

A photograph of a brown leather briefcase lying on a wooden surface. The briefcase is open, revealing a stack of papers and a set of keys. The papers include a newspaper clipping with the word 'Earnings' and a 'U.S. DOLLAR' label. The keys are a set of metal keys on a ring. The overall scene suggests business and finance.

100 Helpful Tips for Great Managers

**Lisa Haneberg
and Bob Rosner**

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Table of Contents

Introduction	D
10 Ways to Start the Day Off with a Bang	1
10 Ways Create an Enjoyable Workplace	4
10 Ways to Reward and Reinforce Excellent Work	7
10 Ways to Generate New Ideas	10
10 Ways to Get Your Point Across	13
10 Ways to Handle Complaints	16
10 Ways to Handle Your Mistakes	19
10 Ways to Get a Stalled Project Back on Track	22
10 Ways to Avoid Energy Crashes	25
10 Ways to Say “No”	28
Bonus! 10 Ways to Get a Promotion	31
About the Authors	32

Introduction

100 Helpful Tips for Great Managers is a resource for making work a bit easier, more productive, and enjoyable. Even the best managers will benefit from the suggestions and ideas offered here. Some of the ideas will seem like common sense. They are! Common sense is often not common practice and everyone needs reminders every now and then. The hectic pace of a typical manager's day makes it a challenge to keep up and accomplish goals. Unfortunately, actions that build the organization's capacity and make managers' jobs more worthwhile and satisfying are often the first to be pushed aside.

Would you like to send a copy of *100 Helpful Tips for Great Managers* to a peer or manager? Great! You can order and send a copy at www.forbosssday.com.

Have feedback? Feel free to email us at info@forbosssday.com.

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10 Ways to Start the Day Off with a Bang

What will the day bring?

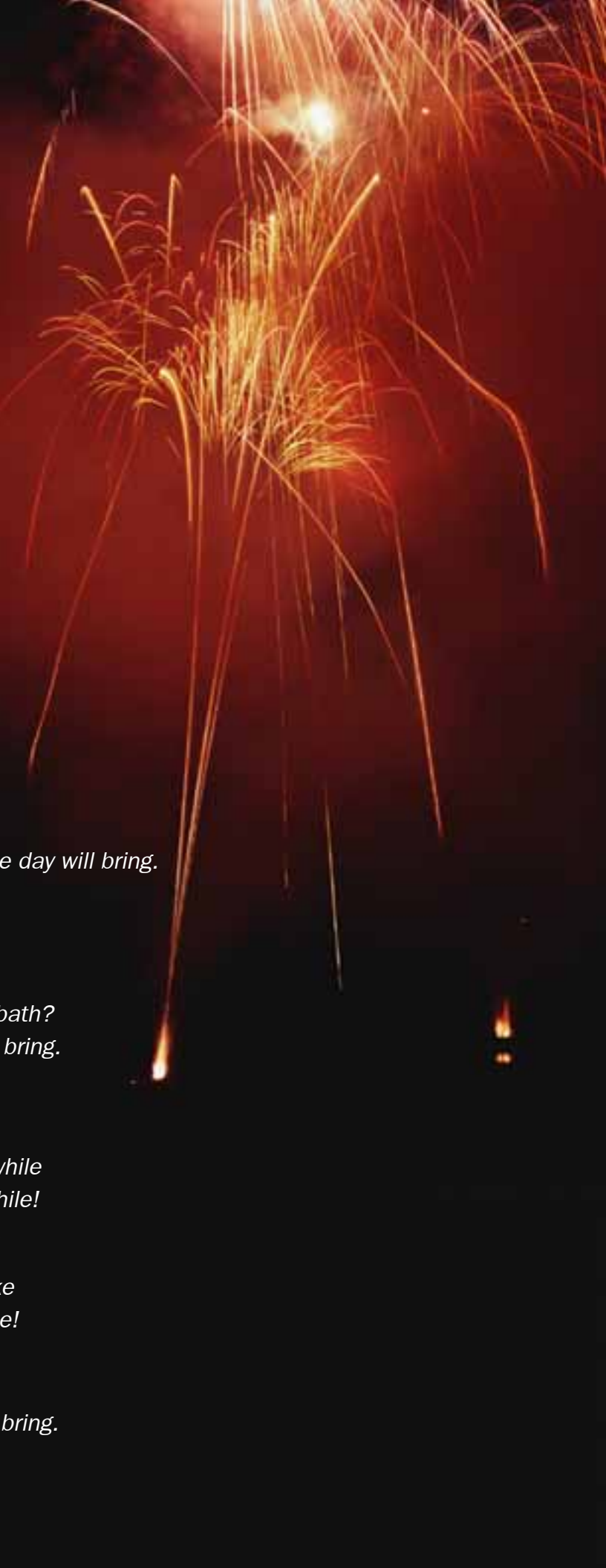
*Mornin' mrs. coffee pot
Tell my future, what's to be, what's not
Will it be chaos, order, or in between
Something new or the same ole routine.
What will the day bring?*

*Mornin' mr. highway patrol
I hope you'll spare my tardy soul
I promise to try and slow down some
On my way to make a modest income.
Perhaps this does not bode well for what the day will bring.*

