

The little guide to being 'The Best Leader Ever!'

**8 ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO BECOME THE BEST MIDDLE MANAGER
EVER!**



KEY2EVOLVE COACHING

- Leadership Coaching for Middle Managers & Aspiring Leaders
- Hogan Leadership Series Assessments
- 360 Leadership Feedback
- MBTI Personality Inventory



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8 ESSENTIAL SKILLS TO BECOME THE BEST MIDDLE MANAGER

EVER!

Quite often in organisations middle managers will often comment on feeling invisible, under-consulted and powerless. This comes mostly from having to 'manage' a very diverse and growing workforce, taking on projects and/or acting on decisions and directions inherited without being consulted and feeling consistently stretched between the needs of their staff and those of their boss.

Middle managers are a key driver in creating a positive healthy workplace. It is important for any organisation to provide them with sound knowledge, practical strategies, tactics and tools to effectively manage themselves first and then manage, influence, inspire and support their team members.

Middle managers also represent one of the most critical factors in developing commitment. They play the most important role in influencing employee's attitude towards their job and the company as a whole. Their own behaviour comes first when explaining the variation in both job satisfaction and job discretion.

Middle managers tend to believe that they are not given enough power to run the business, however, what they do not often realise is that their own behaviour and their employees are the key features to their power in their organisation. They can make or break a business according to their mindset, skills and talent

Why self-assess your excellence in key leadership skills? "That's the best boss I've ever had!" Have you ever said that? Have you ever wondered what made the difference?

The chances are that this person developed and worked on some key essential skills that any well-rounded manager should possess and that 'the best boss ever' will definitely excel in!

In the following pages you will find a self-assessment, where ideally you would score 12 points for each section, and 8 insights to get you started with essential leadership skills.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assess yourself with this scale: 1 = Working on it, 2 = sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

1: I understand what makes every individual in my team unique and I build on each person's individual strengths.

2: I am skilled at managing and developing my team through the performance management process.

3: I use the company's policies and procedures consistently and fairly to reward and recognise achievements but also to tackle poor performance in my team.

Total score for this section

DECISION MAKING

4: I demonstrate sound judgement when making decisions. I can explain my decisions and clearly articulate my decision making process.

5: I take accountability for the decisions I make, good or bad, or the ones made by my company and I learn from any positive or negative outcomes.

6: I take the time to plan and I use a decision making model before making a decision. I always allocate appropriate resources to ensure that goals are met.

Total score for this section

SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

7: I am able to think critically about my company as a whole in order to cascade and/or develop strategies and plans.

8: I have a wide knowledge of my company. I apply it to identify potential problems and strategic opportunities within my own area and potentially other areas too.

9: I maintain an understanding of the implications for other areas of my company of my decisions and actions. I often articulate these implications to other departments.

Total score for this section

DRIVING BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

10: I consistently deliver what I say I will and I always make things happen with pace, energy and enthusiasm.

11: I use my knowledge of the company and my area of expertise to consistently challenge the status quo and drive business performance.

12: I manage resources (people, money, time, etc.) to get my job done according to a plan. I always consider the cost of effectiveness and operational implications of my choices.

Total score for this section

Score

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Self-assess yourself with this scale: 1 = Working on it, 2 = sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always

BEING CUSTOMER & BRAND FOCUSED

13: I know who my customers are both externally and internally. I listen to them and I am focused on delivering quality to them and going the extra mile.

14: To stay ahead of the game I keep up to date with the latest company's news and initiatives and I benchmark competition.

15: I speak highly of my company in every interaction I have.

Total score for this section

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

16: I develop, promote and sustain effective business relationships with people at all levels, both internally and externally.

17: I have a strong internal/external network and I regularly call upon it to help me deliver improvements to the business.

18: I am culturally sensitive and understand the subtleties and nuances of the different cultures (people, areas, departments etc.) at play in my company.

Total score for this section

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

19: I am in tune with my emotions and feelings and I can manage my behaviour at all time to remain calm and professional.

