

A New Manager's Guide To Leadership



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Welcome to Leadership

Congratulations! You've made the move from an individual contributor to a manager. It feels good, right? But this upgrade is more than just a change in title, there's a major shift in how you'll spend your workday and what's expected of you.

Now, it's less about what you accomplish directly and more about what you accomplish through your team. Your success is dependent on the success of those you lead.

THE MOST IMPORTANT RESPONSIBILITY OF A MANAGER IS ENABLING AND EMPOWERING YOUR TEAM MEMBERS TO DO THEIR JOBS EFFECTIVELY.

While your new title may have "Manager" in it, it's important to remember that people want to be led and developed, not managed.

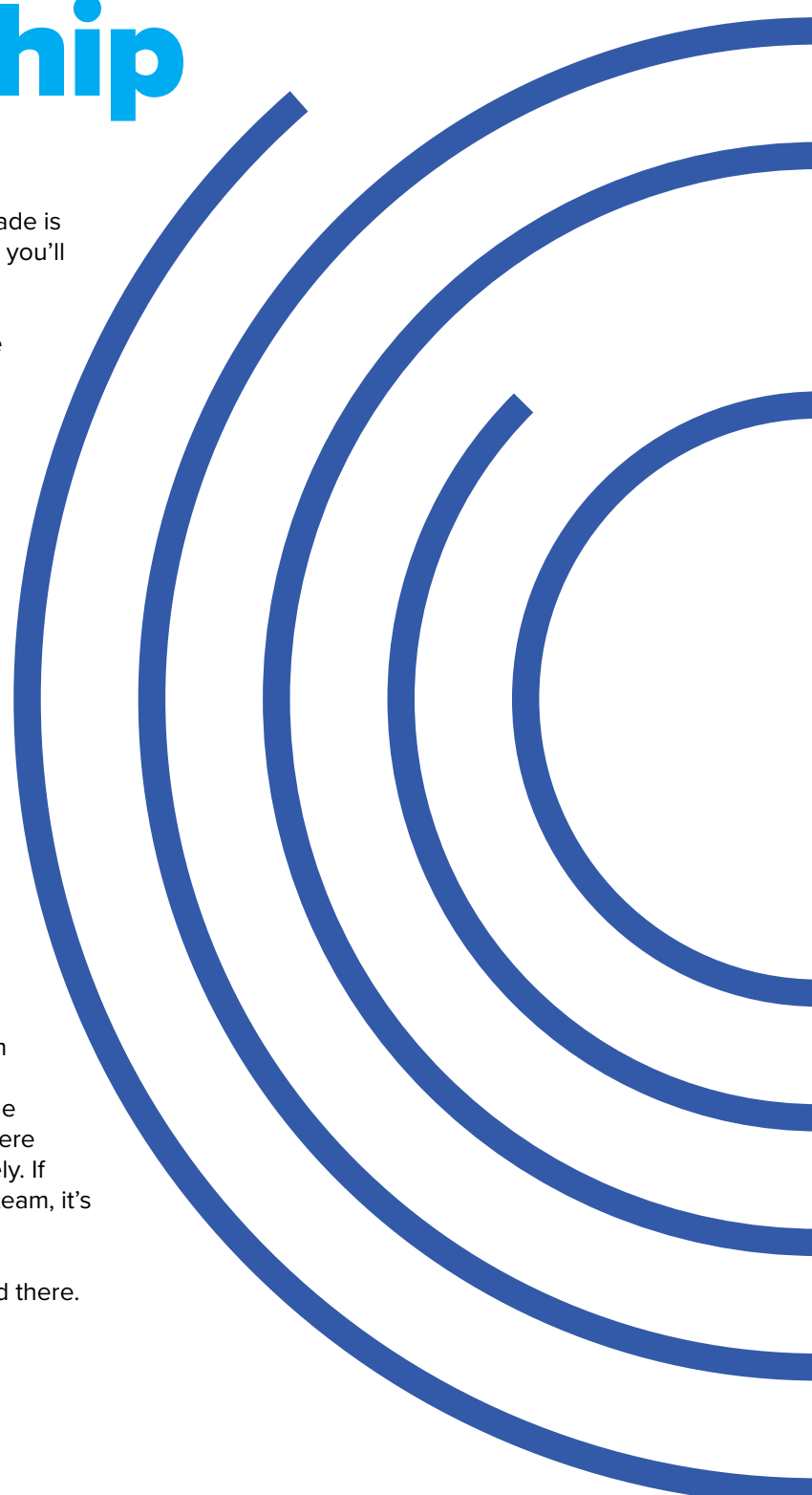
As John C. Maxwell says in [360 Degree Leader: Developing Your Influence from Anywhere in the Organization](#), "Tend to the people, and they will tend to the business."