*Mornin' ms. high tech copy machine
Surely this jam could have been foreseen!
What have I done to deserve your wrath
Your beeps, your jams and the toner cloud bath?
I am getting worried about what the day will bring.*

*Mornin' sir computer network
I would appreciate a bit more teamwork.
I've been waiting for you to respond, meanwhile
There's a fatal error, now that's not worthwhile!
So this is the punishment the day will bring.*

*Misters and misses there must be a mistake
My sanity and happiness is at risk and stake!
Perhaps I'll have another cup
The first five were just the warm up
Toward conquering the dragons the day will bring.*



10 Ways to Start the Day Off with a Bang

Jenny rolled out of bed a bit late this morning. On the way to work, a traffic jam slowed her down and she circled the block several times to find parking. As she walked down the hall toward her office, Jenny noticed that her manager and several peers were in a meeting. They glared as she walked by, signaling that she should be there too. Over the office PA system came an announcement that the email system would be down for the next two hours according to an earlier warning. Ever have a day that starts off poorly and continues to go downhill? Here are 10 ways to begin on a positive note.

Do high-paced MBWA

Start the day off at a brisk pace while checking in with team members and peers. Doing this will help you ensure that priorities are clear and problems are quickly identified. It is also fun and satisfying to connect with people first thing in the day. Don't confuse checking in with checking up – MBWA is a service-oriented activity not a license to micromanage!

Adopt a morning management mantra

Professional athletes and people who meditate use mantras, so why shouldn't managers? You don't have to sit cross-legged and chant, "om." Think about what would make today a home run and how you would define a great day. Begin the day reaffirming the tone and focus you need for the day. "Oms" are optional.

Spend the first hour uninterrupted

Many managers are flooded with calls, emails, and visitors the moment they get to the office. This immediate assault can make you feel overwhelmed from the start. If you can condition others to hold off requests for an hour, you can take that time think, create, plan, or analyze. "Dream on," you say? Give it a try! You might not always be able to set aside the first hour of the day, but shoot for three times per week.

Do the most important work first

Many people start the day by reading email and shuffling papers. While you may need some time to wake up, what better way to get the ball rolling than to brainstorm new ideas or tackle a difficult problem?

Chocolate-covered coffee beans!

These wonders of mental stimulation are worth their weight in gold. Just a few chocolate-covered espresso beans and the mental juices flow again. Avoid eating too many of these as you may experience caffeine jitters (you should start off slow and consult your doctor if you are sensitive to the effects of caffeine).

Organize your desktop

It feels good to be organized and ready to tackle the day. Organizing at the beginning of the day will also allow you to ease your way into more important work and reduce nagging worries there is something important in the middle of one of the piles.

Collaborate with a peer

Working with a peer to identify a new opportunity, share ideas, or solve a problem can be fun and productive. It's a great way to start the day! Collaboration enlivens intrinsic motivation for many managers and produces mental and physical fuel that will last throughout the day.

Declare it!

Stand up and pretend you are Tarzan. Announce to your concrete jungle that you're here and ready to swing through work to success! Managers who put a stake in the ground and proclaim what shall be will find that resulting behaviors and actions are aligned with their declaration. For example, if a manager were to say, "today is going to be the day we bust down the barriers getting in the way of timely project completion," he or she would increase the likelihood of removing barriers. Declaring something is more powerful and than stating a goal or wish like, "I wish we could complete more projects on time."

Show appreciation for great work

Making others feel wonderful is a nice way to begin the day. They will be in a good mood and motivated, and you will feel happy and energized. It is fun and rewarding to reinforce the contributions of team members, peers, or managers.

Take the dog for a walk before work

Seeing the joy on a dog's face is priceless, don't you think? If you have a dog, spend some quality time with him or her before the workday begins and let the unconditional love and excitement rub off on you. Some things should be and are so simple. Spending time with dogs teaches us to appreciate life and helps put minor irritations into perspective.



10 Ways to Create an Enjoyable Workplace

Oh what fun the day will be!

Full of energy and anticipation

My work is occupied by life, like an ocean

Tough problems I dig into and solve

Each day my skills and interests evolve

Oh what fun the day will be!

The boss blessed us with Krispy Kremes

Everyone converges with joyful screams

Now buzzed and ready to conquer

Any barrier or hassle that our way may wander

Oh what fun the day will be!

My coworkers and boss, all people I enjoy

The smart, fun, and hardworking are all we employ

We help each other think, create, and cope

Sharing frustrations, goals, dreams, hopes

For what fun the day can be!



10 Ways to Create an Enjoyable Workplace

Life's too short to spend eight or more hours a day doing something we do not enjoy. Anyone can have fun at work with the right mindset and habits, and managers can create a more enjoyable work environment for everyone. Here are ten techniques for pumping up the fun at work.

Spend 30 minutes a day brainstorming new ideas

When you're bored, you're not thinking, creating, or expanding. If the department seems a bit blah or low energy, stand up, shake it off and get into the game! Work is more fun when we engage our brains to come up with ideas, solve tough problems, or seize business opportunities. Teams that generate many ideas will reach their goals quicker and feel more connected to their work.

