

How to create a 'working-with-me' guide for better collaboration:

by Ben Meer

Ever wish people just *knew* how to work with you from day one?

A ‘working-with-me’ guide can make that happen.

In Tim Ferriss’ podcast, Claire Hughes Johnson (former COO of Stripe) shares this powerful approach.

The guide acts as a personal user manual, helping others understand how you work best.

I’ve adapted a **6-section template (with guided questions)** so you can create your own manual.

Reflect on and answer the questions below:

1. Communication

Outline your preferred methods and frequency of communication.

- Are you an email person, or do you prefer quick chats on Slack?
- When are you open to receiving non-urgent messages?
- When do you unplug?

2. Decision-Making

Share what helps you make efficient and timely decisions.

- How do you tend to make decisions (intuition or evidence-based)?
- What kind of data do you like, and from what sources?
- What's the minimum amount of time you need to make a decision?

3. Management Style

- What projects/tasks/decisions do you like to be involved in?
- What is your preferred cadence for 1:1 meetings?

4. Personality Traits

- What is your Personality Type?
- How do these traits influence your working style?

5. Pet Peeves

Identify the small things that can derail your focus.

What frustrates you or steals your energy?

Examples:

- Meetings without an agenda
- Meetings that could have been emails

Whatever it is, let others know upfront.

6. Miscellaneous

Consider sharing your interests to help others relate to you.

- What should people know about your family dynamic (kids, pets, etc.)?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- What's your favorite type of food?

As you grow and change, so should this guide.

Here are a few maintenance tips:

- 1. Regularly review and update your guide** to reflect any shifts in your work style, communication preferences, or personal priorities.
- 2. Encourage direct reports to give feedback on your guide**, which can help uncover blindspots. Update your document accordingly.
- 3. Encourage team members to share their own guides, too.** This isn't just about making life easier for you but creating a culture of transparency and mutual respect.

If you're a people manager, I highly recommend creating a document like this and sharing it with your team.

And if you're not managing people yet, this exercise is still a game-changer (whether you share it with your teammates or not).

It builds self-awareness and helps you be more intentional in how you operate.

The best working relationships start with clarity, and clarity starts with you.