The New Manager's 90-Day Kit

Your Complete Playbook for the First 90 Days

Week-by-week action plans · 19 conversation scripts

5 fillable worksheets · Proven frameworks

Printable checklists · Meeting templates

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The Mindset Shift

Congratulations — and welcome to the hardest career transition nobody prepares you for. The skills that got you promoted (deep expertise, personal execution, technical brilliance) are not the skills that will make you a great manager. Your output is no longer your individual work. It's the combined output, morale, and growth of your entire team.

This is the single biggest mental shift you'll make. Most new managers fail not because they lack intelligence, but because they keep doing their old job while adding 'manager' to the title. Here's what actually changes:

FROM (Individual Contributor)	TO (Manager)
Doing the work yourself	Enabling others to do their best work
Being the expert in the room	Asking the right questions
Solving problems directly	Coaching others to solve problems
Personal productivity	Team throughput and morale
Getting feedback from your manager	Giving feedback to your direct reports
Optimizing your own time	Protecting your team's time and focus
Success = your output	Success = your team's output

★ *Pro Tip: Schedule 30 minutes every Friday for the first month just to reflect on this shift. Ask yourself: 'Did I spend most of my time enabling my team, or doing their work for them?'*

What Your Team Actually Needs From You

Research consistently shows the top drivers of team performance under a new manager aren't strategy or technical direction — they're psychological safety, clarity, and consistency. Your team needs to know three things:

Core Need	What They're Thinking	Your Action	Timeline
Safety	"Can I be honest without consequences?"	Listen more than you talk in Weeks 1–2	Day 1–14
Clarity	"What exactly do you expect from me?"	Define expectations in writing	By Day 14
Consistency	"Will you show up the same way tomorrow?"	Establish a weekly rhythm	By Day 7

The 5 Pre-Day-1 Questions

Before your first day managing, get answers to these five questions. Ask your own manager, HR, or the outgoing manager:

1. **Current Goals:** What are the team's active goals and how is progress tracked?

2. **Biggest Challenge:** What's the #1 obstacle the team is facing right now?

3. **Key Stakeholders:** Who are the people/teams that depend on your team, or that your team depends on?

4. **Existing Processes:** What management tools are already in place? (standups, 1:1s, retros, project boards)

5. **Previous Manager:** What did the previous manager do well? What frustrated the team?

★ *Pro Tip: If the previous manager is available, a 30-minute handoff conversation is invaluable. They'll tell you things nobody else will.*

Listen & Learn

Your first 30 days are about building trust and understanding. Resist the urge to change things. The fastest way to lose your team is to walk in with answers before you understand the questions. Your job right now is to listen, observe, and earn the right to lead.

Week 1: The Listening Tour

Here's exactly what to do, day by day:

Day	Focus	Key Actions
Mon	Introductions	Meet each direct report 1:1 (30 min). Use the Discovery Meeting questions on the next page. Take notes.
Tue	Observe	Attend every existing meeting as a listener. Take notes on dynamics, energy, and participation. Don't direct a
Wed	Stakeholders	Meet your top 3–5 stakeholders. Ask: What do you need from my team? What's working? What's not?
Thu	Systems	Review team dashboards, project boards, shared docs. Map current workflows and handoffs. Find the gaps.
Fri	Reflect	Write down your top 5 observations. Share nothing externally yet — this is your private intelligence.

The First 1:1: Discovery Meeting Guide

This is the most important meeting of your first week. You'll have one with every direct report. Allow 30–45 minutes. Your only goal: understand who they are, what they need, and how to support them.

Open with:

"I'm genuinely excited to work with this team. In this first conversation, I just want to learn — about you, about your work, and about how I can best support you. There are no wrong answers and nothing is off limits."

Then ask these 6 questions (in order):

Script 1 — Role & Energy:

"Tell me about your role. What does a great week look like for you?"

