

My management philosophy

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What is this?

This living document is intended to capture my beliefs as a manager. It has two broad audiences—

- Myself, to force myself to process my own beliefs
- Peers, direct reports, and bosses, as a starting point for conversation

As a reader, let me know what you think and let's talk! Like my views on management, this document is a continuous work-in-progress and changes often.

Service-oriented leadership

Summary

- I am here to serve my team
- I am only successful when my team is successful
- I am equitable and inclusive
- I am against process that only serves me

I am here to serve my team

My sole purpose as a manager is to elevate my engineers and the team to be happy and successful.

I exist to remove their roadblocks, celebrate their wins, and assist them in fulfilling their career ambitions, among other things.

Without a team to support, I am unnecessary.

The manager's function is not to make people work, but to make it possible for people to work.

— Tom DeMarco, *Peopleware*

I am only successful when my team is successful

I should be measured by the success of my direct reports and team as a whole. Keeping my team happy with their work life—with the support needed to enable a productive work environment—is my number one priority. Anything that gets in my team's way of being happy and productive is where I should focus my efforts.

[T]he performance rating of a manager cannot be higher than the one we would accord to (their) organization

— Andrew Grove, High Output Management

I am equitable and inclusive

I will treat everyone equally. I will treat my engineers with respect.

Diversity makes us stronger. I will hold the team accountable for being inclusive.

I am against process that only serves me

Sometimes process exists only for the sake of the manager, especially process around reporting.

If I'm asking my team to do something out of their way just so I can measure or report on something that only management cares about, it is likely not in the best interest of the team to use their time on that.

Grow and celebrate

Summary

- I give my team feedback often
- I give my team opportunities to grow
- I support career transitions
- I celebrate wins by preference and never provide constructive criticism publicly
- I give my full attention in 1:1s

I give my team feedback often

Evaluation feedback should not be infrequent or greatly surprising. If an engineer on my team is surprised during an evaluation period, I've done a poor job of communicating and collaborating on their performance. I expect myself to check-in with my team frequently and communicate clearly how they are doing.

In Practice

Currently I do this with ad-hoc discussions, weekly 1-on-1s, semi-formal monthly checkins where we collaboratively talk goals and progress, and my organization's standard six-month reviews.

Giving guidance as quickly and as informally as possible is an essential part of Radical Candor, but it takes discipline—both because of our natural inclination to delay/avoid confrontation and because our days are busy enough as it is. But this is one of those cases where the difference in terms of time spent and impact is huge. Delay at your peril!

— Kim Malone Scott, *Radical Candor*

I give my team opportunities to grow

It can be frustrating as an engineer to feel stagnant. I give my team actionable feedback to achieve their goals and assist them in finding opportunities to demonstrate those behaviors.

I support career transitions

I want my team to feel comfortable discussing a potential future not on my team or in a different role if there are ways they want to grow that are not supported by their current team.

I support engineers and help them grow, regardless of whether it's possible on my team or not.

I celebrate wins by preference and never provide constructive criticism publicly

I always defer to an individual's level of comfort when celebrating wins. I'd love to share them publicly, but if the engineer doesn't want to share them publicly, I won't!

I never provide constructive criticism about performance or mistakes publicly – that's toxic.

I give my full attention in 1:1s

1:1s are important report-driven meetings that should not be attended carelessly, or frequently canceled/rescheduled.

If for some reason there is a production fire or other interruption that prevents us from having a meaningful 1:1, I'd prefer to reschedule over only partially being able to pay attention to my team.

In Practice

I strive to keep 1:1 rescheduling for conflicts on my side to a minimum. I strive to be on time and attentive during 1:1s.

Lead and defend

Summary

- I lead by example
- I protect my team from unnecessary requests
- I am transparent everywhere I can be

I lead by example

I do not ask my team to exemplify behaviors that I do not show.

If I want my team to have high ownership, I'll exemplify that ownership. If I want my team to be accountable for their word, I'll be accountable for my word.

I join in frontline engineering work where appropriate, while also acknowledging that it's easy to get in the way as a manager due to time constraints—it's a balance.

I protect my team from unnecessary requests

One function of a manager is to protect their direct reports from incoming requests that are not high priority. I will protect my team from requests that don't serve to move our team towards its goals.

When possible, I will gather as much information about a request and its purpose before bringing it to the team so that there are meaningful actions we can take on the request.

I am transparent everywhere I can be

By default, if I can be transparent, I will be. Hiding information from my team does not make the team better. I will properly qualify when I don't know an answer fully.

Conclusion

Conclusion

My promise as a manager is that I will strive to do these things and more. I am always open to being wrong. I will never stop growing and improving myself. This document will grow and change over time as I do.

Thank you so much for reading through this—let me know if you'd like to talk about it! If you're a prospective employer, I am especially impressed.

Appendix: Influences

I intend to flesh this section out a bit more with the why and how, but here are a few books that have influenced my way of thinking as a manager.

Listed from most-to-least influential on my beliefs.

- *Radical Candor* by Kim Malone Scott
- *Peopleware* by Tom DeMarco
- *High Output Management* by Andrew Grove