Solve a nagging problem

Persistent problems drag down performance and morale. Solving these problems, once and for all, can feel great. Nagging problems cause stress, frustration, and add hassle to the team's day, which is no fun! It feels good and is fun to get a monkey off your back. Celebrate with a round of chocolate monkey milk shakes (chocolate banana).

Work on the right stuff and make an impact

Work is more fun when it makes a difference and is relevant. Assess the projects and tasks on your team's to-do list and ask, "Is this the best way to spend our time?" Push back on projects that don't make sense. When you work on tasks that make a difference, work is more satisfying. Your team will THANK YOU for clearing the crud off their lists as well.

Choose to have fun

Work may be a four-letter word, but so are love, life, and cake! If you resolve to enjoy your work, you will. You will also be more satisfied than your peers who view work as boring or a chore. Self-talk influences how we feel about work. Don't let mental grumbling, complaining, or victim conversations get in the way of having fun at work. If you sense that you are in a foul mood, shake it off and replace those thoughts with more productive ones. Whichever you choose – to be happy or grumpy – it will rub off on your team.

Set the pace

Get your blood circulating! Working at a brisk (not frantic) pace is energizing and makes the day flow well. When the pace is good, even the most mundane tasks will seem more fun. Managers can improve pace by doing the following: 1. Walk briskly and with intent. 2. Try not to sit in one place for more than two hours. 3. MBWA (manage by walking around). 5. Ask open-ended questions and engage others in targeted discussions about the work. 6. Display interest and passion for the work. 6. Take on challenges that can improve the business.

Learn something

Learning – stretching the mind – is fun and stimulating, particularly when you can put new skills to use immediately. Be open to learning in various ways, including formal classes and informal conversations.

Ask for coaching, read an interesting article, or peruse a cutting-edge business blog. Encourage team members to pursue development goals and offer them growth opportunities.

Notice and recognize contributions

Make someone else's day a little brighter. It's fun! If a team member, peer, or a manager has done great work, let them know you notice and appreciate it. It feels good to notice great work and doing so will strengthen everyone's understanding of what's important. Do not confuse acknowledgment with random positive reinforcement. Employees value specific and sincere feedback.

Energize intrinsic motivation

Do work that you love everyday and encourage others to feed their passions. What drives your desire to do great work? Do you love a great challenge? Are you motivated by working with a strong team? Do you enjoy analysis? Are you energized by speaking with groups of clients? Ensure that you fuel your intrinsic motivation. Get to know and understand the goals and ambitions of your team members. Allow team members to work on plum projects by spreading assignments fairly.

Do fun stuff now and then!

Some workplaces are more fun than others. Don't let yours become a drag! Establish a work environment that is fun by encouraging individual contribution, being flexible, and by communicating in a positive and open manner. Loosen up, laugh a little, or buy a birthday cake. When managers have fun, their energy, interest, and drive rubs off on others. Keeping politics, bureaucracy, and hassle to a minimum will also make the workplace more enjoyable. Celebrate your team's successes.

Stop overcommitting

No matter how much you love your job, it is never fun when you feel overwhelmed – so put your foot down! Many managers say “yes“ too much and end up with unmanageable to-do lists for themselves and their team members. There are several questions to consider. Is the work worth doing? Will this project make a positive difference? What is the best way to complete the work? Who has time to take on this work? How long will it take? It is easy to feel tired and burned out when the workload is too high. You will enjoy work more by renegotiating your priorities and getting tasks off your to-do list. Better still, toss the to-do list out and do the work you know will make a difference.



10 Ways to Reward and Reinforce Excellent Work



When am I great?

*I often wonder how well I am doing
Is my work so-so, good, or outstanding?
I have a drive to succeed, complete goals, excel
But the messages are mixed and it is hard to tell
When am I great?*

*If I judge greatness based on promotions
I might think it smart to take golf lessons
For who you know outweighs what you know
And it is always good to feed others' ego
But, when am I great?*

*Perhaps there is some underlying logic
A measure of greatness, a performance yardstick
That factors all my accomplishment and skill
And if someone would tell me, it'd be a thrill
To know when am I great.*

10 Ways to Reward and Reinforce Excellent Work

It can be difficult to decide how to best reinforce the work of others. Some managers feel uncomfortable and awkward when saying nice things to others. Other managers take the shotgun approach and thank people when they show up to work with matching socks. Here are 10 suggestions about how and why to reinforce excellent work.

Notice when team members make an extra effort

Managers who focus only on results, may not know that someone stayed late, called in a few favors with vendors, and redesigned a process to make it all happen. The best way to know of extraordinary efforts is to ask your team members and peers. Your employees will welcome the interest you take in their work as long as your inquiries do not look or sound like monitoring.

Share your appreciation in front of others

Want to make someone feel great? Recognize him or her during meetings or conversations with managers, peers, or other team members. And don't be cheap with your appreciation. Share what the person did and why the effort is worthy of thanks.

Send an email and copy your manager

Bob was at wits' end. He had been trying to rework the schedule after two vendor cancellations. He heard a ping and saw that his boss sent him an email. "Now what," he thought. He opened the email and smiled. The stress drained from his body and he knew today was going to be OK. Putting your appreciation in writing and copying your manager is an easy way to show your team members and peers that you have noticed their excellent work.

