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OPEN, HONEST, & DIRECT

A GUIDE TO UNLOCKING YOUR TEAM'S POTENTIAL

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ATTRACT AND RETAIN TOP TALENT

Think of the last time you tried to roll out a new process to your team. You delivered a clean presentation that was simple and easy to digest. You gave your team time to ask questions and gain clarity. You even followed up with an email recapping what was expected of them. You did everything you could to provide the knowledge, believing it would lead to a smooth and intuitive rollout.

But why, only a few days later, are only a *handful* of people following the new process? Generating a change in the behavior of your people requires more than just telling them what to do and how to do it; it requires them to take action. It's the same reason only 20% of people ever accomplish their New Year's resolutions.[1] Why, when

people know better, do they not *do* better? It's not that people don't know what to do; the problem is that they don't take action.

We tend to believe knowledge leads directly to action; that is, someone knows what to do, then they do it. I find this to be a fallacy in our understanding of human behavior—and the reasons for this are fascinating.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

To better understand the knowledge-to-action gap, I took a deep dive into the science of human behavior some years ago. I wanted to find out why people do what they do and what triggers some people to take action in their lives while others do not. I looked back to the history of *Homo sapiens*, trying to understand where our instincts originated. I read philosophy to better appreciate the perspective on the human condition from generations past. I researched the perplexities of the human brain and cognitive biases from behavioral economists like Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky and looked at the importance of intrinsic motivation in driving human behavior from the likes of Ed Deci and Richard Ryan. I explored how social constructs nudge our decision making in one direction or another. And I even looked at casinos and grocery stores to understand how space design—the environment you're surrounded by—can influence your decisions.

All of this research helped paint a picture of why we do what we do. But it wasn't enough. I really wanted to know how this worked in real life, with real people. I was fortunate to be the first employee at a health and well-being coaching and education organization

right out of college, led by two physicians who viewed medicine from a whole new perspective. Instead of seeking to fix the sick, they wanted to see how we could look upstream at the problem; they dove into the question of human behavior with the very same curiosity I had. As the director of education and delivery at that organization, I had the perfect opportunity to test out these theories in real life.

Our client base gave me the chance to work with thousands of leaders from all over the country, across varied socioeconomic backgrounds, generations, and denominations. It became my playground to explore behavior change. I started testing what worked to trigger change in people's lives—from yearlong coaching, weeklong training programs, and experiential workshops to lunch-and-learns, webinars, and even animated videos.

We tried everything, and through these mini experiments, I discovered two key insights that made a profound impact on my future, ultimately leading me here.

Discovery 1

I found what really works to drive a human being from knowledge to action and how to do this rapidly and effectively. All of the work I've done with leaders since has been based on this key learning and even informs how I've laid out this book for you to read. I care more about you taking action as a result of reading this book than anything else, so the book is designed in a way for you to *do*, not to simply *know*.

Discovery 2

In my work with thousands of leaders, I noticed what gives me the most joy is seeing the light switch go on for a leader. And once the light turns on, I'm awed at the way these leaders quickly take action, not just in that one area but also across various other domains in their lives and business. I uncovered how far-reaching and profound one intentional, consistent change can be on a leader and a company's performance.

The feeling of helping someone tap into their potential invigorates me, and even now, writing about it, I feel my heart beating faster with energy and excitement. This clarity shifted my perspective of the world and my role within it. I realized that helping people unlock their potential is what I love doing. It's what fills me up. And my eyes immediately opened to the problems and possibilities around me. I began asking some different questions of myself.

How can I serve more people in unlocking their potential? Where could I maximize my impact? What problem would I be solving? In searching for a better answer to these questions, I was led to a $30 billion problem and realized I could do something about it.

MILLENNIAL TURNOVER: THE $30 BILLION PROBLEM

For quite some time, I've observed people—millennials in particular—jumping from job to job, sometimes leaving incredible positions for reasons I couldn't logically understand. I had a friend, Harry, who was making well over $150,000 at twenty-five years old. He kept getting promotions and raises at a rapidly growing

company, where he worked with a few of his good friends—and they even had a barista on staff. Yet only three months after his most recent promotion, Harry quit.

The crazy part is that he wasn't recruited by another company; he wasn't starting his own business. He simply left to sit on his couch and figure things out. I remember being really confused. He seemed to have all the things you'd want at a company, and yet he still left. I asked him what his reasons were at the time, and he told me, "I didn't feel like I had the opportunity to grow and develop myself, and if I couldn't see myself there in five years, why should I stay?"

