

90-Day New Manager Playbook

Your First 3 Months as a Leader: What to Do, When to Do It

So You Finally Got the Job You Wanted!

Congratulations - you've been promoted and will be managing people! That's exciting... and maybe a little terrifying. **Fear not.** This is your handy go-to guide to help you succeed in your first 90 days. We'll walk you through exactly what to do, when to do it, and how to handle the inevitable challenges that come up. You've got this!

The first 90 days as a new manager set the tone for your entire leadership journey. This playbook breaks down **exactly what to focus on** in each phase so you build trust, establish credibility, and set your team up for success.

Manager

Name:

Start Date: _____

Team

Size:

Manager/Coach: _____

The 30-60-90 Framework Overview

Phase	Focus	Goal
First 30 Days	Learn & Listen	Build relationships, understand the team, observe how things work
Days 31-60	Contribute & Clarify	Start making decisions, clarify expectations, establish your approach
Days 61-90	Lead & Optimize	Drive results, optimize processes, build your leadership style

BEFORE You Do Anything Else: Get Clear on YOUR Job

Schedule a meeting with YOUR manager in Week 1 and ask these questions:

- What does success look like for ME in this role?
- What are my top 3-5 priorities?
- How will you measure my performance?
- What authority do I have to make decisions? (What can I decide vs what needs approval?)
- When should I escalate vs handle things myself?
- How do you prefer to communicate? (Frequency, style, updates)
- What are common mistakes new managers make here?

Write down their answers. Review them monthly.

Your First Week Survival Guide

Feeling overwhelmed? Normal. Start here:

Day 1: Meet with YOUR boss to clarify YOUR success criteria (use questions above)

Days 1-3: Schedule 30-min one-on-ones with each team member

Days 4-5: Start one-on-ones. Ask: What's working? What's not? What would you change?

Week 1 Rule: Listen 80%, talk 20%. Take notes. DON'T make big decisions yet.

Your only job Week 1: Learn and build relationships.

First 30 Days: Learn & Listen

Your Primary Goal: Build relationships and understand how the team operates. Don't make big changes yet.

Week 1-2: Foundation Building

- Schedule one-on-ones with each team member (use the One-on-One Template)
- Meet with your manager to clarify expectations and success criteria
- Understand team goals, current projects, and deadlines
- Learn team norms (communication style, meeting cadence, decision-making)
- Identify key stakeholders and schedule introductions
- Review any existing documentation (processes, org charts, past performance)

Week 3-4: Deep Discovery

- Ask each team member: What's working? What's not? What would you change?
- Observe team dynamics (Who leads? Who's quiet? Where's the tension?)
- Shadow a few team members to understand their daily work
- Identify quick wins (small improvements you can make immediately)
- Start building trust through consistency and follow-through

Key Questions to Answer in Your First 30 Days:

- What are the team's biggest challenges right now?
- What does success look like for this team?
- Who are the top performers and why?
- Where are the gaps (skills, processes, communication)?
- What's the team's reputation with stakeholders?

Days 31-60: Contribute & Clarify

Your Primary Goal: Start leading actively. Set clear expectations and make your first improvements.

Week 5-6: Set Direction

- Share your observations and priorities with the team
- Clarify roles and responsibilities (use the Job Fit Evaluation if needed)
- Set or refine team goals based on what you've learned
- Establish your communication norms (meetings, updates, availability)
- Implement 1-2 quick wins to build credibility
- Start regular one-on-ones (weekly or bi-weekly)

Week 7-8: Build Your Approach

- Have performance conversations with underperformers (use Difficult Conversations Framework)
- Delegate work strategically (use Delegation Decision Matrix)
- Build your leadership brand (How do you want to be known?)
- Strengthen relationships with key stakeholders
- Address any urgent team issues or conflicts

Key Questions to Answer by Day 60:

- What's my leadership style and approach?
- Are expectations clear for each team member?
- What processes or systems need to change?
- Who needs more support or development?
- Am I building the trust and credibility I need?

Days 61-90: Lead & Optimize

Your Primary Goal: Drive results and establish your rhythm as a leader.

Week 9-10: Accelerate Performance

- Review progress on team goals and adjust as needed
- Coach team members on growth and development
- Optimize workflows and eliminate bottlenecks
- Celebrate wins and recognize strong performance
- Address any lingering performance or team issues

Week 11-12: Establish Your Rhythm

- Conduct 90-day reviews with each team member
- Reflect on your own performance (What worked? What didn't?)
- Set priorities for the next 90 days
- Build out your leadership development plan
- Establish ongoing rhythms (team meetings, one-on-ones, check-ins)

Key Questions to Answer by Day 90:

- Is the team performing at the level it needs to be?
- Do I have the right people in the right roles?
- What's my plan for the next quarter?
- Where do I need to grow as a leader?
- Am I creating a culture I'm proud of?

Common New Manager Mistakes to Avoid

- X Trying to prove yourself too quickly** - Take time to learn before making big changes
- X Not scheduling one-on-ones** - These are your most important meetings

- X Avoiding difficult conversations** - Address issues early before they grow
- X Doing everything yourself** - Delegate to develop your team
- X Neglecting your own development** - Keep learning and growing as a leader
- X Ignoring company culture** - Understand and work within the culture first

Your 90-Day Success Checklist

- Built trust with each team member through consistent one-on-ones
- Clarified expectations and set clear goals
- Made at least 2-3 visible improvements (quick wins)
- Addressed underperformance or team issues directly
- Delegated work to develop team members
- Established your leadership style and communication norms
- Built strong relationships with key stakeholders
- Created a plan for the next 90 days

Your SMART Goals (Create with Your Manager)

Work with your manager to set clear, measurable goals for your first 90 days:

Goal #1:	
Specific: What exactly will you accomplish?	
Measurable: How will you know you succeeded?	
Achievable: Is this realistic in 90 days?	
Relevant: Does this align with team/company goals?	
Time-bound: When will this be done?	
Goal #2:	
Specific:	
Measurable:	
Achievable:	

Relevant:

Time-bound:

What to Do When You Get Stuck:

- **Feeling overwhelmed?** Pick ONE priority. Do that first.
- **Not sure how to handle something?** Ask your manager or a peer manager.
- **Team member resisting?** Have a one-on-one. Ask what's going on.
- **Made a mistake?** Own it quickly. Explain what you'll do differently.
- **Unsure if you're succeeding?** Ask your boss explicitly: "How am I doing?"
- **Need help?** That's normal. Asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.

90-Day Reflection & Next Steps

What went well in your first 90 days?

What would you do differently?

What are your top 3 priorities for the next 90 days?

1.

2.

3.

BiteSize Resources to Support Your Journey:

- **One-on-One Meeting Template** - Structure your weekly check-ins
- **Difficult Conversations Framework** - Handle performance issues with confidence
- **Delegation Decision Matrix** - Know what to delegate and to whom
- **Leadership Effectiveness Checklist** - Self-assess your leadership skills
- **Team Meeting Agenda Template** - Run productive team meetings