**The Effective Manager**

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**Book Summary and Excerpts**

**CHAPTER 1 - Who Is an Effective Manager?**

Everyone has experienced both good and bad managers. What makes them that way? Is it what they do? How they think? Their personality? What they feel? Where they went to school?

Think about this for a minute: *How do you know someone is a good manager? What is the definition of a good manager?*

When we ask these questions at conferences, we get all kinds of answers, such as the following:

* Their people like them
* They communicate a lot
* They’re smart
* They care
* They listen well
* They are respected

*These are good efforts, but are still incorrect.*

Suppose a manager reported to you who did all of the above and had never achieved a single objective the organization had set for him. Would you describe him as a good manager? Of course, you wouldn’t.

***Your first responsibility is NOT to your team of directs. It's NOT to your people. You should NOT worry about them first. Your first responsibility is to deliver whatever results your organization expects from you.***

About the only way to really feel good about what your responsibilities are is to have quantified goals, in numbers and percentages.

If you can't list your goals almost off the top of your head, make a note somewhere to go to your boss in the near future. Ask him/her: What results do you expect of me? What are the measures you're going to compare me against? What are the objective standards? What subjective things do you look at to round out your evaluation of me?

**The Definition of an Effective Manager**

In the best companies in the world, when there’s a discussion about who is best, who deserves a promotion, and who is “ready now” or going to be “ready next,” ***these two metrics come up over and over again: “How well did this manager do her job, as shown in her results? “ And “Did he/she retain his/her people?”***

**Your First Responsibility: Retain Your People**

One of the tools to measure a good manager is his ability to retain his people. Replacing employees is expensive. When someone leaves, there’s the lost work that had been planned for them, the cost of interviewing new candidates in both money and time, the likely higher salary that will be paid in the event of replacement, the time and expense of training the new employee, and the cost of less productivity by the new employee until the person can match the quality and quantity of work of the person who has left*.* ***For today’s manager, it’s not enough to get results, he/she also has to make sure that his good team members don’t leave the organization.***

**CHAPTER 2 - The Four Critical Behaviors**

*What are the things that you can do that are most likely to achieve them?*

The four critical behaviors that an effective manager engages to produce results and retain team members are the following:

1. **Get to Know Your People**
2. **Communicate about Performance**
3. **Ask for More**
4. **Push Work Down**

**Number One: Get to Know Your People (Accounts for 40% of the total value)**

***All of the data over the years shows that the single most important thing that you can do as a manager to improve your performance and increase retention is to spend time getting to know the strengths and weaknesses of your direct report reports***. ***Managers who know how to get the most out of each individual member of the team achieve noticeably better results than managers who don’t.*** The most efficient way to get to know your team is to spend time regularly communicating with them.

***Every person on the earth expects and deserves to be treated as an individual.***

People and their behaviors are what deliver results to your organization. (Not systems, not processes, not computers, not machines.)

**At this point, you’re probably thinking one of two things:**

* I think I already know my people very well,
* No need— I talk to my people all the time!

Let’s take each of these ideas in turn. First, “I know my people very well.” Perhaps you do, but the vast majority of managers who claim to really don’t. Here’s a test of that knowledge.

What are the first names of all the children of the people who directly report to You? 95% of the managers don’t know all of their names. A fair portion—maybe 40% don’t even know how many children all of their direct reports have! This is called The Direct report Relationship Acid Test.

Now let’s look at the second idea: “No need—I talk to my people all the time!” Many managers say this. They’re constantly in communication with their direct reports through e-mail, texts, and plenty of face-to-face conversations. In fact, they feel like they talk to their direct reports so much that they hardly have time for their own work. ***Most managers, however, have no idea how one-sided their conversations are with their team members. They have no idea how little influence those brief conversations actually have on building relationships***.

Your directs don't see you as a nice person... They see you as the boss... Because of the power of your role, your directs don't see you the way you see yourself.

Generally, the more a team trusts its manager, the better the results will be, and the better the retention as well.

…the binding and distinctive element of teams that outperform others is the amount of trust that they build and engender among their members

***When you communicate with others, they evaluate your communication with them in two ways: quantity and quality. Quantity is the frequency of your communications. You communicate more with those whom you consider friends and trusted colleagues, and less with those with whom you have less of a relationship. Quality is judged by whether or not what we talk about is of interest or benefit to them.***

**Number Two: Communicate About Performance (Accounts for 30% of total value)**

Would your performance improve if you heard more often from your boss about how you were doing? Most professionals would give a resounding yes.

Ask the following question: “Provided it was done politely and professionally, would you like more feedback and input from your boss and/or organization about your performance, on a more regular basis, regardless of whether it was positive or negative?.” Again, the answer would be a resounding yes.

If you want more performance communications from YOUR boss, you know your directs want the same thing from you.

***When you think about it, everything that’s done at a high level is done with a lot of communication about performance. That means if you want high performance, you’re going to have to regularly talk about it with your direct reports about their performance.*** It matters more than anything else, other than your relationship with them, and in return, you will get the results and retain your team.

