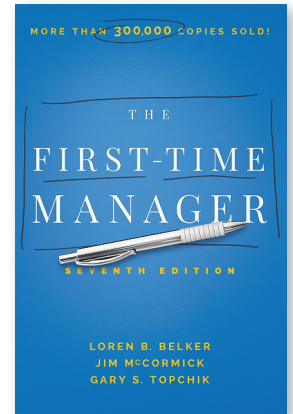


The First-Time Manager

by Loren B. Belker, Jim McCormick, and Gary S. Topchik



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Stepping into management for the first time and facing new responsibilities can be overwhelming. Novice managers can't afford to learn by trial and error. ***The First-Time Manager*** by Loren B. Belker, Jim McCormick and Gary S. Topchik has long been the definitive resource, a trusted classic for navigating those early challenges with clarity and confidence.

This timeless guide is indispensable and goes beyond theory, equipping new leaders with practical know-how on hiring, coaching, delegation, time management, communication, and building trust. For over forty years, it has helped professionals move from individual contributor to effective manager.

Becoming a manager isn't just a step up the career ladder – it's a transformation, a complete shift in how you work and lead. *The First-Time Manager* helps you sidestep common mistakes, establish credibility, inspire your team, and develop into the kind of leader people respect and trust. With its guidance, you'll gain the tools to start strong and lead with confidence from day one.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- Learn what it takes to be a successful new manager.
- Discover how to spot and cultivate talent.
- Explore the importance of relationship building.
- Understand how to effectively handle the administrative side of people management.

PART ONE: **So You're Going to Manage People**

The Road to Management

Being a manager requires skills beyond those of being an excellent technician. Managers need to focus on people, not just tasks. They need to rely on others, not just be self-reliant. Managers are also team oriented and have a broad focus, whereas non-managers succeed by having a narrow focus and being detail oriented.

Starting Out

- Settle in
- Use your new authority
- Have the personal touch
- Get to know them
- Have friends in the department
- Structure your organization
- Manage your mood
- Manage your feelings

Building Trust and Confidence

Building confidence is a gradual process. One of your main goals is to develop the trust and confidence of your employees, not only in their own abilities but in their opinion of you. They must have confidence that you are both competent and fair.

Show Your Appreciation

Consider some of the following points when giving praise or showing appreciation:

- Be specific
- Describe the impact
- Don't overdo it

Giving praise or appreciation involves two steps. First, you specifically describe the behavior, action, or performance that deserves the appreciation. Then you describe why it deserves your appreciation and the business impact of the contribution.

Being an Active Listener

One of the best-kept secrets of successful management is the ability to listen actively. Active listening means letting the other person know that she has been heard. You do this

by involving yourself in the conversation, making clarifying statements, asking questions, summarizing what you have heard, and using appropriate visual and vocal cues. The best listeners are active ones.

The New Manager's Job and Pitfalls to Avoid

As a manager you need to play many roles—coach, standard setter, performance appraiser, teacher, motivator, visionary, and so forth. You select the appropriate role based on the situation you're in and the objectives that you want to accomplish. Often, new managers are given the advice to "just be yourself." This is actually bad advice. It will prevent you from using the different roles that will make you a successful and effective manager.

Dealing with Your Superiors

It is important for managers to pay attention to their attitude toward superiors. Their future success depends on both their subordinates and their superiors.

You need to do the following when communicating with your managers:

1. Keep your manager informed
2. Be considerate of their time
3. Be well-prepared
4. Be willing to listen to their point-of-view

Choosing a Managerial Style of Your Own

If you look at the history of management styles, you'll notice that two styles have dominated. Managers were either autocratic or diplomatic. Today, however, the best managers know that there are more than two styles of managing and they need to be good in multiple styles.

As a new manager, you should use the "awareness approach" when selecting an appropriate managerial style. In order to be aware, you must use the right amount of control and encouragement for each of your employees.

Control is:

- Telling employees what to do
- Showing them how to do it
- Making sure that the work is done

Encouragement is:

- Motivating
- Listening

Many new managers are uncomfortable about what they cannot do. Don't be. You will be held responsible for the results you achieve—not for performing every task yourself.