Harry's story sparked a fire in me. I began interviewing friends, clients, and anyone who would talk to me about their job and their future desires. Virtually all of them said they were in the process of searching for a new job or not planning to stay with their organization for more than two or three years. After more research, I found these stories weren't all that unique. Millennials everywhere—even today—are going from job to job, staying months instead of years. According to a recent survey, only 27% of millennials were expected to stay at their current company for the next four years.[2]

As a millennial myself, I wanted to know what was going on. What was causing this enormous turnover?

What I found was simple yet powerful. In almost every leave story, I observed a perceived lack of one or more of these factors, factors that apply to your workforce today:

1. The desire to do work that makes an impact

2. The need to feel connected to your team, company, and boss

3. The belief that your company cares deeply about your growth and development

Millennials want to do work that makes an impact, to do something with real purpose to it. This doesn't necessarily mean working for a nonprofit whose mission is to rid the world of illness or poverty. Millennials want to know, within whatever company or organization they join, that the work they do matters and how it plays a role in the company's success.

I consistently see how a millennial's desire to be heard and recognized is often misconstrued as a desire for instant gratification or to be coddled. In reality, their behavior has to do with a desire for a feeling of connectedness to their company and the feeling that their opinions and perspectives are valued by their leaders and team.

Like Harry, millennials' most common reason for leaving a job is that they don't feel their company truly cares about their growth and development. Often, it breaks down at the manager level, with the manager seeing the millennial as a to-do on their weekly task list instead of as a future leader to grow and nurture.

You might be thinking these are not just millennial needs; these are basic human needs any person wants in life. Don't we all want to make a difference, to be heard, and to grow and develop?

You're right. These needs are not unique to millennials—although there is a key difference. Millennials not only need these factors in their life but also have come to expect them from their workplace, which is vastly different from the Gen Xers, baby boomers, and traditionalists who came before them.

To better explain, there are a variety of reasons—including the

changing world of work, the nature of our current on-demand society, and various inciting incidents—that have affected the experiences of an entire generation. (The generations conversation is a different conversation for another day. If you want to know more about why the millennial generation is different, I share more in the bonus chapter at the end of the book.) What I noticed from all of this was a group of people who were not satisfied with their work, who were not unlocking their potential, and who were hoping that the next role they landed would magically tap into it. It was a disturbing hope.

I was lucky; I found my potential in my very first role. Many others aren't so lucky.

I looked at the problem from the perspective of an organization or a business leader and found that employee turnover costs US businesses more than $30 billion per year. And it's not a problem that can simply be avoided by not hiring millennials.[3]

According to a 2016 Gallup Study, millennials already account for 38% of the entire workforce and are expected to be 75% of the workforce by 2025.[4] Rather than being an issue about millennials, this is an issue about the largest population in the workforce—one critical to the growth and future success of any business.

It's a two-sided problem, one where the employee wants to be at their best, to reach their potential, but has no idea of where to do this, how it happens, and what to do to ensure their next job is the one that connects them with their potential. The other side of the problem comes from companies wanting their employees to be at their best and not knowing how to get the most out of their people. Both sides are losing, and an end doesn't seem to be in sight. One

reason is that it's even easier now more than ever for employees to leave when something's not working because the labor market is so competitive. The shorter employee life cycle only makes this problem harder and more critical to solve.

THE WAR FOR TALENT IS REAL

Record low unemployment is making it harder and harder for growing companies to find and hire top talent and, conversely, easier for talent to switch jobs. I was at lunch a few months ago with four successful entrepreneurs, and like most conversations, the topic quickly turned to their most pressing concern—hiring talent. One founder rolled his eyes, another sighed, and they all complained about the difficulty and the fierce competition around attracting top talent. These entrepreneurs are impressive; one just raised $40 million, another is on Crain's Fastest Growing Companies, and they were all exasperated with the struggle to find the right employees to grow their companies.

Although low unemployment is good for the economy, the lower the unemployment rate is, the harder it is for businesses to find good employees. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate dropped to 3.9%, which is the lowest point since the late 1960s. If you take a deeper dive into the data over time, you'll find unemployment for adults over twenty-five is 3.1%, and for those with a bachelor's degree or higher, it's at 2%—making it even harder to find talent with a degree.[5]

The issue of attracting talent is real. Attracting talent is something companies must focus their energy and resources on. Yet, in meeting

with 400+ businesses in the past twenty-four months, I've noticed a trend—more of a trap—that most of these companies fall into.