When we talk to high-performing directs who rate their bosses outstanding, performance communications come up over and over again as a core reason. “He tells me how I'm doing.” “When I do well, he says so.” “When I mess up, he quickly tells me, and we move on.” “I never need to worry about where I stand- she tells me.”

**Number Three: Ask for More (Accounts for 15% of the total value)**

If you want great results and retention, you have to constantly raise the bar on performance; you have to ask for more.

Well, what most people don't know about stress is that there are two kinds. There's distress: that's the kind you mean when you're feeling stressed out. It's a level of stress that impedes or hinders your performance... Below the stressed-out level of distress is the useful level of stress called eustress… Eustress is the stress you feel that helps you get ready, get excited, and “get up” for the big game.

***The ideal place for your directs to be for maximum output/results is on the right line between distress and eustress, almost over the line and the fear, but not quite there. They should have lots of energy but not panic. The only way to know where the line is, for each direct report, is to push each direct into moments of distress and pay attention to when they start to lose effectiveness.***

As managers, you’re not responsible just for the status quo, but for improving the performance of the whole team***.*** The best way to improve a team’s performance is if each individual team member’s performance improves. If your team goals are constantly being raised (and, if they aren’t right now, someone is surely thinking about raising them), you need to get more out of everyone to meet those higher goals.

**Number Four: Push Work Down (Accounts for 15% of Total Value)**

The reason “pushing work down” is the fourth part of our “Management Trinity” is that, while the first three parts of the “Management Trinity” create value for the team, “pushing work down” creates capacity for the organization. Managers are the ones who push work down, but the organization is the one that benefits. Put differently, ***you can produce results from your team with only the first three parts of the “Management Trinity,” but pushing work down creates growth potential for your entire organization. What this means for managers is that they have to learn to share and delegate most of their work with their direct reports.***

If we can achieve an acceptable quality level with less cost, for all but the most important things we do, we should do so.

**CHAPTER 3 - Teachable and Sustainable Tools**

If you’ve got your own way, and you’re achieving the four critical behaviors, leading to great results and team member retention, you’re good to go, almost! Unfortunately, it’s not quite enough to use the four critical behaviors and achieve your two fundamental responsibilities.

However, you manage, your techniques, behavior, and philosophy must be both teachable to others and sustainable. What does this mean? It means ***that you have to be able to teach others how to do what you do, and you have to be able to continue to apply those same teachable behaviors and externally visible skills and abilities, in different roles, in different organizations, through different economic conditions, wherever you are, for long periods of time.***

It's really not enough for someone merely to get the job done. The team member has to be able to talk about it, communicate about it, and explain it, and even defend it if need be. If something goes wrong, you may have to ask that team member to walk through their process step by step as part of a root cause analysis.

What does it say about the most important systemic behavior in every organization that the majority of us learned how to do it from others who were never taught it and who privately worried that others would discover that they didn't truly know what they were doing?

There are all kinds of great managers who are reserved or even shy. Managing is about results and retention, not about smiling and knowing people. Sure, it's a people job but it's a job that any person can do with the right skills and behaviors! Don't stunt your people's possibilities because they're not you!

When your organization’s business or service grows, at some point more managers are going to be needed. If the people who are considered for promotion to a newly created managerial role haven’t learned how to manage well from their own manager, they are not going to be any good at it.

To sustain organizational growth, new managers must be created, and the way to create new managers is to teach them before they move into the role. Otherwise, they will learn the hard way- when they're already in the role. And that means learning from their own mistakes, at a time when the organization doesn't need new, weak managers but, rather, managers as good as the ones they already have - and better- before the growth.

**Frequency and Impact on One-to-Ones**

1. Weekly - 's biggest improvement in both results and retention
2. Biweekly - slightly less than half the improvement seen by weekly one-to-ones
3. No one-to-ones - slight improvement in results and retention
4. Monthly - slight decrease in results in retention

**CHAPTER 4 - One-to-ones: Know Your People**

What is a one-on-one? It is a meeting

* That is scheduled
* That is held weekly
* That lasts for 30 minutes
* That is held with each of your direct reports
* In which the direct’s issues are primary
* In which the manager takes notes

**Scheduled**

Scheduling your one-on-ones is actually more important than having them weekly. That’s why it’s first on the list. It’s more important to schedule your one-on-ones than to have one-on-ones almost every week that are unscheduled.

***The value of having one-on-ones is that by doing this, you are saying to your direct reports, “You’re always going to have time with me. I’m always going to be investing in the relationship.”*** If you don't schedule your one-to-ones, you're saying to your directs, “This might be important in a given week. You might be important, and the time with me might be valuable to me. I don't know. Let's play it by ear. We'll see how things go.

If you don't schedule one-to-ones, they're just not going to happen.

Why is scheduling so important? Direct reports whose managers have scheduled one-on-ones tell us two key things: 1) “My boss is saying I’m important,” and 2) “I have time to prepare.”