If you're a sports person, think of it this way. As a leader, you're an offensive lineman, knocking down the other team (or in this case, obstacles in your team members' way), so the quarterback (your team members) can run the ball to the endzone. It's your job to foresee problems that could interfere with success and defend your team against them proactively. If you don't do your job of protecting and providing for your team, it's hard for them to do their job.

If you're not a sports person, that's okay. The analogies end there.

So what does a successful leader look like?

Let's get started.



Making the Transition to Manager

As a new manager, there are two major shifts you'll encounter - shifting priorities and shifting relationships.

Shifting Priorities

The biggest shift that happens when you're promoted to manager is that other people's success is now dependent on you. That means, no matter what priorities you have as an individual now come second to the success of the team as a whole.

Why?

The team you lead is going to lead the charge in getting everything done. If you're the brains, they're the hands. In other words, they are the boots on the ground bringing projects to the finish line while you guide their vision and efforts. But if your team is blocked from getting their job done because of unanswered questions, pending approvals, or confusion on vision for their work, ultimately your team will fail. And as the leader responsible, people will come to you looking for answers.

That's why your first priority as a leader is to remove roadblocks and maintain alignment for your team. If they are getting their work done well, overall your team is winning.

Of course, you'll also be leading sideways and up, and have your own projects and priorities to manage. While these can feel more pressing, remember - if your team doesn't win, you're not winning.

Making the Transition to Manager

If you're ever feeling lost as to what to prioritize as a new manager, here are your core responsibilities that should always take precedence over your individual responsibilities.



Shifting Relationships

Step one in becoming a new manager is recognizing that your peer group now looks different. If you were promoted from within your organization, people who used to be in your cohort now report to you. This changing dynamic is tough for new leaders who wish to maintain old relationships while having a new level of leadership insight, responsibility, and expectations.

If your promotion to manager came from joining a new organization, you have new relationships to build.

No matter where you're coming from, step one (and the foundation of your success every day moving forward) as a new manager is forming relationships and building trust with your new team. Let's dive into the critical components of building those strong relationships from day one.



Managing Your New Team

“With great power comes great responsibility.”

Whether this quote originated from Winston Churchill, Spiderman, or somewhere else altogether, it’s a classic leadership quote for a reason.

As a new manager, your responsibility increases drastically. But don’t worry, at the end of the day, your success all boils down to one thing: **your relationship with your team members.**

According to research from Gallup, 50% of employees leave their companies because of their boss. This tells us how critical it is to build strong bonds from the get go. Here’s how to direct your efforts to crush it as a leader:

Cultivate trust

In order for your team members to work effectively, quickly, and with confidence, trust is critical. There are a number of trust killers, such as micromanaging, poor communication and planning, improper feedback, etc., but there is one powerful way to build and maintain trust - the 1:1 meeting.

Here at Leadr, we affectionately call the 1:1 meeting a manager’s most powerful leadership development tool. If you want to learn more, we have **dozens of resources** on 1:1s including our most popular eBook, [The 1:1 How To Guide](#).

Managing Your New Team

Develop others

Rather than seeing yourself as a leader, think about yourself as a coach - someone to guide, advise, and develop your team members rather than command them. Coaches come to the table with a deep level of care for the growth of each individual and the team as a whole. Their goal is to help each individual in the unique ways they can grow, meaning they may lead different people in different ways based on their needs, learning preferences, and strengths. There are a few ways to focus on development with your team (by the way, you can do all of these things within Leadr. [Find out how](#)).

GALLUP TELLS US THAT EMPLOYEES SIMPLY LEARNING THEIR STRENGTHS MAKES EMPLOYEES 7.8% MORE PRODUCTIVE, AND TEAMS THAT FOCUS ON STRENGTHS EVERY DAY HAVE 12.5% GREATER PRODUCTIVITY.

1. Find Out Their Strengths

Allowing your team members to participate in projects that utilize their strengths isn't only beneficial for morale, it contributes to higher output, benefiting retention and your bottom line.