Companies look at the problem of attracting top talent, and, instead of taking a long-term approach, they often focus on a short-term solution: throwing money at it. It's as if they are dealing with a leaking bucket, and, instead of taking time to fix the leak, they just keep adding more water to replace what's flowing out.

As people continue to leave, companies try to solve the problem by adding more people to replace them. They focus on filling the bucket with more talent and making the opening of the bucket look prettier so more people will want to jump in.

A perfect example of this can be seen in a fast-growing tech company in Chicago—let's call them Company X—that just raised $7 million. Most of the funding is going into hiring tech talent to develop Company X's product for new markets and into building out its gorgeous new office space with a game room, nap room, kombucha on tap, and a cereal bar. To hire the needed developers, coders, and digital marketers, the company pays a recruiting firm 25% of each new hire's starting salary. At an average salary of $150,000, Company X pays out $750,000 across three recruitment companies just to hire twenty new employees. At the company's current turnover rate of 30%, Company X will also need to hire six *more* people in the next year just to maintain its team; it's throwing away $225,000 to recruiters each year.

Most companies hire recruiters, pay exorbitant recruitment fees, enhance their perk packages, and continue to raise salaries—even though people are leaving almost as fast as they are hired. The cyclical nature of this problem, which most companies find themselves

in, creates a huge opportunity—one that only a few organizations have tapped into. Instead of focusing on the trap of attracting talent—on filling the bucket with more water—strategic leaders take the time to fix the hole in the bucket by focusing on talent retention.

FIXING THE LEAK

This is where I've decided to put my energy. It's how I've found I can best help people unlock their potential. You may have heard the phrase, "It's cheaper to keep a client than to find a new one." I believe the same holds true for your employees. I've seen how companies who provide deep-rooted intrinsic value for their employees win in the long term.

I'm talking about creating an environment where people want to come to work, where they can see the perceptible impact their daily actions have on the business, and where they can grow their skills, leaving better than when they first walked through your doors. It's about creating a culture that is open, honest, and direct.

If you don't believe this is possible, take a look at Hireology, a frequent name on various lists of the best places to work and one of the Inc.'s fastest growing companies. I've had a chance to take a close look at the structure and leadership of Hireology. They have a culture of people who love to work for them, and they reap the rewards of resources spent on developing their people rather than on solely attracting new people. Hireology and companies like it provide autonomy (the freedom for employees to do their work), competency (the opportunity for employees to succeed and develop mastery in a specific area), and connection (an environment where employees feel

connected to each other and see the impact of their work). These factors match the needs of humans as defined by Ed Deci and Richard Ryan's self-determination theory of human motivation.[6] Hireology is a great example of a company with clear values, vision, and mission; that ensures its managers are leaders, not doers; and that provides a structured operating system for its employees to grow within.

MOST MANAGERS SUCK

Creating an environment of intrinsic motivation for your employees is much easier said than done. To make it happen, your managers need to be powerful leaders. An employee's need for impact, connection, and growth in the workplace are all perceptions. Even if you provide great resources for your employees, it doesn't guarantee they'll see them as resources.

One of my good friends, Ty, was working at a fast-growing company that provided unlimited funds for his personal development. He could buy books on Amazon, sign up for courses to take online, or go to conferences to better himself. And yet, he still quit. Why? He quit three months after his boss left for a different company, and, as he shared with me, "My last boss was awesome. I loved working with her, and I learned so much in such a short time. My new boss doesn't really care about me or my growth, so why stay and do the work when I can go learn more on my own?"

As a business leader, this can be baffling, knowing you are investing in your people and not having them recognize it. It's because the biggest influence on an employee's perception of her company and her place within the company is her manager.

When a business leader needs to fill a management role, the natural thought is to look at top performers. We pluck them out of their role as individual contributors and put them into a management role, as a team lead. We do this because they are good at their job, not because they are good at leading people. This is the problem. A top performer will not necessarily be a great leader. Leading and performing require vastly different skill sets. In fact, fewer than 10% of employees naturally have the tools and skills to be great leaders.[7] We often pick the wrong person because we are not looking at the right set of skills. We look at their key performance indicators, not their ability to listen to others or deliver critical feedback. We fail to assess their people skills, ultimately setting them up for failure.