Script 2 — Obstacles:

"What's the biggest obstacle you're facing right now?"

Script 3 — Feedback Style:

"How do you prefer to receive feedback — direct and in the moment, or written and reflective?"

Script 4 — Previous Manager:

"What did your previous manager do that worked well? What didn't work?"

Script 5 — Quick Win:

"What's one thing I could do in my first month that would make your life easier?"

Script 6 — Open Floor:

"Is there anything you've wanted to raise but haven't had the chance to?"

★ Pro Tip: After each conversation, send a brief 2-sentence summary to that person: 'Thanks for the great conversation. Here's what I heard as your top priority: [X]. I'll follow up on [Y] by [date].' This shows you were listening and creates accountability.

Team Assessment Worksheet

After your first round of 1:1s, fill out this grid for each team member. This becomes your private management reference — update it monthly.

Name	Role	Strengths	Growth Areas	Motivation	Flight Risk?

Key: Motivation = What drives them (growth, stability, recognition, autonomy, money). Flight Risk = Low / Medium / High.

Stakeholder Mapping Template

Map every person or team that depends on your team or that your team depends on. Rate their current satisfaction (1–5) and your relationship strength (Weak / OK / Strong). This tells you where to invest time.

Stakeholder / Team	What They Need From Us	Satisfaction (1–5)	Relationship	My Next Action

Weeks 2–4: Building Your Rhythm

After your listening tour, your priority is establishing a predictable management cadence. Consistency is the foundation of trust. Your team should be able to predict how you operate. Here's a weekly rhythm:

Day	Activity	Duration	Purpose
Monday	Team standup or weekly kickoff	15–30 min	Align priorities for the week
Tue–Thu	1:1s with each direct report	30 min each	Coaching, unblocking, feedback
Wednesday	Stakeholder check-in (rotating)	30 min	Relationship maintenance
Thursday	Deep work / strategic thinking	2 hours (block it!)	Planning, process improvement
Friday	Personal week-in-review	30 min	Reflection, next week prep

★ Pro Tip: Block your deep work time on Thursday in your calendar as a recurring meeting. If you don't protect it, it will disappear within 2 weeks.

30-Day Checkpoint Checklist

By Day 30, every item below should be checked:

■ Completed initial 1:1 with every direct report

■ Met all key stakeholders (at least top 5)

■ Documented current team workflows and processes

■ Established a regular 1:1 cadence (weekly recommended)

■ Identified top 3 team strengths and top 3 challenges

■ Sent a brief 'Here's what I've learned' summary to your own manager

■ Set up your weekly management rhythm (1:1s, team meeting, planning block)

■ Started a private management journal or log

■ Completed the Team Assessment Worksheet (page above)

■ Completed the Stakeholder Map (page above)

Build Trust & Align

You've listened. You've learned. Now it's time to start shaping — carefully. Month 2 is about establishing your management voice and aligning the team around clearer expectations. The two most important skills to build this month: giving feedback and running effective meetings.

The SBI Feedback Framework

Most new managers either avoid feedback entirely or deliver it so clumsily it backfires. The SBI (Situation–Behavior–Impact) model gives you a reliable structure that works for both positive and constructive feedback:

S — Situation: Describe the specific context (when and where).

B — Behavior: State the observable behavior only. No interpretation, no mind-reading.

I — Impact: Explain the effect on the team, the project, the client, or you.

6 Ready-to-Use Feedback Scripts

Script 7 — Positive: Great Initiative

"In yesterday's sprint review [S], you proactively flagged the timeline risk before anyone asked about it [B]. That gave the team an extra 3 days to adjust the plan, and the client never felt the impact [I]. That's exactly the kind of ownership I want to see more of."

Script 8 — Positive: Helping a Peer

"During the onboarding session on Tuesday [S], I noticed you stayed an extra 30 minutes to walk Jamie through the codebase [B]. Jamie told me it made a huge difference in their first week, and it showed the team we support each other [I]."