Get your facts straight, then acknowledge

Nothing can be more irritating to team members than hearing their boss thank the wrong person for completing a project early or claiming a victory that is not real! For appreciation to feel sincere and



special it needs to be accurate, so take a few minutes to ask questions that enable you to understand the accomplishment fully.

Be inclusive with your reinforcement

Don't leave anyone out! Most victories are the result of great teamwork, often across functions. While it is fine to recognize individual efforts, also notice the efforts of the team. Include your peers and manager as appropriate. Celebrate with a team gathering and serve cake!

Don't treat your employees like Pavlov's dogs

Your team members want to be appreciated, not patronized or controlled. Do not offer employees rewards and reinforcement for minimum requirements (like showing up to work on time). Be wary of positive reinforcement systems that ask you to track the number of times you praise employees. Most positive reinforcement systems smack of control-oriented behaviorism. Don't kid yourself into thinking that employees like being treated this way, because they do not.

Reinforce excellent work, not compliance

It is important to reinforce the right accomplishments. Acknowledging outstanding accomplishments is worthwhile and appreciated. Reinforcing excellent work serves two purposes. First, it feels good to appreciate others' outstanding work. Second, your team will better understand what excellent work looks like. Many employees have no idea what their managers regard as great performance and, when this is the case, efforts may be wasted and misunderstood. Don't let this happen to you!

Reward excellent work with new projects and promotions

When employees do an outstanding job, they prove their ability to contribute to the business. Continue to challenge and satisfy your best performers by offering them new projects and assignments. This might mean losing the team member to another department, but as Spock once said, "The good of the many outweighs the good of the one." People want to work for managers who help them grow and encourage career development.

Ask team members to coach others

Each employee has strengths and weaknesses. To encourage members to learn from one another, create an environment that recognizes individual strengths and looks at weaknesses openly and as learning opportunities. The process of coaching others will reinforce your better performers and build team relationships and capabilities.

Notice great work in other departments

It is a welcome surprise to be recognized by a manager from another department. By noticing great work, no matter where in the company it comes from, you will communicate to your employees that you see and care about the efforts of others. Cross-functional staff meetings, informal lunch conversations, and emails are great vehicles for expressing appreciation. Or, just walk up to the person and share your thanks!



10 Ways to Generate New Ideas

We need a new way

*We need a new approach, a new way
Every day is the same, there's no play
It is like droning on, stuck in the fray
Never moving, making no headway
My hope is to get off this treadmill someday
I want to escape the already somehow
Can we try something new, not obey
Take a side road, get off the causeway
We need a new approach, a new way
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
We need a new approach, a new way
Fillet, Frappe, Flambé, Soufflé, Sundae
We need a new approach, a new way
Okay?*



10 Ways to Generate New Ideas

Could your department benefit from some fresh thinking? Are you struggling to get the creative juices flowing during staff meetings? Are there persistent problems that you want to solve? Here are 10 ideas to increase the number of new ideas you and your team generate.

Hold a brainstorming meeting

One way to guarantee more ideas is to get the team together and ask for them. Communicate the questions you want to discuss ahead of time so attendees can begin thinking about them (some people need time to prepare their thoughts). What to increase participation and meeting attendance? Doughnuts are highly recommended!

Read cutting-edge and respected periodicals

Who are the top thinkers in the field? Check new, innovative, and edgy publications, which can be great sources of new ideas. Today, many leading management thinkers have online blogs (web logs) and many magazines have online versions (some that are free).

Ask for ideas

It sounds simple, but many managers neither ask for nor encourage new ideas. Ask for new ideas during one-on-one conversations, in meetings, and in emails. When you communicate that you value your team members' perspectives, they will offer more ideas.

Ask the right questions

To generate new ideas, ask open-ended and thought-provoking questions. Try not to ask questions that suggest a particular answer, like, "I was thinking we should switch to Lotus. What do you think?" A better question would be, "Given the goals we have for reports in the future, what ideas do you have about the actions we should take to prepare our systems and processes?"

Create an environment that reinforces idea generation

When managers show appreciation for new ideas and are open to unconventional input, they reinforce idea generation. When managers do not consider new ideas or quickly shut them down, they communicate to their employees that new ideas are not welcome.

Benchmark the best

If you are looking for new ideas on a particular competency or technology, try looking at companies that are leading the pack in these areas. Who is defining state of the art? Look outside your industry as well as at competitors.

Look at the situation from many points of view

New ideas often come from a fresh perspective or view. Try looking at processes as if they flowed backwards. Try arguing from an opposing view. Look at a product from the customer's perspective. Take on the viewpoint of upstream or downstream customers.

Use a mind map

Don't worry, this process does not include finding out what's really going on inside that head of yours! A mind map is a tool that represents a thought process or brainstorming session using graphics (looks like a process diagram but is more adaptable and free-form). This flexible diagram helps explain how ideas link and is useful for generating new ideas.