A simple way to find and use your team's strengths is having a recurring question in your 1:1 meetings asking questions like:

- What are your strengths?
- Do you feel like they're being used at work?
- Where do you see opportunities to utilize your strengths more?
- If you could add one responsibility or job to your role, what would it be?

Delegation will become a necessity as you focus less on projects and more on your team, so knowing your team's different strengths or development goals will help you determine where to delegate different tasks.

2. Learning Opportunities

IN THE WORDS OF ADAM GRANT, "PASSIONS ARE DEVELOPED, NOT JUST DISCOVERED."

This ties in closely with using strengths. Gen Z is quickly becoming a larger part of today's workforce, and the one thing they're after more than anything else is opportunity for learning and growth. As a leader, this is good news for you - an eager and motivated employee is unstoppable.

94% OF EMPLOYEES WOULD STAY AT A COMPANY LONGER IF IT INVESTED IN THEIR CAREER DEVELOPMENT (CNBC).

A great way to invest in your team's growth is through personalized [learning and development plans](#). We've got an entire eBook on creating your own [custom leadership development program here](#). But if you're not ready for that as a new leader yet, we get it. Bookmark that for later. Start small. Find podcasts, blogs, or books to assign to your team members that align with their growth goals. Discuss what they're learning each week and create goals based on their takeaways. Go deeper by following the development plan alongside them.

Teams are much more likely to succeed in meeting company and team goals when employee engagement is a focus, leading to a significant decrease in factors like turnover and absenteeism, and an increase in productivity.



Managing Your New Team

3. Two-way Feedback

72% OF PEOPLE SAID THEIR PERFORMANCE WOULD IMPROVE IF THEIR MANAGERS WOULD PROVIDE CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK (HBR).

Offering feedback can often be the most challenging part of leadership. I don't know anyone who's ever said they enjoy **delivering negative feedback**. However, a critical part of developing others is breaking down unhelpful habits while encouraging winning behaviors.

HBR REPORTS THAT 90% OF MILLENNIALS WANT CANDID, FREQUENT FEEDBACK, AND 85% OF GEN Y AND 71% OF GEN X DO TOO.

The most effective feedback strategy is to deliver it immediately. Be on the lookout for when your team meets a goal, lives out your organization's values, supports another team member, or puts in extra time. When you see your team winning, tell them. Positive feedback is powerful.

Remember - as a coach, feedback always originates with care. Think, "how can I help this person grow," rather than looking at challenges with a critical eye.

4. Set Clear Goals

Ensuring that every person on your team knows how to win is mission critical. A key early step in leadership is collaborating with each member of your team to create clear goals that tie back to your organization's overall mission and KPIs.

5. Inspire Culture

Leadership Guru, John C. Maxwell says, "Attitude is like a thermostat for the place she works. If her attitude is good, the atmosphere is pleasant, and the environment is easy to work in. But if her attitude is bad, the temperature is insufferable."

As the leader, you're now where culture is cultivated. Be sure to make your team a space where people want to work. How? See points 1 - 4 above and you're set!

Make sure each person on your team knows how their role directly impacts the organization and that they have a "why" behind everything they do.

Notice none of these responsibilities are task-forward. They are relationship-first. Because that is the root of leadership.

IF YOUR ACTIONS INSPIRE OTHERS TO DREAM MORE, LEARN MORE, DO MORE AND BECOME MORE, YOU ARE A LEADER.

-SIMON SINEK

Leading Sideways

One blindspot many new leaders have is failing to recognize that the responsibility is now yours to create alignment between your team and the other teams in your organization. This alignment is critical to building trust and ultimately winning as an organization. Here are two tips for successfully leading sideways.

Break Down Silos

It's tempting to become a manager and focus all of your efforts on the success of your own team. While that's certainly priority one, you can't be sure your team is working toward the organization's overall goals and objectives without alignment with other team leaders.

And at the end of the day, even if your team is producing like crazy, if the outcomes don't align with the overall goals of the organization, are you really winning?

Avoid this pitfall by initiating multi-departmental alignment meetings. Once or twice a month, gather with other managers to share priorities and upcoming projects that will impact other teams. Not only does this ensure there are no surprises, it also allows teams to support each other and offer feedback or insight proactively.

In between these meetings, use Slack or email to send a weekly update to keep other managers in the loop on how projects are progressing or when big updates or changes occur.

If you show other teams you care about their initiatives and let them in on yours, trust will inevitably follow.