**When you tell your directs that they're going to have scheduled time with you every week, no matter what, you elevate their importance to that of the rest of the items on your calendar; That is, you're making them also important.**

When you stop by their desk to chat, you do some chit-chat, and then you discuss whatever you stopped by for. Directs know this, and they don't assume that your stopping by randomly means it is an open forum to bring up ideas, issues, or concerns.

Directs are also uncomfortable about bringing up something formal or something that requires planning while you are hanging around their desk. Some topics require thinking through the issues and asking questions in a certain way.

Directs tell us that having scheduled time with them on your calendar allows them to prepare for the meeting.

You may also be thinking, “I'm too busy.” This is a rational response to another meeting and your already busy day, but part of the reason your schedule the so full is because you're not spending enough time communicating with your directs. You're using e-mail too much, so you're having a lot of miscommunications.

Don't start your one-to-ones for three to four weeks, when you can easily fit them into a calendar that is almost empty.

***The amount of time you spend in one-to-ones- that you don't think you have time for right now!-will actually cause you to have more time to get more of your work done. How is that possible? You'll develop more trust with your directs. They'll know more often what you expect, because they'll be hearing it more regularly, so they won't ask you as many questions. You won't get interrupted as often for non-urgent issues. Your directs will wait to bring things to you that can wait.***

**Weekly**

***It is best to conduct your one-on-ones on a weekly basis. The simplest reason for this is that you probably think about your work life in weekly increments***. You think about deadlines that are coming up this week. Your direct reports tend to work the same way, for the most part. They think about their week when they’re thinking about work. The things that are happening next week don’t seem that important (even if they are). Two weeks from now seems like “the future.”

**Bi-Weekly**

Our conclusion is that managers who decide that they don't have time to have weekly one-to-ones because they're too busy are going to use the same rationale for canceling close to 50% of their biweekly one-to-ones***. Directs tell us over and over again that they prefer having weekly one-to-ones it matches the rhythm of the work. They say that biweekly one-to-ones end up being too general and less relevant***... There's another benefit to holding weekly one-to-ones that is lost if you go biweekly: a significant reduction in interruptions. If you're not doing one-to-ones now, and you're like a lot of managers, you probably get interrupted frequently by your directs.

The caveat: if you have more than 10 directs, it's OK to start with biweekly one-to-ones.

**Monthly**

***We have never seen an outcome where monthly one-to-one have improved performance. In every instance, results and retention have stayed unchanged or have declined.***

**30-Minute Meeting**

***Our data shows that 30 minutes is the magic number for scheduling time for one-on-ones.*** There’s no benefit to going longer than 30 minutes and going longer generally causes a reduction in “compliance.” Managers who schedule one-on-ones longer than 30 minutes mean well, but often they cancel them more frequently—so much so that direct reports make note of it.

If you're a senior executive, schedule one-to-ones for an hour.

**With Each of Your Direct reports**

***If you’re going to do one-on-ones, you’ve got to do them with all of your direct reports.***

If you have a special case for one or two direct reports, there’s nothing wrong with spending more time with them than with other team members. Just do it at a time other than your one-on-ones. Schedule a special one-hour meeting with those one or two direct reports to discuss whatever makes their role unique.

You should not hold one-to-ones with anyone other than your direct reports. This means that you don't do one-to-ones with people who report to your directs.

**The Manager Takes Notes**

If you’re not taking notes, then it’s not a one-on-one.

Directs have told us in every study we've ever done that their manager taking notes actually ***elevates the conversation, making it more important period managers who just chatted but didn't take notes about possible follow-up were deemed to be less engaged, less interested, and less likely to take action on topics that came up.***

The problem with a one-to-one in which the manager does not take notes isn't a lack of note taking; It's the lack of accountability that no note taking implies

One-to-ones tend to be very down into the details, very specific, very much about what's happening this week…In addition, because one-to-ones are also about relationships, trust is especially important. That means that managers have to be sure to do what they say they're going to do. Thus, remembering what we've committed to takes on special meaning.

**Where to Conduct One-on-ones?**

***Don’t do one-on-ones in public.*** One-to-ones are like feedback in the sense that they are for private use of one individual. The one-to-one you're having with one of your directs is for you and that one direct.

… don’t go to the direct’s office. Don't go from your office to the direct cubicle, because one person going to six or seven or ten different places doesn't make any sense. It's much smarter to have six or seven or ten people come to one place, and, frankly, it makes it much easier on you.

**CHAPTER 5 -Common Questions and Resistance to One-on-Ones**

Don’t ever be surprised by pushback. Just because you think what you’re going to try is a good idea doesn’t mean that your direct reports will go along with it. Quite the contrary: when you change how you manage, then fear, uncertainty, and doubt about the change are always part of the response. Don't assume it's just you, it happens to all of us.

When you look in the mirror, you see the trustworthy, hard-working, well-intentioned you. You see a nice person. But, unfortunately, your directs to not see you as a nice person. They see you as their boss.