- Running interference so employees can do what is expected of them

PART TWO: Tackling Your New Duties

Building a Team Dynamic

If you really want your team to succeed and perform at the highest levels possible, you need to build a team dynamic. In order to build a team dynamic, the following six factors are essential:

1. Open communication
2. Empowerment
3. Clear roles and responsibilities
4. Goal clarity
5. An effective leader
6. A reward and accountability system for both individual team members and for the entire team

Management Versus Leadership

It is common to see the words *management* and *leadership* used in place of one another. This is understandable but doing so causes an important distinction to be lost. As a manager you need to both manage and lead but it is vital that you understand the difference. At the risk of oversimplifying the difference, management is about controlling and leadership is about inspiring.

Managing Problem Employees

Not every employee you manage is going to be successful on the job. Someone who is performing poorly may require additional training, a transfer to another area where the employee may shine, or ultimately, outright dismissal.

Here are a few of the types of employees that most new managers find particularly challenging: The Attacker, The Comic, The Deserter, The Limelight Seeker, The Moonlighter, The Not-My-Jobber, The Bleeding Heart, and The Complainer.

Hiring and Interviewing

Nothing you do as a manager is more important than hiring well. You need to be very confident you have the right person before you offer the job. Your certainty needs to be based on hard facts, research, reference checks, testing, and whatever other tools are available to you.

Training Team Members

You must know what needs to be done, not exactly how it's done. A lot depends on what level manager you are. If you are responsible for doing some of the work yourself and leading others in the same function, you will know how to perform the operation. Many new managers are uncomfortable about what they cannot do. Don't be. You will be held responsible for the results you achieve—not for performing every task yourself.

Managing Change: Dealing with Resistance

One of the most important aspects of a manager's job is managing change effectively. Managing change includes accepting change and supporting it, understanding why your team members may be resistant to it, and finding ways to reduce that resistance. When you are able to do all three of these, you have mastered one of the most critical competencies of any manager.

Disciplining the Employee

Every employee you are managing must know what the expected standards of work are. You create problems for yourself when you discipline an employee on the basis of vague work standards. Doing so will weaken your position in the process and easily lead to genuine misunderstandings. You can't get by with a nebulous approach to performance standards.

“Oh My God! I Can't Fire Anyone!”

Firing someone can be traumatic for both parties in the drama. If you've done your job properly, the event will not come as a surprise to the person who is about to get the ax. But you can set the bar higher. Your goal, when dismissing an employee for poor performance, is to have him actually

thank you for removing him from the position. Really. This cannot be achieved every time, but it is the goal you want to target.

Having a Legal Awareness

It is very important as a first-time manager that you know current employment laws, practices, and regulations set by federal, state, and local governments in order to avoid any legal liability. You do not need to be an expert, however, because that is the job of human resources.

PART THREE: Working with People, Building Relationships, and Managing Risks

No Secrets

If you do not let your people know what's going on, they will either seek out the information from other sources or simply make assumptions. This can work against you in two ways. The information your team members get from other sources may be incorrect or they may assume something that is not accurate. Even worse than that, they may act on the incorrect information or assumptions.

The Human Resources Department

The human resources department can help you out in many of the areas that new managers are not familiar with, including hiring, coaching, training and development, employee assistance programs, benefits, wage and salary administration, discipline procedures, promotions, performance appraisals, dealing with difficult bosses, termination, and all the legalities involved in managing. It is a good idea for you to familiarize yourself with what your HR department or HR person can do for you.

The Current State of Loyalty

If there is one subject that has fallen into disrepute in recent years, it is loyalty. While it still exists, it tends to be granted more sparingly and only when it is seen as having been earned. Changing employers is common. The more transient nature of today's workforce contributes to decreased loyalty.

Is There Such a Thing as Motivation?

Motivation is getting people to want to do what needs to be done, willingly and not by force. The best managers spend time finding out what motivates their employees, blend those motivations with the needs of the organization, then

create an environment in which their employees can be successful. There are many ways to find out what motivates your employees. You can observe their behavior, get to know them after a few months, or have them fill out a survey or questionnaire. There is one other method: Ask them!

Understanding Risk Inclination

By accepting your new management position, you decided to take some risks. Foremost, you moved from a position where you were likely performing well to take on a new challenge with no guarantee of success. This suggests that you have some willingness to take a career-related risk, at least when familiar with the people and organization offering you the promotion and when given the opportunity to fully assess it. The amount of time you took to decide whether to accept the promotion to your new position likely provides you with some insights into your risk-taking style. If you accepted the position immediately, you are probably a bit bolder, or you knew the offer was coming and had plenty of time to assess the pros and cons in advance. If you took a good deal of time to consider it, you likely have a more cautious style of risk taking.

