

The Leading Edge

2nd Quarter 2014 Manager Newsletter



Manage to your team's strengths

Does building up weaknesses feel like all deposit and no return? Find out why managing to your team's strengths might be the answer you're looking for. **More...**



Tips for virtual managers

Telework can be a great way to boost employee engagement, morale and work/life balance. Check out these tips for managing virtual teams. **More...**



Develop yourself and your team

Do the words "development plan" leave you a little befuddled? These ideas can help you with your own plan. And once you've made friends with that dragon, you can better guide your team members as they find new directions. **More...**

Manage to your team's strengths

2nd Quarter 2014 Manager Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

Are you working hard with your team to shore up weaknesses? Try using this quick test to see if it's energy well-spent:

1. Is the team member interested in developing the weakness in question? If so, full speed ahead! If not, go to the next question.
2. Is the team member's weak area an essential skill for his or her job? If so, help him or her bring it up to par. If not, go to the next question.
3. Is the weak area essential for a job the team member wants one day? If so, help him or her bring it up to par.

If the answer to all three questions is "no," maybe your team member doesn't need to develop this weakness. Maybe that energy can be better channeled into building up a strength.

Successful teams focus more on strengths

Think about it. Do you like to do things you're not that good at and don't have an interest in? Most people don't. But when they're using their strengths every day, people often feel happier, more engaged and more productive.

Whenever you can, help your team members shine. You can:

- Praise them during and between performance reviews
- Find out what they're excited to learn
- Assign projects to those you know will excel at them
- Help connect them with mentors who have skills they want to develop
- Give them assignments that lead to growth in directions they want to explore

Sleuthing out hidden strengths

Not everyone knows what they're best at. Some people are still figuring it out.

As a manager, you're in a great position to inspire your team to discover new strengths and start down new development paths. You can search the internet for strength-focused assessments and team-builders to use with your team. Or try asking team members what they think. Then respond with active listening.

You'll find that when your team focuses on strengths, morale, enthusiasm and innovation can really soar. And on a really good day, you can even set a co-worker on a brave new course.

Tips for virtual managers

2nd Quarter 2014 Manager Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

As technology continues to evolve, there's an increasing tendency for people to work remotely. More and more, it's becoming common for workgroups to form across long distances.

An employee might report to a manager in California and have team members in New York and Florida. Many companies see the value in hiring based on talent first and location second.

Managed well, a team with some or all of its members reporting virtually can be a great model. Here are some tips from managers who know how to build community and collaboration in a virtual team:

Use technology to connect. E-mail's only the beginning. Instant messaging allows for real-time discussions. Desktop sharing is great for training and problem-solving. For meetings, you can get applications that act like phones through your computer hardware or use a phone conference line. Participants can share computer white-boards. Then they can type notes everyone else can see. If you add webcams into the equation, it's not that different from sitting in a meeting room together.

Reach out. Cultivate a relationship with everyone on your team. When working at home, it can be easy to get "in the zone" and accomplish a lot — but miss out on getting to know your teammates. Just remember, if you were sharing the same office you'd be exchanging pleasantries every day. Don't be afraid to recreate that in your virtual environment.

Help your team members connect with each other. Have regular meetings and start with ice-breakers or team builders. Let team members take turns leading projects, and have them work together in rotating sub-groups.

Host social events — virtual style. You can have social hours (or half-hours) for:

- Holiday parties
- National Customer Service Week luncheon
- Spring "picnic" event
- Birthdays and more

Keep the basics in mind, too

Some things remain the same, no matter where your team works. Such as:

Trust and accountability. Trust your employees to do their work and hold them accountable to meeting their deadlines.

Flexibility. Teleworking offers flexibility that can make it easy for team members to miss less work. But be sure your employees are available when you need them to be. Keep open communication with employees so when things do come up you'll be able to meet business needs.

Coverage. Be sure the team identifies backups for when they're going to take time off.

Contact information. Create a contact list for everyone on an internal site and in print in case internet/computer connectivity is lost. The list can include work phone, cell phone, home phone and personal email. You may not be able to walk over to your team member's cubicle, but you should always be able to reach each other.

Develop yourself and your team

2nd Quarter 2014 Manager Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)

The best managers don't just focus on business as usual. They've also got one eye on the horizon.

Making adjustments now can help you drive your business to success in the future. You can get your team excited and involved in the process. That means your team will always be:

- Adapting to industry changes
- Gaining new skills
- Looking for new ways to grow

Development plans aren't one size fits all. Your employees need to do the heavy lifting. But you can help by asking the right questions.

Narrow it down. Some people know exactly where they want to develop skills. Others might need some help setting goals. Try asking these questions. They can help you and your employees gain direction:

- If you could do anything you wanted for a living, what would it be?
- How does that fit into our business?
- If it doesn't, what job with our business has the most (or at least some) overlap?
- What new skills would you have in this role?
- How can you learn those skills now?

Make a plan. Once you've identified a direction, it's time to make a plan. Be sure to include a timeframe to keep it moving. It's all too easy to put development on the "back burner" when things get busy. But it can be just as important as the day-to-day aspects of your job. Give it the attention it deserves.

Adjust as needed. You might make a plan for a whole year. But if things change in July, your plan should change along with it. If a new and better way to reach your learning and development goals comes along, seize it.

The Leading Edge

2nd Quarter 2014 Manager Newsletter



[Return to index page](#)