The three most common forms of resistance to one-on-ones are the following:

* **It’s Micromanaging**:
* **I Don’t Have Time:** when your direct reports tell you they’re too busy, they’re talking about how busy they are right now. That’s why, when we announce that there will be one-on-ones, we announce that it won’t start for three weeks to allow for the scheduling to take place. If your direct reports are all so busy, they better get their priorities straight as maybe they are not making the time for the truly critical issues.
* **We talk all the time**

**It’s Micromanaging**

***Never tolerate from your directs what you would not do to your boss.***

The direct report who believes that a 30-minute meeting once a week is burdensome means that they see you as overbearing and is telling you either that he/she is afraid of oversight, or that he/she is above it, which is a level of arrogance that could tear apart your team.

***The problem today with the average manager-direct relationship is NOT one of too much management but of far too little.***

A demanding boss is not a micromanager. Asking for reports is not micromanaging. Expecting updates is not micromanaging. Asking for a meeting a week is not micromanaging someone. Spending time communicating about tasks, deliverables, deadlines, successes, failures, growth opportunities, and yes, even family- is not micromanaging in any way.

One-to-ones are not unreasonable, and the reason they're not is that they basically are a new form of communication that eliminates several other less efficient and less effective forms of communication, such as waiting in line to see the boss, 10 three-minute conversations versus one 15 minute conversation about 10 different things, more frequent feedback, more timely feedback, an opportunity to receive coaching, a reduction in e-mail communications, and steady communication despite an excessively high (or low) operational tempo.

***When directs tell you they're too busy, they're talking about how busy they are right now…But, if we allowed every new idea to be compared to everyone's current schedule, almost no one would introduce new ideas to change or improve performance, behavior, quality, quantity, or efficiency.***

“Busyness” is one of the most frequently used defenses against manager initiatives: “I don't have time.” “I'm too busy.” “What do you want me not to do in order to have time to do this new thing?”... The defensiveness that our directs feel is reasonable. Nevertheless, being so busy that one can't change has dangerous implications. As busy as everyone is, this defense, left unanswered, suggests that the organization will never change.

When a direct says he doesn't have time to attend one-to-ones, it's a sign that he is fully busy with work he's not getting done. But if this is a defense against a new obligation, then you're never going to get that direct to ever do anything new.

There's a simple rule about work when there's more than can be done: ***Before trying to get more of everything done, get the most important things done first.***

There are three forms of power or influence in organizations. Role power, that which the organization grants you to compel others to act for the organization; relationship power, your own ability to change behaviors of others because of their knowledge of, and trust in, you; and expertise power, other’s perceptions of your technical, industrial, or topical knowledge that causes them to follow your guidance.

***Role power tends to exist in inverse proportion to how often you use it.***

**Talking Too Much and Talking Too Little**

One-to-ones are not chances “to just sit around and talk,” “to get to know one another informally,” or “to do a quick catch up.”

***The agenda is simple: first, 10 minutes for your direct to speak, then 10 minutes for you to speak, and then 10 minutes to talk about the future. The most important item on the agenda is first… reckless first and talks about whatever the direct wants to talk about.***

Start each one to one, every time, with every direct, no matter what, with the same first question. It eliminates the need to be creative, it increases the brain power you put into listening to the answer rather than the question, and it simplifies your work.

You don't have time for chit-chat; That's why it's not on the agenda.

Don't ask your directs for a list of topics…Also, it's not a good idea to send a direct a list of topics that you're going to talk about. In theory, this makes good sense: the direct will be prepared, and the meeting will be more efficient. What actually happens in far too many cases is that the direct will actually spend their time and their portion of the agenda addressing your list.

A typical one-to-one direct’s portion includes updates about ongoing work, questions about problems that are having, project status reports, requests for assistance with budgets or communications, request for guidance about next steps or about approaching a problem, verification of rumors they've heard, clarification of what you want or how you want something done, notification of tasks they've finished, follow up on pending actions, reminders of information and materials they need from you, and so on.

One-to-one’s can be personal or work-related. One-to-ones create a form for both. Trust your directs to choose to talk about what's important to them.

As a general rule, if there is any information that you need to get out to your entire team, we recommend that it go out and what we call a waterfall meeting not in your one-to-ones.

Don't use your one-to-ones to pass down standard information that everyone's getting.

The last 10 minutes on the agenda is a reminder to cover the future or big picture when you think the timing is reasonable and you run short. If you don't run short, don't cover the future. If you run short two weeks in a row, there is no need to cover the future all over again (unless there are worthy issues to discuss) so soon.

The average direct talks for 21 minutes… Directs are far more likely to talk too much than too little.

***The agenda of a meeting always serves the purpose of the meeting, not the other way around. The agenda is there to facilitate the purpose. If the agenda is getting in the way of the purpose, you jettison the agenda to get to the purpose.***

**Pushback on Note Taking**

There are two types of pushback on note taking: managers who prefer to take notes on their laptop, and directs who are worried that their manager’s notes are a form of documentation

We don't recommend that you take notes on your laptop, and neither does almost anyone else. Just do a quick Google search of the effectiveness of handwritten versus type notes, and you'll agree with us.

