



# Book Developing Great Managers

## 20 "Power Hour" Conversations that Build Skills FAST

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### Recommendation

Training managers is a great idea in theory but often not so great in practice. Managers are intensely busy professionals who don't have any extra time. Lengthy training sessions just put them further behind and add to their stress. Consultant and speaker Lisa Haneberg and the American Society for Training and Development have developed a training approach that avoids those problems. Using their "Power Hour" curriculum, which consists of what they call "learning conversations" about relevant management problems, managers can upgrade their skills quickly. Although not much in this book is new, *BooksInShort* recommends it to management trainers, and to middle and senior managers who are responsible for developing other leaders and management teams, and who want a quick review.

### Take-Aways

- Managers are busy and often stressed. They have to juggle competing priorities. Some become underachievers.
- If performance is off in your organization, retrain your managers.
- Do not conduct management training in lengthy sessions that run over several days.
- Instead, hold a series of short sessions. One hour is ideal.
- Schedule them about once every two weeks, and vary the meeting time and day.
- "Learning conversations" are the basis of the "Power Hour" training approach.
- Use Power Hours to educate managers and to reinforce important messages.
- The quality of your trainers makes all the difference.
- The best trainers are managers with deep business expertise.
- They should be superb conversational catalysts who can promote meaningful, engaging and instructive dialogue among trainees.

### Summary

#### Training Managers

Managers are the engines of your business; they keep everything moving toward the destination. If your company is not getting the results you want, your engine may need a tune-up. This is where "Power Hour" training can help. Power Hours are hour-long management training modules.

"Your customer relations can only be as good as your internal relations with one another."

During Power Hour sessions, trainers make connections between the information and skills they are teaching and your company's goals. The organization and scope of this training arise from these basic precepts of management training theory:

- **"Managers are much too busy"** – Training sessions must be short and sweet.
- **"Managers...suffer from fuzzy priorities, competing priorities, scope creep and meeting overload"** – Training should show them how to deal with these challenges.
- **"Many managers feel overwhelmed and stressed"** – Training should reduce managers' stress, not add to it.

- **“Many managers work well below their capabilities”** – This is usually because they do not know how to use their time effectively. Training sessions should help them focus and prioritize their activities.

## Setting Up the Training

Choose your trainers carefully. Select competent managers who know your business. Trainers should be skilled conversational catalysts who can encourage instructive dialogue and promote “playfulness” in discussions. Spread training sessions out over time. A schedule of one training session every other week works well. Vary the meeting hour and day so more managers will be able to attend.

“Managers will love the way Power Hours fit into their schedule, and they will love the interactive and relevant nature of each of the topics discussed.”

Try to “enroll” – rather than sell – the most important stakeholders in the Power Hour concept so they feel a personal investment in the training approach. Ask a primary stakeholder to host some pilot sessions in his or her department. Explain that Power Hour training will enable the organization’s managers to perform better, which will improve the company’s operations and its bottom line. Stress that the training schedule respects the managers’ busy workdays.

## The Power Hour Format

All Power Hour sessions are structured similarly. Participants know what to expect, because the Power Hour agenda is always the same:

- **“Brief discussion of prework” (10 minutes)** – The trainer starts a discussion of a current event or a development in the business world, distributes the day’s handouts and encourages conversation about the homework.
- **“Presentation of the conceptual model or topic” (15 minutes)** – This is a minilecture about the focus of the day.
- **“Initial discussion of the concept” (10 minutes)** – Trainees become involved in the conversation.
- **“Exercise/application” (15 minutes)** – Exercises are job-related, and participants can do some of them in small groups.
- **“Final discussion and assignment of homework” (10 minutes)** – Homework is also work-related. It “puts the topics discussed into action.” Trainers can use the questions and exercises in the curriculum or develop their own.

## Power Hour Session Topics

Power Hour sessions focus on four types of management concerns: “job perception, expectations, time management and team development.” Each session has a “learning objective,” presents a question for participants to discuss and concludes with an exercise or homework assignment. The curriculum covers these 20 topics:

