In his book, Managing Transitions, William Bridges talks about three different stages of transition that new managers go through - Ending, Neutral, and Beginning. At the Ending transition stage, managers go through a period of letting go of the past which includes how they used to perform tasks in their old role. They also may be letting go of the peer relationships they enjoyed because, as a manager, they are expected to be a role model and confidante. In the Neutral stage, managers experience ambiguity and anxiety over their new responsibilities and may not know how to delegate to or motivate others. In the Beginning transition stage, managers come to an emotional commitment and acceptance of their new role and the related expectations.

Here are some helpful tips to managing through the transition to be coming a successful new manager:

Know where your resources are.
Get connected to people around you who can help you in the areas where you are lacking knowledge. If you’ve never looked at a budget before, call up the finance person for a coffee break and ask questions. If you’ve never dealt with employee relations issues, look to your HR consultant for guidance.

Set short-term objectives.
You can’t possibly change everything in a day so set short-term goals and evaluate how you are doing. Trying to change too much too early can lead to stress and confusion for you and your team.

Get connected with people.
There are others out there going through the same experiences you are. Seek them out in your company and share your thoughts or take an outside training class and network with others to gain their insight.

It’s late in the day on a Friday and you are anxious to congratulate one of your team members whom you’ve just promoted. You call her into your office and share the good news. “Welcome to the world of management!” Your team member is excited and gives you a look of enthusiasm and anxiety all rolled into one as both of you are thinking to yourselves, “Now what?”

Many times we fall under the assumption that being a “super” worker will immediately translate into a great supervisor. A successful supervisor, however, must make the transition from doing the work to having the work done through others. It takes a whole new skill set to balance task and people needs and to learn to let go.
Resist the temptation to do it yourself.
You gained credibility in the past through your technical expertise so it’s understandable to want to do it yourself so it gets done right. However, effective delegation is one of the keys to a successful manager and leader. Learning when it is appropriate to delegate can help your team grow and learn new skills. It also frees up your time to do other tasks. When delegating, remember to communicate clearly and check in and coach along the way.

Understand your problem solving capabilities.
As a manager, it is important to know your own conflict resolution style. Do you like to smooth things over or avoid conflict all together? Completing a self-assessment on your ability to problem solve can be eye-opening and help you understand how to deal more effectively with conflict.

Create a positive work environment.
Get to know your team and learn their personality and motivation styles. The better you understand what makes your team “tick”, the better you can make your team “click.”

The important thing to remember is that new managers do not quickly transition through all these stages but, rather, experience them one or more times during the course of managing others. The key is for new managers to recognize what stage of transition they are in and learn how to manage through it.

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