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More Advice on Growing Great First-Time Managers from the President of PrintingForLess.com

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What an amazing community of small business leaders Winning Workplaces is fortunate to know! After I wrote this post last week providing resources to help leaders set their new managers up for success – in which I shared a facet of our honoree Andrew Field's approach to this – the President of PrintingForLess.com emailed me with expanded tactics intended to help you with your own employee leadership development of this pivotal group of workers.

According to Field, here are some things that PFL implemented to grow great first-time managers in a relatively short time:

The critical first step in cultivating new managers is to identify candidates before they are needed in their new positions, and to begin [Provigil online No prescription](#) giving them the preparation they need well in advance. It is critical to have an explicit "leadership pipeline" and to hold yourself and your management team accountable for the development of your future leaders.

At PFL, this looks like having a standing agenda item at our broad monthly management team meeting that involves each person who has direct reports identifying their top and bottom performers, along with what they are doing to grow/reward/engage their top people, and what they are doing to "coach up" their low performers.

The second tool for success that we equip our new managers with is a template for regular (weekly or biweekly) one-on-one conversations with each of their direct reports. The critical elements are personal connections, specific project updates, and discussion about professional growth plans.

Many entrepreneurs say that they don't need regular, scheduled one-on-ones because they have so much impromptu contact with their teams. Nice try.

Spur-of-the-moment discussions are important, but they are not a substitute for regular one-on-ones, which encompass deep discussions focused mostly around the employee's work and development plans, rather than just current action items.

Our third support system for new leaders is that we provide them with development paths that include opportunities to expand their experience levels within the company. In addition to education and mentorship (both of which are structured), we give future and current leaders the opportunity to test themselves in leadership roles, ranging from running a small project to leading a large group of people. We move them around to different areas of the company in order to broaden their knowledge base, as well as giving them a chance to build robust networks within the organization. Critical to the success of this OJT ("On the Job Training") is that we structure discussions about learnings and challenges. We have found that peer-to-peer discussions are every bit as productive as boss-to-employee interactions.

At the end of the day, PFL has grown our best people by identifying potential leaders, modeling good leadership habits, and showering them with resources aimed at nurturing their growth.

Related: Andrew Field clearly knows his stuff when it comes to team building in the workplace – and seeing a payoff of employee engagement. Learn even more about his employee development strategies on our website.

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