

Is Your High Performer Really Ready for Promotion? (Part 1 of 2)



Imagine you manage a stellar employee. She's incredibly competent in her current technical role and gets along well with her colleagues. You have every confidence in her abilities. You think she'd be a great supervisor and suggest she apply for a team lead position that recently opened. She applies, gets the job, and begins her new role.

After some time, however, you realize it's not going well. The new manager has conflicts with her direct reports that she seems unable to resolve. The team's performance is suffering as a result.

This story illustrates a common problem: employees are promoted based on strong performance as individual contributors, but struggle once they're in management roles.

The New Manager Trap

Many new managers fall into the trap of an inward mindset. With a self-focused inward mindset, we see others not as people with their own needs, challenges, and objectives, but as *objects*. A new manager with an inward mindset sees her

direct reports, therefore, as:

- *Vehicles* to achieve her own objectives and results
- *Obstacles* that are in her way or causing problems
- *Irrelevancies* that can be ignored

People sense when they are being seen as objects. Think about your own life—can you tell when someone isn't really seeing you?

Seeing her direct reports as objects, the inward-mindset manager might begin to micro-manage or fail to delegate. She might become defensive if an employee suggests alternative ways of doing things. Or she might give no feedback or input, fearing her reports might dislike her. In all these examples, the manager deprives her team of agency in their own work and decisions—they are disempowered and unable to contribute meaningfully to the organization. This lack of agency can lead to employee disengagement, poor performance, conflict, and other team challenges.

How to Help New Managers

The new manager trap is extremely common—and certainly not unique to new managers. Anyone can fall into an inward mindset, especially when challenged with new situations and expectations. If we are going to ask new managers to deliver results from a new role, then we must help them clearly understand the role and prepare to step into it.

Stay tuned for Part 2 of this series, which dives into exactly how we can help new managers prepare for their new role.