

First Time Manager Tips for Go-to Market Leaders

October 24, 2023

Adapting to life as a first-time manager can be complex.

On the one hand, you're likely to be excited about the opportunities this new leadership position brings. You'll have new changes to [enhance the sales process](#) from the inside, new ways to develop your skills, and you might even earn a much higher salary.

However, as a new manager, you'll have a number of challenges to overcome too, from figuring out how to motivate your team to dealing with hiring and firing processes.

These first-time manager tips should help you to navigate the nuances of your new role more effectively so you can thrive as a sales leader.

Common Challenges Faced by First-Time Managers

Making the transition from a sales rep or individual team member to a 'leadership' position isn't as easy as it seems. According to [one report](#), around 26% of first-time managers say they enter their new role without feeling ready to lead others.

Managers in the sales landscape aren't just responsible for driving revenue results and keeping teams motivated, they have to overcome a variety of obstacles. Some of the most significant challenges you'll face in your new manager role include:

- **Leading former peers:** Influencing and directing people who used to be your team members can feel complex. Some of your colleagues may take time to adapt to your position as a leader, and you may struggle to earn their trust and respect.
- **Balancing a new workload:** As a manager, you'll be responsible for various tasks, from managing interpersonal relationships, to creating sales strategies, forecasting results, and even hiring and firing employees. There's a lot to keep track of.
- **Motivating and inspiring employees:** A core part of your role as a manager is to motivate and inspire other team members. To do this, you need to understand what drives your employees, and how you can keep them focused.
- **Holding people accountable:** If employees don't reach their sales targets, or fail to perform according to your company's expectations, you need to hold them accountable. Giving negative feedback can be difficult for anyone, no matter your leadership position.

- **Coaching others:** Managers are in an excellent position to help their employees develop new skills and abilities. However, [teaching other people](#) can be complicated if you don't have any prior experience as a coach.
- **Delegating:** First-time managers need to be able to identify which tasks they should manage themselves, and which they should give to subordinates. It can be difficult to give up control of projects, and choose the right strategies for delegation as a beginner.
- **Resolving conflicts:** As a first-time manager, you'll need to regularly resolve conflicts between members of your team. This means you need to have excellent problem solving and communication skills, as well as a high level of emotional intelligence.

Tips for Becoming a Successful First-time Manager

The more time you spend within a managerial role, the more likely you are to find your rhythm and improve your leadership skills. While embracing a new manager job can be complicated, there are certain steps you can take to boost your chances of success.

1. Assess your Strengths and Weaknesses

Every employee in a sales business has their own distinct strengths and weaknesses, even the managers. Understanding what those strengths and weaknesses are, is crucial to ensuring you can thrive in your role.

Ask yourself where you're likely to excel in your new position, and where you might struggle. For instance, you might be great at coaching others, but have a hard time delivering negative feedback or resolving conflicts. Once you determine your weaknesses, set strategies for how you can overcome them. For instance, you could invest in first-time manager training courses or webinars.

1. Get to Know Your Team

While every member of your team might be working towards common goals, such as enhanced revenue or reduced customer turnover, they're all individuals with [different skills](#) and personalities. The only way to ensure you're embracing the right management style for your team members, and that you're equipped to keep them motivated, is to get to know them.

Taking the time to connect with your team members gives you an opportunity to find out:

- Their strengths, so you know which tasks they'll excel at
- Their personalities, and how they'll mesh with other members of the team
- Learning styles and coaching preferences
- What motivates, inspires, and drives each employee
- What kind of management style they respond to

1. Set and Maintain Clear Expectations

As a first-time manager, you'll need to get used to setting goals for your employees, and outlining clear expectations. It's up to you to ensure your staff members know exactly what you want them to achieve

each month, quarter, or year, and how you're going to measure their performance.

If you don't set clear expectations, your employees won't have an obvious vision or mission to work towards. Set meetings with each of your reps regularly, where you can discuss things like sales quotas, based on forecasting information, and professional goals.

Make sure you follow up with your reps regularly to see how they're progressing, and leave the lines of communication open, so they can reach out for clarity on any projects they don't understand.

1. Invest in Developing your Teams

When you enter a new manager role, it's worth remembering your success won't just depend on your own performance, but how effective your team members are in their role. With that in mind, it pays to invest in developing your team's skills and abilities.

