BEEN PROMOTED TO MANAGER

Being promoted to manager is certainly something to be celebrated, but the authors remind us that although you are happy about the promotion, not everyone will be. Particularly colleagues who thought that they would have been a better fit. This may lead to some teething issues as they test you early and compare you to the previous manager. However, hopefully, most of your colleagues will give you the benefit of the doubt and welcome you as the new manager.

Changes

It's really important in your new role that you don't make immediate changes. It's common for people to feel threatened by change and if this is your first impression upon them, you may not be successful.

When you do implement changes, the authors recommend that you explain exactly what changes will be happening and why. Explain how they will improve everyone's situation. The more open and honest you are, the happier your staff will be.

Something to also be aware of is your newfound authority. The authors warn against you using it too regularly. If you do, then it won't be as effective when really necessary.

"View the authority of the new position as you would a limited inventory. The fewer times you draw on the inventory, the greater is the supply that remains for when it is really needed."

BE PERSONAL

The authors explain that it's important you get to know the people you work with. Try to make sure you have conversations with everyone and get to know them, show genuine interest in them both personally and career-wise. Take the time to find out what their goals are within the company so you can work together to help them achieve their goals. The aim is to ensure that the lines of communication are open and everyone feels comfortable with each other.

"If you can help employees achieve their goals, they'll be more productive."

A battle that many people face after a promotion is how to handle friendships with people you worked with, that you are now expected to manage. The authors explain that you don't need to give up your friendships but you need to ensure that they don't interfere with work or receive any special treatment.

TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

It's extremely important that your employees trust you and have confidence in both themselves and in you as a leader. Rather than being a dictator, keep your employees involved in the decision making process, this way they will feel confident in themselves and their role within the company. This also encourages success for your staff.

Trust is hard to build but so important. The authors suggest you follow a few steps to ensure you cultivate trusting relationships.

1. Keep all team members involved and share the vision of the company as a whole.
2. Ensure that you give everyone clear directions when delegating.
3. Have conversations with every individual team member and learn what each of their goals are.
4. Share your own successes but also share your mistakes with your staff.

APPRECIATION

It's important that every team member feels appreciated for the work that they do. The authors explain that you should praise your employees and by doing this they know that you care about their work.

"Your goal as a leader is to inspire your team members to perform at the top of their ability. Praising them in an appropriate way when it is deserved is part of providing this inspiration."

When providing praise, the authors suggest you follow a few simple rules:

1. Don't be generic, be specific about what work/behaviour you are praising.
2. Explain how their work had a positive impact.
3. Don't overdo the praise.
4. Explain why their work deserves your appreciation.

Listening

The authors stress the importance of being an active listener as a manager. Active listening means that you need to be involved in the conversation rather than passively listening. You need to involve yourself by asking questions, making statements and summarising what you hear. This behaviour will encourage your team mates to speak up and communicate well. It's also important to realise that your facial expression and tone of voice impact what you are saying.

MANAGING

The authors explain that as a manager you have a lot of roles you need to full. These include coach, teacher, motivator, appraiser etc. The authors outline a few key responsibilities for a manager:

1. Hiring staff
2. Communicating the vision and goals for the company.
3. Planning what work needs to be done in order to meet the goals.
4. Organising resources and team members.
5. Training employees and assessing their skills.
6. Monitoring team mates to ensure that work is being done to the right standard and in a timely manner.
7. Evaluate team member performance.
8. Firing staff that aren't meeting expectations.

MANAGERS ALSO HAVE SUPERIORS

As a manager it's important to not let the power go to your head and to realise that you also have superiors. It's important that your attitude to your superiors is appropriate. The authors emphasise the importance of remaining loyal to them and doing so in front of all of your team members. Support their decisions and policies, even when they may be contrary to your personal opinion. It's important to keep the lines of communication open and let your superiors know what projects you are working on and what your plans are. Also remember that they too are busy and you need to be considerate of their time and schedules. \

MANAGING STYLE

The authors outline 4 key managing personality types:

- **MONOPOLISERS:** these managers are very organised and prefer to be in charge of everything all of the time. They make decisions quickly and stick to them.
- **METHODICALS:** these managers are focused on accuracy, they are usually very predictable and like to take their time with decision making. Decisions are usually well researched before they are made.
- **MOTIVATORS:** a motivating manager is someone who is charismatic, creative and high energy. Motivators usually have great relationships with all team members and are considered fun to be around.
- **MIXERS:** one of the key qualities of a mixer manager is that they try to keep the peace. They are dedicated, loyal, sympathetic and dependable.

Managing problem employees

As a manager it's never going to be smooth sailing all of the time, it's so important that you feel equipped to handle problems as they arise. It's important that you handle problems and employees yourself. The authors do point out that there are times that you'll need to look outside of your own department for help, particularly when employees problems are personal such as substance abuse or family difficulties.

Employees can be difficult in different ways and they can all challenge you. When you face difficulties, it's important that you address the behaviour first. Don't let bad behaviour slide ever. When it comes to disciplining problem employees, the authors have a few suggestions:

- Don't make it personal.
- Never humiliate an employee, always handle these situations privately.
- Have a two sided conversation, never be the only one to talk.

- Try to eliminate any risk of misunderstandings.
- In terms of discipline there are a few options: you can recommend no salary increase or put them on probation.

HIRING AND FIRING

As a manager, it's likely that your job will involve interviewing and hiring new staff. This is such an important part of the job and it's important that you do it right. The authors explain that most people look for experience, qualifications and education. However, the most important thing to be looking for in a new staff member is the right attitude. If an employee has a bad attitude, then it's not going to work out, despite any experience or qualifications they have.

