First 90 Days: New Manager Checklist

Starting a new management role, whether by promotion or by joining a new team, is one of the most demanding transitions in a career. The actions you take in the first 90 days shape how your team, peers, and senior leaders see you for a long time. This checklist keeps you focused on what matters most, when it matters most.

One principle above all others: Listen before you lead. The managers who struggle in new roles are usually the ones who arrive with solutions before they understand the problems. Earn the right to shape things by first understanding what's already true.

WEEK 1: LISTEN & ORIENT

Your job this week is to learn, not to act. Ask more questions than you answer. Don't make promises you can't keep yet.

PEOPLE

- [ ] Meet every direct report individually (even briefly) to introduce yourself with no agenda except to say hello
- [ ] Ask each person: What are you working on right now? What's going well? What would you change if you could?
- [ ] Learn names, roles, and what each person cares about professionally
- [ ] Meet your own manager. Clarify their expectations for your first 30, 60, and 90 days

WORK & CONTEXT

- [ ] Review current team priorities, projects, and any live risks or deadlines
- [ ] Read any available team performance data, recent feedback, or pulse survey results
- [ ] Attend (but don't chair) any existing team meetings, observe how the team communicates
- [ ] Identify any immediate fires that need your attention before week 2

NOTES FROM WEEK 1, WHAT SURPRISED ME, WHAT I NOTICED:

MONTH 1 (WEEKS 2 TO 4): BUILD RELATIONSHIPS & UNDERSTAND THE TEAM

Your priority now is completing your picture of the team. You're building the trust and understanding that will let you lead effectively.

1:1 CONVERSATIONS

- [ ] Hold a proper 1:1 with every direct report (30 to 45 minutes minimum). Explore: their strengths, current challenges, ambitions, and what they need from a manager
- [ ] Ask each person: What's the most important thing I should understand about this team? What would you want me to know that I probably haven't heard yet?
- [ ] Identify the two or three people whose knowledge and relationships you most need to understand

STAKEHOLDERS

- [ ] Map the key people your team depends on or serves (peers, senior leaders, clients, internal partners)
- [ ] Schedule introductory meetings with the three most important stakeholders outside the team
- [ ] Understand what those stakeholders most need from your team right now

PERFORMANCE & QUICK WINS

- [ ] Identify 1 to 2 quick wins: changes that are clearly sensible, low-risk, and visible enough to build early credibility
- [ ] Avoid any major structural or process changes until you've completed your understanding
- [ ] Agree your 1:1 rhythm with your own manager

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I'VE LEARNED ABOUT THIS TEAM SO FAR:

THE ONE THING THAT MOST NEEDS MY ATTENTION:

MONTH 2: BEGIN TO SHAPE

By now you have enough context to start making moves. Not wholesale change, focused, considered action on the things that matter most.

WAYS OF WORKING

- [ ] Hold a team conversation about how you'll work together. Share your working style and what you value as a manager
- [ ] Establish a consistent 1:1 rhythm with all direct reports (frequency, format, agenda ownership)
- [ ] Review existing team meetings, are they the right ones? Too many? Not enough?
- [ ] Agree how the team communicates, makes decisions, and escalates problems

DEVELOPMENT & PERFORMANCE

- [ ] Begin addressing the one thing that most needs your attention (from Month 1)
- [ ] Have an initial development conversation with each direct report: What do they want to grow towards?
- [ ] Identify who on the team has high potential and may need more stretch or challenge
- [ ] Identify anyone who is underperforming and consider how to approach that conversation

MY 1 TO 2 FOCUSED PRIORITIES FOR MONTH 2:

MONTH 3: ESTABLISH & LOOK AHEAD

By the end of Month 3, you should feel like the team's leader, not its newest member. This phase is about establishing your presence and beginning to think strategically.

CONSOLIDATION

- [ ] Review your original assumptions from Week 1, what has changed? What did you get right? What did you misread?
- [ ] Gather informal feedback on how your leadership is landing. Ask a trusted peer or your manager directly
- [ ] Assess team capability honestly: what does this team need to develop over the next 6 months?

LOOKING FORWARD

- [ ] Identify 1 to 2 medium-term priorities to focus on with your team over the next quarter
- [ ] Begin individual development plans with direct reports where appropriate
- [ ] Ensure you have clear alignment with your manager on your priorities and how success is measured
- [ ] Reflect: are you managing your own energy well enough to sustain your effectiveness?

WHAT I'M MOST PROUD OF IN MY FIRST 90 DAYS:

WHAT I WANT TO FOCUS ON DEVELOPING IN MYSELF OVER THE NEXT 90 DAYS:

A note on pace: Most managers try to move too fast in months one and two and pay for it with broken trust and poor decisions. The managers who have the most impact over 12 months are usually the ones who listened longest before acting. Revisit this checklist at the end of each month and be honest about where you're ahead or behind.

Want help putting this into practice?

Growth Performance builds the human advantage in an AI-driven world, with people, teams and leaders.

growthperformance.co.uk/contact
hello@growthperformance.co.uk