Think without interruption

It is tough to generate ideas when your phone rings off the hook and you are rushing from one meeting to the next. Take time to collect your thoughts and shut out any distractions. If your office is like Grand Central Station, take a walk to the local coffeehouse or book a meeting room and brainstorm ideas on the white board (door closed!).

Take a class

Great ideas often come from new experiences. Be sure to select a class taught by a respected trainer and that is participatory in nature. You might also try attending a lecture offered the local university or bookstore. A class or talk can be just the right catalyst to get your creative juices flowing! Be wary of \$99 classes that pack 500 people into a room for 8 hours. The information might be valid, but these sessions are less participative and individualized and therefore less likely to produce "ah-ha!" moments.



10 Ways to Get Your Point Across

Can I say it so you hear?

I could shout it out loud

I could whisper soft like a cloud

I could tell you in a sonnet

I could discuss it over tea and a crumpet

But can I say it so you hear?

A note with good grammar might be wise

Reasoning and logic would comprise

Or an intimate tête-à-tête for two

Perhaps that would work better for you?

But can I say it so you hear?

10 Ways to Get Your Point Across

Do you sometimes feel as though you are talking to a wall? Do your messages get misinterpreted? Do you worry that peers and managers don't understand your challenges and concerns? Do employees forget information you have discussed with them? Have change efforts failed? Ensuring that your message reaches others as intended can be a challenge!

MBWA

Managers who manage by walking around (MBWA) know more about what is going on in their areas and their employees and peers will be clear and up to date about priorities. Informal chats are often the best for clarifying information shared in meetings or by email and many employees feel more comfortable talking directly with their manager than reading a memo.

Update regularly

Don't leave team members and peers in the dark! Providing frequent updates will ensure that information is current and correct. Updates are also a good tool for inviting questions and concerns.

Email summaries and notes

Once a meeting has finished, you should not assume that everyone took great notes and are clear about action items. Send an email soon after the meeting to reinforce agreements and communicate decisions. Put the action items toward the top of the email and highlight names, because many recipients will not thoroughly read the email.

Be inclusive

By definition, a conversation is communication flows at least two ways. By inviting others to share ideas and concerns, you will improve the effectiveness of the message you are communicating.

Spend time with peers

You will be more influential with and gain greater cooperation from peers with whom you spend time regularly. It makes sense, but we often let our hectic schedules get in the way of regular check-ins with colleagues. Share a midafternoon latte or check in with a peer as the day winds down. Informal discussions help keep peers up to date.

Communicate twice as much as you think you should

It is almost impossible to over communicate (it is possible, but most of us don't come close). To get your point across, share your message several times and using various methods (meeting, in person, email, memo, bulletin board). Ask for clarifying questions and note how people react to the information to judge their understanding.



Solicit input before decisions are final

Nothing frustrates people more than when their managers tells them of a decision and asks for input after it is clear the decision is final. What use is it to offer input if you have no influence over the outcome? If you want team members to support changes, ask for input before you firm things up. Your peers and team members will be more receptive and cooperative when you share the final decision.

Be clear about which decisions are final

Managers who are honest with team members about whether they will consider their input will earn greater respect. Conversely, team members do not trust managers who mislead them.

Eliminate fuzzy words

Wishy-washy, imprecise, and excessively general communication can drive people nuts. They can't figure out where you stand or what you want! Managers sometimes use fuzzy terms because they lack the self-confidence to speak with conviction and assurance. We should be aware that when we use fuzzy words, many will be thinking, "Get to the point. What do you really want?"

Value your point of view!

Some managers keep their ideas and concerns to themselves and take a back seat approach to managing. This approach harms the company and reduces their ability to make a difference. Your perspective, belief, thoughts, concerns, questions, and ideas are important, and you should share them.



10 Ways to Handle Complaints

What is a complaint?

What's a complaint, if not a cry for help

A signal that communicates a wish or hope

Complaints can be useful to bosses

Who are interested in preventing future losses

Of people, processes, time, and harmony

What's a complaint, if not an idea cloaked

A bit of creativity waiting to be evoked

Complaints can become positive

For they mean communication is active

And it takes a conversation to change the world.

10 Ways to Handle Complaints

Do you struggle to respond to complaints? Complaints are not all treated equally. Most managers welcome and can deal with a complaint that is valid and objectively expressed. Complaints that seem trite, invalid, or resemble whining are more difficult to handle.

Don't be defensive

When dealing with complaints, we are often our own worst enemies! Taking complaints personally makes it more difficult to resolve the matter and move on. Managers who can focus on the information and the resolution without getting defensive will find complaints less disruptive and cumbersome.

Understand the facts

The person is complaining for a reason. Before jumping to any conclusions, learn the facts of the situation. Look at the issue from all sides and ask the person to explain his or her view.

Listen fully

When a person complains, he or she wants to feel as though you have listened and understand. Ask clarifying questions to ensure you understand the situation and to show you are listening. Empathize when appropriate and apologize for mistakes. Listen for what the person wants to happen next, because it is often reasonable and easy to accommodate requests.

Acknowledge the person's feelings

You do not have to agree with the person to recognize how they are feeling. Saying things like, "I can see you are frustrated," or "I understand this ordeal has been annoying to you," will go a long way toward diffusing the complainer's anger.