Encouraging Initiative and Innovation

The pace of business continues to accelerate. Technology has made the faster pace possible while intense domestic and global competition has made it necessary.

As you continue in your career as a manager, you will see the pace at which decisions are made and actions are taken continue to quicken. It is important that your leadership style keeps pace as things move faster.

Improving Outcomes

A big part of your responsibility as a manager is to find ways to do things better—faster, cheaper, and more efficiently. And you need to be successful much more often than you are not. This means you have to always be mindful of opportunities for improvement. It also means you need to be able to execute well.

The Generation Gap

Each generation has unique characteristics. In most workplaces you will have colleagues in at least three distinctive generations. Those are Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964), Gen Xers (born 1965–1976) and Millennials who are also known as Gen Y (born 1977–1995). It is important that you appreciate the differing traits and motivators that are common in each generation. While there are always excep-

Emotional intelligence is a management concept with which you need to be familiar.

tions to broad generalizations, there are some commonalities that often surface in these generations that can prove helpful to you.

Managing Remote Employees

It is important that as much as possible you treat members of your team who are offsite the same as onsite members. You need to be similarly accessible and communicate with them at least as much. You will want to use all the communication tools available to you including email, text, phone, and video with a bias toward video. Video calls or video conferences afford richer communication than the other modes.

Social Media in the Workplace

Professional use at work is an appropriate tool. If your people use social media as a work-related tool you need to have clear written guidelines on what is and is not allowed in their posts. Personal use at work needs to be addressed intentionally. Ignoring it can easily cause you problems. Many companies have outright prohibitions on personal use of social media during work hours or on employer-owned devices. These policies often prohibit using company email addresses for personal social media accounts.

PART FOUR: Job Descriptions, Performance Appraisals, and Salary Administration

Writing Job Descriptions

Most companies use job descriptions, although they may range from very informal to highly structured descriptions. A job description describes what is done in varying detail, and it usually includes hierarchical relationships. When writing job descriptions, you'll find it helpful to use the "three-tier approach." The three tiers are:

1. Technical skills and knowledge
2. Behaviors
3. Interpersonal skills

Doing Performance Appraisals

Performance appraisals can be as informal as telling someone "You're doing a nice job," or as elaborate as a full written report and a formal meeting with the employee. Performance appraisals are a powerful management tool that are often underutilized or neglected. Done well, performance appraisals will help you be more successful as a leader. Done poorly or not at all, they are a missed opportunity and can expose you and your organization to unnecessary liability.

Salary Administration

It makes sense to have a minimum and a maximum salary for each position. You can't allow a situation to develop in which an individual could stay on the same job for years and receive a salary out of all proportion to what the task is worth. It's important to make certain that long-term employees are aware of this situation, especially as they get close to the salary cap on the job. For most well-qualified people this is not a problem, because they'll usually be promoted to another job with a larger salary range.

PART FIVE: Improving and Developing Yourself

Having Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a management concept with which you need to be familiar. Social scientists and psychologists have found that managers and leaders who have high levels of emotional intelligence, or a high emotional quotient (EQ), seem to do much better in their managerial and leadership roles than their counterparts who have average or low EQs.

Developing a Positive Self-Image

Having a positive opinion of your own ability is not an ego problem if it's a realistic assessment. People can get awfully mixed up in dealing with this ego thing. There are always people who want you to feel guilty if you have a healthy opinion of yourself. But as the old saying goes, "love your neighbor as yourself." This implies that your capacity to

love your neighbor is determined by your capacity to love yourself. This principle applies to management, too.

Managing Your Own Time

Some tips recommended my managers from a variety of fields:

- Recognize that we all have the same amount of time
- Set deadlines for your projects
- Difference in urgent vs important
- Keep a record for how you spend your time
- Plan your day and week
- 70/30 rule
- Schedule set times for sending and returning telephone calls, reading and sending emails, office hours, and so forth.
- Don't wait for the perfect time
- Reward yourself
- Develop the on-time habit
- Consider working from home, in a remote office, when you have to work on a task that requires total focus and a minimum of interruptions

The Written Word

Some people are intimidated by a blank piece of paper or computer screen. When you are trying to make a point, always consider using a story. Stories are more powerful than even a well-reasoned argument. Using a story will also make your assertions more memorable. Another one of the best methods for improving your writing skills is to use mental imagery.

