

Course Transcript

The Reality of Being a First-time Manager

Course Overview

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Understanding What a Manager Does

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Course Overview

[Course: The Reality of Being a First-time Manager.] **HOST:** Most new managers don't realize how different their new role really is. They don't understand what managers actually do. They are surprised to learn that the skills that made them successful are very different than those needed for success as a manager. In this course, you'll learn to dispel some myths and clarify what managers really do. You'll learn the typical demands and constraints on managers. Finally, you'll explore strategies for dealing with common mistakes of first-time managers.

Personal Considerations for New Managers

Learning Objective

After completing this topic, you should be able to

- *recognize the personal factors that impact a management position*

1.

*[Topic: Personal Considerations for New Managers. Sofia is speaking on the phone.] (EXCITED)***SOFIA:** You won't regret this promotion. I have a thousand ideas. I can't wait to get going. Why are you laughing? *[Sofia has a puzzled expression.]*

HOST: Sofia's boss probably shouldn't laugh. But he understands what Sofia doesn't yet. Namely, moving into a management role is a big step. She should consider what her new role means. Moving into management can be overwhelming and stressful. The more prepared you are, the better.

[Ryan and Sofia are sitting at the table.] **SOFIA:** So how do I prepare, Ryan?

RYAN: We start by recognizing the personal factors and skills that help make you a good manager. Now first we realize that the skills you hone as an individual contributor are not necessarily the ones that will help you manage. You may need to develop some new skills for success. Let's talk. *[Sofia smiles and nods.]*

HOST: As a new manager, you must develop interpersonal and organizing skills. Your personal success is no longer the objective. Achieving results through others is. Working through others requires excellent people skills, such as communicating, negotiating, motivating, and coaching. Organizational skills include things like scheduling, assigning appropriate individuals to tasks, and getting resources for performing those tasks. Remember, your success now is gauged by how well your group achieves its goals and supports organizational objectives and strategies.

RYAN: You're not just responsible for you anymore.

SOFIA: Right, understood. *[Sofia turns to leave.]*

RYAN: No, hang on, there's more. Part of managing is establishing credibility with those working under you.

*(HAPPILY)***SOFIA:** No problem, my team likes me.

RYAN: It's not the same. You have to demonstrate character, managerial competence, and use your new influence.

*(OVERCONFIDENTLY)***SOFIA:** I'm well known for those skills around here. For instance, last year, we had a crisis on a project and the client was going crazy. *[Ryan interrupts Sofia.]*

*(GENTLY BUT FIRMLY)***RYAN:** One way of showing character and competence is talking less and listening more. A manager's job is to support and guide, not dictate.

HOST: Ryan's on target with that. And another way to demonstrate your character and competence is to always try to do the right thing. Others recognize dedication and sincerity. They'll come to depend on your example. That's priceless in management. Your influence stems from your character. Work hard, be

honest, and demonstrate knowledge, competence, and reliability. These influence people. Consistency will help you build and keep this influence. You also need to bond with your team as a unit. As a coworker, you can pick and choose things like who to go to lunch and share jokes with.

HOST: As a manager, focusing on individual relationships can negatively impact the morale and performance of other team members. You need to develop relationships that will enhance the performance of the entire team. You need a strong relationship with the team as a group. Use group efforts whenever possible for problem solving, motivation, and communal support. Directing team efforts will build your relationship with the group, not just individuals. Be fair and equal. You can't single out individuals to rely on and confide in. You're leading a team now.

SOFIA: There's a lot to think about.

RYAN: You'll get it. You're a good choice, right?

(*CONFIDENTLY*) **SOFIA:** Yes, I am.

Organizational Considerations for New Managers

Learning Objective

After completing this topic, you should be able to

- *describe organizational factors that will impact your new job as manager*

1.

[Topic: Organizational Considerations for New Managers. Ryan and Sofia are sitting at a desk.] RYAN: How'd the status meeting go?

[Sofia shakes her head and seems upset.] SOFIA: There must have been 150 people upstairs all trying to micromanage this project. How do you cope with that?

RYAN: Glamour wearing off?

HOST: Most new managers start with preconceived ideas of what the job entails. Many of those ideas are mistaken.

SOFIA: I really thought that I'd be free to get things done once I was manager.

RYAN: Yeah, well that's one myth we can dispose off now?

HOST: The truth is, you'll actually have less freedom and time than before. Organizational structures mean managers need cooperation to get work done. This equals less autonomy. But you can adjust for that in some useful ways by building a network of mutually beneficial relationships, sharing power, and exchanging of valued resources. Building relationships helps build your credibility, so that when you need help, you'll be more likely to get it. Once, you were only in charge of you. Now you're in charge of a team, and your success depends on cooperative efforts. Work to build a network outside of your team, and that you can depend on. It can include direct reports, others within the organization, and even customers and suppliers.

