



LaunchToLead

↗ ACCELERATE PATH • Free Starter Kit

The Promotion Protocol

How I Went From Individual Contributor to Engineering Manager

Promotions don't go to the hardest workers. They go to the people who are visible to decision-makers and have advocates in the room. Here's the exact playbook I used.



Mansour Manci

Career Coach & Founder, LaunchToLead

LaunchToLead.io

It Starts With Relationships

Never Burn Bridges

Before I explain how I got promoted from Scrum Master / Product Owner to Software PV&V Supervisor, I need to back up. The manager who eventually gave me that embedded software role? **She was the senior engineer who onboarded me on a previous team.**

We did a lot of paired programming together when I was new. She showed me the ropes. Through that process, I built a strong professional relationship with her — and that's where everything began.

How I Got the Role

A couple years later, she left our team and became the manager of an embedded software team in a different division. About 6–8 months after that, I saw a job posting on her new team.

I reached out for a one-on-one. I asked about the role, why I was interested, and what I could bring. Having that rapport — knowing her, having worked with her — helped her already have a picture of who I am and what my work ethic is.

She Told Me Something Critical

She said her team was lacking in **team building, leadership, process improvement, getting people bought into new systems** — and she saw those as my strengths. When a manager tells you their team lacks what you're strong at, and they want you to fill that gap — **that's the best position to be in.**

1

STEP ONE

Volunteer for What Nobody Wants

Golden opportunities don't always look golden

The Scrum Master Opening

Around 3–4 months into my new role, my manager asked the entire team if anybody wanted to become the Scrum Master. The team didn't have anyone owning that role — if nobody's responsible for something, then nobody's accountable for it.

Nobody Volunteered.

A lot of people see taking on more responsibility as more work, more headache. *"Why should I take on more if I'm not going to get compensated for it?"*

I Raised My Hand.

I was the youngest person on the team in terms of experience. I didn't think I was the most qualified. But I was **willing to take on more responsibility without any direct compensation increase** — and that's a completely different mindset.

The Backwards Mindset

"Why should I take on more work if I'm not getting promoted or compensated for it?" — This is completely backwards if you want to get promoted faster than average. **Taking on more responsibility opens up visibility and impact. The fruits come later.**

THE CRITICAL BALANCE

Don't Become the Silent Martyr

There's a right way and a wrong way to take on more

The Silent Martyr

- ✗ Takes on more work **without visibility**
- ✗ No credit in front of the right people
- ✗ Impact not felt by decision-makers
- ✗ Gets slowly crushed and ground into dust

The Strategic Volunteer

- ✓ Takes on responsibility with **high visibility**
- ✓ Learns leadership skills without applying for a new job
- ✓ Gets to "try on the hat" of management
- ✓ Gets recognized and elevated

The Backup Quarterback Analogy

Taking on the Scrum Master role was like being the backup quarterback before becoming the starter. I got to practice leadership skills — influencing people's day-to-day work, organizing the backlog, leading meetings, checking on status — **without having to formally apply, interview, and have massive pressure**. It's a trial phase.



2

STEP TWO

Leverage Into Training

Use your new responsibility to justify investment in yourself

An Easy Ask

Since I'd never been a Scrum Master before, I suggested to my manager: "*Why don't I go find an intensive training so I can become the most effective Scrum Master possible for the team?*"

This Is Not a Hard Sell

If you've already volunteered to take on more responsibility for the team, and now you're asking for training to get the skills you need to do that thing well — **any manager with half a brain won't turn that down.**

The Compounding Effect

Now I didn't just have the new position and experience — I also got exposure to Scrum best practices. This was going to:

- Stretch my impact on the team
- Compound all the benefits into actual deliverable results
- Drive efficiency improvements, quality improvements, process improvements



3

STEP THREE

Make a Proposal

Use what you learned to identify improvements

What I Realized

After the training, I met one-on-one with the trainer to walk through our team's situation. I realized: **our team was too big**. We had 12–15 people in one Scrum team owning two controllers (EIC and HVAC). The inefficiencies were obvious:

- Wasted time during Scrum ceremonies
- Missed context — half the people don't care about the other controller
- One Product Owner trying to cover too much ground

My Proposal

Break into two Scrum teams — one for EIC, one for HVAC. Separate Product Owners for each. I laid out the inefficiencies, the reasoning from my training, and **my manager approved it**.