Proactive Communication

Proactive communication goes hand in hand with breaking down silos. Have you ever been shocked by the news of an organizational announcement, like a new product launch, a huge PR effort, or a major branding change? Did it make you feel blindsighted or left out of the decision making process?

Yeah, it's not a good feeling. This kind of leadership miss happens when team members fail to practice proactive communication.

This is a critical leadership trait whether you're leading down, up, or sideways.

Benefits of proactive communication include:

- Allows leadership to see where you're focused and speak into your pathway if needed
- Offers more input and brainpower behind your initiatives
- Builds trust sideways and upwards through transparency
- Allows other teams to help with your goals
- Lets the organization know your priorities for that season
- Avoids surprising other team members

Start now by taking a moment to set a cross-departmental meeting, set a clear agenda, and be amazed at the alignment that follows.

Leading Up

Most leaders report that leading up is the most challenging part of being a new leader. Leading up is the art of becoming a contributor to the larger organizational strategy by speaking into big decisions and offering feedback and coaching to your leadership.

This can be intimidating for many new leaders, but as Michael Useem, author of *Leading Up: The Art of Managing Your Boss*, says, “Organizations need more overall direction from below to think strategically, communicate persuasively and act decisively.”

Leading up is a critical part of management. Here’s what successfully leading up looks like.

Owning mistakes

Contrary to what you might think, being a leader doesn’t mean you have all the answers. Crazy, right?

Adam Grant says “It takes confident humility to admit that we’re in a work in progress.”

It’s true. But you’re not just responsible for owning your own mistakes. As the front-line of your team, you’re also responsible for their decisions, wins, and misses. That’s why choosing the right team members and investing in their development and success is so important. But even the strongest team members will make mistakes.

Ignored mistakes are demoralizing. Owning your mistakes makes you relatable as a leader and trusted by your peers. But don’t stop at acknowledging where you’ve fallen short.

The best leaders analyze where things went wrong and make a plan for improving results in the future. When you operate

under a solution-first mindset, you earn trust at every level.

Tip: After a large project, regardless of the results, it’s helpful to do a recap or even a retrospective meeting to align on the results. Gather every team member who worked on the project as a chance to gain clarity on what to continue or change for future projects. Retrospective meetings are helpful because they allow the team to recognize shortcomings related to the project, not the person.

Delivering feedback up the chain of command

Yes - we’re back on feedback. As a manager, this becomes a bulk of your responsibility. Offering feedback up the organizational ladder isn’t limited to performance. Your thoughts on the organization as a whole, such as the organizational structure, culture, and mission are critical to help your leadership team have a holistic understanding of how the organization is performing.

Whether you’re on board with how things are going or have constructive thoughts on improving, making your voice heard is critical to your organization performing at its best. Be in touch with what your team members are experiencing and pass along their thoughts as well.

However, your approach to bringing issues up the org chart is critical. Remember: always come at issues with a solution-first mindset.

If the feedback you have to pass along is negative, never hide that information, but come to your leader with ideas for a solution, or at least from the perspective of wanting to talk through and solve the issue together. Leadership maturity, achieved!

Leading Up

Owning your team's systems and processes

As the leader, everyone is looking to you to help your team drive results effectively and efficiently. This happens primarily through training and development, but the tools and software your team uses also plays a huge role in productivity.

As you take on your new responsibilities, take inventory of what your team's tech stack looks like. Go in asking these questions:

1. Are you paying for tools you're not using? Get rid of them.
2. Is everyone on your team using the same tools for project management, goal setting, and alignment? If not, choose one.
3. Do you have a tool to support your main goal as a leader - caring for and developing your team? If not, add one.

This brings us to one last area where you'll need to lead up.

Leadership Buy-in / Presenting your decisions to management

Whether it's new initiatives, changes to the org chart, or additions to your tech stack, you now have the power to initiate change - step one is getting leadership on board.

The best way to win over your leaders is to understand and **articulate the return on investment (ROI)** of every change you propose. Walk your stakeholders through:

- The problem at hand
- How your change will solve the problem
- The wins that will result from your change

Tip: If you can tie your idea to your organization's core values or mission, it's almost impossible for a leader to ignore or bypass your idea. If you can communicate ROI and value-add (literally), you're golden.

Be prepared for the team to ask hard questions and don't be afraid to respond with, "Great question. Let me think on that and get back to you," if you're ever not prepared. Remember our secret from earlier - leaders don't have all the answers. And that's okay.

