

Quick Guide: Tips for Team Leaders

Being an effective team leader or manager of people can sometimes be like a box of chocolates: you never know what you'll get until you try it. If you feel you would like a more consistent team approach, here – with a slight departure from our usual format – are the top ten tips to help you:

Tell the team what commitment and behaviours are expected. Set up regular team meetings to define the commitment then support them to achieve it by doing all of the following.

Expect and plan for errors. Develop a tolerance for them and provide guidelines to avoid errors. Make sure staff know how to access these guidelines.

Aim to develop specialists in your team, but don't develop loners. Make sure everyone is aware of, and can tap into, each other's specialisms so the team itself functions as one.

Motivate those in your team to recognise for themselves what is needed – don't do everything yourself: that's what your team is for.

Let those closest to the task have the responsibility to make those decisions. Next time you hear yourself saying "leave it with me" or "I'll get back to you on that" ask yourself if it really is your job, or theirs, to deal with the issue.

Encourage staff to realise their potential; by providing opportunities for them to volunteer, to make suggestions and to improve existing procedures.

Avoid airing any "less-than-favourable opinion" of senior management in front of staff. Keep it behind closed doors as otherwise it will lead to negativity and discontent. And of course, your team will follow your lead.

Develop a team of motivated and multi-skilled individuals who can cover in times of absence or crisis. By rotating boring or routine jobs (or get the team to devise a rota) you will also avoid flogging the willing horses in your team.

Expand relationships through trust. Everyone makes mistakes! So provide help and encouragement for staff to see mistakes as an opportunity not to repeat it.

Retain respect by creating opportunities for the team and the individuals in it to succeed.

Compiled by Des Whitehorn