

New Leader Pain Points

Congratulations, you've just been promoted to management.

Leadership is an important and challenging role. You have a wonderful opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of those you lead as well as your business. However, most new leaders encounter several challenges that they never anticipated. Keep reading and see if any of these pain points sound familiar.

1. Prioritization

Seemingly overnight, new leaders find themselves inundated with more email, meetings and interruptions than they have ever experienced before. It doesn't take long for the leader to become completely overwhelmed and find themselves working to all hours of the night in order to accomplish all of their tasks. Your ability to prioritize and manage the expectations of your staff, your boss, and your customers will make or break your success.

2. Delegation

Difficulty delegating work is another common snag for new leaders, especially a first time leader. You have just been promoted because you were good at your previous role and most likely you really enjoyed it. However, you are now responsible for ensuring that others complete your former role.

Rather than staying in your comfort zone you need to delegate work to your staff. Additionally, you have to be patient and recognize that everyone isn't going to do it exactly the way you did or as effectively. It is impossible for you to accomplish all of your team's goals by yourself, so learning to delegate effectively will be critical to your success.

3. Addressing Performance Issues

This is the least favorite role of all leaders. Nobody likes to have to tell another person that they aren't meeting expectations. However, if you fail to do so it will infect the rest of your team.

Being able to effectively address performance issues takes a great deal of practice. If you come across too soft, you won't be taken seriously. On the other hand, if you come across too strong you will only come across as a jerk and make your employee defensive. Many leaders fall into the trap of starting too soft and when nothing changes they swing to the other end pour it on too strong.

4. Relationship Transitions

One reality that most new managers don't appreciate is that the moment you become a leader, or get promoted to the next level, all of your professional relationships begin to change. If you are a first time leader, you are likely managing people that used to report to you. Some of these individuals may have applied for the promotion themselves and resent you. Or, you may have had a close personal relationship with one or several of your staff members. You need to appreciate that these relationships need to change or you may be accused of favoritism. Finally, as you move up the ranks of leadership, you might find that you are now managing someone that use to manage you, which can be quite awkward when you don't know how to handle it.

Another important point to remember is that you now need to begin building relationships with a whole new set of peers. While building trust with your team is important, you need to take the time to cultivate relationships with key peers throughout the organization. These relationships can make all the difference when you find yourself working through a challenging disagreement or tight deadline with another department.

5. Decision Making

Several years ago I heard an interview with a college basketball coach who was in his first year as the head coach. The interviewer asked him what the biggest difference was between being an assistant and the head coach. He remarked that as the head coach he was one of 5 other coaches offering ideas to the head coach. Now, as the head coach, he was the one that had to decide which idea to go with.

I thought that was a great way to sum up how overwhelming it can be to be the one that has to make the final decision. As a front-line employee it is easy to play "arm-chair" quarterback and second guess what your leader should have done, but once the decision rests with you your perspective completely changes.

6. Creating a Vision and Leading Change

If you want to be a leader, then you must move your team forward in some way. You might have inherited a team that is firing on all cylinders and surpassing their annual goals handily, yet you still need to take them to the next level. Sure you could come in and preserve the status quo, but then you are merely a manager and it won't take long before the organization begins to question the value you bring.

Few leaders are fortunate enough to inherit a high performing team. Most, if not all teams have room for growth. Regardless of whether you are trying to implement radical or incremental change, how you position it with your staff is critical. Your ability to provide them an inspiring

picture of what the future will look like will go a long way to helping them navigate the inevitable highs and lows of the process.

7. Leadership Style and Approach

Most new leaders find themselves continuously questioning whether they are effective in their new role. There are a host of new responsibilities and it can be quite overwhelming. Naturally, the leader will take their lead from observing and talking with other leaders within the organization. This is a great way to learn different ways to approach the critical tasks of being a leader.

However, if the new leader isn't careful they may become consumed with trying to emulate the style of another leader. Or worse, they feel guilty because they don't agree with the style of another leader on their team. A new leader's confidence will increase significantly once they can articulate and trust the leadership style that works for them.

8. Adjusting to Different Personality Styles

Everyone is different. As a leader there will be some people on your team that you feel very comfortable with and others that you just don't click with. However, you have to work with all of them openly and consistently.

The biggest mistake you can make is to communicate to everyone on your team in exactly the same manner. Even though we know that everyone doesn't think or communicate just like we do, we instinctively communicate in the way that is most comfortable for us. This simply guarantees that your message isn't completely heard most of the time. Successful leaders learn to adjust their style as necessary in order to work effectively with their staff.

9. Developing a Broader Perspective

As a front-line employee you are responsible for accomplishing a set task. You probably needed to understand the responsibilities of your teammates but you may not need to know a great deal about the rest of the organization, except for possibly another department or two.

Once you become a leader, you need to broaden your perspective. It isn't acceptable to only be aware of what your team or department is doing. You need to challenge yourself to begin to understand all of the departments that is impacted, or impact, your team. As you rise to a senior leadership position, it is now critical for you to understand every aspect of the business. If you are a Director of HR you might not need to know the fine print details of the Accounting or Marketing departments, but you do need to possess a 10,000 foot view of the whole organization.

10. Influencing Within a Political Culture

Nobody likes office politics. Many people will move into leadership and say that they aren't going to play the politics game. I don't blame you for not wanting to play the game; however, you have to accept that the game does exist. A VP I know once shared the analogy of a chess board to describe office politics, stating that it is much better being the one to move your own pieces.

The fact is that in order to accomplish anything significant in an organization, you need the support of key individuals from other departments. If you don't understand what's important to them and how your goals support them, you aren't likely to generate the support you need. Even worse, if your idea completely conflicts with something important to others, then you are doomed for failure. Success is based as much, or more, on being able to garner support for your idea as it is in coming up with a great idea in the first place.

If you have made it this far, chances are that you can identify with one or several of these typical pain points. I can help! Whether you are a first time leader or have just moved into the next level of leadership, I welcome the opportunity to assist you in your transition. You have the opportunity to make a significant impact not only for the business you work for, but for the people you lead as well. Don't take this responsibility lightly and recognize that you aren't alone. Contact me today to discuss how I can support you to unleash the authentic leader within!

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