Documentation is an obligation, not something to be feared. Every note you take, every e-mail you send, and every spreadsheet you create are all documentation of something.

**Can I Do One-to-ones over the Phone?**

Our data show that you can get roughly 80% of the value from a phone one to one that you get from a face to face one to one

There are only two cases to do phone one-on-ones

* When your direct report is not co-located with you
* When a normally co-located direct report is traveling or a manager is traveling

If you really believe in the relationship value of one-to-ones, then you will make the time to call your directs, just like when you are going to a meeting in a conference room. Don't make your directs come and find you.

**More Document Sharing is Necessary**

Distance management requires that you become much more effective at managing others based on their work product. Effective managers ask for more documents from their directs in advance of a phone one-to-one to give themselves a better opportunity to assess the quality and quantity of the direct's work product and to allow time to give them feedback on it… Another reason to encourage document communications in advance is the simple one of efficiency. We found that asking for key documents in advance speeds up the one to one.

**Interruptions Are More Frequent Without Focus**

People can only believe that phone one-to-ones are somehow less important than face-to-face meetings. You will be interrupted much more frequently when you're in a phone one-on-one than in a face to face one to one.

Suggestions to Deal With Interruptions:

1. **Start with your back turned** - Turn your back on the world. close your door. Don't look around.
2. **Ignore interruptions** - When someone approaches, turn your back. If the person speaks to you, smile and point to the phone. If the person is standing there, waiting for you to turn off the phone, turn your back. If the person touches your shoulder, hold up a hand while not turning around.
3. **Focus** - Stop checking your emails. Stop looking at stuff on your desk. Close your eyes, and visualize your direct speaking. Shut down your browser. It's only 30 minutes of your time, once a week. Your directs have earned it!

**Can I Be Friends with My Directs?**

You might think of yourself as the boss sometimes and as your directs’ friend at other times, but this kind of role-switching is simply not practicable. Further, even if we ignore the friendship aspect for a moment, the appearance of friendship (whose moral obligations are always assumed) is a significant detractor to one's ability to lead and manage others.

With both of these ideas - social obligation and implied secrecy - friendships run afoul of a manager's professional obligations. A manager cannot expect to be treated as a professional if she at times accepts the different set of moral obligations that friendship also implies. If you're a manager, a part of you knows this. It's not a joy to talk about, but we can't just ignore the friction between our various sets of obligations.

***Not only do your directs see you first as their boss, but also everyone else sees you as your directs’ boss, not as your directs’ friend. When your behaviors aren't easily understood as normal manager behaviors, others in the firm will wonder why you're not effective or not reasonable. They will assume that, regardless of any previous relationship, your decisions will be based on managerial factors, not friendship. If they ever find out otherwise, you will not be taken seriously for much longer.***

You cannot be friends with your directs, but yes you can be friendly with them.

If you're drinking with a smaller subset of your team regularly, you're either admitting they're your friends, or, if you wish to claim it's only friendly behavior, then the subset makes it friendly behavior that is unevenly applied. Thus, favoritism… So, you can drink with your directs, as long as you generally do so equally across the entire team.

Something else we've learned about drinking alcohol with your directs: have only one drink with them. They'll appreciate your willingness to not set yourself apart from them completely. When you turn the second one down, they'll appreciate you more for setting an example and admitting you know you're not one of them, completely

Effective managers want to know their directs, and they are required to make hard decisions that put the company first period be it professional and be friendly, not friends.

**CHAPTER 6 - How to Start Doing One-to-ones**

Avoid times right before and after staff meetings, or regular meetings with your boss period don't choose Monday morning, because meetings slow people down, and you don't want to slow them down at the start of the week. Don't choose Friday afternoon, because if you're one to one get stepped on, you won't have time to reschedule.

Don't let directs choose whatever time works for them. We've tested that. It will wreak havoc on your schedule.

Don’t choose times that work for you without any input. We've tested that. Directs won't like the times you choose for them, even if their calendar is as open as the Texas plains.

Don't lay out your calendar, and each unit directs calendars, and try and figure out what will work best for you and each of them.

Walk them through the purpose, the agenda, how you're going to take notes, and how they're going to continue indefinitely.

For 12 weeks, don't introduce any other new management behavioral change. Just work on the one-to-ones for 12 weeks. At the end of the 12 weeks, you'll know your directs better, and you'll be much more aware of how to deliver the next steps.

If you start delivering feedback using our model after only a few weeks of one-to-ones, you'll be learning two things at once. We've tested it, and it doesn't work. If you don't take time to build trust, your directs will struggle more and longer with getting more feedback from you

**CHAPTER 7 - Talk About Performance - Feedback**

The average manager hasn't been trained, tutored, mentored, taught, or coached with anything approaching professional development of the skills necessary for becoming a successful manager. Just lack of skills and training shows up most quickly in your lack of ability to communicate about performance.

