Leading from the Middle

Practical Approaches For New Managers
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Acknowledgement of Country.

The stretch of middle management can be all too real

The areas below are fundamental in creating and maintaining an inclusive, motivating high performance culture.

- Self-Care
- Shared Purpose
- Empowering Employees
- Communication
- Feedback
- Performance Management

Self-Care

Before you start work

- Self-care starts before you get to work. Could you wake up 15 minutes earlier than you currently do for 'you' time?

- Have you considered having your phone 'sleep' in a different room, to help your day not start by processing notifications.

- Could you start a new exercise habit, a jog, a swim, a walk, to release endorphins, the feel-good hormone? If you are time poor in the morning, could you park a little bit further from the office to stretch your legs a little?

Setting up your day

- Write the 3 things you want to do today down and check in with them at the end of the day.

- Create a simple folder system for your inbox so that **you** are bossing **it**, not the other way round.
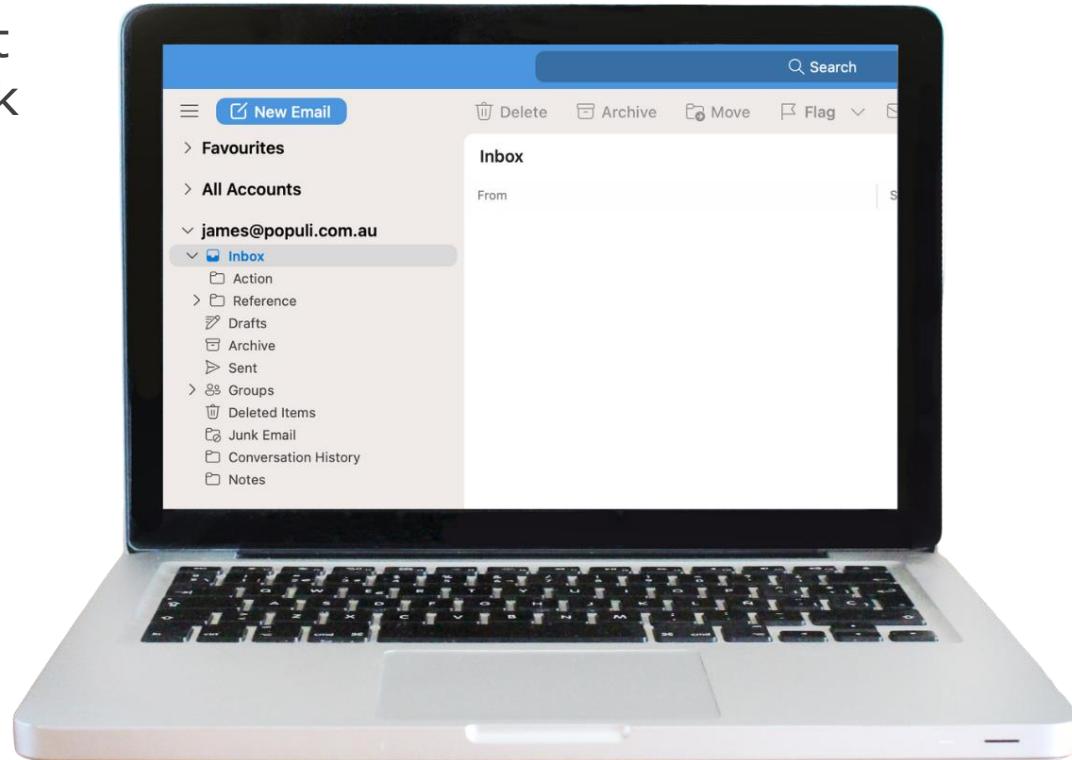
At your desk

- Be mindful of ergonomics, **but also your posture.**

- Keep some dark chocolate as a snack, chocolate contains phenylethylamine, a substance that can stimulate the release of endorphins, the "feel-good" hormones.

On your lunch break

- Take a trip outside to release Serotonin, a chemical that is fundamental to our health and happiness.

- Engage with something that makes you laugh! Laughter decreases our blood sugar levels and releases the happy chemicals serotonin and endorphins into our brain.

When things feel stressful

- Try circular breathing to help regulate the hormone cortisol, which controls your fight or flight response.

- Physically write your frustrations down and then bin them.

Shared Purpose

Launching a contract represents a significant opportunity

- It's important for employees to feel unified by a common purpose.

- High performing teams know each other's skills, experience, strengths and development areas.

BUZZ meeting ideas #1 - POST-IT Exercise

- The standard you walk past is the standard you accept. Be mindful of this as a leader, but also consider the environment you are inviting participants into.