HOST: Sharing power helps, too. It increases your credibility and influence. This can mean sharing advice or knowledge, or simply acknowledging and accepting the contributions of others. It can also mean sharing resources. Providing resources your team needs is your job. An organization's resources are limited. Sometimes you'll need to negotiate for them. Exchanging resources within your organization can help you get the resources you need, such as talent, finances, or support. Let's say two managers who lead teams doing similar work are both suffering a lack of training funds. They now work together on training. This allows them to pool time and resources. Dividing the responsibility of developing and delivering training benefits both teams.

HOST: Now, myth number two – if you think, "I'll learn this through training," – you're going to be surprised. In truth, most of what you need to know is learned through on-the-job experience. The nature of managing limits the effectiveness of formal training. Experience really is the best way to learn. Networking comes into play here, too. Experienced managers have been where you are, and have a wealth of knowledge to share. Most are willing to help you out. Just ask. As you go along, take time to reflect, gather feedback about your performance from people you respect. Ask how you're doing and how to improve. Be willing to adjust in ways that will improve your ability to get the results you want in the future.

RYAN: Of course, I'll be happy to help you any way I can. I recommended you, remember? When you look good, I look good.

SOFIA: And I want you to look great.

Demands of a Manager's Role

Learning Objective

After completing this topic, you should be able to

- *recognize the typical demands that a manager must deal with*

1.

[Topic: Demands of a Manager's Role. Sofia, Jason, and Sulyn are seated at a desk.] **SOFIA:** So, anything else?

JASON: The quarterlies are due tomorrow.

SULYN: We're still a half a point below margin.

JASON: You still haven't approved my vacation dates.

SULYN: Ed called in, he's sick again.

JASON: We still haven't heard back from that state regulator guy.

SULYN: Don't forget to call the supplier before noon. *[Sofia is flustered.]*

HOST: One of the challenges for new managers is recognizing the typical demands they must face. It can be daunting. Demands are things you must do because the job requires it. They typically come from your boss, your direct reports, other managers, the organizational system, even external forces. System demands are things like budgets, reports, and meetings. External forces include things like legislation, and stakeholder requests for information. All of these and sometimes more, can make you feel as though you are being pulled in a dozen directions at once. And yet all of these demands must be met to manage successfully.

HOST: Demands from your boss are generally things related to the goals set for your team or the organization. Like those quarterly reports that are due tomorrow. They are often accountability related. Your direct reports will demand things like providing them with what they need to do their jobs. These are things like training, advice, support, resources, and equipment. And more mundane things like covering for Ed's absence and approving vacation dates. No offense to Jason. Other managers are also likely to place demands on you. As peers, managers commonly cooperate to get results. Sharing time, resources, and information are key to successful collaboration; but can place additional demands on your time and energy.

[Jason, Sofia, and Ryan are seated at a desk. Sofia is working on her computer, Jason is looking at his phone, and Ryan is writing.] **JASON:** Status meeting in ten minutes.

SOFIA: But I'm right in the middle of this quarterly report.

RYAN: Do you have those updated margins for me, yet?

JASON: Status meeting in five minutes. *[Sofia appears to be overwhelmed.]*

HOST: System demands are generally organizational needs that must be met. No matter how busy you are, you have to attend meetings, make time for finishing reports, and adhere to schedules. And if internal demands aren't enough, customers, suppliers, stakeholders, and – depending upon your job –

even legal regulations may require information, attention, or action from you. Speaking of which, don't forget to call that supplier back. Oh! And check in with the state regulator.

SOFIA: There are certainly a lot of demands on managers.

RYAN: Welcome to the club. You'll get used to it.

Constraints of a Manager's Role

Learning Objective

After completing this topic, you should be able to

- *specify common constraints faced by managers*

1.

[Topic: Constraints of a Manager's Role. Ryan and Sofia are seated at a desk.] **RYAN:** How's the new project coming along?

SOFIA: Honestly, I'm running into a few issues.

RYAN: Oh?

SOFIA: Well, let's see, I really need a new marketing resource, the tech team is complaining that the systems can't handle the simulations, but there's no budget to upgrade. And they're nearly impossible to meet with all at once, since the programming folks are all over the world. That's my top three – today.

RYAN: Anything else?

SOFIA: Well, since you asked, the state legislature has tabled their vote on the regulation, so we still don't know what our legal parameters are. Oh, and the board committee wants to push the release up by a month.

RYAN: Well, I'm sure you'll figure it out, and don't forget that the quarterlies are due tomorrow.

SOFIA: I won't.

[Sofia voices her thoughts to herself.] **SOFIA:** Am I the only one struggling to get anything done with all these limits?