1. **“Management in modern times”** – Managers receive information and demands, or “inputs,” from many sources, and out of all that “mucky muck,” must devise appropriate work plans for their teams. Learning objective: Pinpoint productivity “enablers and barriers” and make a plan to eliminate the barriers. Question: “What can managers do to improve the efficiency and importance of...inputs?” Exercise: Working in small groups, managers identify 10 ways they can encourage better, more helpful inputs from others.
2. **“What’s expected of you”** – Managers generally understand the specific tasks for which they and their teams are responsible. However, many do not know what additional duties their organizations expect of them or how their team goals fit into the overall strategy. Learning objective: “Define expectations.” Question: “What clues might indicate what your managers value most?” Exercise: Participants develop 10 questions they can use to clarify what the company needs from them.
3. **“Managing and improving your reputation”** – Managers don’t always understand the benchmarks their supervisors use to evaluate their “performance and managerial style.” Nor are they aware of their reputations within their organizations. Learning objective and exercise: Managers conduct self-assessments of their reputations. Question: “How should a person go about repairing his or her reputation?”
4. **“Your management A-B boxes”** – In this “conceptual model,” managers use two “A” boxes and two “B” boxes to self-assess and realign with changing goals. In the first “A” box, they describe how they currently manage and, in the second, what the results are. Then, they use two “B” boxes to identify, respectively, the outcomes they want to achieve over the next year and how they might change their management approach accordingly. Learning objective: Managers learn processes that can help them meet their targets. Question: “What types of practices get in [your] way when trying to improve results?” Exercise: Participants fill in their “results B” boxes, then their “management B” boxes, and discuss their findings.
5. **“Your management filter”** – In management, expectations lead to goals, which lead to actions. Thus, aims and expectations provide the essential “filters” managers use to focus their activities and allocate team resources. Learning objective: Participants examine the value of their “decision filters.” Question: “How do you know that your actions and decisions are in alignment with your intentions and goals?” Exercise: Participants describe and discuss their decision filters.
6. **“Mind your metrics”** – Managing requires measuring. Good metrics reveal what customers (both internal and external) want, and help managers and teams evaluate performance accurately. Learning objective: Managers determine the best way to track and quantify achievement. Question: “Look at the measures you have in place today. Do they focus on what matters most?” Exercise: Participants discuss the contributions they and their team make to the organization, and how to measure them effectively.
7. **“Grand slam home runs”** – Every team has goals. A grand slam home run goal is one that leaves other group targets in the dust. Learning objective: Develop one grand slam goal. Question: “Do you know what your manager would consider to be a grand slam home run goal?” Exercise: Participants list their team’s goals, then shape them into grand slam home runs.
8. **“Defining excellence”** – Developing a shared understanding of the word “excellence” is crucial. Learning objective: Managers learn to explain excellence to their teams. Question: “Do you think that your employees would do things differently if they had a crystal-clear view of how you measure excellence?” Exercise: Participants discuss what excellence is in meetings, productivity and so on.
9. **“Communicating expectations”** – Team members perform best when they know what their managers and organizations require of them in terms of solving problems, generating ideas and meeting deadlines. Learning objective: Managers establish and communicate their expectations of their employees. Questions: “Do your employees know what you expect of them? How?” Exercise: Participants develop “one- or two-sentence expression[s] of their expectations for their team members.”
10. **“The art of planning”** – Managers often put off planning. They need to create a planning regimen and stick to it. Learning objective: Develop a plan for the

week to come. Questions: “How do you plan? What are your most effective habits or rituals?” Exercise: Participants fill out a “weekly planning checklist” that includes meetings, “must not miss items” and a grand slam home run goal.

11. **“Results-oriented responses” (RORs)** – These actions include accepting responsibility for outcomes, taking the initiative, developing different approaches to problem solving and meeting commitments. Learning objective: Managers learn what a results-oriented response is. Question: “How do you know whether your approach to the situation is helping or hindering your results?” Exercise: Managers examine difficult tasks using the results-oriented responses method.
12. **“Meetings that rock”** – Meetings cost money, because they require workers who are receiving expensive salaries to sit idly around a table rather than to produce. Learning objective: Managers learn to hold meetings that are necessary, focused, relevant and outcome-oriented. Questions: “What percentage of your meetings do you dread? Why?” Exercise: Managers plan a meeting itinerary for their units.
13. **“Mastering your time”** – Multitasking does not work. It is an inefficient waste of time. Instead, managers should learn to “chunk,” or set aside, times when they work on only one thing. Learning objective: Introduce the chunking time-management method. Question: “What have you done to manage and reduce work interruptions?” Exercise: Managers plan a chunking schedule for upcoming tasks.
14. **“Internal service excellence”** – In addition to producing for external customers, departments must also produce for internal customers. For example, managers serve their direct reports, and direct reports serve them. Learning objective: Define service excellence. Question: “If your yearly bonus or raise was determined by the grade your internal customers gave you, how well would you do?” Exercise: Participants discuss how they and their teams can improve their service to internal customers.
15. **“Your leadership legacy”** – Through their actions and performance, managers create their legacies. Learning objective: Participants define “how they wish to be regarded.” Question: “If you were hit by a bus today or decided to move to Tahiti, what would you be known for?” Exercise: Managers list one achievement they would like to leave as a legacy, rate themselves on a one-to-ten scale and discuss the results.
16. **“Knowing how and when to say ‘no’”** – Sometimes, the best thing a manager can do is to say no – for example, to inessential meetings, poorly conceived projects and unnecessary paperwork. Learning objective: Participants learn to say no decisively rather than weakly and to explain the reasons for their refusals. Questions: “Do you say ‘yes’ or ‘no’ too much? Which? Why?” Exercise: Participants identify two tasks to which they should say no, and to whom they should say it.
17. **“Aligning your department for success”** – Aligned business units work efficiently and the employees within them understand their roles. Sometimes, though, “conflicts among technology, processes and roles” disrupt the balance. Learning objective: Understand what alignment is and why it is important. Question: “If you could make just one adjustment to better align your department...what would that be?” Exercise: Managers list one important upcoming goal for their team and determine whether the group is aligned properly to achieve this goal.
18. **“The art of employee one-on-ones”** – Such sessions “improve dialogue and execution.” They should take 30 to 60 minutes. Learning objective: Explain the importance of one-on-one meetings. Question: “What makes a one-on-one a good or bad experience?” Exercise: Participants develop agendas for and schedule one-on-one meetings with their supervisors.
19. **“Enlivening minds at work”** – When managers have good relationships with their direct reports, teams function better. Managers must find ways to energize their staffers’ minds. Learning objective: Participants learn about successful ways to engage employees, as well as how to identify barriers to engagement. Question: “What are some of the causes of disengagement?” Exercise: Participants brainstorm how they might stimulate the minds of their team members.
20. **“Encouraging collaboration”** – Many managers believe that they promote collaboration, but few actually do. Often, managers emphasize the individual goals of their direct reports rather than their team’s shared targets. Learning objective: Develop techniques that spur collaboration. Question: “What does great collaboration look like?” Exercise: Managers discuss how to increase collaboration among team members.

## About the Author

**Lisa Haneberg** is a consultant, speaker and author. Her areas of expertise include leadership, management, and organizational and personal achievement.

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