

50 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR MANAGERS

How to get better results
for you and your team



PAUL MATTHEWS

50 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR MANAGERS

How to get better
results for you
and your team

PAUL MATTHEWS

© 2019 Paul Matthews

Updated third edition October 2019

Updated second edition August 2015

First published 2012

The right of Paul Matthews to be identified as the author of this work is asserted world-wide. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be produced, stored or transmitted in any form by any means, electrical, mechanical or otherwise without the prior written consent of the author.

INTRODUCTION

Managing people effectively is now widely understood to be a key requisite for any company's success. Unfortunately, it's also a skill that many managers are never taught.

Despite this, managers at every level of an organisation are expected to manage, motivate and lead people through change. No wonder so many managers feel under increasing pressure!

If you find yourself in this position, then I hope this booklet will go a long way to making your job easier and more pleasurable.

This 3rd edition contains tips selected from my Monday Tip email collection. Every Monday morning, tens of thousands of people receive an email from me that contains a tip which provides them with an idea to focus on during the week to improve their management.

Inside this booklet, you'll discover:

- How to communicate and manage change
- When to ask 'why' and when to keep quiet
- How to protect your time
- How to identify and resolve issues and problems
- A simple key to leadership
- How to motivate your team (and yourself!)
- And lots more!



Paul Matthews,
Founder and CEO of People Alchemy

1 • When your back is turned . . .

Your behaviour as a leader communicates more to the people around you than any of your formal communications. Your behaviour provides the stories that people tell about you.

And these stories travel fast!

Notice the stories you hear, and perhaps repeat, about your boss and other senior people.

What stories do people say about you, especially when your back is turned?

What sort of stories would you prefer they told?

How do you need to change your behaviour to generate stories that you would be proud of?

2 • Elvis knew the answer

"Values are like fingerprints. Nobody's are the same, but you leave 'em all over everything you do." Elvis Presley (1935-1977)

Values are about what's important to all of us, including the people you manage.

If you want them engaged and willing, and therefore productive, they need to see a connection between what they are asked to do and their own unique set of personal values.

Take a minute and reflect on how your own values affect your engagement at work?

Now consider your team. What about them?

3 • A neat trick for meetings

If you are lucky, you get a meeting agenda. And if you are really lucky, you get it before the meeting. It tells you what you are going to cover in the meeting.

When you call your next meeting, do things differently.

Send an agenda which states what you want the meeting to cause, not cover.

What do you want people to do?

Focus people on the outcomes rather than the process, and reinforce this as you open the meeting.

And if you are invited to a meeting, you could be cheeky and ask the chair what they want the meeting to cause so you can decide if you will attend :-)

4 • Are you a slave to a dysfunctional process?

You will have some key common processes that you and your team follow. They may be written down in a manual, or they may just be done the way they have always been done.

What do these processes say about your culture?

Consider one process you have, and ask these questions . . .

Is it simple or complex?

Is it flexible or rigid?

Does it focus on achieving an outcome or mitigating risk?

What sort of behaviour does it encourage?

What support is available for the process?

What happens if it is done wrong; or right?

Do you still think the process is a good one, and driving a good culture?

5 • How to tackle poor performance

Whether we like it or not, we are judged on our performance, and if we are a manager, the performance of our team.

"The true measure of the value of any business leader and manager is performance." Brian Tracy

What is often forgotten is that a good performance needs two things: a good performer, and a good stage for them to perform on.

So many times people don't perform at work, not because of lack of competence, but because of things in their environment that stop them doing the job. It is often too easy to blame the performer.

Consider a performance issue you are grappling with. Where is the real barrier that is stopping the good performance? In the performer, or in the environment surrounding the performer?

6 • Keys to effective leadership

We hear a lot about leadership these days. And it is increasingly true that to get your team and the people around you to do things, you need to lead rather than command. Managers become leaders through thinking and behaving in certain ways

and you will get much better results when you know what those are and how to use them.

