

4 skills you need to be an effective manager in 2021



The working world has been forever changed. Teams and workplaces were forced to reconsider how to collaborate, hold meetings, conduct events, and interact with external clients and internal partners. The model for success that many managers relied upon in past years doesn't necessarily fit the needs of the time.

Fortunately, managers who wish to keep up don't have to simply guess what they need to do. Employee surveys and data can provide insights into exactly what employees and need to be successful.

So, let's take a look at the skills you need to master in 2021 to stay on top of your management game.

Support overall employee wellness

Many companies already offered employee wellness programs that focused on physical and mental health before the pandemic. However, Gartner's "2020 ReimagineHR" employee survey revealed that the definition of workplace wellness has expanded over the last year.

Past programs often focused on achieving a certain number of steps each day or encouraging employees to take periodic yoga or meditation breaks. Gartner says many now include flexible workplace policies that are thought to promote a more positive employee life experience.

To the extent that your company policy allows, give your team the autonomy to choose when they'll start and end work, and where they'll do their jobs.

As long as employees are performing up to expectations, trusting them to manage their time based on their unique life demands can go a long way in cultivating mutual trust, ownership and accountability.

Provide both positive and negative feedback

It's natural to assume that employees will bristle at any indications of a less than stellar skill set. However, a 2021 survey conducted by Zety revealed that nearly 60% of employees prefer to hear both positive and negative feedback, as long as it's delivered in a way that's constructive.

When you do deliver negative feedback, be honest, direct, and non-critical. If a person is missing deadlines, for example, avoid a pointed question like: "Why are you missing deadlines?" Instead, consider telling the employee that you noticed some deadlines have gotten off track. Then inquire how you can help the employee resolve their challenges with time management or workload adjustments so the issue doesn't persist.

Help employees leverage strengths

In the same Zety survey, nearly 80% of respondents said that great managers focus on employee strengths instead of trying to tackle their weaknesses. A study by Gallup estimates that the U.S. would double the number of engaged employees in the workplace if every company in America trained managers to focus on employees' strengths.

Talk to your team members about the strengths you feel they have, and whether they agree. Create a list of at least five strengths you see in every employee you manage once you have "buy-in" from each.

Then, share the information with the team so they understand how their unique skills come together in a complementary way. It can also help them identify who might be a good partner when tackling a project that requires strengths they lack.

Communicate your vision for the team

Employees who understand your vision for the team and how their contributions help bring it to life are more likely to be engaged and productive. Yet, respondents to the Zety survey gave their managers the worst possible rank when asked if they had a manager who communicates a clear vision for the team's work and purpose.

Put your vision for the team in writing and communicate it to the team at least once a quarter. Invite questions and conversation about why it's important to company success. Discuss how each member of the team can make valuable contributions to bring it to fruition.

Each time you hold team calls, carve out time to review the status of the vision. If it has shifted, given changes in the company strategy, explain how it has changed, and why it's still important.

As the vision starts to come to life, celebrate the small wins that have accelerated its progress. Publicly recognize and praise those employees whose work played an important role.

Additional Resource: Managers are also finding [new ways to help employees grow their careers](#) in these changing times.