20: I give and seek feedback often. When receiving feedback I always listen and respond without inappropriate emotion or defensiveness.

21: I am open and responsive to change, I know how change affects me and others and I learn from my own mistakes in order to improve personal and business performance.

Total score for this section

INSPIRING OTHERS

22: I lead by example; I am a good role model as a leader. People come to me for advice because I inspire confidence, I am positive, I have an open attitude.

23: My colleagues and direct reports tell me I am confident, professional and that I have a 'leadership style' that is charismatic.

24: I can create and maintain a crystal clear vision for the future for my team. I always use great communication skills to inspire and guide others to commit to an outcome, change of idea or point of view.

Total score for this section

Score

1

DEVELOP YOUR PEOPLE

Develop your people

Why it matters:

Because employee development is probably the most overlooked aspect of a manager's role and because investing time in individuals to develop their talents is a key aspect of employee engagement and retention.

According to the 2016 Towers Watson Global Talent Management and Reward Study Survey, career advancement opportunities for employees ranks amongst the top 3 attraction and retention drivers and only 38% of managers seem to be effective in conducting career development discussions.

How am I doing as a manager?

Take a few moments to reflect on the 3 statements below. Be honest with yourself. To be the 'best boss ever' the idea is to always excel, so think about what you could stop doing, start doing and continue doing.

1. I understand what makes every individual in my team unique and I build on each person's individual strengths.
2. I am skilled at managing and developing my team through the performance management process. I do regular 121s, offer coaching, support and development to everyone and I like to create the right conditions to foster good team dynamics.
3. I use the company's policies and procedures consistently and fairly to reward and recognise achievements but also to tackle poor performance in my team.

2 MAKE SOUND DECISIONS

Make sound decisions

Why it matters:

Because managers have to make decisions everyday, and it is often easy to fall into the pitfall of having impulsive reactions.

A good manager needs to be able to define their position on any given situation and to remain fair, unbiased and appropriate when going through and explaining their decision making process. As a manager, every week, you are faced with hundreds of opportunities to make decisions. All these decisions can appear to carry not much value but cumulatively, they can make you and your company successful or alternatively break the two of you.

According to a McKinsey & Company study, frontline managers across industries spend between 20 to 60 percent of their time doing 'administration tasks' and 'attending meeting'. If this is the case in your organisation, how much of that time do you spend on decision-making?

The ability to make sound decisions builds trust and confidence amongst employees, peers and managers.

How am I doing as a manager?

Take a few moments to reflect on the 3 statements below.

1. I demonstrate sound judgement, considering cost, benefits and risk as well as being able to apply intuition when making decisions. I can explain my decisions to my team and my decision making process.
2. I take accountability for the decisions I make, good or bad, or the ones made by my company and I learn from any positive or negative outcomes.
3. I take the time to plan before making any decisions and I always allocate appropriate resources to ensure that my goals and targets are met.
I have several decision-making tools I can use.

3 THINK BIG PICTURE

Think big picture

Why it matters:

To truly empower line reports to perform fully, a manager needs to understand the macro environment and true purpose of their business in order to tangibly translate and cascade it.

If a manager cannot provide that clarity, does not understand the greater business context and fail to explain the executives' vision then employees will start questioning their leaders. In turn, motivation and engagement levels will drop and an unhealthy 'us and them' culture might start to arise.

The more connected and aligned to the company's vision and the big picture a manager is, the more work synergy they will be able to instil within their business.

How am I doing as a manager?

Take a few moments to reflect on the 3 statements below.

1. I am able to think critically about my company as a whole in order to cascade and/or develop strategies and plans.
2. I have a wide knowledge of my company. I apply this knowledge to identify potential problems and strategic opportunities within my own area and potentially other areas too.
3. I maintain an understanding of the implications for other areas of my company of my decisions, plans and actions. I often articulate these implications to other departments.