Leadership is about challenging and motivating people to use their potential. Those managers who focused on improving their people skills early in their career are now achieving greater success than those who didn't. As your people skills grow, so do your opportunities.

Remember that leaders are made, not born. They are made by themselves, more by their own life experience and high levels of self-awareness and self-management than by external factors. Leadership can be learned. In other words, the midwife does not come out with the new baby and announce "It's a leader!"

7 • The DNA of conflict

I am always surprised at how often managers I speak with talk about conflict. But perhaps I shouldn't be. Handling differences between people is one of those life skills that should have been taught at school, but wasn't. So now it's time to find out how conflict really happens, and what to do about it.

Conflict arises between people when they insist that their view of how things should be is the view that should prevail. Once you understand the three basic ingredients of conflict, you can resolve conflicts so much more easily.

1. The parties
2. The interest or needs
3. The actions

8 • The Process of Risk Management

Risk comes from the uncertainty inherent in the world. The consequences of the uncertainty can be good or bad. If the consequences of something are good, we use words like 'opportunity'. If things could turn out badly, we call it 'risk', and as managers we should always be seeking to handle risk and mitigate the possible negative consequences.

If a possible risk materialises, then it turns into an 'issue'. The fact that we spend so much time as managers dealing with 'issues' tends to indicate that we don't proactively manage risks as well as we could.

Spend more time exploring consequences asking "What would happen if . . .?"

9 • Motivating with recognition

Time after time, surveys show that people want recognition from their job, and this is often highest on the list, well ahead of an increased pay packet.

Employee recognition is not just a nice thing to do for people. Employee recognition is a communication tool that reinforces the most important outcomes people create for your business. When you recognise people effectively, you reinforce the actions and behaviours you most want to see people repeat. An effective employee recognition system is simple, immediate and powerfully reinforcing.

Recognition should occur as close to the performance of the actions as possible, and be specific about what the recognition is for, so it reinforces the behaviour you want to encourage.

If it is a public and “formal” recognition system, make sure that it does not include a situation where managers select the people to receive recognition. This type of process will be viewed as favouritism or talked about as “it’s your turn to get recognised this month.”

10 • The idea that starts everything

Look around you at some of the amazing things people have done. Every one of them started with an idea, a thought.

So if you want to achieve anything, you need that thought first. Your chain of thoughts will evolve, but it must start somewhere, no matter how small. I am sure the founders of Facebook or Google didn’t imagine them as they are today.

As your thoughts grow, so they will lead to choices and actions. As your actions grow, they will get results.

And it all started with an idea, so notice the ideas you have. As a manager, notice the ideas from your team.

Ideas that grow become a vision for the future.

If you value your future, then make sure it is full of your ideas.

11 • Communicating Change

“What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say”. This lovely quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson highlights a common trap that many managers step into.

They speak of what should happen or what should change, and then don’t do it themselves.

Another quote you might know that is attributed to harassed parents is "Do as I say and not as I do". As a manager you can't get away with this. The people on your team are not children and you will lose all your credibility if you try to treat them like children.

Think through the rules you have in your workplace and for your team, and notice which ones you think are for "them" and not for yourself.

Either dump the rule because it is well past its sell by date, or start following the rule yourself, or sit down with your team and come up with a new way of doing things that makes sense for everybody.

12 • Catch them doing something right

Many of the ideas of management grew out of the latter stages of the industrial revolution where there was careful measurement and specification of results. Tasks were standardised and managers saw their job as correcting people who didn't follow the rules and procedures.

Our legacy today of this old management style is a legion of managers who think their job is catching people doing something wrong.

For better performance in today's world, it has been proven time and again that you will get far better results by catching somebody doing something right and then rewarding them, perhaps just with a word of appreciation.

So how and who can you catch doing something right?

And how could you give them a simple reward when you do?

13 • Moving fast on people issues

As a manager, you will always have some issues with some people in your organisation.

The best managers understand that people issues only get worse if left alone, and address them early.

You almost never hear a manager say that they moved too early on a people issue they encountered.

