



EBOOK

4 Communication Essentials Your Managers Need to Know

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AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

The failure rate for managers can be staggering.



Having the Right Skillset


Managing people is a huge responsibility and a great honour. But with the right tools, skills, and training, individuals can beat the odds and make the shift from successful individual contributor to successful new manager.



The Best Leaders

When people think about their best leader, he or she was most likely someone who truly listened, was flexible, acknowledged the work and contributions of others, and made them feel like they made a difference. He or she was probably trustworthy, accessible, and a good role model, and gave helpful and appropriate feedback. This is what all managers must aspire to.





When you are
the manager,
you are the
topic of dinner
conversations.

What are your people saying about you?

It's critical for managers to be mindful of the interactions they have with others. People take their work personally and form emotional attachments to their results. And they are constantly forming opinions about what's happening to them and whether it's pleasant or unpleasant, effective or ineffective; fair or unfair. Especially when it involves their communication with their manager.

These opinions go home with people at the end of the day and become the topic of dinner conversation. So it's critical for managers to be aware of the impact of their tone of voice, their words, and their interactions with others throughout the day by becoming adept at the art of conversation and interaction with others.

*The best minutes you
spend are those you
invest in your people.*

—*The New One Minute Manager*[®]
by Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson

What Are the Four Communication Essentials Managers Need?

Good managers understand that conversations are the key to creating relationships. Over time, they learn how to make these conversations a cornerstone for developing their direct reports. Through our research we've found that there are Four Essential Skills that managers use to facilitate more effective interactions with their people. These microskills assist managers in creating purposeful, intentional, quality conversations that are the lifeblood of productive relationships.

1. Listen effectively to learn from others
2. Inquire for insight and understanding
3. Tell their truth with empathy and compassion
4. Express confidence in their people



Skill 1— Listen to Learn

Listening is one of the most important skills any manager can have, regardless of tenure. It makes direct reports feel valued and heard, and it builds trust. Good listeners avoid offering advice (unless it's solicited) and they don't derail the conversation by offering up a time when they were in the same situation (again, unless it's solicited). They know it's important to be fully present so they don't multitask during a conversation. They focus on what the other person is saying and respond in ways that make others feel heard and valued. In any interaction, it's important to

- Listen with the intent of understanding the other person
- Set aside distractions
- Focus on the person and give your undivided attention



Skill 2— Inquire for Insight

Great managers draw their people out. They ask questions that allow their people to share insights and ideas that can benefit projects, tasks, and the team in general. And it helps the manager understand the underlying motivations in regard to what drives behavior. When inquiring for insight, focus on the future rather than the past and avoid placing blame. It's also important for managers to

- Ask open-ended questions
- Emphasise *what* and *how* rather than *why*
- Encourage the direct report, once the conversation comes to an end, to recap in order to check for understanding



Skill 3—

Tell *Your* Truth

Because the goal is to create purposeful action through clarity, managers must learn that telling their truth is an opportunity to shift gears and give feedback when needed to accomplish the goal. Being truthful builds trust and authenticity and allows managers to share information that is needed to help move the person forward. Many managers are afraid of being honest for fear of hurting others' feelings, when in fact a truthful exchange can empower others. When telling their truth, managers need to

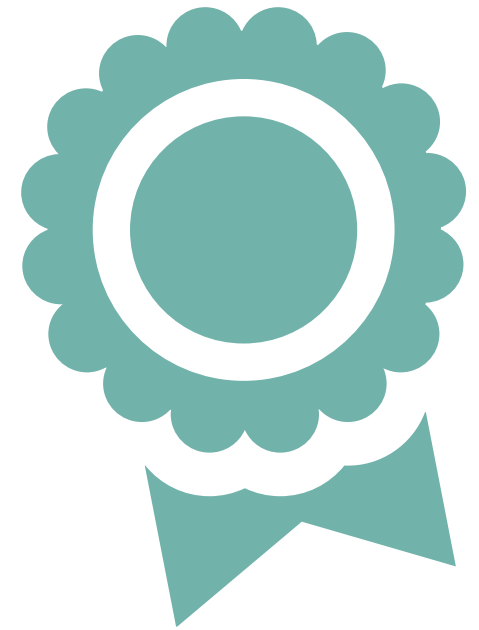
- Be brave, honest, and respectful
- Be open to other perspectives
- Avoid blame or judgment; focus on forward movement




Skill 4— Express Confidence

When managers express confidence in their direct reports, it builds the direct reports' self-assurance and enthusiasm. In conversations with others, it's important for managers to

- Highlight relevant qualities or skills
- Cite previous successes
- Offer support as needed





*Managing is done
minute to minute in
a series of conversations.*

—*The New One Minute Manager*[®]
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Putting It All Together— The Four Conversations

Relationships are built minute to minute through a series of effective conversations. The tone for success is set early on in any conversation. Our research has shown that successful managers focus on the quality and frequency of Four Core Conversations: Goal Setting, Praising, Redirecting, and Wrapping Up.

It's important to use the four core skills—Listening to Learn, Inquiring for Insight, Telling Your Truth, and Expressing Confidence—in any conversation. Setting the agenda beforehand allows managers to think about what they want to say and how they want to say it. They should be clear about their intentions and mindful of their tone of voice and body language. For important conversations, they should be prepared with responses to questions direct reports are likely to have.



Goal Setting

Conversation 1

All good performance starts with clear goals. Goals set people up for success, growth, and development. They should be written in a way that illustrates what a good job looks like, documents the milestones to mark progress, and stretches the individual beyond his or her current performance. And they should be reviewed by the manager and the direct report throughout the year. During a Goal-Setting Conversation, it's important for managers to:

- Introduce the goal
- Get feedback to refine the goal
- Identify steps to make progress on the goal

The best goals are clear and compelling.

Praising

Conversation 2

Praising Conversations reinforce good behaviours and support stronger relationships beyond the goal. They are servant leadership in action. Praising is a powerful catalyst for reinforcing the behaviors that managers want to see over and over from their direct reports. When having a Praising Conversation, it's important to consider these points:

- Communicate the praising and be specific and timely
- Encourage the person to reflect on the accomplishment
- Express confidence and encourage continued good work

Catch people doing something right.

Conversation 3

Redirecting

If people make mistakes when they know better, that's a won't-do problem rather than a can't-do problem. This is when it's time to redirect. It's best to have the conversation as soon as possible rather than delaying or avoiding it. During a Redirecting Conversation, it's important that managers adhere to the following guidelines:

- Clarify the goal
- Ask for the person's perspective or confirmation, being sure to listen to learn!
- Encourage reflection on impact and solutions

Tell them when they need to adjust their course.

Wrapping Up

Conversation 4

Wrapping Up Conversations should occur at the end of projects or goals to celebrate results, acknowledge learning, keep people energised, inspire engagement, and promote development by honouring the work that's been done. Wrapping Up Conversations recognise what's been learned and address anything that's lingering. These conversations also promote reflection. When conducting a Wrapping Up Conversation

- Ask how the person feels about the goal or project
- Discuss the results and impact collaboratively
- Ask about key learnings or areas for improvement

Learn from what
went well and
what went wrong.

Setting your managers up for success makes all the difference.

Being a manager doesn't need to be daunting or overwhelming. Having the skill, intent, and capacity to engage in effective conversations is a key competency for success as a manager. These strategies can get managers off to a fast start by easing and supporting their transition and improving their performance, not only for them but for the entire team as well.





*Management is about
helping people reach
their full potential.*

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