Script 9 — Constructive: Interrupting

"During this morning's standup [S], you interrupted Alex twice while they were giving their update [B]. Alex visibly pulled back and cut their update short after that [I]. Can we talk about how to handle disagreements differently in group settings?"

Script 10 — Constructive: Missed Deadline

"The client report was due last Friday, and it came in on Tuesday [S]. The 3-day delay meant the client had to reschedule their board review [B], which created tension with the account team [I]. I want to understand what happened and figure out how to prevent it."

Script 11 — Constructive: Meeting Behavior

"In the client call yesterday [S], I noticed you were working on your laptop during their presentation [B]. The client paused and asked if we had questions, and I could tell they felt we weren't engaged [I]. How did you experience that interaction?"

Script 12 — Constructive: Quality Issue

"In the proposal you submitted Wednesday [S], there were several data errors in the financial summary [B]. If the client had seen those numbers, it would have undermined our credibility on the whole project [I]. What can we put in place so this gets caught before it goes out?"

★ *Pro Tip: Give positive feedback publicly, constructive feedback privately. Aim for a 5:1 ratio of positive to constructive. If you can't remember the last time you praised someone, it's overdue.*

Running Effective Team Meetings

Bad team meetings are the #1 complaint employees have about managers. Make yours count by using a consistent structure:

Block	Time	Owner	Details
Wins & shout-outs	5 min	You	Start positive. Recognize specific great work from the week.
Metrics review	5 min	You	Quick look at 2–3 key numbers. Trends only, not deep dives.
Priority alignment	10 min	Team	Top 3 priorities this week. Surface any conflicts or dependencies.
Blockers & asks	5 min	Team	What's stuck? What help is needed? You unblock, you don't solve.
Deep-dive (rotating)	10 min	1 person	Rotate who presents each week. Builds ownership and visibility.
Wrap-up	2 min	You	Recap action items. End on time. Always. No exceptions.

Total: 37 minutes. Book 45. You'll look like a hero when you give people 8 minutes back.

Goal-Setting With Your Team

By Week 5–6, you should set or reconfirm team goals. Use whichever framework fits your organization:

Framework	Best For	Structure	Example
SMART Goals	Individual targets, clear deliverables	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound	Reduce customer response time from 4 hours to 1 hour by March 31
OKRs	Team-level ambitions, alignment across groups	Objective (qualitative) + 3 Key Results (quantitative)	O: Become the fastest support team in the company KR1: Avg response < 1hr KR2: CSAT > 95% KR3: Zero escalations

Goal-Setting Worksheet

Goal / Objective	Key Results or Measures	Owner	Due Date	Status

60-Day Checkpoint Checklist

- ■ Weekly management rhythm established and running consistently
- ■ Delivered at least 3 pieces of feedback using SBI (1 constructive minimum)

■ Team goals documented and shared with the team in writing

■ Run at least 4 structured team meetings using the agenda template

■ Completed second round of deeper 1:1s (career goals, growth areas)

■ Identified one process improvement and started implementing it

■ Had a 30-day check-in with your own manager about your performance

■ Started tracking 2–3 team metrics consistently

Drive Results

By now you have context, trust, and rhythm. Month 3 is about translating all of that into visible impact — for your team, your stakeholders, and your own manager. The three skills to build this month: delegation, difficult conversations, and performance management.

The Delegation Framework

If you're still doing most of the work yourself, you're not managing — you're a very busy individual contributor with a new title. Use this decision matrix:

Task Type	Delegate?	To Whom?	How
Only you can do it (approvals, hiring, strategy)	No	N/A	This is core manager work. Protect time for it.
You're great at it but others could learn	Yes, with coaching	High-potential reports	Teach the skill, review output, give feedback
Someone is already better at it than you	Yes, immediately	That person	You're the bottleneck. Get out of the way.
Feels urgent but isn't truly important	Yes, or eliminate	Anyone capable, or nobody	Ask: does this actually need to happen?
New initiative you'd love to own personally	Yes — pick a champion	Motivated team member	Builds ownership. You advise, they execute.

