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PROBLEM? RELAX. YOU'VE GOT THIS!

A tongue-in-cheek guide series ;)

I Became the Boss, and Now Everyone Wants Something

How to Move from Coworker to Manager,
Delegate Work, and Handle Difficult Conversations
Without Pretending to Know Everything



We've got a problem. But relax.
It can be solved - and we'll even have something to laugh about.

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INTRO

Congratulations. You Got Promoted. Now the Problem Starts.

Not long ago, you were sitting at the same table with these people, complaining about the same procedures, rolling your eyes during the same meetings, and knowing exactly who had taken the last coffee capsule from the kitchen for the third time that week. Now you come to work and suddenly you are "the boss." In theory, your job title changed, your responsibilities expanded, and perhaps a few numbers on your paycheck improved. In practice, the biggest change is that people have started looking at you a little differently.

Some still see you as a coworker. Some already see you as their manager. Others will try to decide which version you are depending on what they currently need from you. When they want to leave early, you are the old friend. When a difficult client appears, you are the boss. When an unpopular decision has to be made, you suddenly become a representative of the mysterious "management," even if three weeks ago you were still wondering who exactly management was.

A promotion into management has a sneaky quality. From the outside, it looks like a reward. From the inside, it can feel a little like buying an apartment and discovering that along with your own four walls, you also acquired a mortgage, maintenance fees, and a neighbor drilling into concrete at seven in the morning. You have more influence, but you also have more responsibility. You can make decisions, but you have to live with their consequences. You can expect things from other people, but from now on, they will also pay very close attention to what you expect from yourself.

The biggest surprise, however, is often how quickly the new manager becomes the service desk for every problem imaginable. One person needs a decision. Another wants approval. A third wants to complain about a fourth. The fourth wants to know whether a deadline can move. The fifth has just discovered that the project due tomorrow actually needs another two weeks and a minor logistical miracle. You look at your calendar and begin to suspect that your primary professional duty from now on will be answering questions that begin with, "Do you have a minute?"

This book will not teach you how to become an infallible leader who meditates at 5:30 a.m., runs ten kilometers at six, reads financial reports at seven, and inspires the team at eight with a quote from a Roman philosopher. If such a person exists, they probably do not need this guide. You probably need something much more practical: a way to lead people when you do not have all the answers, time is limited, and some problems appear exactly five minutes before the end of the day.

Being a good manager is not about knowing everything. It is about creating conditions in which people understand what is expected of them, can act independently, receive the support they need, and know what to do when something goes wrong. A good boss is not a walking search engine. A good boss is someone who can set direction, distribute responsibility, ask the right questions, and avoid panicking every time somebody says, "We have a problem."

So we are going to talk about things that are less glamorous than charisma but far more useful. Delegating without micromanaging. Managing people who were your peers yesterday. Giving clear direction without behaving like a general at a military parade. Responding to mistakes, conflict,

excuses, overload, declining performance, and those special situations in which somebody is clearly hoping a problem will eventually die of old age.

We will also talk about boundaries. This is especially important when you are promoted from within the team. You do not suddenly have to speak in an official voice, wear a blazer to the coffee machine, or stop joining people for lunch. You do, however, have to accept that some conversations can no longer happen exactly the way they did before. When you are responsible for evaluating someone's performance, assigning work, approving vacation, influencing bonuses, or supporting development, the relationship automatically becomes more complicated.

The worst solution is pretending that nothing has changed. The second worst is behaving as though everything has changed. A manager who starts saying "my team" the day after a promotion with the tone of someone who has just inherited a medieval kingdom will lose credibility quickly. A manager who spends six months pretending to remain simply one of the group will eventually discover that nobody takes their decisions seriously.

You need something in between: normality combined with clarity of role.

You do not need to be the most experienced person in the room. You do not need to know the answer to every question. You also do not need to solve every problem with your own hands. If you become too good at doing that, your team will learn one lesson very quickly: whenever something becomes difficult, take it to the boss. A few months later, you will be doing the work of six people and wondering why everyone else has time for lunch.

The purpose of management is not to become the busiest person on the team. The purpose is to create a team that can work well even when you are not standing over everyone. That is where we begin.

Chapter 1 - Yesterday a Coworker, Today the Boss. What Actually Changed?