When the average manager gives feedback, the focus is on what happened. The manager thinks about what happened in the past and asks herself how to talk to the direct - about what happened, in the past, about which the manager can do nothing.

It ought to be obvious why talking about something that happened in the past is a problem. It also ought to give you a clue as to why directs get defensive when managers talk to them about their mistakes. They get defensive because managers talk to them about their mistakes - what happened in the past - about which directs can do nothing. So, they feel trapped.

***Our directs are similar to us in that they make mistakes, but they aren’t actively trying to mess things up. They’re going to respond to a discussion about their mistake by giving their reasons for doing what they did. The mistakes may not be good, but at least their reasons were explainable (in their mind).***

There are all kinds of reasons why direct reports defend themselves. Probably the first one on the list is the perceived lack of trust provided by their boss...The lack of frequent performance communication increases direct reports’ defensiveness as well… also, let's face it: our role power increases their defensiveness.

The way to reduce these problems down to a manageable minimum is to ask yourself, “What is the purpose of this performance communication?” The purpose is to encourage effective future behavior!

**Encourage Effective Future Behavior**

The moment you switch to a future focus, however, you free yourself up to focus on something that you (and they) can do something about.

If your direct made a mistake, you want different behavior. If your directed something well, you want more of the same.

Focus on what you want!

The best way to encourage effective future behavior is the below feedback model. It has four steps:

1. **Ask**: Ask your direct reports if you can give them feedback.  You can use the word feedback or another word, but you must first ask the direct, every time, whether it's positive feedback that you will be giving or negative feedback. The questions might be something like this:
   1. Can I give you some feedback?
   2. Can I make an observation?
   3. Can I share something with you?
   4. Can I have a word with you?
2. **State the behavior**: Tell the direct report what he/she did well or what he/she did that you would like her to change. Behavior consists of five things:
   1. **Behavior consists of five things**
      1. The words you say
      2. How you say the words
      3. Your facial expressions
      4. Body language
      5. Work product
         1. quality
         2. quantity
         3. accuracy
         4. timeliness
         5. documents
3. **State the Impact of the behavior**: explain to your direct report the problems created or the positive impact their behavior has on the organization, the team, and those around them
4. **Encourage Effective Future Behavior**: you either ask for a change in their behavior or say thank you for the behavior that you want to encourage.

When we are giving negative feedback, we are asking the direct to behave differently. We are not punishing the past mistake, because we've already forgiven it. Remember that our focus is on the future, not the past. The easiest way to ask the direct to do this is, “Can you change that?” Here are some other examples:

* Could you change that?
* Can you do that differently?
* What can you do differently?
* How could that be better?

**When Should I Give Feedback?**

The simple answer is, sooner is better

***Giving immediate feedback is great but almost an unattainable goal. The real goal for timing your feedback is as soon as you can***. When you learn something positive or negative about the actions of one of your direct reports, decide to share it with them as feedback when you have 30 seconds or longer to speak with them in private. Usually, that will be within a day or two for most managers.

**How Does Feedback Sound?**

***Whenever possible, it's best for managers to give feedback immediately after they see, hear, or notice the behavior. If you have a chance to give feedback right after one of your directs does something you either want to encourage (positive feedback) or change (negative feedback), and you can do so without others overhearing, do so.***

Immediately isn't necessary. If you can't give someone feedback in a meeting because you can't do it without others overhearing, you can absolutely give it an hour or two later, when you and they have a moment. Another way to think about the “when” of feedback is as soon as practicable - but that's not as easy to say as immediately.

If you're wondering about how to define how long “soon” lasts, at the outside, it's about a week. In other words, don't give feedback that's more than a week old. Why? The reason is that our ability to remember precisely by then has faded enough so that you may not get it right, and accuracy matters when you are giving feedback. You shouldn't say something vague like, “I can't remember what you said but whatever it was, it was really good and made us look good.” Further, your directs won't remember the moment as clearly as you would have liked them to.

**CHAPTER 8 – Common Questions and Resistance to Feedback**

The following are some questions to ask yourself as you think about delivering feedback to your direct reports.

* **Am I Angry?** If you’re angry, don’t give feedback. Period!  If your directs know you're angry, then the feedback is about you and not about them, and that violates the purpose of the feedback, both in terms of encouraging good behavior and in terms of changing bad behavior.
* **Do I Want To Remind Or Punish?** If you’re giving feedback, then your purpose is to encourage effective future behavior. Yes, you have to mention the past, but that’s not your purpose. You’re not trying to point out the mistake.
* **Can I Let It Go?** If you can’t let it go in terms of how you feel, we recommend that you let go by not giving the negative feedback. Would have confused the need for delivering feedback quickly with an emotional urge to do so. The manager who really believes in the purpose of feedback and wants to focus on encouraging effective future behavior isn't in a negative emotional rush to get feedback.