If you have any current people issues on your team, do something sooner rather than later.

14 • Two contracts . . . Really?

Yes. Every employee has two contracts. The employment contract written down and filed away somewhere in HR, and the other one that you, as a manager, ignore at your peril.

It is what the employee thinks is reasonable, what they think they have been promised, and their expectations of how they think things should be done. It is often called the psychological contract.

Are you considering changing something, or wondering about the strong reaction when you did change something?

Something like changing hours of work, changing where people can park, putting in a paid for coffee machine, changing the notice required for holidays.

If these changes violate what people expect, or what "should be", then people will resist, even if the change seems trivial and within your remit to make.

So tread carefully when making changes, and consider the psychological contracts all employees have.

Note: This concept of an implicit contract also occurs in other relationships outside of work :-)

15 • Who controls the conversation?

Two people are having a conversation. One person is asking all the questions and the other person is giving all the answers.

Who controls the conversation?

The one asking the questions!

That being so . . . If you are a manager who is answering your people's questions all day long, then that means they are in control of every conversation with you.

Every time you provide your people an answer for which you could have asked a question, you have removed their need to think for themselves.

On the other hand, encouraging them to think helps them to grow. They will be better equipped for next time they have a question, and may not even need to ask it.

Now, you just can't go through your day responding to every question with a question. However, getting a better balance of questions & answers will make you a better manager.

16 • Six steps to easy report writing

Business thrives on reports and most ideas need to be written down at some stage if they're to be implemented.

The more change is going on, the more senior people feel in need of information, and they ask for reports.

If they get a poorly structured and difficult to read report, what would they think of the person who wrote it?

On the other hand, when you write a good report, you stand out as a manager. You are seen as someone to be relied upon, someone who can get their thoughts in order; and by implication, someone who can therefore get things done.

It may sound odd, but trust me – the worst way to write a report is to sit down and start writing. Use this approach and you'll almost certainly lose your thread, bring in irrelevancies and spend hours longer than you need.

1. Establish objectives and readers
2. Research your data
3. Organise and sequence your data
4. Create the structure for the whole report
5. Write
6. Format
7. Edit and proof

17 • When they come and ask you what to do

When they come and ask for help, you have a great opportunity to focus on training your team to think through problems.

Unfortunately, that's the very time when it's easiest to just tell them what to do.

Instead, help them to explore the problem. For example, ask what are 2-3 possible things they could do, and why would one action be better than others.

Encourage their thinking, and use the opportunity to coach them, rather than tell them.

Next time they will be better equipped to deal with the problem on their own.

18 • Manager as mediator

Disputes happen at work. Then what?

The dispute could be a serious one between an employee and the company, or a spat between two employees over rosters or a prized parking space. In any case, as a manager, you are involved and may be called on to mediate a solution.

Note that when mediating, you are not there to make a judgement or impose a solution. Mediation is focussed on what happens going forward, not on who was right or wrong in the past.

Any successful mediation results from an increased understanding by each person of the underlying interests and desires of the other person. So ask good questions to facilitate this.

Here are some questions to ask . . . "What is the positive outcome you want from this?" and make sure the answer really is positively framed. After you have an answer, ask "Why do you want this positive outcome?" or "What do you think you will get from this that is important to you?"

Keeping things in the positive results in each party starting to see merit in the underlying interests and purpose of the other party.

19 • The far reaching power of the manager

As a manager, you have great power. By that I mean, the quality of the lives of the people you manage will be affected by your

words and deeds; and not just at work, because we all know that what happens at work reverberates into our personal lives as well.

Think of your manager, and how their words and deeds affect you for good or ill.

Use your power with care – and caring.

"Life I touch for good or ill will touch another life, and in turn another, until who knows where the trembling stops or in what far place my touch will be felt." Frederick Buechner

Using power has consequences, and empathy is your guide.

20 • The best management style

Think about the best manager you have ever had. If you have never had a good manager, and sadly some people haven't, then imagine what one would be like.