The most awkward moment after a promotion often has nothing to do with budgets, strategy, or performance targets. It may simply be a normal team meeting where everybody sits exactly where they always sat, except now you are expected to lead it. For a moment, it feels as if somebody accidentally handed you the television remote during a family gathering and everyone is waiting to see what you are going to put on.

That feeling is normal. It only becomes a problem when you try to hide it behind exaggerated confidence. New managers often fall into one of two traps: they either become even more friendly than before because they do not want anyone to think the promotion has gone to their head, or they immediately try to prove that they deserved the promotion. In the first case, they avoid decisions. In the second, they make too many.

Your role really has changed, but your personality does not have to.

A Promotion Changes Your Responsibility, Not Your Species

Yesterday, you were mainly responsible for your own work. Today, you still are, but you are also responsible for whether other people know what they are supposed to do, have the resources to do it, and receive useful feedback. That is a fundamental difference. You are no longer judged only by how well you personally complete tasks.

This can be painful for excellent specialists. They get promoted because they were very good at doing the work, then discover that the new job partly consists of not doing all the work themselves. Someone who spent years being the fastest driver suddenly has to sit in the passenger seat and explain where other people should turn. The urge to grab the steering wheel appears approximately every three minutes.

If you take over every task whenever somebody does it more slowly or differently than you would, you will quickly become the bottleneck for the entire team. At first, it may even look impressive. Putting out fires creates a short-lived feeling of effectiveness. The problem is that if you are the best firefighter every single day, eventually it is worth asking why the building keeps catching fire.

Your job is no longer just to do the work. Your job is to build a system in which the team can get the work done.

Tell People How You Intend to Operate

One of the best things you can do after a promotion is have a short, calm conversation with the team about how you see your new role. You do not need a motivational speech, a presentation featuring a photograph of a mountain, or a slide titled "My Leadership Vision." A few specific sentences are enough.

You can say that you care about clear expectations, accountability, and open communication. You can explain that you do not intend to pretend you know the answer to everything. You can also acknowledge that some relationships will naturally change because from now on, you are responsible for decisions affecting the entire team.

That conversation removes some tension because it names something everyone is already thinking about. People do not expect perfection from you. They are much more likely to expect predictability. They want to know whether decisions will make sense, whether rules will be applied reasonably consistently, and whether you will speak openly when something goes wrong.

Predictability builds trust faster than impressive speeches.

Do Not Try to Preserve Every Relationship Exactly as It Was

If you had close friends on the team before your promotion, things become more delicate. You can still like them. You can still talk about life, joke around, and meet outside work. What you cannot do is ignore the fact that you can now make decisions that affect them.

The key is being aware of the conflict between roles. If a close friend is repeatedly underperforming, you cannot spend three months pretending not to notice and then surprise them with a weak annual review. If two people request the same vacation dates, you cannot automatically favor the person you have coffee with more often. Even if your decisions are fair, people will be watching to see whether they really are.

That does not mean becoming cold. It means becoming more conscious.

A useful rule is this: the closer your private relationship with someone on the team, the more transparent your professional criteria concerning that person should be. Not because you do not trust them. Because everyone else needs to be able to trust you.

"But We Always Did It Differently"

The first tests of your new role often arrive quickly. Someone will try to negotiate an exception. Someone will remind you that you used to criticize a particular procedure yourself. Somebody may joke, "Come on, you're one of us."

And in some ways, you still are. Your responsibility, however, is different now.

You do not have to react aggressively. You only need to separate your private opinion from your professional responsibility. You might say, "Yes, I remember that I had concerns about this too. But I am now responsible for making this process work, and until we change it, we need to operate within these rules."

That sentence is powerful because it does not require pretending that you always agreed with everything. People remember your old comments surprisingly well. Attempting to rewrite history is one of the fastest ways to damage credibility.

You are allowed to change your perspective after a promotion. You may learn things you did not know before. You may even decide that something you once criticized makes more sense when you can see the wider context. You do not, however, need to behave as though implementing procedure HR-47B has been your lifelong dream.

Authority Does Not Come from Raising Your Voice

A new manager sometimes feels a need to "set the team straight." That phrase alone should trigger a small warning light. If your first priority is showing everybody who is in charge, you are probably thinking more about your position than about their work.