FINDING YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

I work with companies to fix the leak in their bucket by empowering managers with the tools, skills, and training to be better leaders of people. When you focus on empowering your managers to be coaches rather than micromanagers and on adding value to the talent you already have, you will get employees who want to stay and give you their all. Talent will find you because they want to be a part of what's going on at your company. Employees will be engaged; they'll give their extra discretionary effort to their work instead of to their Instagram account or side hustle because their managers help them see their impact, because they'll feel connected to the company, and because they'll experience constant growth, regardless of title changes or promotions. Managers will

be leaders and not simply doers because they will have the tools and skills needed to lead.

When this happens—when you have a company of open, honest, and direct leaders, a group of leaders and not simply doers, of coaches and not simply managers—you'll be in rare company. Most organizations don't take the time to be so thoughtful, deliberate, and focused on developing the skills of their leaders. You'll unlock the potential of your organization, and your people will become your competitive advantage.

That's the opportunity I'm so excited to share with you and why I'm writing this book.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is designed to share knowledge from my work with thousands of leaders and to provide you with the practical tools and skills to apply to your leadership and with your team, whether your needs are for an entire global organization, a growing team, or just a department of one. In sharing these lessons, tools, and skills, I hope you can learn from my mistakes and experiences to more rapidly develop your team of open, honest, and direct leaders. To do this, I've broken the book up into three parts.

Part 1

Part 1 is about how you can make sure to get it right when hiring and promoting managers in your company or team. As leaders, we tend to skip this step and go straight into how you make your managers

better. I advise you not to skip this part of the book, as it can save you a lot of pain later on in the development of your leaders.

Part 2

The tools in part 2 get much more tactical; I'll share activities, checklists, and frameworks to serve as a practical guide to developing the four key skills to make you and your team more powerful leaders.

Part 3

Finally, we'll bring it all together, walking you through the steps to get started today with plans to organize and schedule your leadership successfully and without too much headache!

The goal of this book is for you to be able to put, if nothing else, at least one new skill into practice in your life as a leader. If out of all the insights shared and gained, you put one idea into consistent action, you'll have succeeded. Small changes taken consistently over time lead to profound impact.

Enjoy the read. I can't wait to hear what action you've put in place on the other side of this book. Many of the frameworks, models, and checklists featured in the book are also available on *openhonestanddirect.com* for your use. That's where you can connect with me directly to find out more about an idea in this book, ask a question, or share a win. Please do connect. I want to hear from you; it's what fills me up!

Note

For some of the stories in this book, I share the challenges clients and friends discussed with me. As a means to respect their confidentiality, I've changed their names.

For other stories, I've kept the names of clients (with their permission, of course!) and provided more specifics about their situation to give you more context and relatability to a situation you may be facing.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT MANAGERS

It is crucial that you choose the right people as the foundation of your company's leadership. To secure that foundation, we need to know why managers fail, how good ones succeed, and how to help encourage that success in your team. Without all three pieces, your leadership team will fail.

For instance, what happens if you have good managers who aren't given the time or tools to connect with, evaluate, and support their reports? You get a disconnected team. You get frustrated managers and employees. You get a revolving door of talent. But with top-down support—leading by example—you can give your managers every chance to help their team grow and succeed.

In part 1, you'll find key checklists to follow when looking for the right manager (chapter 1), an understanding of the key skills all great leaders possess (chapter 2), a deeper explanation of how habit formation works (chapter 3), and a framework to more rapidly change behaviors within your company today.

Let's start putting the pieces together.

WHY MOST MANAGERS SUCK

"I most seriously believe that one does people the best service by giving them some elevating work to do and thus indirectly elevating them."

—Albert Einstein

Intention: It's on you to set your managers up for success.

Let's face it: Most managers suck. We will first take a focused look upstream at this problem and explore three key questions for hiring and promoting the right manager for your team. Choosing the right manager can make or break the success of your team and company, so it's critical to get this step right. You may not feel as though you have the tools or the time to properly vet a manager yourself. We'll discuss ways to give you more clarity throughout the

process, making it easier to determine the right hire or promotion and saving you hours and hours of rehiring later on.