Now think about the worst manager you have ever had.

What did each of them do that made you think of them as best or worst?

How did other people react to these managers? The same as you did?

Given this information, what can you stop doing and what can you start doing to become a better manager yourself?

As you think about what you can stop or start doing, think about how to do this and stay true to yourself.

Now go beyond thinking, and take action!

21 • A simple key to leadership

People will do things when they know WHY they are important. Great leaders know this. They talk about WHY, not HOW.

The WHY is what provides the motivational energy to do the HOW, so keep communicating the WHY.

The "E" in CEO could really stand for Chief "Explaining" Officer, as one of the key success factors of their role is to explain the WHY.

Consider this . . . The people who only know HOW will always be led by the people who know WHY.

22 • Getting them to do it right

Very often as managers we are asked to show someone how to do a task. If we don't teach them well, we risk poor performance and bad results.

If we do teach them well, they perform better with less supervision. Teaching a task well requires some simple steps . . .

A: Get their attention and buy-in to learning the task

B: Break down the task into steps

C: Check their understanding, and that they can do the task unaided

The bonus: Teaching a task to someone else means we have to get it clear in our own mind first. Often we don't know at a detail level how we do what we do.

Tip: If you want to get clarity on something, and you have no-one to teach it to, make up an imaginary student. Then rehearse a training session in your mind with your imaginary student. They are sure to ask you some good questions!

23 • Too simple to learn from?

I was speaking with a very experienced management consultant this week. He has masterminded the turnaround of many medium sized companies from almost dead to thriving. He knows his stuff!

He reminded me that turning around performance is down to doing the basics well, and doing them consistently.

The easiest step to improving your performance is virtually always something simple . . . Something simple that you know already, something simple that you maybe used to do once upon a time, something simple that you probably do some of the time, something simple that you probably ought to do more of.

So rather than think "I already know that", which closes the door to improvement, instead think "How can I do that well and consistently?"

24 • 'Got a minute?' is never a minute

If you are a manager, you hear this all the time – "got a minute?".

One thing for sure, "got a minute" is never a minute. You want to be accessible, but you also you have your own task list to wade through.

A very simple ploy to limit the time on these interruptions is to always take them standing up. It encourages others to be more concise in their explanations. If you are already standing, stay standing. If you are sitting down, stand up and move away from your chair.

If within the first minute or two you realise it needs more than just a few minutes more, and it can wait, say so. Then schedule

a time to meet to give the issue the attention it deserves, and task the person to do something to move the issue forward before the meeting, or to bring some key information to the meeting.

25 • Are you the enemy?

I saw this quote the other day, and it got me thinking . . .

"So much of what we call management consists in making it difficult for people to work." Peter Drucker

Think of the people who manage you. What do they do, or insist that you do that gets in the way of you getting your job done?

Now put yourself in the shoes of someone you manage. What do you do that gets in the way of the people you manage?

Now consider what systems or processes are in place that stop people working effectively?

Process improvement is often such an easy win, and it is a great way to engage your team in how to make things work better. Doing process improvement work with your team will also surface the things you can personally do to help them be more productive and efficient.

26 • Agreement vs. Commitment

There's a huge difference between getting agreement from your team, and getting commitment from your team.

It's easy for people to agree on a common way forward, but it is the commitment that powers everyone to do whatever is necessary to make it happen.

Leaders foster commitment.

In your meetings, focus on gaining commitment, not just agreement.

Committed people take action, and delight in doing so.

27 • How to stop wasting your time

Ask your team to identify low value work.

You know, the kind of work that generates comments like

"No-one ever looks at these reports"

"Now we have to do it all over again"

"This is never going to work"

"That was a waste of time"

"We've got more important things to do"

"They changed their mind again, so all that work we just did is no good"

"Never time to do it right, but we have to find time to do it over again"

Are they right? Is it low value?

If they are right, work with them to find a way to get rid of the work. Maybe improve the processes, get better clarity from the customer (internal or external), do better planning, and so on.

