



Tips on: How to be a fabulous manager

Knowing all your staff

How well do you know your staff?

Central to being a fabulous manager is the extent to which you know your staff, their strengths, weaknesses and their potential.

You are in a powerful position to help your staff realise their potential, but, first, you need to know what that potential might be like. That means getting to know them.

You could conduct individual interviews over time, to help you find out about your workforce and they find out about you!

Your staff knowing you

How well do your staff know you?

You are a role model. Wherever you go people will be watching you and making judgments about you. This can be quite off putting, especially if you feel they don't understand you very well. It's a different story if you know people and they know you. You can relax and not put on a show.

Give your staff the opportunity to get to know you. Share your values; share your ideas; reveal things about you that influence your work and how you approach managing your staff. This helps create a better mutual understanding about the approaches you adopt for managing your staff.

During this process, start the sharing of responsibility for future success of the organisation by seeking observations and crucial comments about the organisation and the ideas they have for making improvements.

Being curious about everything

Curiosity is being inquisitive about life. Finding out what is happening; how things are made; how machines work; where people come from. It doesn't matter what you're curious about as long as it's almost everything!

Being curious about everything helps to build trustworthiness. Your staff will expect you to be curious about what they are doing, so that you can learn more from them, rather than questioning what they're doing in an off putting way.

Attentiveness

This is the most important attribute and behaviour. It is the key to triggering reciprocity, engagement and almost everything else.

Attentiveness has to be felt by the other person, and you should look for signs that your attentiveness is hitting the mark.



Often, attentiveness is made easier by asking questions that are thought to be unique by the other person. General questions tend not to work as well and often provoke answers that are economical with the truth. Questions unique to the other person, however, tend to result in reciprocity, and reciprocity is what is needed in securing engagement. People who feel you are attentive to them will reciprocate by being attentive back to you.

You can practise this in front of a mirror, asking yourself a unique question and experimenting with expressions until you find one you feel most comfortable with. If you feel comfortable, others will feel the same.

Being approachable

If you give out signals that you are approachable, it breaks down the barriers that people assume are there because of the position you hold.

Anyone who approaches you should be the centre of your attention; you should welcome the attention and deal with the issues that arise with intelligent kindness.

Being approachable is essential because you do not want anyone to feel intimidated. You want people to come to you with suggestions about improving the prospects for future success. You want people to come to you when they have concerns about anything to do with the organisation.

You will probably need to structure times when you let it be known you are approachable, as you'll need thinking and doing time for yourself without interruptions.

Managing your time effectively

Time is, of course, the biggest challenge we face.

Time constraints cause so many difficulties for us and can lead to making short cuts, quick fixes and poor judgments. We need time to think, to reflect on past actions, to consider options and arguments and to arrive at judgments.

For you to remain calm and in control of yourself, you need to know you can achieve tasks that are important to you and to do them properly, without rush.

In a hectic working life, managers often find themselves rushing to complete things and, in so doing, may be storing up problems down the line.

Showing agility

Being agile helps you develop positive attitudes towards most things that happen. It is about you being intellectually flexible and having the broad awareness required to manoeuvre yourself through hurdles seamlessly and fluently. Try to avoid being perceived as slippery, getting out of situations by diverting attention away from yourself. If in doubt, pause and acknowledge you can't see your way forward at this point but you'll come back and have another go shortly.



Obviously promoting and experiencing diversity and equality

If you don't already relish the experiences of learning from the diversity of people you meet, start now. You will expand your horizons beyond imagination by being curious about other people's cultures, backgrounds, life experiences, skills and everything else. The same applies from becoming aware of the differences between people and understanding that their differences expand your own understanding of life and make your own life richer. Treat everyone equally. Be open to everyone. Banish any lurking prejudices you may have grown up with – get rid of them. You will be a much more rounded person as a result. You will, also, act as a role model for others, actively drawing everyone into the kinship of the workforce.