WHY TOP PERFORMERS DON'T MAKE GREAT LEADERS

Top performers are promoted into management roles because of their ability to do work well, not because of their ability to lead. The problem with turning your top performers into managers is that their skills as individual contributors don't always directly translate into leadership skills. The skills required to lead are vastly different from the skills required to be a top performer.

Too often, I see organizations promote top performers and then leave them alone to figure out how to run a team. Once they are promoted, top performers-turned-managers typically tend to power through, sticking with what got them there and relying on talents that may not apply well to their new situation. However, what got your manager there—being good at *doing* a job—doesn't necessarily mean they know how to *lead* others doing that job. When they continue to do all the work individually, they turn into what I'd refer to as a super doer rather than a leader, and the negative impact on the team and its success is immediate and profound. Without the right tools and skills, the transition from top performer to manager leads to an inevitable drop in employee performance, increased company turnover, and a lot of frustration for all parties.

This recently happened to one of my clients, Katya. Katya was the corporate hero. She'd mastered the science of success, of getting work done, and had achieved a level of excellence that most others

don't reach. After being promoted to partner in her company, she found herself stressed out, overworked, and unsure of how she could keep up as her responsibilities and team grew.

Katya, like most other super doers, fell back on her work ethic. As her company grew, she had trouble saying no to all the various requests coming her way. From client fires to employee questions, Katya found herself increasingly more frazzled. Instead of benefiting from additional team members, she took on more tasks and responsibilities. To ensure success, she double-checked all client emails, orders placed, and proposals sent out. In reviewing every detail, it seemed she hoped her team would learn how to do great work simply by osmosis.

For Katya, things reached a breaking point when she was faced with a several-thousand-dollar mistake one of her employees made for the second time in three weeks. The first time it happened, she blamed the employee. But the second time, Katya realized it wasn't the employee's fault; it was hers.

THE IMPACT OF A BAD MANAGER

Having the wrong person in the wrong seat hurts the business on many levels. Not only is the manager being asked to be accountable for the growth, development, and success of a team of people, but she is also expected to continue performing on the same level herself. The results are often a failure on both ends.

First, you lose a top performer. They go from delivering great work to now having to manage their time between doing the work, leading others, and putting out fires. Instead of doing one thing well, they are now doing many things poorly.

Second, you create a team of frustrated employees who are also not performing. They are frustrated because their manager doesn't support their growth, doesn't communicate clearly, or doesn't help them be better at their work. The frustration can only last so long before you start to lose employees. And it all stems from this single manager promotion.

ACTIVITY: THREE QUESTIONS FOR HIRING RIGHT

☐ Does she want to lead?

☐ Do I have the right metrics in place to measure her success?

☐ Does she have the skills to lead others?

HOW CAN I GET IT RIGHT?

The manager is still the number-one reason people leave their jobs. The impact of picking a bad manager never seems to end for a company. That's why it's so critical to get this right.

The most important thing to do is make sure you have the right people in the right seats. This means taking a step back and looking at your hiring and promotion practices. Before hiring a manager, I recommend first asking yourself these three questions:

Do they want to lead?

The desire to lead is the single biggest factor in the development of a leader. I once had an executive ask me if I thought certain people just aren't meant to lead. Although there are people who seem naturally and intuitively inclined to lead, I've found that anyone can lead if they have the desire to learn and are willing to do the work. I've learned through my work with leaders that those who are the most successful in our training are the people who want it—who want to grow and develop themselves as leaders.

If someone doesn't want to lead, then they shouldn't be doing it, and that's OK too. Sometimes this requires letting go of old mindsets and work structures where managing people is the only way to get ahead in business. It's time to recognize there are other paths to growth within an organization. It's OK to promote individual contributors up the ranks of your organization without giving them a team to lead.

> **Tip:** It can be hard for an individual to recognize that they would rather be a contributor than a leader. Instead of asking them if they want to lead, ask them what excites them about leading a team. Their answer—the way they either light up when talking about others or skip over the team aspect—will give you a better insight into their true desires.

Why do we have to pluck a top individual contributor out of what they are good at and force them into something they don't want to do? There's no reason for it. We can stop this now by promoting

those who want to lead into leadership roles while creating other avenues of growth for those who don't. Knowing who wants to lead and who doesn't also enables a company to prevent problems further down the line when it realizes it may not have the right person in the right position.