If they are wrong and it is high value work, help them understand why it is high value. They need to know, or they will never engage with the work or bother doing it well.

28 • Like it or not, you are a message

What you say or do, or don't say or do is noticed. You are 'on show' all the time. This is particularly true if you are a manager. People notice what you say or do, and then make sense of it. They extract meaning from what they observe.

They then talk with colleagues and swap their ideas of what your activities mean, what they imply about your values, your ethics, your motivation, your intentions and what they imply about you.

These conversations are where the 'meaning' of any message coalesces and forms, and then affects their behaviour. Think about how you talk with your peers about any message you get from your boss.

What if the 'meaning' your team extracts from your behaviour and messages is not what you hope it is? What if they have misunderstood the message, or you as a person?

To find out, you need to engage with them in conversations that bring out what they think the messages are so you can understand how your communication, either by word or deed, intentional or unintentional, landed.

29 • The dangerous quest for perfection

I was reminded again this week of how debilitating the desire for perfect results can be in terms of stopping us taking action.

"A good plan executed, is far better than a perfect plan carried out next week" – General Patton

But the desire for perfection is part of what motivates us to do well, better than last time. It is a valuable driver that pushes us to improve.

So we need to strike a balance in our quest for perfect plans and perfect results.

When do you throw the switch on preparation and say "Let's do it. It will be good enough"

How do you know when you throw the switch? How do you feel?

Too early and the results will probably be poor. Too late and you will get delayed results and wasted time doing prep that wasn't required.

Learn your own pattern, and the patterns of those on your team.

30 • Do you have a feedback gap?

Feedback gaps occur when employees need more frequent and/or higher quality feedback than they get.

Remember, feedback = constructive and meaningful conversations about personal aspirations, performance, potential, and development.

Now . . . read that definition of feedback again. Do you agree with it?

Do you get enough feedback from your boss?

Do you give people on your team enough feedback?

If asked, would they say they get enough feedback given the definition above?

Feedback is arguably among a manager's most important duties. There's no excuse for a manager not to give feedback – it's their job, and it's one of the few dependable means to significantly improve performance.

31 • Discomfort is the gateway to change

I was in a class at the gym and the instructor was urging us to use slightly heavier weights than we would normally.

He said "There is no change without challenge". (JJ the gym instructor)

That got me thinking. And you . . . What does it mean to you when you roll that statement around in your mind?

This philosophy doesn't extend to all areas of life, but it does apply well beyond the gym.

The problem is that challenge usually brings with it some form of discomfort, and we naturally shy away from discomfort. The discomfort of the pain of exercising at your limits, the discomfort of going a bit hungry on a diet, the discomfort of withdrawal from something we have grown used to but want to stop. Or the discomfort of a difficult conversation with a team member, the discomfort of saying you don't know in front of peers, the discomfort of trying and failing.

All too often we give up on our goal when the discomfort kicks in.

What discomfort do you need to get tough on and work through in order to get the change you want?

32 • Would you want to have a boss like you?

When was the last time you stopped and tried to get in tune with what it feels like to work for you?

Go on. Stop right now and imagine that you have a boss who is just like you . . .

What does that feel like? Are you motivated? Dismayed? Engaged? Ignored? Grateful?

You need to ask your boss a question. Do you think you will get a helpful answer?

You need to tell your boss something bad has happened. Do you feel safe doing so? Or apprehensive? Or would you just try and not tell them anything?

Think again . . . What would it be like to have a boss just like you?

How can you respond to your team today, so you would LOVE to have a boss just like you :-)

33 • Great managers play this bigger game

All managers should be making use of individuals' talents, but great managers play a bigger game; they understand the potential of entire teams.

A great manager needs the skills to manage 'combinations' more than 'people', and the skills to plan for the short term and long term development of these combinations.

How could you switch around the jobs or people within your team to help them grow and learn?

How are you empowering your people to work together better than they could work on their own?

34 • Does your 'but' get in the way?

Your 'but' is really rather dangerous, and here's why.