Delegation Worksheet

Task I'm Currently Doing	Delegate To	Support Needed	Handoff Date	Check-in Date

Having Difficult Conversations

At some point in your first 90 days, you'll need to have a conversation you've been avoiding. The longer you wait, the worse it gets. Here's a 6-step framework:

Step 1 — Prepare: Write down the specific issue, the business impact, and your desired outcome. Never wing a difficult conversation.

Step 2 — Open with care: Start with genuine intent. Show this comes from investment in their success, not punishment.

Step 3 — State facts: Use SBI. Stick to observable, undeniable behavior. No character judgments.

Step 4 — Listen: Ask for their perspective. Say: 'I want to understand your side.' There may be context you don't have.

Step 5 — Agree on next steps: End with a specific, documented action plan. Who does what, by when.

Step 6 — Follow up: Check in within 5–7 days. If they improved, acknowledge it immediately. If not, escalate the conversation.

4 Difficult Conversation Scripts

Script 13 — Chronic Underperformance

"I've noticed a pattern over the last few weeks that I want to address because I genuinely care about your success here. Specifically, the last three deliverables have come in past deadline and below the quality bar we agreed on. I want to understand what's going on and figure out a plan together. What's your perspective?"

Script 14 — Attitude / Energy Shift

"I've noticed a shift in your energy lately, and I want to check in. You've seemed disengaged in the last few team meetings, and you've been quieter in standups than usual. I'm not making assumptions — I just want to understand. Is everything okay? How can I support you?"

Script 15 — Interpersonal Conflict

"I've observed some tension between you and Jordan over the last two weeks, particularly around the API project handoff. I'm not here to take sides. I want to hear your perspective so we can figure out how to move forward productively. What happened from your point of view?"

Script 16 — Scope/Boundary Issue

"I appreciate your initiative in taking on the client presentation last week. I want to be transparent though — that presentation needed to go through me before the client saw it, and I didn't get a chance to review it. Going forward, anything client-facing needs a quick review loop with me. Can we agree on that process?"

Performance Conversations

Three scenarios you'll encounter. Each requires a different tone and approach:

Script 17 — The High Performer (Retain & Grow)

"I want to take a step back and acknowledge the impact you're having. Your work on [specific project] has been exceptional, and it hasn't gone unnoticed. I want to talk about where you see yourself growing. What does the next level look like for you, and how can I help you get there?"

Script 18 — The Solid Performer (Coach & Stretch)

"You're doing strong work, and I want to build on that. I see real potential in [specific area], and I think with some focused development, you could take on [bigger responsibility]. Would you be open to a stretch assignment? I'll support you through it."

Script 19 — The Struggling Performer (Direct & Support)

"I need to have an honest conversation with you because I want to see you succeed. Right now, your performance on [specific deliverables] isn't meeting the bar we agreed on. I've seen what you're capable of, which is why I'm raising this directly instead of letting it slide. Let's build a concrete 30-day plan together. What support do you need from me?"

90-Day Self-Assessment Scorecard

Rate yourself honestly on each dimension. 1 = Needs significant work. 5 = Confident and consistent.

#	Dimension	1	2	3	4	5	Evidence / Notes
1	Team trust & psychological safety						
2	Clarity of expectations						
3	Consistency of management rhythm						
4	Quality & frequency of feedback						
5	1:1 meeting effectiveness						
6	Team meeting effectiveness						
7	Stakeholder relationships						
8	Delegation effectiveness						
9	Personal time management						
10	Strategic thinking vs. firefighting						

Score: 40+ = Strong start. 30–39 = On track, keep going. Below 30 = Pick your 3 weakest areas and build a plan.