The Grapevine

One way a manager can avoid falling victim to the grapevine is to do a good job of communicating. Getting information out clearly and effectively will reduce the opportunities for the grapevine to distribute inaccurate information about your operation. There will always be speculation and gossip. But by being an effective communicator, you can reduce the *incorrect* speculation. You'll never stop it completely and need to accept that fact.

Your Best Friend: Delegation

We cannot stress enough how important it is for a manager to know how to delegate and utilize this indispensable tool. When you delegate properly, you can focus less on performing tasks and more on managing and leading. Delegating is not *doling out*. Delegation is taking something that you

currently do and giving it to one of your employees for the purpose of developing her skills and making your organization more effective.

A Sense of Humor

Many new managers take themselves way too seriously. Life is challenging and can be grim. Without a sense of humor, it can be deadly. New managers need to learn not to take themselves too seriously and to develop a sense of humor.

Managing, Participating in, and Leading Meetings

Some of the best training for leading a meeting is in being exposed to some poorly led ones. Most meetings last too long. You can't help but wonder if some folks think sitting around at a meeting beats working. But probably the main reason meetings last too long is that they are poorly planned and poorly led.

Taking Center Stage: The Role of Public Speaking in Your Career

It is amazing that there are so many capable managers who can't handle a public speaking situation well. Standing up on the platform they come off as dull, uncertain, and of limited talent. The impression the audience receives is that they're not very good on the job, either. That impression may not be valid, but as we've discussed earlier, people act based on their perceptions. There are three specific ways that can help you learn how to be an effective presenter—Toastmasters, training classes, and presentation coaching.

A Few Body Language Insights

Having even a basic knowledge of body language will give you advantages in reading other people and effectively conveying your own messages. Simply stated there are two general types of body language: open and closed. Open body language is invitational and welcoming. Closed body language reflects restraint, or even avoidance.

PART SIX: The Complete Person

Coping with Stress

1. Don't make things worse
2. Take a breath
3. First things first
4. Distribute the load
5. Seek advice

6. Be levelheaded
7. Visualize wisdom

Having Balance in Your Life

The first-time manager often becomes so engrossed in new responsibilities that the job occupies almost every waking moment. This dedication is admirable, because it indicates that the person is determined to do a great job and be successful as a member of the management team.

A healthy life must have balance, however; while your career is important, it is not your entire life. Actually, you will be a more complete manager if you are a more complete person. You cannot separate the two.

A person whose only interest is the job is one-dimensional, and a one-dimensional person is not as effective a manager as a multidimensional person. Here are some ways to achieve balance in your life.

Community Work

Be involved in your community. The objective is to be of assistance, but there are ancillary benefits: knowledge, contacts, friends.

Outside Reading

Read about your business and the world.

A Healthy Separation

Separate work from the rest of the day. Minimize work at home.

Work/Life Balance

Self-discipline. Train colleagues to contact you only for emergencies.

A Touch of Class

There are many meanings to the word *class*. As a manager,

think of class as “style and elegance in one’s behavior.” Class in a manager or executive consists of what is done and, often of greater importance, what is not done.

Conclusion

The *First Time Manager* is devoted to exploring how you manage your people, but equally important is seeing you grow as a total person. Your career can add to your total growth, since it’s such a large part of your life. We shouldn’t work at jobs we don’t like, but on the other hand, we must be realistic in recognizing that all careers include aspects we don’t like. It’s the balance that is important.

If most of the job is enjoyable, satisfying, and challenging, then you can put up with the parts you don’t care for. If it’s the other way around and you dislike most of what you have to do, you’re obviously in the wrong career and you ought to change it. Life is too short to spend time and energy in a career that depletes and destroys you.

As you progress as a manager you don’t necessarily get smarter. You gain more experience, which has the potential to become wisdom. It doesn’t matter what you call it as long as you continually become more effective. You can become more effective as you develop a greater variety of experiences in working with people. As you repeat the same experiences you have the opportunity to develop a smoothness you might not otherwise develop.

Wishing you the best of success as you direct people in what amounts to about half of their waking hours. Your success as a manager starts with you and your attitude toward that responsibility. We hope this has been of help to you at the beginning of a new and exciting chapter in your life. Good luck to you, and enjoy the ride.



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