

Want to improve as a leader? Google it

Whether you've been a manager for a few weeks, years or decades, you're probably aware that earning the title of "manager" and succeeding as one are far from the same thing.

As importantly, being an effective manager isn't a one-size-fits-all proposition.

Company culture, employee disposition, workplace norms and shifting workforce expectations about what constitutes a "good" manager and a fulfilling job all impact the "right" way to manage—and that can change at any time.

While there's no shortage of management theories, books, and leadership experts, identifying which tips are as effective in practice as they seem on paper is a challenge unto itself.

So why not borrow some of the tactics that Google—a company that has single-handedly disrupted the world and how we live, interact and work in it—uses to turn its own new managers into leadership superstars?

Here are three key ideologies Google teaches its own leaders to adopt.

1. Mindset is crucial

A person with a fixed mindset believes that their skills, talents, and capabilities are essentially assigned at birth, and limited.

A person with a growth mindset believes that they can always develop new abilities and expand existing ones. A person with a fixed mindset views failure as the end; a person with a growth mindset views it as a learning opportunity.

Google encourages its new managers to wholly embrace and adopt a growth mindset for themselves, and the employees they manage.

It also encourages them to be willing to entertain where they have a fixed mindset—but don't acknowledge it.

In practice, managers can coach employees towards a growth mindset by abandoning ideas of failure, and replacing them with the thought they simply haven't found that big win "yet."

Managers should also praise employee effort rather than results, and teach themselves and employees to replace language like "I have to" with "I want to" or "I get to."

2. Cultivate emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become a bit of a buzzword in the business world, but Google attributes management and staff who have high EI (defined as a combination of self-awareness and other-awareness) as a significant contributor to a positive organizational culture and performance.

Google encourages its new managers to become self-aware about their own emotions and to identify personal

“triggers” that could disrupt their EI. It also teaches managers to view emotions as “inherently valuable data” that can inform how they perceive or respond in situations.

In particular, Google teaches managers that empathy is a critical skill set to develop for high EI, and one that can be developed further over time.

For example, one new manager exercise prompts participants to think back to a time they felt joy, fear, anger, disappointment and surprise.

It then asks them to dissect how that emotion impacted their thoughts or actions.

Using that examination as data about their emotions, participants are then challenged to “peel the layers of the onion” behind their response, and consider how a deeper analysis of those emotions could have changed how a situation played out.

3. Embrace and know your values

Google teaches managers to understand their deepest values, and embrace them as a unique personality trait they can lean on when they face ambiguity or must make difficult decisions.

To help managers hone in on their values, it prompts them to think of a time when they had to make a difficult choice in a situation that included “grey areas,” and to consider what principle or value might have led them to do what they did.

It further stresses that managers who lead with their values can find deeper meaning in their work—and will better understand the behaviors, motivations, and beliefs of those they manage and engage with at all levels of the organization—when they take the time to learn what they value most.