Templates & Cheat Sheets

Print these pages and keep them at your desk. Use them every week.

Ongoing 1:1 Meeting Template (30 min)

Block	Time	Owner	Notes
Check-in	5 min	You	How are you doing? Anything on your mind? Read their energy.
Their agenda	10 min	Them	They drive this section. Ask: 'What do you want to discuss?'
Your agenda	5 min	You	Share context, updates, or questions from your side.
Coaching moment	5 min	Both	Pick one growth area. Ask: 'What's one thing you're working on improving?'
Action items	5 min	Both	Summarize: who does what by when. Write it down.

★ *Pro Tip: Never cancel a 1:1. Ever. Rescheduling is fine. Canceling sends the message: you're not important enough.*

Weekly Team Meeting Agenda (37 min)

Block	Time	Details
Wins & shout-outs	5 min	Name specific people and specific work. 'Great job everyone' doesn't count.
Metrics review	5 min	Show 2–3 key numbers. Ask: 'What's the story behind this trend?'
Priority alignment	10 min	Top 3 priorities this week. Surface conflicts before they become crises.
Blockers & asks	5 min	What's stuck? What do you need from me or another team?
Deep-dive (rotating)	10 min	One person presents each week. Builds visibility and ownership.
Wrap-up	2 min	Recap action items. Say: 'Thanks everyone, you've got 8 minutes back.'

Feedback Conversation Starters — Quick Reference

Tear this page out and keep it in your notebook. 10 openers for every common scenario:

#	Scenario	Opening Line
1	Great work you want to reinforce	"I want to call out something you did really well..."
2	Missed a deadline	"I noticed the [X] deliverable came in past the deadline. Can we talk about what happened?"
3	Interpersonal tension	"I've observed some tension between you and [name]. I want to understand your perspective."
4	Declining performance	"I care about your growth here, which is why I want to be direct about something I've noticed..."
5	Energy/attitude shift	"I've noticed a shift in your energy lately. Is everything okay? I want to support you."
6	Exceptional initiative	"What you did with [X] showed real ownership. I want to find more opportunities like that for you."
7	Needs to improve communication	"I want to help you increase your visibility with stakeholders. Can we talk about how you communica"
8	Scope creep / overcommitting	"I appreciate your willingness to help everyone, but I'm concerned you're spreading too thin. Let's pr"
9	Not speaking up in meetings	"I value your perspective, and I noticed you've been quiet in recent meetings. What would make it ea"
10	Ready for more responsibility	"You've earned the right to take on something bigger. I have an opportunity I think you'd be perfect f"

30-60-90 Day Tracker

Print this and put it where you'll see it daily. Check items as you complete them.

	Days 1–30 Listen & Learn	Days 31–60 Build & Align	Days 61–90 Drive Results
Weeks 1–2	■ All initial 1:1s done ■ Stakeholders mapped ■ Workflows documented ■ Team assessment done	■ Rhythm fully established ■ First feedback given (SBI) ■ Team goals drafted ■ Process improvement started	■ Delegation plan active ■ 1 difficult conversation done ■ Performance reviews prepped ■ Strategic initiative started
Weeks 3–4	■ Weekly rhythm set ■ 30-day summary written ■ Journal habit started ■ All checklists passed	■ 4+ team meetings run ■ Metrics tracking started ■ 60-day checkpoint done ■ Own manager check-in done	■ 90-day self-assessment ■ Stakeholder feedback gathered ■ Next quarter goals drafted ■ Celebrate with team!

You've Got This.

The fact that you invested in a resource like this tells me something about you: you take leadership seriously. That already puts you ahead of the 60% of new managers who receive zero training when they step into the role.

Remember — the goal isn't perfection. It's consistent, visible improvement. Show up for your team every day, keep learning, stay curious, and trust the process. The best managers aren't born. They're built — one conversation, one decision, one week at a time.

You now have the playbook. Go lead.

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