Try to solve the problem or offer alternatives

The quickest way to take care of complaints is to solve the issue. This may seem like common sense, but many managers allow complaints to linger and go unresolved. If a solution is not possible, it is important to offer an alternative to resolve the complaint.

Thank people for constructive complaints

Receiving complaints can be a good thing because it signals that communication lines are open. Constructive complaints can help managers identify problems and address barriers. Listening to and thanking others for sharing complaints will strengthen relationships.

Involve the right people

You may not be the best person to resolve a complaint and will want to bring in others to address the concern. This does not mean that you can wash your hands of the complaint! As the “complaint receiver” you are responsible for ensuring the person gets a response.

Provide the facts

Team members are more likely to gripe and groan about a decision they do not understand. You can resolve many complaints by clarifying team members’ questions and concerns. Managers who take the time to explain decisions upfront prevent many complaints from occurring.

Run and hide

Just kidding! Don’t try this at work or home.

Ask for complaints

Managers who ask for complaints will find that team members express their concerns more objectively and openly. Inviting complaints reduces the likelihood the person will be upset and emotional. It is a way to nip problems in the bud and solve problems before they are able to fester and grow. Try setting aside the last 15 minutes of each staff meeting to discuss complaints.

Prevent complaints

Active MBWA and open communication can go a long way toward preventing team member and peer complaints. Often, a complaint is really a second or third attempt to share and be heard. Managers should recognize and respect diverse points of view and areas of disagreement.



10 Ways to Handle Your Mistakes

Not Respected

*I cursed under my breath then picked up the carpet
To sweep my blunder so I don't have to face it
No one must know, it cannot be revealed
My imperfections are secret and will remain concealed
For if they knew I would not be respected*

*My boss is a jerk, she thinks we do not know
She wasted our time to save her ego
I wish she understood and could see
That open and honest is a better way to be
Because right now she is not respected*



10 Ways to Handle Your Mistakes

We're not perfect, although some of us act like we are! The ways in which we handle our goof-ups, guffaws, screw-ups, bad decisions, miscalculations, and blunders is critical. Here are 10 ideas for how to react to and recover from mistakes.

Admit it before anyone knows about the mistake

In his classic book, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie suggests that the best way to handle mistakes is to admit them as soon as they occur and before others begin to react. Carnegie recommends we admit our mistakes with some energy and certainty like, "I've just made the following mistake: _____. I really messed it up! Here is what I am going to do to fix it. So sorry everyone!" By being the first to notice and admit the mistake, you will diffuse peoples' reaction and turn their attention to helping you solve the problem.

Don't try to hide mistakes!

It drives people, especially bosses, crazy when we deny or try to cover up our mistakes. Like Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart", nobody wants an undiscovered mistake looming in his or her career. This is surely a recipe for disaster, because eventually these things come to light. Mistakes can be corrected, but it is difficult to repair a spoiled reputation.

Apologize Sincerely

Mistakes will cause some inconvenience and create a waste of time, costs, or effort. Let people know that you sincerely regret the inconvenience your mistake has caused.

Ask questions that show you care

Unless we learn from our mistakes, history will likely repeat itself. Take the time to better understand how to prevent similar errors in the future.

Let team members help you to recover

Once you have admitted your error, your team members will want to help turn the situation around. Accept their help! Sometimes we are neurotic about allowing others to help us, which, ironically, hurts those around us. Our team members are there for us, just like we will be there for them when they need it.

Move quickly into problem solving

The only thing that drives people crazier than someone denying a mistake is when he or she are slow to fix it! It's true, this happens all the time. A quick recovery is particularly important when mistakes inconvenience others.



Reverse the mistake if possible

If you have made a bad decision, don't stick with it and suck the whole team down with you. Undo it if possible.

Treat yourself consistently

The ways in which you handle your mistakes should look and feel similar to the ways in which you handle mistakes made by others. We should neither be tougher nor more tolerant of ourselves. A mistake is just a preventable problem looking for a quick solution.

Clear your head if needed

Frustrated by your mistakes? Before you act, take a walk around the block. It is in moments of great stress and frustration that we do stupid things, so don't compound the problem by sending an email you will likely regret later! If you need to, vent with a trusted friend.

Update others on the progress of the fix

Once a blunder is out in the open, follow up a couple of times so they know all is under control. This will instill confidence and create closure.



10 Ways to Get a Stalled Project Back on Track

Stuck

Stuck in the muck

No go, no flow

Stopped, chopped

Stalled, stonewalled

Quicksand, panned

Jammed, be damned

10 Ways to Get a Stalled Project Back on Track

Are you stuck, stopped, or stalled? Many problems can cause a project to slow down or stop. Luckily, there are several easy ways to get the project humming again. Here are 10:

Get excited!

Have you ever worked for a company where project deadlines were a farce and nobody cared about timelines? Projects often suffer from a low sense of urgency and importance and the largest barrier to success is apathy. Don't let this happen to you! Rescue your project by demanding better focus and follow-through. Show those working on the project that you intend to ensure the project is done on time and that you mean business.

Use project management tools

Perhaps your project stalled because the work is disorganized and ill defined. Project management software can help managers stay on top of projects that have many parts and milestones. For large and complex projects, a formal project management process might be warranted.

