



The Leading Edge

1st Quarter 2016 Manager Newsletter



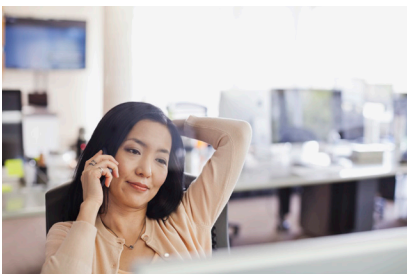
Coping when your team is short-staffed

Even in the best of economic times, you may find yourself the captain of a team without a big enough crew. Maybe one of your best performers got promoted and it's taking time to find a suitable candidate to fill his or her shoes. Or maybe your team doesn't have the budget to hire another worker even though the workload would justify the expense. **More...**



Productivity hacks

We all want to work smarter, not harder. You may feel like there "aren't enough hours in the day" sometimes. But what if you could squeeze more out of the hours you have? Here are some hacks that can help you make the most of your days. **More...**



Five reasons people quit their jobs (and what you can do about it)

Employees come and go. But one thing remains the same: You want to keep good staff. Workplaces depend on their talented, hardworking employees. And when you lose those people because of internal issues, then "turnover" can go from a normal event to a word people start to whisper. **More...**

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Even in the best of economic times, you may find yourself the captain of a team without a big enough crew. Maybe one of your best performers got promoted and it's taking time to find a suitable candidate to fill his or her shoes. Or maybe your team doesn't have the budget to hire another worker even though the workload would justify the expense.

Here are some ideas you and your team can use to get through a tough time:

- **Ask for candid feedback from your team.** In order to get a feel for how your team is functioning, it helps to check in often. And be sure to encourage and reward open and honest communication.
- **Prioritize, prioritize, prioritize.** Is your team spending time on low-priority projects? If everything is marked at the same priority level, maybe it's time to look a little closer. Are there any that don't need to be delivered as early as your team normally would? Are there any that aren't even really needed? You might need to make some tough decisions, but it can help stave off burnout and the risk of losing experienced team members.
- **Review your processes.** Is there anything you can do faster? Is it possible to reuse work from past projects on existing ones? Would cutting back the frequency of status reports, emails or meetings provide more time to actually get the work done?
- **Overtime, anyone?** Some team members might love overtime opportunities. Others might not be able to add more hours to their work day without straining their stress level. It's important to weigh the costs of overtime with the benefits. In addition to stretching your team's budget, in the long term, overtime can increase burnout and employee turnover.

- **Reach out.** Are there others in your organization with the expertise to help? See if you can borrow from any areas that might have employees to spare for part of the work week.
- **Morale matters.** Your team's culture plays a large part in running uphill together. Supportive teams often fare better than teams that fall into negative patterns of interaction. It can help to take a little extra time to listen to each other and provide ideas and encouragement.
- **Don't give up.** Keep trying to find solutions that will work not just today but next month and next year, too. You might need to present your business case for hiring more people several times before it's approved. Or it can help to document all the projects your team's been working on and ask leadership where you can cut back your workload. Be sure to keep your managers aware of the situation. If you stop talking about it, they may not remember to follow through on it, or worse: they may assume a problem has been resolved even while it's causing your team great stress.

If you suspect your team might be short-staffed, it can help long-term performance to return to a more balanced state as quickly as possible. Think of it this way: You wouldn't tell a marathon runner at the finish line, "Great job! Now give me another 26 miles!"

Productivity hacks

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We all want to work smarter, not harder. You may feel like there “aren’t enough hours in the day” sometimes. But what if you could squeeze more out of the hours you have? Here are some hacks that can help you make the most of your days.

Turn up your focus

Sometimes multi-tasking turns into getting less done. Your brain is so busy processing multiple tasks that you end up working more slowly. Or worse, you end up forgetting or messing up one of your tasks (It’s okay; we’ve all been there).

Try to focus on one important task at a time. And get rid of distractions. Turn on your “do not disturb,” put away your cell phone and leave the rest of the items on your to-do list for later. And exercise! Just 30 minutes a day of activity sharpens your focus and increases your energy.¹

Don’t trust your memory

Wouldn’t it be great if your brain could remember everything? Sadly, we just have too much to recall throughout the day — appointments, grocery items, phone calls to make. The list goes on and on. Not only are you likely to forget great ideas and important items, but you can waste a lot of energy trying to remember things.

