

The New Manager Playbook

Your first 90 days, minus the guesswork.

By Brent Morrell · BrentMorrell.com

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Grab it, use it, pass it to a manager who needs it.

You got promoted because you were good at the work. Now the work is different. Your results are the team's results, and most of what got you here won't carry you through this. **This is the map nobody handed you.**

The one shift that changes everything

You're measured by what the team produces now. Your own output stops being the point. Your time goes to clearing obstacles and growing people who can carry real weight without you in the room. The hardest part for most new managers is letting go of the work they were great at.

DAYS 1 TO 30

Learn before you lead

Resist the urge to prove yourself by changing things. You don't have the context yet.

- ✓ Set up weekly **1:1s** with every direct report in your first week. This is the highest-leverage habit you have. Protect it.
- ✓ Ask more than you tell. What's working, what's broken, what they'd fix if they had your job.
- ✓ Learn the actual work. Sit with it long enough to know what good looks like.
- ✓ Meet the people your team depends on across the business. Relationships you build now save you later.
- ✓ Align with your own boss on one question: what does success look like at 90 days and at a year.

DAYS 31 TO 60

Set the bar

Now you've earned the standing to steer.

- ✓ Give feedback small and often. Praise in the moment, correct in private, and don't save it all for a review.

- ✓ Name your strong performers to yourself, and name the problem you've been avoiding. You already know who it is.
- ✓ Connect the team's work to the business. People do better work when they know what it drives.
- ✓ Start light course corrections. Small adjustments now beat a big reorg later.

DAYS 61 TO 90

Own it

The training wheels are off. The team's results are yours.

- ✓ Address the performance issue you spotted at day 45. Waiting makes it worse and tells everyone else the bar is soft.
- ✓ Set two or three clear priorities. If everything is important, nothing is.
- ✓ Lock in your operating rhythm: how you run 1:1s, your team meeting, and how decisions get made. Predictability builds trust.

When to call HR

Loop us in early, before it's on fire. HR is not the No Police. We help you do the hard thing the right way.

- You're starting to document a performance problem.
- Anything touches harassment, discrimination, or a protected class. Do not wait on these.
- You're weighing a termination, a leave, or a pay change.
- You just aren't sure. A five-minute call beats a five-figure mistake.

Five rookie mistakes to skip

- 1 The work you keep doing yourself** because it feels faster. It isn't, over any horizon that matters.
- 2 The hard conversation you keep ducking.** It won't fix itself and it never gets easier.
- 3 The month-one overhaul.** Learn the terrain before you move the furniture.
- 4 The need to be liked by everyone.** Aim for respected first, then trusted.
- 5 The documentation you skip.** If it isn't written down, it didn't happen.

The best managers build teams that don't need them in the room for every decision. Start there.

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