The word 'but' undoes the impact and meaning of the preceding statement.

Consider . . .

You did a great job on that report, but . . .

You messed up that report, but . . .

I will help you with your new project, but . . .

The company vision is to expand operations globally, but . . .

Today, notice when you say the word 'but' and how it affects the meaning of what you say. Notice when other people use the word, and the impact it has.

Other words with a similar effect are 'however', 'nevertheless', 'though'.

Unless you are using the word 'but' on purpose to undo meaning, then a simple alternative is to use the word 'and' instead.

35 • A simple way to be liked

When did you last give your staff a good listening to?

To be really listened to is a unique experience for many people. It is a gift they seldom receive. There is a great deal of difference in being listened to, and being heard.

When was the last time you received such a gift when someone was present for you, and really listened in order to understand?

If you can remember, how did that feel? And do you like them as a person?

If you can't remember, and many people can't, how do you think you would feel?

Every week, give a member of your team, or your friend or your spouse, or your child a good listening to. Who will you listen to this week?

Listen without any intent to reply.

Listen to empathise and understand.

Listen so that at the end, they don't even know your position on the topic because you haven't said anything about you or your stuff; they just know that you understand.

36 • Keep talking when there's nothing to say

Going through change?

How well do you communicate with your team about the change, about what's happening, and the future direction?

There are times during change where there is no news to report (maybe a key decision is still to be made).

Weak leaders go quiet until the decision is made.

Strong leaders continue to communicate through this period and keep the focus on the future direction.

Strong leaders know the dangers of uncertainty.

What are you doing this week to focus your team on the future?

37 • Never try to teach a pig to sing

"Never try to teach a pig to sing. It wastes your time and annoys the pig." (probably Mark Twain)

We function better when we are doing things that are in alignment with who we are, and when we are being our authentic self. We feel good.

People seldom get good at things that don't feel good. I bet that is not a surprise to you, but so many times we ignore

common sense and push people to go against their natural configuration.

So focus on your strengths. And help the people on your team focus on their strengths.

Of course, there may be a minimum standard of some skills that are essential, such as writing or math, but beyond those, develop and play to your strengths.

So what are you good at?

What are the people on your team good at from your perspective . . . and from theirs? Look from both sides. You may get different answers.

Understanding this leads to better team performance.

38 • Nelson Mandela on language

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart." – Nelson Mandela

And by language, he does not necessarily mean French or Zulu or Arabic. He means talk in words and concepts that matter to the listener.

What is important to them?

If you need to talk to employees about the change in the shift patterns in a factory, don't talk about the financial reasons for the change; instead talk about how the change will impact the workers. Talk about things like the time they can clock off and how that relates to picking up their children from school.

What we focus on gets magnified. So magnify what matters to your audience whether that's one person or a hundred.

Talk about what they care about, which might not be what you care about. If they know that you know what they care about, they know that you care.

Read that last sentence again carefully. It is very important.

Now, what messages do you need to deliver this week? How can you deliver them in the language of your audience?

39 • How to make the 'right' decision

Do you sometimes find it hard to make the right decision?

Here's the secret . . . You will never know enough to make the perfect 'right' decision.

Better to make a good enough decision with the information you have, and get going.

Then work on the path you have chosen to make sure it turns out right.

Doing that means you have indeed made the 'right' decision.

Besides, decisions drive action, and a delayed decision leads to delayed action.

40 • The robot school of management?

How do the people on your team feel?

What delights them?

What disturbs them?

What annoys them?

Do you ever stop and think about what the people on your team feel about their jobs, their colleagues, their workspace, and the organisation?

They are people first, and workers second; they are not robots, so take a moment right now and 'put yourself in the shoes' of each of the people in your team.

How do they feel?

What could you do to help them feel a bit better about something?

Now do something quite revolutionary. Go and ask them how they feel. Go on!

41 • A good manager hates this question

"What do you want me to do?"

Seems a reasonable question doesn't it?