Let your brain focus on doing things. Carry a notepad with you and write down important ideas or information. Your memory will thank you for it.

Use the five minute rule

Do you tend to procrastinate? Have you been putting off a task? Sometimes getting started is the hardest part.

Instead of thinking about doing the whole task, which can feel overwhelming, commit to working on it for just five minutes. Five minutes might not seem like much, but once you start you may want to keep going.

Be predictable

Scientists have found that your ability to make good decisions decreases throughout the day.² So, you want to treat your decision-making as a limited resource.

Try making certain things routine to avoid brain drain. Some highly successful people have used this technique to be more productive: Steve Jobs wore the same outfit every day so he never had to think about what to wear. Tim Ferriss eats the same breakfast each day. And President Barack Obama puts his non-urgent emails into three buckets: “Agree,” “Disagree” or “Discuss.”²

Stop working

You’ve got a project you want to get done. You’ve been working for hours. And your deadline is looming. But then something happens — your brain turns off.

When you push yourself past your limits, you’re going to burn out. Once that happens, you’re no longer productive. At that point, it’s better to stop working and take a break. Come back to work when you’re refreshed and you’ll make better use of your time. And check out the Pomodoro technique (<http://pomodorotechnique.com>) to learn how you can cycle your breaks.

You can’t create more hours in the day but you can make the most of them. Try some of these hacks or ask others what works for them. You might be surprised by what you can accomplish.

¹ Cohen, Jennifer. 6 Ways Exercise Makes You Smarter. Forbes. May 8, 2012. www.forbes.com/sites/jennifercohen/2012/05/08/6-ways-exercise-makes-yousmarter/#74c3c44e7109. Accessed January 2016.

² Cohen, Andrew. Why You Should Limit Your Number of Daily Decisions. Entrepreneur. May 5, 2016. www.entrepreneur.com/article/244395. Accessed January 2016.

Five reasons people quit their jobs (and what you can do about it)

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Employees come and go. But one thing remains the same: You want to keep good staff. Workplaces depend on their talented, hardworking employees.

Sometimes staff members leave because something better comes along. But sometimes they leave because they're unhappy. Here are some top reasons people feel unhappy enough to quit their jobs and suggestions on what you can do:¹

1. They don't feel valued

65 percent of employees who want to leave their jobs say they don't feel like their employers value them. People want to feel like their work is appreciated. But they also want you to value their work-life balance.

Find ways to show your staff they matter. Tell them their work is appreciated. Recognize a job well done. And encourage self-care.

2. Poor management

Maybe you've heard the phrase, "People leave managers, not companies." Sometimes people get promoted for being great workers but they lack management skills. And 37 percent of workers don't think their managers are doing a good job.

If you're a manager, take time to hone your leadership abilities. If you hire a new manager, provide that person with training. Find out what your team needs from a supervisor and strive to deliver.

3. Too much to do

Employees listed "work expectations during off-time" as one of their top five deal breakers when it came to leaving a job. Overly-large workloads for lengthy periods of time can lead to burnout, performance issues and chronic stress. And it's often your best employees who get the most work.

Be sure to check in with your staff. See how you can manage their workloads. Support initiatives that improve productivity and decrease stress. And make sure everyone on your team is pulling their weight.

4. Feeling like they've hit a dead end

Good employees want the opportunity to grow and advance. If you can't offer that, they'll look elsewhere. In fact, 22 percent of people who don't see the option for career development will look for another job. And 36 percent have felt overlooked for a promotion.

Cultivate the talent on your team and look for internal positions for people. If you have people who aren't ready to promote right now, that's okay. Provide training and mentoring so they're qualified the next time an opportunity becomes available.

5. A crisis of trust

90 percent of employees rank trust, honesty and fairness as the qualities they most value in the workplace. And 80 percent say they would quit because of a "lack of trust."

Employees want to trust you and they want you to trust them to do their jobs. So be transparent with your purpose. Avoid micromanaging. Studies show that the more educated your staff, the more they want to work autonomously. Let your employees know about your larger goals and then set them free to be creative and innovative.

Turnover happens. But with strong leadership, communication and talent management, you can retain employees who are happy and productive.

¹ The 10 Reasons People Really Quit Their Jobs. Available at: recruitloop.com/blog/why-do-people-quit-their-jobs/. Accessed January 27, 2016.

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