Track and communicate project progress

The easiest way to keep a project on track is to measure task and milestone completion and share the project's stats with the team regularly. Awareness and reinforcement help keep project tasks on the top of people's to-do lists. When managers do not provide project updates, the project will not get the attention it needs.

Involve the team in getting the work back on track

You can get a project back on track by meeting with the team and launching a problem-solving brainstorm discussion. Ask team members what's getting in the way of project tasks and how the project can get going again.



Identify and wipe out barriers

What's getting in the way of completing project tasks? Take the time to discover the root cause of barriers and take steps resolve the issues. You might need to cut through bureaucracy or push for a decision that is holding up project work.

Get more help or resources

Is your project stalled because of a lack of resources? If so, take the time and initiative to determine and obtain the resources needed. You need either to get the resources or to renegotiate the project goals.

Have the right talent working on the project

Does your project require team members with specialized or advanced skills? If you do not currently have team members with the skills needed to complete project tasks consider contracting out pieces of the project or sending a team member for training.

Simplify things

Is your project so complicated that team members have a hard time figuring out what they need to do? Are there multiple steps and approvals needed to complete tasks? Does the project plan look like a PhD dissertation? Make sure that each team member can judge the tasks he or she needs to complete and the goals the tasks support. Complex projects are easier to manage, communicate, and track when broken into several smaller parts.

Ensure the purpose and plan are clear

Nothing can stall a project faster than ambiguity and confusion. Communicate – more than once – the overall purpose, plan, vision, and project team roles.

Own it

Many projects stall because they lack ownership. If you own a project, you will be responsible for doing whatever it takes to ensure project success. Some managers recognize that they have general oversight but then abdicate responsibility for the day-to-day management of the project.

Try a new approach

You can't expect a different result from the same old ways of working. To improve project progress you might try changing one of the following: the way you have communicated the project, when and how the project team meets, task assignments, and task interdependencies.

10 Ways to Avoid Energy Crashes

Ode to Lattes

*I love my latte in the morning
Double, skinny, hazelnut, steaming
It's more than espresso, sugar and milk
It's velvet, cashmere, linen and silk
Decadence for the taste buds and psyche.*

*There's a religion inside my latte
Beliefs, feelings, reasoning, forethought
Like cousins chocolate and wine
Lattes are food that transcend the easy to define
For consumption goes mind, body and soul deep.*

*Have your latte just the way you like
For they are easy to customize, no two alike
Short, tall, double or over the rocks
Whatever your pleasure, your latte unlocks
A mini-oasis in your crazy day.*





10 Ways to Avoid Energy Crashes

It's 2:30pm, and you have looked at your watch for the third time in the past minute. You're dragging and need to snap out of this mental fog to accomplish your goals for the day. Some people have a difficult time in the morning, others crash after lunch. Some managers find that if they eat lunch late they get moody and unfocused. Here are 10 ideas for combating mental and biophysical energy fluctuations.

Move

Take a walk around the office or down the block. Get your blood circulating faster and wake up your brain! It does not take a marathon to make you feel better, just a couple of minutes. Kill two birds with one stone by walking to Starbucks to get an espresso or a cup of exotic tea. Invite a peer or team member to go along and catch up on how things are going.

Eat energizing foods

The foods we eat before and during our workday will have a significant impact on our energy levels throughout the day. Foods that offer a balance of protein, carbohydrates, and fat help stabilize blood sugar levels. It is best to avoid large meals because these may reduce your available energy.

Splurge on a fancy coffee in the afternoon

For many, the energy crash comes in the middle of the afternoon. One way to combat the 3:00pm blahs is to get a triple hazelnut latte. The caffeine and sugar are energizing and the diversion helps the brain recuperate. For some, the act of getting a coffee drink provides a psychological boost, as if the mind saying, "Time to get back in gear!"

Work on meaningful tasks

If you're out of energy, switch mental gears and work on a challenging problem or brainstorm new ideas. Ask a peer to collaborate on an issue that you want to resolve. Work that makes a difference is more interesting and engaging.

Vary the work

Mundane tasks like paperwork, filing, and email can be a drag, so don't do them one after another! Read your email, work on a challenging problem, do some filing, then MBWA. Keep the day interesting by moving from task to task. If you need to concentrate on one sedentary task for an extended period (like reading briefs or creating a budget) take quick stretch breaks when you begin to feel weary.

Worry on cue

Are you a worry wart? If so, you may be draining your energy unnecessarily. Dale Carnegie used to say that 99% of all worries don't come true. If you must worry, give yourself permission to worry a couple of times a day for 10 minutes or less.

Do the work you love, love the work you do

Do you love your job? Managers who do find work more energizing than their peers who find their jobs dissatisfying. Life is too short to spend on a job you do not like. Even if your current job is not ideal, there are exciting aspects of your work. Do whatever it takes to enjoy your work.

Resist being a slave to your to-do list

Are you stuck in a rut? Does everyday look and feel the same? Try ignoring your to-do list for a week and engaging in the work you think will make the greatest difference. Do something that would never appear on your to-do list. Facilitate a breakthrough, shake things up (in a positive way), or propose a new project.