Intelligent kindness¹

If you demonstrate a kind and supportive approach to others you do so because you realise that your self-interest as a manager and the self-interest of your staff are bound together. This is strengthened by your approach to sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation. It places you in a form of kinship relationship, each sharing risks, sharing successes, sharing ideas and supporting each other. There is no reason to be anything other than kind to everyone you work with, as well as your customers and clients. It reduces the need for others to call on their personal resilience when engaged with you as they won't feel threatened.

Trustworthiness

Trust occurs when people stop second guessing your motivation for doing things. This means you need to be consistent in everything you do; consistent in decision making; consistent in behaviour towards others; consistent in your approach to management. Practise being consistent.

When people trust you, they rely on what you say and do. They take you at face value. They spend no resources in trying to work out what you're up to. They don't need to call on their resilience when dealing with you; they know what you are like.

Humour and fun

When you laugh, smile and enjoy yourself, you tend to be relaxed. Humour is an attractor and people are drawn to those who can see life in a humorous way. They will also reciprocate and smile with you. The workplace should be an oasis in a turbulent world, where humour and fun can be found. Just don't overdo it! Too much humour and fun sends the wrong signal; too little means you're too serious. Pitch yourself in the middle and others will enjoy your company, what you say and do and it reduces the need for your staff to call on their resilience when dealing with you.

Be professional

Being professional is being competent at what you do. Demonstrate your competence at being a manager by being attentive and reflective. When considering how to tackle challenges, pause before saying anything. Think through and discuss with others your ideas and reasoning. Listen to suggestions and take them on board in your considerations. If your reasoning is challenged, listen and understand the reasons and alter your position.

¹ For more on Intelligent Kindness please read *Intelligent Kindness – reforming the culture of healthcare* by John Ballatt and Penelope Campling. Royal College of Psychiatrists. 2011



Always have in mind the future success of the organisation and not your own reputation. One of the easiest things to spot in a manager is when the manager's self-interest doesn't align itself to the interests of the organisation or staff, but to the preservation of their own reputation, which, sadly, is too often destroyed by the very act of seeking to protect it.

Have clear personal values

Your core personal values are what drive you to do things. They also explain why you do things that others might think are crazy.

Finding out what your core personal values are is an important part of the process of self-awareness and helps your own personal resilience, as values contribute to how you form your attitudes.

Below is an exercise to discover your own personal values.

Showing true grit and determination

This is about showing commitment to achieving things. Often, there are hurdles in the way, and your determination to succeed and strong attitude (resilience) in the process provides to others a role model which they will follow. In some ways, the more difficult the hurdle and the more obvious your determination to overcome it, if your staff think overcoming this particular hurdle is in the best interests of the future success of the organisation, the greater your own self-esteem and reputation amongst your own staff.

Knowing what you're doing

This might seem obvious but it's important to know what you're doing because if you don't you are not in control of yourself and you become vulnerable.

Never try to bluff your way through something you don't know much about; it doesn't work. Your staff are equally intelligent and capable as you and one of them will know much more about the subject than you anyway.

If you have doubts, say so. It's part of sharing responsibility and the use of intelligent kindness. It is part of being open and transparent. It gains respect to be frank, trustworthy and revealing.

Helping others to know what they're doing

Try to ensure your staff know what they're doing as well. Look out for staff who tell you what you want to hear, as they may be concealing their uncertainty about something and may fear your reaction. In a culture of sharing responsibility, you can talk about the need for everyone to be open and frank with each other. Much depends on your capacity to present as a supportive manager, an enabler, a facilitator and a mentor.

Coaching and mentoring your staff

Coaching and mentoring help individuals achieve their potential. Coaching is relatively short term and focuses more on specific skills, whilst mentoring is a longer term exchange of experiences, observations as well as skills.

You should be coaching your staff in the specific skills they need, as well as continuously mentoring everyone by sharing your own skills, knowledge and experiences with them. Reverse mentoring should, also, be encouraged, where you are mentored by your staff, so that you exchange their



information about how things may be done differently. Mutual mentoring is a sign of good team work and the implementation of sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation.