Another Golden Opportunity

Since nobody else wanted to be a Scrum Master, I volunteered to be the Scrum Master for **both** teams. More work? Yes. But it's better for one person to have some redundancy than for all 15 people to be inefficient.

Take the Second Hat

Product Owner — another opportunity nobody wanted

The Pattern Repeats

My manager saw that I was committed and concerned for the team's success. She asked if I'd be okay becoming the Product Owner for the HVAC controller. The original PO would stay on the larger, more complex EIC controller.

Same Story, Same Lesson

There were plenty of people on the team who had been there longer, had higher positions, and were way more knowledgeable. But I stepped up. **Not always the most qualified person gets the position.**

Two Different Perspectives

The Cynical View

"I don't want more responsibility without getting compensated. The company's taking advantage of me."

My View

"This is a golden opportunity to put on a new hat, get new skills, have bigger impact – without having to apply and interview."

Testing the Fit

Just like the Pivot methodology — you want to find something you're talented at, that you enjoy, and that has value. Taking on these roles without a formal position change lets you test: **Am I good at this? Do I like it?**

THE FOUNDATION

Two Hats, Two Skillsets

This was my management apprenticeship

Scrum Master Skills

- Running Scrum ceremonies
- Organizing work for the team
- Keeping people on target
- Running retrospectives
- Sprint planning and reviews

Product Owner Skills

- Organizing the backlog
- Interfacing with stakeholders
- Prioritizing features and work
- Deciding what we can/can't deliver
- Ownership of the product

The Complete Picture

Together, these two roles gave me a very good taste of what it would be like to lead a team, manage a team. They were the foundational experiences that gave me the skills, knowledge, and **confidence** to even think about becoming a manager.

THE PAYOFF

What Happened Next

The benefits compounded in ways I didn't expect

- ✓ **Deeper conversations with my manager** about potential future career paths
- ✓ **Access to her manager and their peers** — one-on-ones, career advice, learning about opportunities
- ✓ **My manager became my advocate** — she was bragging about me to her manager
- ✓ **My name started getting mentioned positively** in meetings and conversations I wasn't in
- ✓ **I became a known commodity** — not some unknown name coming out of left field

The Mindset That Made the Difference

I showed that I was invested, that I cared about the team and my career, that I was willing to take on more responsibility than I was compensated for. I was in it for the long haul — looking for **long-term growth, not immediate results.**

THE RESULT

Software PV&V Supervisor

When I applied, the case was already made

Why It Worked

When I went to get promoted to Software PV&V Supervisor, I wasn't starting from scratch. All these experiences played similar to the Pivot methodology — **I had already proven I could do the work.**

70–80% Already Demonstrated

When I sat in the room having a conversation about becoming a supervisor, I'd already demonstrated most of what it takes. They only had to have faith in the remaining 20% gap — not 80%.

The Recap

- 1 Got into the role through previous relationships
- 2 Volunteered to be Scrum Master when nobody else wanted it
- 3 Leveraged that into intensive training
- 4 Made a proposal to restructure the team (approved)
- 5 Volunteered to be Scrum Master for both teams
- 6 Took on the Product Owner role when nobody else wanted it
- 7 Built visibility with the entire management umbrella
- 8 Came out as the top candidate when I applied

YOUR ACTION PLAN

Accelerate Path Checklist

Use this to build your promotion case

Relationship Building

- Never burn bridges — today's peer is tomorrow's hiring manager
- Build strong relationships during onboarding and training
- Reach out to old colleagues when you see opportunities
- Understand what strengths you bring that teams are lacking

Strategic Volunteering

- Look for high-visibility responsibilities nobody wants
- Volunteer without demanding immediate compensation
- Use new roles to leverage training opportunities
- Apply what you learn to make proposals for improvement

Building Visibility & Advocates

- Have deeper career conversations with your manager
- Get access to your manager's manager and their peers
- Turn your manager into your advocate

- Get your name mentioned positively in rooms you're not in
- Become a known commodity before you apply
- Demonstrate 70–80% of the job before asking for it

Ready to Accelerate Your Career?

This playbook gives you the framework. Check out our Accelerate Path packages at LaunchToLead.io for personalized coaching to build your promotion case.

[Book a Free Discovery Call →](#)

LaunchToLead.io | contact@launchtolead.io