A less than good manager will proceed to tell people what to do, and how to do it. It's called micro-management.

A less than good manager feels good when they are micro-managing because it makes them feel important. And through a misconception of what management is really about, they may even think that means they are doing their job well.

Instead, think about what you need to do as a manager to ensure that your people have what they need to figure out what to do, and the freedom to do it?

What do you need to do to pre-empt that question, so it does not need to be asked?

You see, a good manager hates that question "What do you want me to do?" because it means they have failed in some way as a manager.

42 • How to teach your team so they learn

It can be frustrating when you try and teach someone something, and they don't seem to get it, they don't seem to learn it.

So what's going wrong?

Think back to what you have learned. How did you learn?

In a classroom?

By trial and error?

From talking with a colleague?

How?

Of the different ways you have learned things, which was easiest, and which way really made the learning stick?

Next time you need to teach someone on your team how to do something, how do you think you should help them learn it?

There is a great quote from an Australian writer, Patrick White. "I can't remember what I was taught, I just remember what I've learnt."

Ultimately the people you are trying to teach are in charge of what they learn. You can't force learning. All you can do is generate situations and information flow that motivate them to learn, and assist them to learn.

By the way, you might also ask them how they prefer to learn :-)

43 • Time Management – Prioritising work over availability

Managing your time is largely about how you organise your work, and that will affect other people.

Our biggest trap is getting caught up on a treadmill of service to others. If you are overly focused on pleasing others, you are probably sacrificing productivity.

Your greatest asset to your organisation is not your availability, it's your ability to solve problems and get things done. It's doing high value work.

Do you manage your work with a focus on availability or productivity?

Have you got the balance right for your role?

44 • What is really important? Do you know?

If you look at the list of things your team is working on, every item is important in some way to someone, somehow. They all add value, so debating which ones are important is futile.

Strategic thinkers decide where to focus rather than just doing what is important. They consciously put aside 'important' projects or 'important' opportunities to focus on those that are a better fit for their strategic direction.

"There is nothing quite so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all."

Peter Drucker

Look at all the stuff on your to-do list. What are you going to focus on, and what are you going to let go?

45 • Stop working while I am interrupting!

When do you get most done at work?

Many people say either very early, or very late, or at home. In fact, any time there are fewer interruptions.

We all know how long it can take to get back into a complex task after an interruption. It is never just the five minutes of actual conversation.

Next time you feel like doing some quick get-together brainstorming or asking a quick question by phone, think of your colleague first. Make sure it's collaboration, not interruption.

Do you really need to stop them doing what they are doing right now?

To get what you need, what options other than interrupting someone do you have?

And what if you are the one being interrupted?

46 • Measure yourself by your worst employee

Many managers use their top performers as a measure of how successful they are as managers. However, while you may have hired a top performer or grown them into that role, that success is more likely to be a result of their drive and ability rather than anything that you did.

Instead, you should measure your management ability based on how you handle your worst performers. It is those people who define the lowest level of performance that you're willing to tolerate, and how much you expect the other employees to compensate for YOUR low standards.

47 • Micro what?

We have microprocessors, microwaves, microphones, microfiche (if you remember them), microlights, and microorganisms.

Unfortunately, we also have micromanagers.

Micromanagers lose employees. If the employee is a competent, passionate person, they more than likely know how to do their job and do it well. They don't want someone telling them what to do, how to do it, and then have to report back when it's done.

Instead, they just want to do the job they do well with some guidance and moral support.

Do you micromanage? How would you know?

What does it feel like when someone micromanages you?

Does it help you do better work?

48 • When they don't perform, what do you do?

How do you tend to handle poor performance?

Do you get angry? Stressed? Needy? Distant?

Your role is to give people what they need to perform, not what you need to release.

Here's what people almost never need: to feel scared or punished. And more often than not, that's how we make them feel when we 'hold them accountable' in anger.

What's more important? Holding people accountable, or improving their performance? There's a massive difference.

In the moment, take a breath. Slow yourself down for the briefest of pauses – just enough time to avoid your default reaction.