When interviewing a prospective employee, it's best to make them feel relaxed at the beginning and not to be too confrontational. Ask them questions about their previous job, what they liked, what they didn't like etc. Any tricky questions should be left till the end of the interview. And if you want a second opinion, ask a colleague to sit in.

Training

Once you've hired a new team member, it's important that you get them trained up as soon as possible. The training may be done by you but it's more likely to be done by one of your other employees. Make sure you select someone who is a good teacher and understands the role comprehensively. It's also important to ensure that the training is done at a reasonable pace, you don't want to overwhelm them with too much too soon.

Firing

Potentially the hardest part of a managerial role is firing staff members. It's important that as a manager, you are up to date on your companies firing processes. Human resources will have all the information if you are not sure. And the authors remind us that firing should not be the first course of action. When facing a problem employee, you should assess the situation and see if there are ways you can make it work. Perhaps they need more guidance or training in a specific area, see if there is a way you can bring them up to speed.

However, there will be times when someone is underperforming or behaving badly and they simply must be let go. Once the decision has been made to fire an employee, you first need to check that all of the documentation is done correctly, ensure that any formal appraisals are done and documented before you proceed. The authors recommend doing the firing late on Friday afternoons, this way,

everyone will leave the office and not too much attention will be drawn to what's going on.

Keep the firing process quick and straightforward, explain clearly what is happening and why it is happening. Ensure that all monetary issues are cleared. It's also important to consider the employees feelings at this time and keep it as confidential as possible.

INNOVATION AND INITIATIVE

The authors explain how important it is for a manager to encourage initiative and innovation. Without innovation, organisations will never improve and likely fail. Innovation is risky but it's important to encourage your team members to be innovative. The authors explain that the way you do this is by rewarding both the effort and the outcome. By only rewarding the outcome, your team will be a lot less likely to be innovative. And take care when responding to an outcome that wasn't favourable.

The same goes for rewarding initiative, you want to create a culture where your staff show initiative as much as possible.

OFFICE POLITICS

When it comes to office politics, the authors have a few tips for handling yourself and your team members.

1. Always have an 'understudy' - someone who is well prepared and can take over in your absence. Don't risk being away and having nobody know what's going on.
2. Don't be indispensable.
3. Always continue your own education swell as others.
4. Dress well, it's always better to be over dressed than under dressed. As a manager, the way you dress should set the tone for the whole team.
5. Understand that there is a difference between urgent work and important work, encourage your team members to know the difference.
6. Have deadlines and stick to them.
7. Be organised, have a schedule and always be on time. This will set a standard for your other team members.

DELEGATION

As a manager, it is crucial that you know how to delegate. Don't try to take on all of the work yourself, this will cause burn out. By delegating you are also providing other employees with opportunities to better themselves and their work. rage

"Delegating has the potential to free you up to see further into the distance. Think of it this way—your distance vision is quite limited when you are in the trenches. Delegating helps you get out of the figurative trenches of performing recurring tasks that are not the best use of your abilities."

STRESS AND BALANCE

"React to the Problem, Not the Stress. To succeed, you must convert the fear of a stressful situation into the challenge of a stressful situation."

As a manager, it is inevitable that you will face some stressful situations. The authors have some tips on how to deal with these"

- Don't be impulsive, this will only make things worse.
- Remember to breathe, take a few breaths to relax yourself before you face the stressful situation.
- Figure out what needs to be handled first and get it done.
- Delegate where possible.
- Ask for advice and help when needed.

You need balance too

It's important not to let your job take over your whole life, career is important but it's not everything. As a manager it's important to be able to separate your work life and your personal life. Make sure you leave work at a reasonable hour, have hobbies outside of work and spend plenty of time with friends and family.

The authors explain that while working from home is a great option, you need to take a bit more care in separating work life and home life. You don't want to fall into the trap of spending your evenings at home checking emails or finishing up some paperwork. Work hard to maintain a healthy balance.

CONCLUSION

Key takeaways

- Work to earn your team members trust.
- Encourage your team members to have confidence in their own abilities.
- Get to know your team members.
- Be an active listener and show your team members that you appreciate them.
- Always be loyal to your superiors.
- Figure out your own personal managing style, just because someone before you managed in a certain way, doesn't mean you have to do the same.
- Be sensitive when firing staff.
- Encourage innovation and initiative with your team members. Reward the actions not just the results.
- Remember that the way you dress, act and work sets a standard for your team members.
- Delegation is key.
- Make sure you keep your work life and personal life separate. Ensure you have balance in your life.

Further reading

If you're a leader it's also worth checking out *Leaders Eat Last* by Simon Sinek. This book is ideal for anyone who leads, whether it be a small team, an entire organisation, a community or a family. As a leader, it's important to create a culture that leaves everyone happy and fulfilled, and this is exactly what Simon describes.

Simon emphasises that when an environment is built on trust, teams will work together, have each other's backs, survive and thrive.

Never Eat Alone by Keith Ferrazzi is a guide to establishing and managing some of the most important relationships in your business life. These relationships can be used to open up new doors and opportunities, achieve great success and reach your goals. Ferrazzi emphasises the importance of networking, meeting new people and reaching out to people beyond your usual social circle.

Guidelines is my eBook that summarises the main lessons from 33 of the best-selling self-help books in one place. It is the ultimate book summary; Available as a 80-page ebook and 115-minute audio book. Guidelines lists 31 rules (or guidelines) that you should follow to improve your productivity, become a better leader, do better in business, improve your health, succeed in life and become a happier person.

Action steps

- Asses yourself as a manager and identify what you need to work on. Start putting these into action.
- Download the book on [Amazon](#).

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