If you don't pass the three-question checklist, what should you do? You should delay or defer. Delay means you hold off giving the feedback for a bit. Maybe you will get over being angry. Maybe you will realize that, in your haste, your thinking was sloppy… Delay is okay. It's only one piece of feedback, and a few hours won't hurt… suppose you pause and realize a few hours later that you're still not in the right place. You're still angry, or, for any other reason, you're just not where you should be. That's fine. Defer the feedback completely. Let this instance go completely.

**What Do I Do If One of My Directs Pushes Back or Refuses Feedback??**

***The Shot Across the Bow! The concept of handling defensive responses to feedback is based on the naval concept of shooting across the bow of an opposing vessel… Basically, a shot across the bow says, “I can reach you, and I can hit you if I want to.”***

The analogy works this way: when your direct gets defensive, you needn't do anything at all about it, because you have already fired a shot across their bow. They likely know they're in the wrong, and they know you're aware of what they did. If it continues, you'll likely be back. Enough said

… If your stuck-in-the-past direct won't allow you to achieve your original purpose, don't honor the direct’s request that you join her in the past. It was your conversation to begin with. If you're not going to be able to achieve your purpose, don't make it worse by arguing about something you can't change…Once you’ve given the feedback and the direct report has pushed back, pause, smile, apologize, and walk away.

**The Capstone: Systemic Feedback**

Repeated behaviors without a change toward effectiveness require *Systemic Feedback*. Systemic feedback addresses the direct report’s combination of continued failure to change with their stated commitment to change:

* When do we use it? Use systemic feedback when you have already given six instances of standard feedback in a period of time and the direct report has not been engaging in the behavior they’ve committed to.
* How Is It Different? Systemic feedback is different from standard feedback because the behavior about which we’re giving feedback is the failure to meet commitments.
* Two Dangers: The Systemic-feedback-related dangers are:
  + We must be faithful to the feedback model.
  + Implied sanctions must be discussed and delivered.

**CHAPTER 9 - How to Start Delivering Feedback**

After 12 weeks of having one-to-ones, you can start the process of delivering your performance communications in the Manager Tools Feedback Model.

* **Announce your intention in your weekly staff meeting** - OK and individual behavior, but announcing it to the team says that everyone is going to be treated similarly.
* **Schedule 30 minutes for your briefing**
* **Use your materials and reports**
* **Cover the purpose of the feedback** - which is to encourage effective future behavior. When you have to give them negative feedback, tell them you'll do your best to be relaxed and not accusatory. Tell them you know there's nothing we can do about a mistake that's in the past, so there's no sense in getting upset after the fact.
* **Walk them through each step of the feedback model**
* **Give only positive feedback for eight weeks**
* **Add in negative feedback after eight weeks**
* **Stay as positive as you can** - Be careful that you don't overdo negative feedback. Most managers fail to realize how much they see their job as “correcting mistakes.” If you believe you should be “vigilant” against “mistakes,” two things will happen gradually: you'll start seeing all the mistakes, and you'll stop seeing all the good behaviors.

**CHAPTER 10 - Ask For More - Coaching**

Coaching allows you to help each of your direct reports grow their skill set(s). Coaching is defined as a systemic effort to improve the performance of a direct report in a specific skill area. Coaching is a way to supervise the self-improvement process of the direct report over a series of months.

**Our coaching model has four simple steps:**

* **Step 1:** **Collaborate to set a goal:** how do we set a goal? Easy. We describe a behavior or a result we want to achieve by a date when we want it achieved. We will follow a goal structure called DBQ: deadline, behavior, and quality. We start with the deadline portion because deadlines drive behavior. The behavior portion is what we want the direct report to master—the behavior we want to improve. The quality portion is how we will measure the behavior
* **Step 2:** **Collaborate to brainstorm resources**: we get to the goal by jointly brainstorming the resources that the direct report could use to become more effective at the skill on which we’re coaching him. Part of the coaching plan will include finding out what resources are available. The manager and their direct report sit down and brainstorm to produce a list of potential resources that might be helpful to them in learning and doing this new or better skill.  Looking for the one right thing period we're looking for lots of possible things, hoping that out of all of them there will probably be one to five things that will collectively get us where we need to go.
* **Step 3**: **Collaborate to create a plan**: we’ve got a goal; we’ve got a pile of ideas to get us there; what now? Now we create a plan, a series of steps the direct report will take to help him/her start learning and improving his/her behavior. The steps in the plan each have three parts: the deadline, a behavior, and the reporting that the task is done, which is inherent in the task. The best way to keep people improving is by creating and focusing on short-term (week-to-week) tasks.
* **Step 4**: **The direct report acts and reports on the plan**: it’s by providing daily or regular updates in the form of task completion e-mails, and briefly discussing their progress each week during the one-on-one.

In every one-on-one, we will be reviewing completed tasks, rescheduling uncompleted tasks, and creating new deliverables based on where we are in the process.