Now . . . What do they need to perform better next time?

Choose a response that will achieve the outcome you want.

49 • Guy walks into a bar . . .

Guy walks into a bar.

Bartender notices how sad he looks and asks, "You OK?"

"I just lost my best friend," says the guy.

"How'd it happen?"

"I became his boss."

(From an HBR blog by Bill Gentry)

Have you been promoted to manage your friends?

Or perhaps a friend of yours was promoted to manage you.

Usually the friendly relationship takes on a new quality, or even ends. It cannot really stay the same, so don't expect it to, or worse, try to make it stay the same. That road leads to disappointment, and even pain.

As with any relationship, communicate; be clear about boundaries and expectations, and how you will work together.

What else could you do to make it work for you?

50 • Have you forgotten what it's like?

Something I've noticed about managers is how completely some have forgotten what it's like to not be a manager. At least, you would think so looking at how they try and manage people.

Can you remember?

Think back . . . What annoyed you? What inspired you? What helped you?

How did you like to be managed? What 'management service' would have been good to receive?

A manager needs to understand things from the perspective of the person they are managing in order to manage them well. A manager needs empathy.

Did you feel understood by your manager back then?

Do you have empathy for the people in your team now?

ABOUT PAUL MATTHEWS

Paul is a recognised expert in the field of organisational Learning & Development and the author of three books on L&D.

He is a speaker, consultant and author whose background as an engineer and his natural curiosity give a unique edge to his work. He grew up on a hill country farm in New Zealand and later, like many Kiwis, travelled the world. Paul's preference was travelling well off the beaten track and this has resulted in some fascinating stories that bring his talks and keynotes to life. He climbed Mt Kilimanjaro twice, crossed the Sahara three times and the Himalayas eight times.

Paul founded People Alchemy Ltd in 1999 after a senior corporate career and the company now specialises in online learning software.

20 years after moving into L&D, Paul is a sought-after speaker on the international stage – not only for his undoubted knowledge but also for his engaging, story-led approach and his desire to make L&D ideas easy to understand. He runs workshops and does consultancy for many blue-chip clients in the UK and beyond.

Perhaps he can help your organisation's L&D be more effective?



paul-matthews.com

SUBSCRIBE HERE TO GET MORE TIPS EVERY MONDAY

 paul-matthews.com/blog/

While you are there, have a look around the website.

Is there something I could do to help you or a colleague in
Learning & Development?

If so, let's talk about it :-)

Paul



+44 (0)1908 325 167



paul-matthews.com



hello@paul-matthews.com



[linkedin.com/in/paulmatthews100](https://www.linkedin.com/in/paulmatthews100)

Paul is the CEO of People Alchemy, so if you are interested
in leading-edge online learning tools visit. . . .



peoplealchemy.com

Performance¹⁰⁰TM

Software that breathes life into learning

ONBOARD

Excites your new starters

TRANSFER

Makes sure your training works

APPRENTICE

Manages your apprenticeships

WORKFLOW

Moves learning to where it matters

MANAGER

Gets managers off to a great start

TALENT

Nurtures tomorrow's talent

ASSISTANT

Provides a helping hand

QUALIFICATION

Manages the journey – end to end

Call us for more information and to book a demo

☎ 01908 325 167
✉ hello@peoplealchemy.com
🌐 www.peoplealchemy.com



50 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR MANAGERS

How to get better results
for you and your team



In this 3rd edition booklet, performance management expert Paul Matthews has gathered 50 of his best Monday tips. These weekly tips provide an idea to focus on during the week to improve your management.

Inside this booklet, you'll discover:

- How to prioritise your workload
- How to communicate and manage change
- When to ask 'why' and when to keep quiet
 - How to mediate effectively
 - How to protect your time
 - A simple key to leadership
- How to get more out of every meeting
- How to motivate your team (and yourself!)
 - And lots more!

PAUL MATTHEWS

+44 (0)1908 325 167
paul-matthews.com