Leadership Guru, Adam Grant says, "Holding strong opinions in the face of weak evidence is a sign that you're not thinking critically. Conviction should follow the facts, not precede them. What you want to believe shouldn't dictate what you believe."

In other words, do your research.

Present your proposal with confidence and use data as often as possible. You've got this.

Congrats! Your Idea Was Approved...Now What?

Once you have buy-in on your idea, make sure to keep communication lines open as you implement your change. Keep your leadership privy to the implementation timeline, next steps, and goals for the change. Be sure to send updates every so often on the success or challenges you're experiencing so they can both help you out and have confidence that you're moving the needle.

You presented on ROI, and now it's your time to shine by sharing how much your proposed change is improving business. It's critical to track data from before your change as well as after on a consistent basis so you can prove the worth of your idea.

The Key To Developing Your New Team

Whew! That's a lot to take in. But if you're going to take one thing away from this eBook, we hope it's this: caring for and developing your team is a manager's key responsibility. If you do that well, results will follow.

While you can care for your team in a number of ways, having a tool to help you implement your ideas allows you to be more effective and consistent in your efforts.

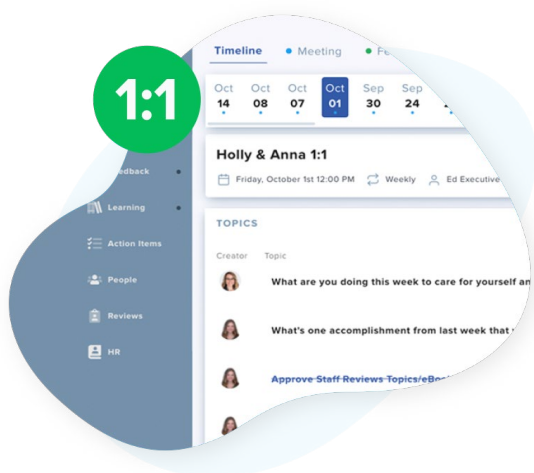
Think about an alarm clock. You don't need an alarm to wake up every day - eventually you would get up naturally. But an alarm sure is a helpful tool if you want to ensure you wake up at a certain time and set your day up for success.

This is how we think about People Development Software. It's not going to develop your people for you, it's going to simplify your efforts by giving you the resources and framework to develop your people with intentionality.

Learn how Leadr's People Development Software helps you engage and grow every person on your team.

The Key To Developing Your New Team

Unlike a project management tool, HRIS, or meetings tool, Leadr keeps the focus on your people over priorities because we recognize that people want to be led and developed, not managed. And if you put effort into caring for your team, outcomes will follow. Here's some of what you can do using Leadr:



THE 1:1 MEETING

We believe the 1:1 meeting is the most powerful leadership development tool a manager has. Our people development software allows you to collaboratively build meeting agendas, track progress, and ask intentional questions in your 1:1 meetings.

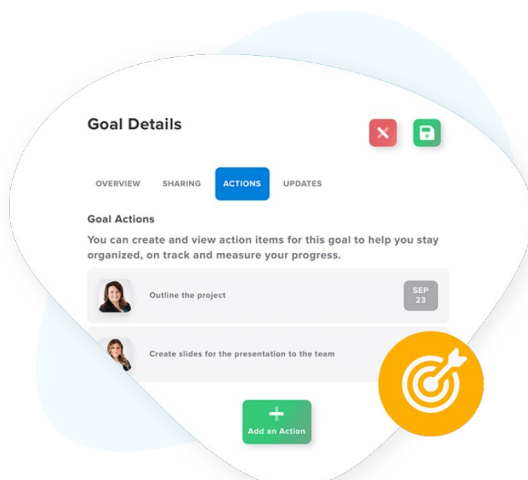
BETTER TEAM MEETINGS

Stop wasting time on unproductive meetings where the team is disengaged and start leading your team through action-oriented conversations. Whether you're in a 3-person departmental meeting or an all staff event, stay focused on team efforts, take collaborative notes, and add recurring topics for frequent meetings to stay on track & increase output.