Be a bureaucracy buster

Red tape and never ending processes drain our ability to focus and concentrate. Prevent energy crashes by cutting through the steps that add hassle to the work. By dehassling your organization, you will free up mental energy and increase work enjoyment.

Schedule meetings at the right time

Friday at 3:30pm is the WORST time to schedule a meeting. First thing Monday morning is also usually bad. Meetings held after lunch need to be active to combat the after lunch carbohydrate crash. Schedule meetings at times when people will be ready to think and before they get worn out.

10 Ways to Say “No”

No. Maybe Later. Okay.

I won't do it, I can't possibly

I have no time, it's too costly

It is a bad idea, I tell you

This is a decision we should undo

No.

I should not waste my time, it makes no sense

It will take a while before the work can commence

We need more data before we can begin

Perhaps a few others should weigh in

Maybe later.

It's a hassle, but we can do it

Just make sure that we get credit

And that other project will be late

The quality might not be so great

Okay.



10 Ways to Say “No”

Today’s managers are busier than ever and their ability to say no is critical. Their sanity, effectiveness, and satisfaction depend on their willingness and skill to deflect work that should not be a top priority.

Just say it!

No. Nein. Nono. Dooda. Naddo. Yuk. Mai. Ei. Nit. Nggak.

Sometimes, you just need to say, “No!” This is often the simplest and most straightforward way. Most of us are too accommodating for our own good and make agreements we regret later. Here are nine other ways.

“You won’t get the results you seek.”

If someone asks you to provide a training program to solve a systems issue, for example, you will want to say no. Ask why he or she thinks this solution will work and offer your thoughts. Once he or she recognizes that training is not going to fix the problem, he or she will probably back off the request. This line of reasoning is appropriate your inner voice wants to say, “Why are we doing this, this is stupid!”

“This is can’t be a priority right now.”

There are an infinite number of good projects to put on the to-do list, and this would be fine if you had unlimited resources. If you don’t think a suggested project or task should be high on your list of priorities, point this out. It’s not like you are saying, “No” so much as you are saying, “Not now,” or “I’m too busy.” If the person making the request is being a thick-headed, share what you are working on and ask whether, compared to other priorities, this task is the best use of time and resources.

“How about this?”

One of the more effective ways to say, “No” is to offer an alternative. Using this approach, both parties will feel as though they are getting something. Try this technique when you believe the task is worthwhile but needs adjustments.

“It’s not my job”

We know, we know. Team players do not say things like this. Sometimes, though, it is the right thing to say. If your manager asks you to own a project that does not belong in your function, you should push back unless you want the exposure or experience. Most managers have enough to worry about without having to take on work that belongs somewhere else.



“Fixing X will cause Y to break”

We’ve all seen the Three Stooges routines where one kick on the rear causes a fall that makes a board fly up and hit Mo on the head. This happens at work too. If the task or action is going to cause new and different problems, it is important to discuss this before moving forward with the work.

“I don’t agree, and this is why”

Many of us avoid telling people how we feel. While we need to be diplomatic, professional and collaborative, we should also be clear and self-assured. If you disagree with a suggestion or idea, say so, and offer a detailed explanation.

“I don’t think others will support this project”

Pass the buck! Seriously, though, that’s not the intent of this technique. If a project or task is likely to face major resistance or barriers, you may want to put off working on it until the plan has broader support.

“I don’t know how”

When a task requires specialized skills and is labor intensive, saying you don’t know how to do something might be the best reaction. For example, you may not have the time, interest, or resources, to learn a different programming language to create a new computer program.

“Bob wants to do it”

You should delegate work to another team member or peer when it makes sense based on the scope of work or when the other person requests it. Your manager may not know that Bob wants to work on the new product plan. This response should seek to create a win-win alternative, not to dump work on others.

Bonus Section!

10 Ways to Get a Promotion

Most of us want our career to be filled with promotions, new challenges, and greater responsibility. As a bonus, we have listed the top 10 reasons that managers receive promotions. This list is based on our years of observations and is not scientific.

Develop a reputation for the qualities listed below and your chances of landing a corner office will soar!

10. The manager has excellent technical and functional skills. He or she has kept current in their field.
9. The manager is a good role model and trustworthy.
8. Internal or external customers love dealing with this manager.
7. The manager is known. He or she has taken the time to get to know and build positive relationships with various peers and managers in the company.
6. The manager is a well-rounded professional. He or she understands and cares about the business.
5. The manager is a good addition to the management team. His or her strengths are just what we need.
4. The manager is a great thinker (or inspires great thinking). He or she has helped us improve the business.
3. The manager has the courage and conviction to make the tough decisions and take care of problems expeditiously, even when it is uncomfortable to do so.
2. The manager hires, develops, and retains a great team of people. The department ROCKS!
1. The manager delivers consistently great results. He or she can be relied upon and can run any function well.

About the Authors

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Lisa, founder of Haneberg Management, is also the author of *H.I.M.M. (High Impact Middle Management): Solutions for Today's Busy Managers* which is to be published by Adams Media in December of 2004. She also writes a management blog, Management Craft, and a column, In the Thick of Things.

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