**CHAPTER 11 - How to Start Coaching?**

If you have time, give your direct reports examples of a deadline, behavior, quality (DBQ) goals, and how to meet their deliverables. It’s not a good idea to try to start to coach everyone all at once.

Even though it doesn’t take as much time as O3s, coaching feels more intensive to many managers. It will be more fun to coach top performers because you probably won’t feel that it’s a “must improve” situation the way you will feel as you start to coach some of your at-risk performers.

After coaching a couple of your top performers through one or two successful sessions, roll out coaching more broadly across your entire team

**CHAPTER 12 – Push Work Down - Delegation**

***Learning to delegate is part of the transition to becoming an executive. Too many managers today think that because they are smarter and more effective at getting things done than their direct reports, they should try to get more done by doing it themselves. This isn’t sustainable, and we’ve seen the failure scenario play out a hundred times.***

You not Delegating a task when it's not a task you would normally do, and you're simply assigning that task among members of your team. This is an example of task assignment. Delegation on the other hand, is you turning over responsibility for one of your regular responsibilities- something you routinely do- on a permanent or long-standing basis, to one of your directs.

***Don't ever delegate a new responsibility your boss has just given you to one of your directs. Learn it first, master it, before you consider delegating it***

**How to Delegate**

Delegation has five steps:

1. **State your desire for help**: asking for help will guarantee that you’re going to be able to delegate the activity to your direct report.
2. **Tell them why you’re asking them**: Help the direct report understand the rationale for choosing her/him. We want the direct report to believe he/she is the right person for the job.  ***Look for four areas of direct’s abilities to determine what to delegate to whom: what they're good at, what they like to do, what they need to do, or what they want to do. As a general rule, disregard what you are good at, or what you like to do***.
3. **Ask for specific acceptance:** Ask the direct to accept the responsibility before telling them the details of what’s involved. A direct who has already agreed is much more likely to listen to the details with an attitude of ownership in trying to solve the problem. If we wait to ask until they've heard all the details they will often listen to all the details in a defensive way, worrying about workload and priorities.
4. **Describe the task or project in detail**: Walk the direct report through what the responsibility is in detail. Explain to them what they will need to do at a reasonable level.
5. **Address deadline, quality, and reporting standards**: Once you’ve gotten acceptance, it’s time to cover three things: the deadline, the quality standard the work has to meet, and whatever reporting frequency is required

**CHAPTER 13 – Common Questions and Resistance to Delegation**

There are four tasks that you could delegate to your direct reports:

1. **Reporting:** let one of your direct reports create a report
2. **Meetings:** have one of your direct reports responsible for creating the agenda and facilitating the meeting.
3. **Presentations:** assign a presentation and delegate it to a direct report and help them create the slide deck and rehearse
4. **Projects**: follow the same procedure as for the presentation

When you use your role power to get something done, you get what is known as “*compliance energy”* from your directs. They know they “have to.” They'll do it, but they may not be excited about it… When you use the persuasion built on trust from your relationship power to get something done, you get what is known as *“commitment energy.”* The direct knows they can say no, and *they choose to say yes*. That ability to choose frees up that last full measure of work devotion that we want from them.

So, if a direct says no, you are obligated to accept the demurral. Usually, this means one of two things, tactically. Either you will ask another direct, which works far better than most managers expect, or you will do the work yourself. Strategically, of course, it also suggests that you look at your efforts toward building trusting relationships and asking yourself, “Did I not see something, or was I unaware of what her situation was?”... The overwhelming majority of nodes are based on workload issues.

***The first time you were told no, accept it. There's nothing wrong with probing, however, and trying to overcome the objection. Then, honor the no and walk away. If this happens a second time, do the same thing, at first. Probe. Try to overcome. Then, if the answer is still no, step back before you ask someone else. Ask yourself, “What do I think his/her workload is? Is it close to being overwhelming? Is this “no” a part of a weakening of our relationship that has larger implications?”*** Look back over the past few weeks for clues to a change in your relationship, which might include any of the following:

* behavior changes
* change of tone and conversations
* fewer emails
* change of tone in emails
* changes in schedule
* changes in mood
* changes in attendance changes in meeting behaviors and interactions

After getting two demurrals, take time in a one to one to ask questions of the direct.

**CHAPTER 14 - How to Start Delegating**

Explain that you’re going to start slowly and that you will choose whom to delegate to based on what the direct report is good at, likes, wants, and needs to do in terms of performance and goals. Remind them again that when you ask them to accept the delegation, it’s ok to say no. Just ask them to step up by pushing some work down. Your best team members will relish the challenge.

**AFTERWARD**

***You can be demanding while also showing respect for your team. You don’t have to withhold positive feedback. You can give negative feedback with love in your heart. You can deliver tough messages with kindness. You don’t have to be mean, short, or disrespectful to challenge people. You don’t have to “act like a boss.” Nor do you have to sugarcoat hard messages. Be direct report, and be kind doing it. That takes love.***