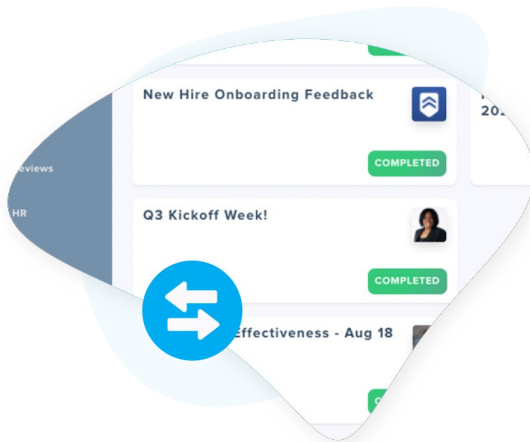
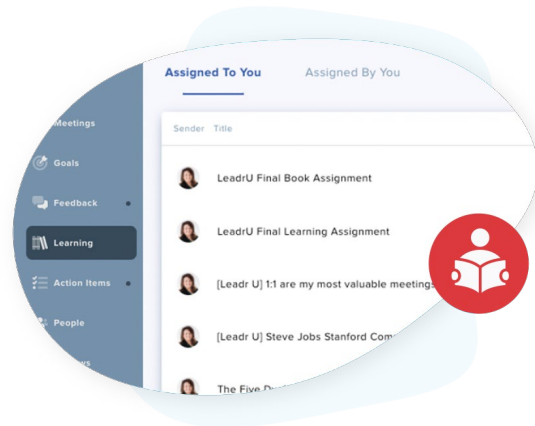
CLEAR GOALS

Every employee should have clearly documented goals that allow them to measure success. By keeping these goals front and center, you and your team can track progress and realign priorities on a daily basis boosting productivity and clarity.



CUSTOMIZED LEARNING

Invest in the growth of your employees by assigning customized or organization-wide learning assignments such as videos, podcasts, books, or articles. Each learning assignment can have application questions that encourage interactive, thought-provoking investment in the content to develop your employees more intentionally.



REGULAR TWO-WAY FEEDBACK

Regular feedback is critical to leadership development. Make feedback intentional and allow it to sink in by offering and requesting it in a timely way.

PRIORITIZE YOUR PEOPLE

Developing people begins with knowing them deeply. Our profile cards allow you to seamlessly access meaningful information about each of your team members for more intentional and effective meetings. Quickly pull up details such as your team members' unique strengths, how to communicate most effectively with them, their motivations, and more.



The Key To Developing Your New Team

If you say you prioritize developing your team, but don't have a line item in your budget to support those efforts, it's time to change that.

If developing your team is important to you, here are the practical steps you can take to bring on a tool to help you with that goal:

- 1. Evaluate your current tech stack and see how you can fit a people development tool into your budget.**
- 2. Draft a presentation outlining the ROI you anticipate from bringing on the tool (if you need help with that, here's a [guide on the ROI of Employee Engagement](#)), how adding people development aligns with your organization's mission or core values, and other perks you anticipate from this addition.**

If you need help understanding the true benefits of a people development tool, **schedule a demo** with our team. We'd love to help you make a case for Leadr at your organization.

- 3. Present your case to leadership with a solution-first mindset.**

Bringing on a new tool is no small feat, but as a manager, you now have the power to drive change.

The Transition From People Management to People Development

Personalize it to maximize it.

Developing and retaining key talent is crucial to the success of your organization. The workplace has changed, especially in the last year. According to numerous workplace studies over the years, [like this one from HBR](#), today's employees expect more than just pay or title. They seek careers where they can learn, grow, be challenged, and be valued for the ideas they bring to the table. In fact, a study by LinkedIn found that 27% of Millennial and Gen Z workers have left jobs because they didn't have the opportunity to learn and grow.

A personal growth plan focuses on the goals of individuals in your organization. It is an opportunity to explore their dreams and aspirations. Growth plans should have attainable and measurable goals that are broken down into actionable steps.

Investing in the growth of your team members creates more engaged and committed employees. A study by Clear Company found that 94% of employees stay longer at a company that invests in their careers.

Research by Zippia found that 77% of businesses report a lack of potential leadership candidates. Taking the time to develop the people in your organization can help managers to identify the next generation of leaders.

Growth plans combine the purposefulness of goals with the individual strengths of team members. As you meet with team members each week, during one-on-one meetings, you can provide feedback as they work through the action steps of their personal growth plans.



Additional Resources For Your Leadership Journey

There you have it. Take those first steps into leadership with confidence that strong team relationships are the key to success. As you get started on your leadership journey, here are some additional resources to help you along the way: