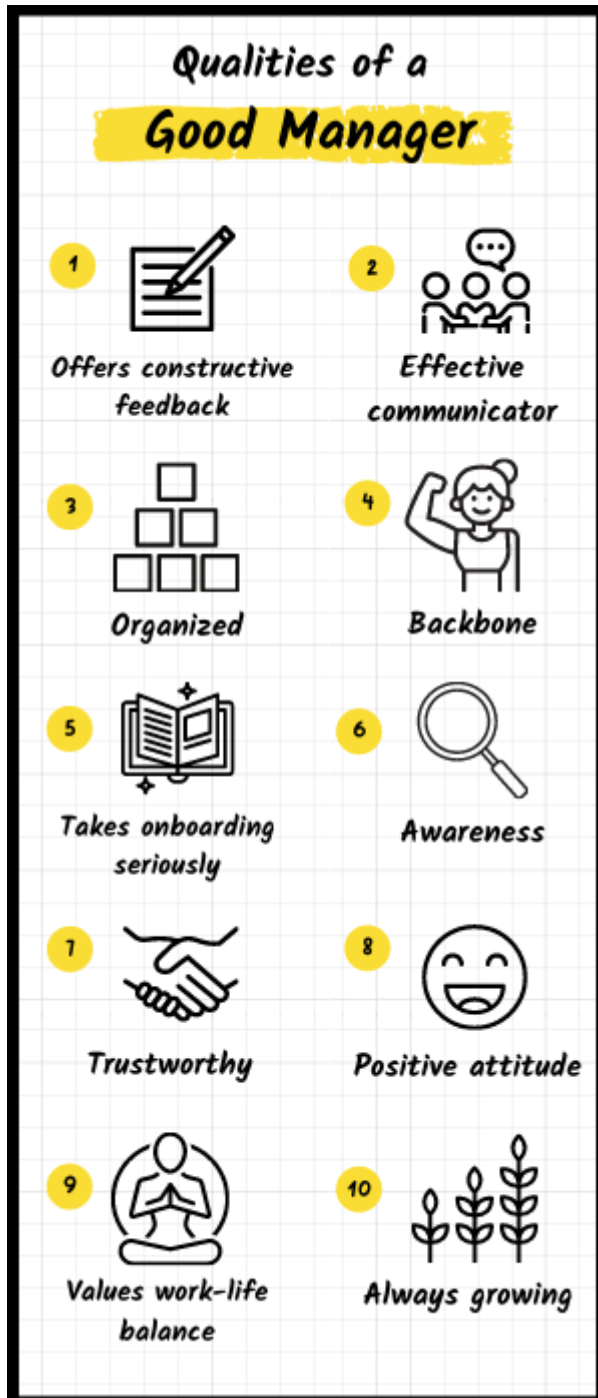


10 Qualities every good manager needs to have



Everyone wants a good manager, or to be a good manager. However, a single definition of a “good manager” does not exist. Leaders possess a variety of management styles. So finding a method that’s authentic and effective for you proves more valuable than trying to live up to some preconceived notion. That said, there are certain qualities that most good managers have in common.

They generally demonstrate competency in several basic areas critical to productivity, interpersonal relationships, and morale.

Let's take a look at some of the actions and behaviors often associated with being a successful manager. As you read about the qualities of a great manager, reflect on where you stand. You may decide to invest some time in developing certain traits and skills. Or, maybe you're on the right track but simply need to develop greater consistency in applying them. Either way, you'll find what you need to get started on your journey to being a superstar manager.

Offers constructive feedback

Employees need to know exactly what they are doing right and what things need improvement. Specific, positive feedback makes them feel confident in their abilities and encourages them to repeat good actions. Saying "good job" is nice. However, stating "I really like how you kept your calm around that irate customer" increases the odds of it happening again. Similarly, pinpointing behaviors requiring change paves the way for actual improvement. Telling someone "Records show you've been late five times this month" is quite different from stating "you don't act like you care about this job."

Scheduling regular one-to-one check-ins with direct reports provides the chance for individualized, constructive feedback on a timely basis. Deliver it objectively and respectfully. Do not treat someone like a child or let emotions get the best of you.

When the time comes for formal performance reviews, the best managers complete them thoughtfully. Employees interpret a half-hearted effort as a sign you don't particularly care. Allow time for follow-up, as workers likely will have questions about the contents. Use the review as a springboard to conversations about goals and improvements.

And don't be afraid to turn the tables. Great managers seek constructive feedback from team members. Leaders benefit from knowing what they are doing well, where they can improve, and how their employees feel.

Excellent communicators

When instructing and informing are critical components of your job description, effective communication skills are a must. The best managers put a system in place, such as a daily email blast, that ensures all staff members receive pertinent news whether they work on-site or remotely. Likewise, successful managers build a reputation for answering questions from employees in a timely, thorough manner. This promptness and accuracy enable team members to do their best work.

Stating things, however, is not enough. Great communicators pay attention to comprehension. After talking to an employee, they may ask the person to summarize the conversation or restate important points. This repetition ensures the person truly understands.

And good leaders act as role models by putting away their cell phones during conversations. By giving others in a discussion their undivided attention, successful leaders better grasp what their employees are trying to say. Such attention also allows managers to pick up on body language, tone, and other cues offering insight into attitudes or emotions.