DRIVE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

Drive business performance

Why it matters:

Success in a business happens because everyone, bottom up and top down, takes accountability for performing to the best of their ability in the interest of the company they work for. Wherever you work, whatever your level, you all play a part in the profitability of your company.

Today, the drive for revenue growth is omnipresent in any sector, and for managers, instilling personal responsibility in teams should be at the top of the agenda. Be reassured, it can greatly be done by leading by example.

In order to succeed in this competitive environment, managers need to be more in touch with direct and indirect costs associated to their decisions and to the way in which their function is run. They also need to deliver on their plans, be adaptive, innovative, flexible and challenge the status quo. All of this with pace, energy and enthusiasm.

How am I doing as a manager?

Take a few moments to reflect on the 3 statements below.

1. I consistently deliver what I say I will and I always make things happen with pace, energy and enthusiasm.
2. I use my knowledge of the company and my area of expertise to consistently challenge the status quo and drive business performance.
3. I manage resources (people, money, time, products etc.) to get my job done according to a plan. When managing I always consider the cost of effectiveness and operational implications of my choices.



5

FOCUS ON YOUR CUSTOMERS AND THE BRAND

Focus on your customers and the brand

Why it matters:

Getting closer to your customers both internal and external, is not something that should only be done via efficient IS systems or sales & marketing specialists. It is a culture that takes years to develop in any business and involves time and efforts to deliver customer satisfaction.

All too often we associate focussing on customers with 'front line customer service' or 'aftercare' but what about co-workers? Many organisations will somewhat tackle the 'customer focus' topic by putting everyone on a customer service training course which in the short term might create a buzz but in the mid to long term won't show any benefits because the business will still operate in the same way.

Focussing on your customers means looking back at the basics, looking at the core values of your organisation or ways of working and bringing them to life both internally and externally. For a manager it means developing and encouraging work collaboration between functions and departments. It also means being curious and benchmarking competition regularly to gain insight and finally it means focussing on the brand, what your company stands for, and speaking highly of it in every interaction you have.

How am I doing as a manager?

Take a few moments to reflect on the 3 statements below.

1. I know who my customers are both externally and internally. I listen to them and I am focused on delivering quality to them and going the extra mile.
2. To stay ahead of the game I keep up to date with the latest company's news and initiatives and I benchmark competition.
3. I speak highly of my company in every interaction I have.

6

BUILD STRONG RELATIONSHIPS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

Build strong relationships and influence people

Why it matters:

In today's world, businesses are becoming less hierarchical and it is therefore more difficult for middle managers to get promoted and move up the ranks. Once key area of development that is quite often forgotten because of day-to-day management duties is the power of influencing and making strong relationships.

In order to influence, managers need to be at the top of their game and be experts in their fields. Thanks to social media sites such as Twitter and LinkedIn it is now possible to either set up or join a group, share practices, ask for opinions on work challenges, reach out to industry contacts etc.

Building your reputation and expertise via social media is only one way amongst others to help you with your power of influence. Spending time with colleagues, taking a few hours every month to 'shadow' another department and find out how they work, what their challenges are and making connections will help you in the long term understand your business as a whole and how it fits in within your industry.

How am I doing as a manager?

Take a few moments to reflect on the 3 statements below.

1. I develop, promote and sustain effective business relationships with people at all levels, both internally and externally.
2. I have a strong internal/external network and I regularly call upon it to help me deliver improvements to the business.
3. I am culturally sensitive and understand the subtleties and nuances of the different cultures (people, areas, departments etc.) at play in my company.



DEVELOP YOUR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Develop your emotional intelligence

Why it matters:

Emotional Intelligence (EI) can be broadly defined as an individual's ability to understand and manage his or her own emotions, and to respond empathically and authentically to others. It is also the capability to identify, use, understand, and manage thoughts in positive ways to alleviate stress, converse effectively, empathise with others, overcome troubles, and defuse discord.