ACTIVITY: IDENTIFY YOUR INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTORS

1. Create a list of all your people managers.

2. Go through each manager on the list one by one and ask yourself:

   a. Does she truly want to lead? (yes, no)

   b. What is the impact of her managing people on your team? (positive, neutral, negative)

   c. Is she better served as an individual contributor? (yes, no)

3. Put a big star by each manager who is a better fit as an individual contributor.

4. Determine your course of action with each manager.

Now that you've identified your people managers who would likely be better off as individual contributors, it's time to determine your course of action. The impact of doing nothing is likely far worse than

you might imagine in the moment. Just because someone isn't a fit right now to manage others doesn't mean they have to be demoted or fired. That's counterintuitive if they're great contributors.

EVALUATING MANAGERS				
Manager name	Do they truly want to lead? (yes, no)	What's the impact of their managing people? (positive, neutral, negative)	Are they better served as an individual contributor? (yes, no)	Action to take
Noel	Yes	Neutral	No	Invest in her development as a leader.
Steve	No	Negative	Yes	Share insights with Steve and opportunity to transition to more strategic role where he doesn't manage people.
Latoya	Yes	Positive	Yes	Check in with her to learn what she's doing well and how you can continue to support her.

Often, the most effective transitions have no impact on a person's title, pay, or position in the organizational chart. Rather, the change that's needed will free your leader up from the responsibilities of managing others and give them time to crush it for your organization, thereby performing even more effectively. By keeping certain leaders on as individual contributors and allowing them to continue to thrive within the organization, you create a path others can see for success, one in which career growth is not dependent on managing people.

Do you have the right metrics in place?

Once you've confirmed the answer to the first question and have determined your potential new hire or promotion does want to lead a team, it's time to take an internal look at your metrics. Do you have the priorities and performance metrics aligned for your managers to be successful?

Priorities and performance metrics are the success measures and evaluation milestones for the position. They are what allow both you and your managers to understand what success looks like for them in this role. By understanding these metrics, you can better share them up front with each manager, giving them clarity about their role and your expectations.

Prioritizing your leadership

During a recent check-in meeting, my client asked how it was going with her team. In full transparency, I shared how they have the skills but they don't have the time.

This is something I see frequently from organizations experiencing

hypergrowth. As the leader of your organization, you have a picture of what you want the company to be—a beautiful vision of people who love to work for you, who love their coworkers, and who come to work excited to work alongside their boss and team. The only problem is the execution of this vision; that's where most of us fail. We fail because although we *say* it's critical for our leaders to spend time coaching and growing their team, what we *do* conveys the opposite message. Although she wanted her team to develop their skills and although she invested money to do it, my client wasn't showing up as an example they could follow and didn't give them the space needed to actually develop their skills.

People do what you do, not what you say. As the leader of the organization, you are the archetype of what success looks like; you are the corporate hero for your team. If you are constantly running from meeting to meeting, showing up late, pushing meetings over and over again, and generally too busy to spend time developing your leaders, you are sending a specific message and creating a picture of what it takes to succeed in your organization. This CEO was sending a message that getting work done was more important than developing skills to lead more effectively and efficiently, so her leaders didn't do the work it took to develop their leadership toolkit.

One of my clients recently admitted to me that he doesn't do one-on-ones with his executive team. He says it's because he trusts them to do their work and wants to give them autonomy. But autonomy without accountability doesn't work. It's a basic human need to have at least some level of certainty, and people crave structure and accountability, even if they say they don't.

In reading between the lines, it became clear to me that, between

board meetings, strategy sessions, and travel, my client had to choose where he spent his hours in the day, and making the time to meet with each person on a biweekly basis was not high enough on the priority list in an already busy schedule. What kind of example does this set for his executive team? By not making time for his team, his leaders then didn't prioritize one-on-one meetings with their own direct reports, and the pattern followed, on and on, down the line, resulting in a company culture that lacked structure and account-ability. And when this happens, people pay for it.

If you want others to lead, you need to prioritize leading your-self, or put someone else in place to lead so you can contribute to the company in other ways. What this looks like is taking the time to have one-on-ones with your people, making sure you check in periodically, and asking your team how you can help serve them. It also means letting your team make mistakes so they can learn from them instead of having you jump in as the savior to fix their errors at the eleventh hour.

