Managing Managers Toolkit

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| About This ResourceEvery manager has a variety of tools at their disposal. This toolkit contains:1. An overview of the tools in your [**management toolbelt**](#kix.f3schvn4exzt) and suggestions for when you might use them
2. A [**checklist**](#kix.4avnmejacev7) of the skills, behaviors, and practices to spot for when managing managers

For more advice, be sure to check out our article, [Six Tips for Managing Managers](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/tips-managing-managers/). |

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# Management Toolbelt

Below are some examples of ways you might use these tools to manage a manager and some (non-comprehensive!) suggestions for when to use them. Please note that any of the tools below will work better if you continuously approach your management with a spirit of [relationship-building](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/four-elements-strong-relationships-managers-guide-relationship-building/).

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| **Tool** | **When to use it** | **Example** |
| **Probing questions**  | * When discussing progress toward a goal or project
* During debriefs
 | “What support will your staff most need from you?” |
| **Role plays** | Before a performance review, while giving corrective or developmental feedback, or delegating a complicated assignment | Practice an upcoming feedback conversation they are planning |
| **Direct feedback** | * During [check-ins](http://www.managementcenter.org/resources/check-meetings-sample-agenda/) and [2x2 conversations](http://www.managementcenter.org/resources/2x2-feedback-form/)
* After you’ve seen them in action
* Any time you have praise
 | “I want to share some observations from watching you lead the staff retreat…” |
| **Debriefs** | After the conclusion of a project or assignment (especially if it was new, a stretch assignment, time-consuming, or tricky) | Talk about what worked and what didn’t in a recent strategic planning session |
| **Pre-briefs** | Before delegation or the onset of a project or assignment (especially if it’s new, a stretch assignment, time-consuming, or tricky) | Discuss their plan to delegate a new project to a staff member |
| **Slices** | * Any time you have to be more hands-on (such as if they’re on a [PIP](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/performance-improvement-plan-toolkit/))
* When you’re feeling removed from the work
* If the project is high-stakes or a stretch
 | Review and discuss a draft of their team’s goals for the year |
| **Observations**  | * If you’ve heard feedback about the manager but haven’t observed the behaviors first-hand
* Any time you have to be particularly hands-on (such as if they’re on a PIP)
* When you’re feeling removed from the work
* If the project is high-stakes or a stretch
 | Sit in on a one-on-one check-in with a staff member or a team meeting that they lead, then debrief afterward |
| **Side-by-side work** | If you’re training them to do something new (or it’s their first time doing it in your context, such as hiring) | Co-lead a set of interviews with job candidates (including prep) |
| **Modeling** | All the time, but especially when you’re training them on something new. You can also model behaviors that uphold team values and culture | Lead meetings to recruit potential job candidates and have them observe |
| **Be a helper** | During busy periods or when their capacity is limited and helping would be a strategic use of your time and skills | Help create job descriptions for the positions they’re adding |

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# Managing Managers Checklist

Below are key management areas and what to spot for when you’re managing a manager.

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| **Management Area** | **What to spot for** |
| **Check-ins** | * They hold regular, high-quality [check-ins](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/7-tips-making-most-your-check-ins/) with each staff person
* They prepare in advance for their check-ins
* They regularly give and invite feedback during check-ins
* They use check-ins to coach, troubleshoot problems, and track big picture priorities
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| **Delegation** | * They are guiding and coaching, not doing all the work
* They are aligned with the staff member on the 5 W’s
* They do the full delegation cycle: agree on expectations, stay engaged, create accountability and learning, and adapt to fit the context
* They seek perspective from the staff member when delegating an assignment
* If they manage multiple staff, they delegate projects equitably, being mindful of who gets opportunities to showcase their talents and grow their skills
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| **Developing people** | * They support their staff member’s growth and development by providing time, space, and resources to pursue learning opportunities and removing barriers when possible
* They are an advocate and champion for the development of their staff
* They offer stretch assignments to help their staff grow and demonstrate new skills
* They actively focus on retention by having stay conversations, offering praise, and openly discussing the staff member’s trajectory at the organization
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| **Equity and inclusion** | * They translate values around equity, inclusion, and belonging into plans for staff development, retention, strategy, and improving culture
* They routinely reflect on and check for [choice points](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/tools-for-identifying-choice-points-common-choice-points/) and implicit bias
* They acknowledge lines of difference and power and their impact on their management
* They exercise authority without asserting dominance, approaching leadership with a mindset of “power with” rather than “power over”
* They regularly include others in planning and decision-making
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| **Feedback** | * They give timely, regular, and direct feedback
* They regularly invite feedback and [receive it well](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/how-to-receive-feedback-part-1/), especially about issues that relate to [power, difference, and inequity](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/how-to-receive-feedback-part-2-power-difference-inequity/)
* They act on feedback and make efforts to course-correct when needed
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| **Goals** | * They make sure that each staff person is aligned on how to measure success
* Their staff are clear on how they contribute to the overall results of the team/organization
* They set [SMARTIE goals](http://www.managementcenter.org/article/tips-for-writing-smartie-goals/)
* They regularly track progress to goals and course-correct when needed
* They ensure that goals drive the day-to-day work by focusing on the big rocks
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| **Hiring** | * They prioritize building a high-quality, diverse pool of candidates
* They drill down on [must-haves](https://www.managementcenter.org/resources/must-haves-starter-kit/)—being mindful of [PTR](https://www.managementcenter.org/article/thats-how-weve-always-done-it-a-guide-to-using-ptr/)—and find ways to test for them
* They assemble a diverse hiring committee while being mindful about tokenizing or over-burdening their colleagues
* They regularly use [rubrics](http://www.managementcenter.org/resources/hiring-rubric-starter-kit/) and check their bias
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| **Performance management** | * See: feedback and developing people
* They provide timely and honest performance evaluations in which there are no surprises
* They are proactive about staff retention, such as by having stay conversations and checking in about the staff member’s desired trajectory
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| **Relationship- building** | * They invite and practice authenticity by cultivating self-awareness, aligning their values with actions, and acknowledging and learning from their mistakes
* They demonstrate that they see, appreciate, and value their staff as full people
* They negotiate and manage boundaries with staff
* They effectively navigate difference and power, including by owning their power and authority, understanding the broader context of their relationship (such as systems of oppression and the organizational culture), and being curious about differences
* They build trust by acting with care, good intent, competence, and integrity
* They reinforce share purpose by instilling a sense of team, being clear about how each person contributes, and building a sense of collective responsibility for wins and losses
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