There are various ways you can do this. One option is to provide your employees with plenty of resources they can access in their own time, such as [community platforms](#) like the Hardskill.Exchange, books, documents, and whitepapers.

Another option is to foster a peer-to-peer learning environment. Create mentor programs where mentees can seek assistance from professionals with the skills they want to develop. Encourage team members to share their insights and discoveries with employees as they grow.

1. Create a Feedback Cycle

As mentioned above, one of the most important things you'll need to do as a first-time manager, is learn how to motivate and inspire your teams. One of the best ways to do this, is to ensure you're providing them with regular constructive feedback.

Recognizing and rewarding your teams for their hard work will help to keep them engaged. At the same time, providing insights into how they can improve will ensure they can continue to optimize their performance going forward.

Speaking of feedback, it's important to ensure you're gathering and evaluating feedback from your employees too. Ask them for their opinions on where you can improve your management style, your approach to leadership, and your goal setting strategies.

The Importance of Continuous Learning and Development

It's easy to assume that you've reached the pinnacle of professional achievement when you earn a manager role. However, any first-time manager should know, there's still a lot to learn. Accepting the fact that you don't know everything, or have all the answers doesn't just humble you. It can also reduce the pressure you feel to perform perfectly, and never make mistakes.

The best first-time managers adopt a 'growth mindset'. They understand there are always [new skills to learn](#), new challenges to overcome, and opportunities to develop. A growth mindset, as popularized by

Carol Dweck, encourages you to constantly seek out opportunities for improvement.

It also means you approach failures correctly, looking at mistakes as a chance to learn, rather than a sign of inadequacy. As you step into your new role, make sure you:

- **Invest in training:** Constantly seek out new ways to acquire skills and knowledge. Join online forums where you can learn from other managers. Take part in courses, webinars, workshops to hone your leadership skills. Read books where possible too.
- **Stay informed:** The sales landscape is always changing, as is the world of business. Staying up to date is crucial as a new manager. Follow industry influencers, read market reports, and keep your finger on the pulse of what's happening in your landscape.
- **Network:** Networking is one of the best things you can do to ensure you're constantly expanding your skills, and connecting with other industry leaders. Look for ways to build out your network with other professionals in your field.

Importance of Work-Life Balance as a Manager

One crucial thing to keep in mind as you move into your role as a first-time manager, is that leading a team doesn't mean ignoring your own wellbeing. Sales people often struggle with achieving a good level of work-life balance, as they're constantly striving to achieve lofty goals.

When you move into a managerial role, finding a good level of work-life balance can be even harder. You'll have more challenging tasks to deal with, a more demanding schedule, and more expectations to live up to. It's easy to let your work life take over everything.

However, if you don't invest in caring for yourself, the results can be catastrophic. Studies show that managers are [27% more likely](#) to feel stressed on a regular basis than their employees. Increased stress boosts your risk of burnout, and causes issues with both your mental and physical health.

This is particularly true if you're not giving yourself the opportunity to rest and recuperate in between your work days. As tempting as it might be to adopt an unsustainable lifestyle that involves long hours and minimal rest, it's important to remember you can't succeed without your health.

If you're exhausted, overwhelmed, or sick as a result of work-life balance, you'll struggle to motivate and inspire others. What's more, since teams often look to their leaders for guidance on how to behave, you risk instilling bad habits in your staff members too.

Commit to maintaining your personal wellbeing. Take time to unplug from work, when necessary, work regular hours, and encourage your team members to follow in your footsteps.

Thriving as a First-Time Manager

The transition to your new life as a first-time manager can be complicated. As exciting as it is to take on new responsibilities, and earn a better pay check, there are various challenges to overcome. Don't be

surprised if you feel a little stressed and overwhelmed at times.

Remember, becoming a manager doesn't immediately make you an excellent leader. Following the tips above, and committing to constant development and improvement will ensure you can thrive and succeed in your new role.

After a while, if you commit to the right strategy, you'll be able to benefit from all of the rewards of being an amazing manager, from a loyal and dedicated team, to a greater level of job satisfaction.

Struggling to find your feet as a first-time manager? Connect with other market leaders, and develop your skills at the [HardSkill Exchange](#).??

HSE Team