Organized

There are many important qualities a good manager should possess. However, without organization, it's almost impossible to reap the benefits of exhibiting those qualities. When you're the one responsible for the group, disorganization sets everyone up for failure. Direct reports must know performance goals and the steps needed

to reach them. Break down projects into manageable parts, and check in with relevant employees at preset intervals.

Use time management skills to stay on track. A master calendar is a must for keeping tabs on deadlines and other important dates. When you call meetings, set an agenda to avoid forgetting important matters or wandering off course. Start on time. It shows respect for employees and their own time management efforts.

And while it may not seem like the biggest deal, know the location of everything within your work environment! Wasting time trying to find the Company X file or even the stapler takes away from using that energy on more productive activities.

Backbone

Some managers spend a good amount of time worrying about popularity. A better goal, however, is to aim for respect. The nature of the job oftentimes requires saying or doing things others will not like. The position also involves making difficult decisions. Successful managers realize these potentially problematic things go with the territory and remain strong.

Effective managers must possess clear standards regarding office conduct and not be afraid to call out inappropriate behavior. They exhibit zero tolerance for bullying, tasteless “jokes,” gossip, and other negative influences on company culture. They enforce rules across the board without being swayed by excuses or employee drama. When instances arise where they need to deliver bad news, great leaders know how to convey such information in a direct, mature way.

However, having a backbone does not mean a manager is inflexible or domineering. In fact, effective managers own their mistakes and apologize appropriately. Solid managers gain a reputation for commitment to fairness and doing the right thing, even when that may be uncomfortable. Team members relish that they can count on their leader to stick up for them in company meetings or in exchanges with clients.

Takes onboarding seriously

Good managers understand that a positive initial employee experience significantly impacts employee satisfaction and retention. They make a point of being around and available on a new hire’s first day. They follow a thought-out onboarding program to ensure pertinent information gets conveyed and vital paperwork completed. However, the best managers also know new employees are eager to start making a difference. They assign meaningful work from the get-go to promote employee engagement.

Good managers recognize the importance of belonging, so they encourage existing staff members to personally reach out to welcome a new colleague. Assigning a mentor is another important move. New employees like to have someone at the company to turn to besides their direct boss.

Awareness

At any given time, a manager should possess a pretty good sense of staff mood and employee engagement. Effective managers often accomplish this by making a point of walking around the office just to get the big picture of how things are going in the workspace. Hiding behind a desk all day doesn’t offer insight into company culture, morale, or how workers interact with one another.

The best managers also are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their team as a whole as well as of individual team members. Knowing every person is not motivated by the same things, a successful leader tries to figure out what will spur each employee to do their best work.

Awareness should not be limited just to work-related issues. Managers with emotional intelligence and empathy are more successful than those without. Knowing enough about each team member to sit down and hold a friendly, individualized conversation demonstrates interest in someone as a person, not just as a worker. Such interaction strengthens bonds and connections to the organization.

Trustworthy

Trust is a two-way street, and this is one quality good managers should never overlook. They hold everyone to the same standards and don't play favorites. They admit when they don't know something rather than faking it or avoiding the issue.

Since nobody likes someone constantly looking over his shoulder, great leaders avoid micromanaging. They trust their staff to check in as needed and ask for help if any problems arise. These managers comfortably delegate work and give stretch assignments because they know their direct reports will come to them as needed. The door is always open!

Positive attitude

As stewards of company culture, managers set the tone for their team. Others observe and follow their behavior. Simple actions such as smiling and greeting people start the day off right. Politeness and respect are a way of life.

When the going gets tough, great managers exhibit a can-do spirit. They not only rally the troops but also pull up their own sleeves to pitch in however they can. They value collaboration and hard work, sincerely thank workers for their efforts, and give credit where it is due.

And when mistakes happen? Whether it's their own error or someone else's, the best managers treat missteps as a learning experience. Instead of endlessly rehashing the problem, they focus on improvement and move on.

Values work-life balance

The best managers know that people have lives outside of the office. They understand the importance of flexible scheduling to overall well-being and do what they can to accommodate employee requests. Respecting the right to recharge, they do not send emails or texts in the evening or on the weekend and only call if there is a true emergency. Likewise, they grant vacation time without a problem (except in extenuating circumstances) and try exceptionally hard not to bother the person who is away.

Concern for work-life well-being isn't limited to employees, though. Great managers know they too need time to recharge. They stay home when sick in order to get better (and to set the proper example for their staff). They leave early sometimes to catch a child's soccer game. They realize vacation time is something they've earned, so they don't leave PTO on the books.

Always growing

While most managers already likely exhibit many of these leadership qualities, the best managers know the importance of lifelong learning and obtaining new skills. They read trade journals, attend industry conferences, or take professional development classes to keep their knowledge base up to date. To enhance their leadership skills, they may turn to books, podcasts, or TED talks on areas in which they determine they could use improvement.

Growth comes from meaningful relationships, too. Talking to other leaders at the company aids in discovering more about the organization as a whole. Expanding and solidifying one's network expands career paths,

influence, and ways of thinking. Great managers cherish keeping up with others, even if only via LinkedIn much of the time. And maintaining a relationship with a reliable mentor offers a readily available source of guidance.

Lastly, growth comes from challenging the status quo. Great managers take time out to brainstorm, innovate, and think about their company's future. They also reflect on their own behaviors and actions, realizing that self-awareness is one of the premier qualities of a good manager.