HOST: No, Sofia's not the only one. Most first-time managers get a big surprise when they see the full menu of constraints they face. Constraints are limits on what you can do as a manager, they can come from inside or outside your organization. Part of your job is learning to work successfully within the constraints you face. Let's look at a few that Sofia is facing. First off, she's facing expectations from both her boss, Ryan, who wants a successfully completed project, and the committee that now expects her to deliver it a month earlier than planned. Next, she's challenged by a lack of resources, namely, the extra marketing person she needs to meet her goals. Unless she can create one, like Frankenstein in her basement, she'll have to figure out a way to get by without. Another constraint she faces is technology.

HOST: Her tech team claims they need a better system, but there's no budget for an upgrade. As for trying to get everyone online at the same time, physical location is another possible constraint. Even with modern media, it can be a challenge to get a global group together for meetings and work sessions. Finally, Sofia may face changes in regulation that will affect the policies and procedures she operates under. In her case, these are external issues. But managers also face internal policies and procedures that limit their ability to take actions. Suppose Sofia's company policy required that all tech design and programming be done domestically, that would provide a further constraint to be overcome.

RYAN: How's the project?

SOFIA: Well, I was able to negotiate part-time on the marketing position, and I have to get up really early, but I found a time to get all the tech folks together. And the state is scheduled to vote on the regulations next week. So at least we'll know how to move forward.

RYAN: Great, I knew you'd manage it.

Manager Mistake 1: Taking on Too Much

Learning Objective

After completing this topic, you should be able to

- *choose the best strategies for dealing with the mistake of taking on too much*

1.

[Topic: Manager Mistake 1: Taking on Too Much. Jason, Sulyn, and Sofia are seated at a desk.] **JASON:** Who do I call about those missing parts?

SOFIA: I'll find out for you.

SULYN: I can't get all those reports done on time.

SOFIA: Okay, you finish up the weeklies, and I'll take the monthlies. I used to do those anyway.

JASON: Remember, I'm off next week. I don't know who's covering me.

SOFIA: I know. I will until I figure it out.

SULYN: Don't look at me.

SOFIA: Don't worry. I'm looking in the mirror.

HOST: You probably don't want to hear it. But as a first-time manager, you're going to make mistakes. A common mistake plaguing first-time managers is taking on too much. They become overburdened, failing to understand that their role has changed. And the biggest contributor to taking on too much is the failure to delegate. Acknowledging that the job differs from when you were an individual contributor is the first thing to do to avoid taking on too much. You need to switch your focus from personal achievement to helping others achieve.

HOST: You'll often have to step back, and let your direct reports do the work, placing more emphasis on team building. You can't micromanage and be effective over the long haul. Mentally, you have to get some distance from the details of each task. Trust and insist that your direct reports can do their jobs. Advise them, don't do it for them. They'll still come to you for help when needed. But not before trying to handle things on their own. This lets you take a step back, and focus on the big picture, which is your job. Remind yourself that you need to approach your work from the perspective of a manager. You're responsible for helping others, your team, and your organization meet goals. Delegation will give more time to accomplish your tasks.

SOFIA: Sometimes, it's just easier to do it myself. Rather than risk assigning work to someone who may not do it well. Or worse, they do it better, and make me look inept.

HOST: Delegating does have risks. So take small risks, initially. Use the strengths of your team members. Assign work to individuals you are confident can deliver. As you become more comfortable with delegating, you can take bigger risks that build your confidence and your abilities. And empower your team members, helping them to grow and develop, too. Remember, delegation is not abdication. You need to remain involved and informed. Scheduling regular progress meetings will help you stay up on projects, and other work. Using well defined and communicated milestones will help establish expectations, and make follow-up easier.

SOFIA: Jason, about those missing parts?

JASON: Taken care of. Took a few calls, but I located them and they're on their way.

SOFIA: Good work. I knew you could do it.

Manager Mistake 2: Not Asking for Help

Learning Objective

After completing this topic, you should be able to

- *identify strategies for overcoming the mistake of not asking for help*

1.

[Topic: Manager Mistake 2: Not Asking for Help. Sofia and Ryan are seated at a desk.] **RYAN:** I haven't heard much about the new project.

SOFIA: Oh...everything's great. *[Sofia is nervous.]*

RYAN: Really? Well, rollout is approaching fast. Let me know if you need anything.

SOFIA: It's all good.

RYAN: Great.

[Sofia appears distressed and thinks to herself.] **SOFIA:** I'll accept the budget shortfall. The bad data we can't explain and the rework on the main system. Other than that, here's hoping.