Establishing the right performance metrics

It takes time to lead. Depending on how many people you have reporting to you, managing people should take between 20% and 30% of your time. That's at least one day a week, whether you plan it or not. If you don't plan ahead, you'll end up losing that time and more. If you are unable to effectively lead, your reports are left to fend for themselves, which brings about fires. You'll have to stop what you are doing to jump in and help or fix a situation that could have likely been prevented. If you plan ahead and are strategic in your approach, you can get ahead of those major fires.

Does your organization incentivize new leaders to spend time with their direct reports? Or do leaders only get recognized (or paid) when they deliver work? It's crucial to get your performance metrics and incentive structure aligned properly.

Even if your newly hired manager wants to lead others, if they are expected to do the same amount of work or even more while also managing a team of people, something's going to give. Where do you think they'll decide to prioritize their time? On what their bonus compensation is tied to? Or with their team? The answer is obvious: They'll focus on what helps them get their full bonus, not on their team. What gets measured matters.

> **Tip:** Including one or two measures of team performance in your leader's individual performance metrics is a surefire way to make sure you align priorities.

A great example of this comes from Frank Riordan, the president of DMC, a rapidly growing engineering consultancy with offices all across the country. Frank has a wonderful dashboard he uses to assess each of his employee's performance. He looks at three elements: billable hours, projects proposed, and project dollars managed. Each element is scaled as if the employee were only performing one of them, and then a composite score is created to get a weekly snapshot of performance. Frank knows each element is critical to the success of his organization; he recognizes the importance of intentionally taking time to lead and manage his team, and so he assesses his team accordingly.

> **Tip:** Avoid putting more than eight people under one manager. I've found that any number larger than this is simply too many people for one manager to be able to handle well.

It's imperative to set up success measures for your managers. The happiness and well-being of people in your company—and, ultimately, the performance of your company—are tied to the ability of your managers to connect effectively with their direct reports. When you sit down to assess your leaders at the end of the quarter or year, one element of their performance should measure how well their team is performing and how well they lead.

By including performance metrics around people management, your leaders will be able to clearly see where your priorities lie and will motivate them to spend more time focused on developing the skills it takes to be a great leader.

Do they have the skills to lead others?

This might seem to be the first question you should ask when determining whether someone is ready to lead. The order here may seem counterintuitive, but in my view, skills and tools should be the last element to review on your checklist of whether to hire or promote someone. Even if your manager is equipped with the right tools, if they don't want to lead or don't have the right incentive to lead, you've set them up to fail. Tools and skills can be provided and developed, but they'll work only if the manager wants to grow and already has the structural support to do so.

If your managers don't have the tools and skills for effective management, there's a simple solution: Invest in their development. You can start small and focused. The four most important skills any leader can develop are these: to listen with intention and attention; to ask powerful questions; to be open, honest, and direct in their communication; and to hold critical conversations. Managers who practice these skills daily can motivate, evaluate, and lead their teams successfully.

To set your managers up for success, make sure they have the bandwidth to not only do the work you're asking of them but also time to manage a team of people and work on themselves as leaders.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

Finding the right manager for your growing team is crucial to supporting the growth of your organization. To really get it right, this requires exploring the manager's desires, taking a serious look at your incentives and performance metrics, and then assessing their leadership tools and skills.

Since you've made it this far and are still reading, you are likely one of those leaders who is willing to do the work it takes to build a truly great team. Congratulations! You are already in rare company; most organizations don't take the time to be so thoughtful and deliberate about choosing and developing the right people to lead. By doing so, your company has a better chance of success and of being the type of place where people want to work.

TOP TAKEAWAYS

- Choosing the right manager can make or break the success of the team and your company, so it's critical to get this step right.

- Avoid simply promoting a top performer into a management role. You'll end up losing a top performer and creating a team of employees frustrated with their lack of quality leadership.

- When hiring or promoting a manager, first check: Do they want to lead? Do you have the right metrics in place? Do they have the skills to lead others?

- The desire to manage people is the single biggest factor in whether a potential hire will develop into a good leader or not.

- Include at least one team-leadership metric into your assessment of a manager's performance to ensure they are incentivized to manage their people and not just accomplish their other work tasks.

- Invest in helping your people develop the skills to be better leaders.

ACTION ITEMS

- Use the "Three Questions for Hiring Right" checklist on page 22 to determine your next management hire or promotion.

- Complete the "Identify your individual contributors" activity from page 24.

REFLECTION

- What structures or processes do you need to change to better support your managers?