Staying calm

You'll have to work hard at this. If you feel you are becoming agitated try the following exercise:

- Close your eyes.
- Concentrate on your breathing; listen to the sound of your breathing.
- Keep concentrating on the sound for five minutes.
- Open your eyes. You will be much calmer now.

Remaining calm is about feeling in control of yourself. So, try to slow the pace of everything you do. This allows thinking time, a precious period when you can work out the best ways of approaching the challenges of the day.

Write things down. Make notes. Scribble. These all help to keep you in control of yourself and help you to remain calm.

Look upon life generally, and working life in particular, as entertainment. You are being entertained by whatever is going on.

Delivering what's required

Your role as a manager is to manage your staff to deliver the products and/or services that the organisation exists to deliver.

Managers who deliver with teams that are energetic, engaged, vibrant and hard working, are fabulous managers. Make sure you deliver without causing any form of dis-engagement of your staff from you.

Establishing mutual expectations and leaving nothing to chance

It's too easy to tell someone you would appreciate something being done without establishing mutual expectations about the task. Making clear mutual expectations about everything enhances engagement and prevents misunderstanding.

Enjoying being part of the workforce; not being hierarchical but sharing responsibility

Understanding that you are an integral part of the workforce in exactly the same way as your staff is an important attitude to have when helping them achieve peak performance.

You are a manager because you have skills in persuading others to do things they may not wish to do without causing anyone any discomfort in the process.

This means working with close understanding of your staff. The best approach is to implement that attitude of sharing responsibility for the future success of the organisation with them. If you share responsibility, you are with them and they are with you, not in any hierarchical way but in a mutual way with mutual expectations, mutual responsibility, mutual delivery and mutual success. You are one member of a team, all of whom have equal significance.

You should enjoy the experience of working with staff in a mutual manner. It is exhilarating and very rewarding.



Looking after your own mental wellbeing

Mental (psychological) wellbeing is about how you feel.

If you feel terrific you'll be full of energy, probably optimistic and may have a smile on your face.

The ingredients for feeling psychologically well differ for each of us. However, it's worth finding out what those ingredients might be.

Spend some time thinking about what makes you feel terrific.

Looking after everyone else's mental wellbeing

As a manager who knows his or her staff well, you will discover the ingredients of your staffs' mental wellbeing.

It is in your interests to ensure you look after their mental wellbeing by interacting with them in ways that do not cause them to call on their resilience.

You should enquire about the mental wellbeing of your staff at regular intervals, on an individual basis as well as collectively.

If you've managed to create an environment based on 'psychological responsibility' and 'sharing responsibility for future success' you will have created a safe environment in which your staff can discuss openly with you and others how they feel, as well as the impediments to their mental wellbeing which, together, you should address.

Sharing responsibility for future success of the organisation with everyone

Whilst you may be 'held to account' by your Board for the delivery of services provided by your part of the organisation, you could create an environment where everyone shares responsibility for future success. This means encouraging your staff to feel accountable for future success, which results in them sharing responsibility.

The ways in which this is achieved is explained in greater detail later but you start by encouraging your staff to focus their attention on the organisation and its success, and not on you and your success. This is about the organisation. The organisation is greater than its managers, and should be the focus for the workforce.

The rationale for this approach is that the combined intelligence of the workforce makes the organisation a success. If the workforce isn't totally engaged in its success, it will under perform. Persuading and encouraging the workforce to feel responsible will raise the question 'what's in it for me?' The answer is greater success; a feeling of ownership; a sense of real purpose, not just doing a job but making an organisation successful; a feeling of kinship with everyone, also known as being a Corporate Citizen, with a clear identity within the organisation as someone on whom the organisation depends for its success.

Individual members of the workforce count; they are of great value; their importance cannot be diminished.

It's your job to make this happen.



Assembled by Derek Mowbray as part of the implementation of [The WellBeing and Performance Agenda 2014](#).

More information can be found in [our Guides](#) and on our websites:

www.wellbeing-and-performance-group.org.uk

www.mas.org.uk

derek.mowbray@mas.org.uk