HOST: Hoping that everything will work out is not a good strategy for managerial success. Not asking for help is a common mistake new managers make. Instead of reaching out to senior managers for support, they often try to resolve issues, and work through situations they have no experience with, and hope things will work out. You need to view your relationship with your boss as a partnership. Maybe you were promoted based on technical competence, not your managerial skills.

HOST: Accept that you can't know how to do everything, and your boss doesn't expect you to. In fact, your boss is likely to be concerned if you're not asking questions. Think of it this way. If you don't see your relationship with your boss as a supportive partnership, perhaps you don't see a relationship with your direct reports as supportive either. That's a problem, you're the first line of support for them. When they have issues, you need to know about it. So how can you avoid this? The first step is to sit down with your senior manager and clarify expectations your boss has for you. Knowing what's expected of you will help you focus on what you should be doing and not waste time doing things you shouldn't.

HOST: You want open communication with your direct reports, so does your boss. And support from senior managers is key to your ability to learn how to be a manager. Once you've begun your partnership and clarified expectations, make it a priority to meet regularly with your boss. Set up regular meetings, and use them to develop rapport, ask questions, clarify your understanding of things, and get feedback. It's on you to make productive use of this time. Always be prepared for these meetings by setting an agenda for the discussion. And don't be afraid to ask to meet if something comes up, and you need help or advice sooner than scheduled. You'd want the same from your people, right?

[Sofia and Ryan are seated at a desk.] **RYAN:** Is the new project still sailing smoothly?

SOFIA: Well, actually, I could use your advice on a couple of things. Do you have time to talk?

RYAN: I'm swamped until 1 o'clock today, can they wait till then?

SOFIA: Yes, they can.

RYAN: Great, set up a meeting then. I want to hear all about it, and whatever they are, we will figure them out. *[Sofia nods in agreement.]*

Manager Mistake 3: Projecting a Lack of Confidence

Learning Objective

After completing this topic, you should be able to

- *recognize strategies for helping you avoid projecting a lack of confidence*

1.

[Manager Mistake 3: Projecting a Lack of Confidence. Jason and Sulyn are seated at a desk.] JASON: Did you see Sofia's face?

SULYN: She looked worried.

JASON: She looks terrified.

SULYN: I think she's overwhelmed.

JASON: I think she's sorry she ever became a manager.

SULYN: I thought Sofia would be able to handle it.

HOST: It's easy to be overwhelmed while you're learning how to manage people. It's hard to avoid showing it. When you focus all your energy on the work, you may forget demeanor. But difficult though it is, it's important not to appear overwhelmed, especially to the people who report to you. Projecting a lack of confidence is a common mistake among first time managers. Those who make it aren't likely to inspire others, making it difficult, if not impossible, to lead and manage successfully. You can avoid this mistake by projecting confidence even when you're not feeling it. Remember that as a manager, your direct reports look to your example and follow your lead. If you're flustered or negative, chances are, they will be too. In spite of all you may be feeling, it's very important to maintain a professional and positive image.

[Sofia and Ryan are seated at a desk.] SOFIA: I'm having a hard time, the new project is really tough. I feel like my team thinks I can't handle it. You've been doing this for years. How do I look confident when I'm jittery inside?

RYAN: Sometimes you have to fake it until you make it.

HOST: If your goal is projecting confidence, start by watching your everyday demeanor. You may be worried, but you don't have to look worried. Practice makes perfect, the more you work at showing confidence, the easier it becomes and the more you are likely to feel confident. You can show your team confidence by setting clear expectations and directions. Let them know how you want things done, acceptable attitudes, behaviors, and what needs to be accomplished. Decide what's important to you and express that to your team. Next, take a few risks, it builds confidence. Stretch your own abilities, accept that you don't know everything about managing others. But instead of playing it safe, take risks. When you succeed your confidence is boosted. When you fail, learn from your mistakes. And finally, give credit to others when they succeed. Look for opportunities to praise. Your confidence and your own ability will grow when you see those you're responsible for succeeding. Your boss looks good when you succeed. When your team succeeds, you look good.

JASON: Sofia killed it in the meeting today.

SULYN: Of course you think that, *[Sulyn rolls her eyes.] (JOKING)* let's hear it for Jason, he hit his milestone early. Nice work, by the way.

HOST: And nice work to Sofia too. One final word about showing confidence. Everyone needs a chance to share their worries and frustrations away from the team. Let out your feelings in a safe place with your boss or a senior manager who you can trust to understand and offer support. It's all part of the job.

Let's review what you learned in this course. To excel in your new role as a manager, prepare properly and develop your interpersonal and organizing skills; take your business's organizational structure into account; recognize the typical demands and constraints you'll have to contend with; avoid taking on too much work; don't be afraid to ask for help or feedback; and try to project confidence, even if you're not feeling it.

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