

5 Things the Best Managers Do-and Don't Do

Good managers realize positional power is a privilege, and use it judiciously.
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Excellent managers come in all shapes and sizes. They can be loud or quiet, [extroverted](#) or [introverted](#), Type A or calm. Their [management](#) style can be as unique as personalities. But while elements of personal style may vary, there *are* absolutes one can point to about management substance. Accordingly, here are five things the best managers do—and don't do.

On the positive side, the best managers:

Keep the big picture in mind—They have a sound strategic mindset. They know their company's business well, and ensure that the activities of their unit or department or division are always firmly aligned with broader initiatives and strategies.

Are consistent in their behavior—People like and need predictability. I never minded working for someone who was tough, so long as he or she was predictably tough. Thus, you knew what to expect and count on in terms of behavior and expectations. Problems arise for employees when a manager is erratic—for example, lenient and upbeat one day, and controlling and dour the next.

Treat their employees' time as if it's as important as their own—The best managers earn respect by being every bit as prompt with their own employees as they are, for example, with their own boss. It shows you value your employees as individuals—a feeling that in all likelihood will be mutual.

Are unafraid to question their own management—In a thoughtful, respectful way, of course. As one colleague I used to work with put it: "If you're just paying me to say what you want to hear—and not for my own opinions – then you're paying me too much." I'm not advocating cantankerous, difficult behavior—just independent, honest thoughts when needed.

Earn the trust of those they manage—The best managers are credible and always true to their word. In short, trustworthy.

On the other side of this equation, the best managers don't:

Become intoxicated by positional power—A little power goes a long way; it's easy to abuse. When too many people are too eager to please you, it's tempting to take advantage of that. The best managers realize positional power is a privilege, and wield it judiciously.

Play favorites—As obvious in theory as this point may seem... most managers will readily admit it's simply human [nature](#) to enjoy working with some employees more than others. Some people are just more naturally likable; some always have a great attitude, while others equally talented may not have the same [charm](#) or charisma. But any natural tendencies toward favoritism should be resisted; it's not only unfair—it's a quick way to lose, or at least damage, the respect of your [team](#).

Go off halfcocked—The best management decisions are rational and logical, not emotional. The daily frustrations of the job can easily lead one to [impulsive](#) decisions—they can even be cathartic (you're fired!)—but hasty, angry decisions are rarely optimal for an

organization.

Avoid conflict—Since a good amount of management involves addressing or adjudicating conflict situations, management is no place for conflict-avoiders. Resolving all types of conflict diplomatically and effectively is an integral part of the job, a core managerial skill.

Feel threatened by the abilities of their employees—The best managers are secure, and want to build a team of talented people whom they continue to develop. No less a business person than Warren Buffett is well known for wanting to be surrounded by “[the brightest and most productive people](#)” he can find. Based on my own modest experience, I couldn’t agree more. Since management is all about accomplishing things through others... the better people you have, the higher quality work your team or organization will produce.

Net-net, there’s no single roadmap for effective management; there are innumerable ways to accomplish what needs to be done. That having been said (and this list is by no means exhaustive), there are different roads to travel to get where you need to go, and some roads are smoother and more direct than others.

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