Emotional intelligence affects many different areas of your lifestyle, including the way you respond and how you connect to others. Emotional Intelligence factors like self-awareness and social skills can be three times more important than IQ or technical ability in terms of job success. Lack of this essential “line management skill” is a leading cause of executive derailment and employee turnover.

When you have high emotional intelligence, it is possible to acknowledge your mental status and the mental status of others and build relationships with people in a genuine manner. You should use this knowledge of feelings to connect better to other people, form healthier relationships, achieve higher success at your job, and lead a far more fulfilling life.

The Four Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Domain One

Self-Awareness The capability to understand your own thoughts and exactly how they affect your ideas and habits, know your advantages and weaknesses, and also have self-confidence. This is the capacity to step outside yourself with a concentrated observation of how you are feeling and reacting in a variety of situations.

Domain Two

Self-Management The ability to control impulsive emotions and behaviours, deal with your thoughts in healthy ways, make an effort, stick to commitments, and adjust to changing circumstances. Possessing a non-reactive analytic method of your thoughts and problem resolving to increase appropriate reactions.



Domain Three

Social Awareness The ability to see and understand the feelings, needs, and concerns of other people, detect emotional cues, feel safe socially, and realise the energy dynamics in an organisation. The bottom line is; this is empathy, a pure "people skill."

Domain Four

Relationship Management The capability to develop and keep maintaining good relationships, communicate, motivate and affect others, work very well in a team, and manage issue. Quite simply, having good cultural skills and being qualified in relating with the thoughts/opinions of others and staying connected.

Emotional intelligence capabilities become more critical as job complexity increases, and intangibles like "leading and motivating" become key requirements. The good news is that emotional intelligence can be learned, although it requires commitment and courage to change long-standing personal patterns of interaction.

There is no better way to start your study of emotional intelligence than reading Daniel Coleman's book on Emotional Intelligence titled "Emotional Intelligence" or to visit his site. It presents a long narrative on emotional intelligence backed with concrete data gathered over years of research.

How am I doing as a manager?

Take a few moments to reflect on the 3 statements below.

1. I am in tune with my emotions and feelings and I can manage my behaviour at all time to remain calm and professional.
2. I give and seek feedback often. When receiving feedback I always listen and respond without inappropriate emotion or defensiveness.
3. I am open and responsive to change, I know how change affects me and others and I learn from my own mistakes in order to improve personal and business performance.

8 INSPIRE PEOPLE

Inspire people

Why it matters:

Through your actions and behaviours you take your people forward, you encourage discretionary efforts and lead business performance. This is not a difficult concept to grasp however a lot of leaders these days are more focussed with their tasks' agenda rather than their people's agenda.

An inspirational leader will somehow manage to create movement within their teams and people will decide to follow them and give them their best. You can easily be called 'the boss' but it's difficult to be called a leader as it demonstrate some qualities are innate to some people and not to others.

By using some of these simple things and incorporating them into your day-to-day management you will be on your path to being a great leader and inspire others.

Is it an easy journey? The answer is 'NO' because the traits that employees really find inspirational in a leader are for most part behavioural and changing one's behaviour is the hardest thing to do, requires trial and error and persistence over time.

How am I doing as a manager?

Take a few moments to reflect on the 3 statements below.

1. I lead by example; I am a good role model as a leader. People come to me for advice because I inspire confidence, I am positive, I have an open attitude, I am trustworthy and passionate about what I do.
2. My colleagues and direct reports tell me I am confident, professional and that I have a 'leadership style' that is charismatic.
3. I can create and maintain a crystal clear vision for the future for my team. I always use great communication skills to inspire and guide others to commit to an outcome, course of action, change of idea or point of view.

SUMMARY

- 1 - Develop your people*
- 2 - Make sound decisions*
- 3 - Think big picture*
- 4 - Drive business performance*
- 5 - Focus on your customers and the brand*
- 6 - Build strong relationships
and influence people*
- 7 - Develop your emotional intelligence*
- 8 - Inspire people*



THE END

*The little guide
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The best leader ever!*