- Ask ECs to stick a note on anything in the site that doesn't meet the standard participants (and they) deserve.

BUZZ meeting ideas #2 - Get to know the team...

- Past professional experience? The industries they have had exposure to and will be able to help participants prepare for.

- Personal circumstances and values? To appropriately support their commitments outside of work and perhaps consider for tailored prizes.

- Particular EC-related passions? For mock interviews, workshops, cold calling, compliance, résumé writing? You can create a site or regional directory or database of skills and strengths.

BUZZ meeting ideas #3 - Get to know the sites

Ask sites to take it in turns to provide virtual tours and share best practice…

- Accessibility
- Jobs Board Set Ups
- Reception Waiting Areas
- Job Searching Stations
- Kitchens
- Meeting Rooms

Consider the opportunity of staff recruitment and turnover

- When you are recruiting for ECs – especially when you have limited time during implementation, try and resist the temptation to save time by cutting corners and simply relying on industry experience.

- As/when/if staff leave, take the time to make sure you acknowledge their contribution in front of their colleagues, either in person or via an all-team email. If you fail to do this, the staff that are remaining will start to question how much their own effort is appreciated and valued.

Visuals for teams to get behind

Will the volume of placements you need be enough to inspire your team to fill a stadium or a local venue?
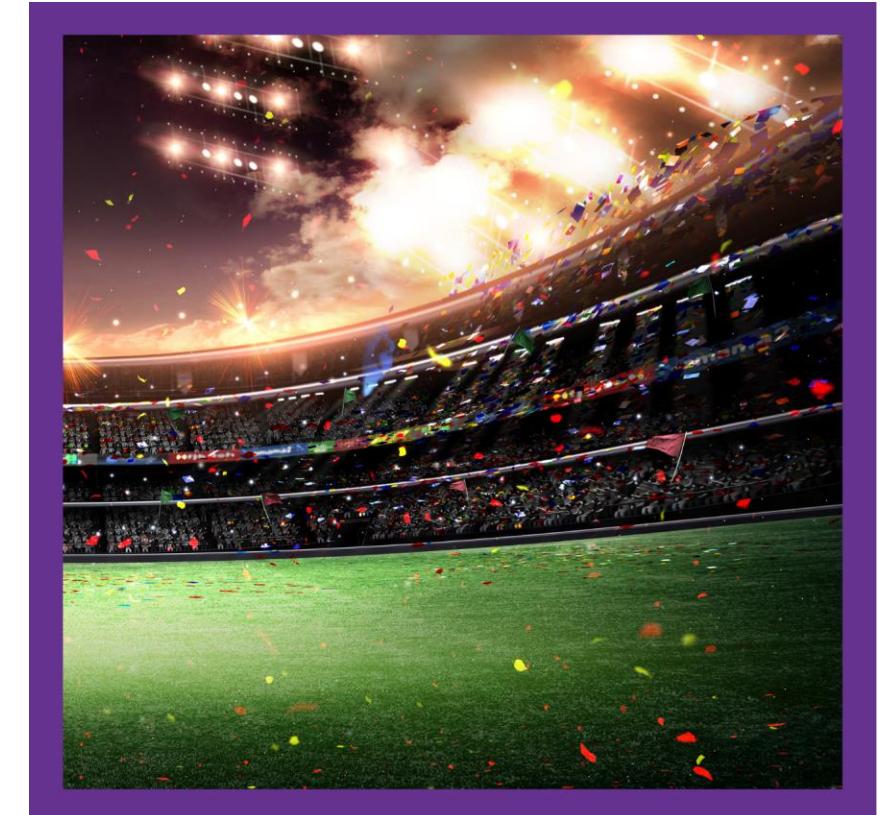
Empowered Teams

Empowering teams can be difficult

For a new manager, the temptation can be to jump in and do some of the EC tasks for them.

Not delegating

- Negatively impacts the morale of the person who should be empowered.

- It limits their opportunity for growth and skill development.

- It sends the message that you don't have confidence in a person's abilities.

What could empowerment look like?

- Let them learn.

- Establishing a buddy system.

- Encourage micro-innovations, small, local ideas that improve access.

- Set up a suggestion box, for staff and participants.

What does that leave for you?

- Strategically plan for placement drives around the seasonal local labour market.

- Observe EC appointments, both the ECs that are flourishing *and* those that are struggling.

- Visit, meet and work with provider partners and employers

- Form a local accessibility panel of clients or community representatives who provide feedback on site design, processes, and communication.

Communication

There are 2 types of communication

ASYNCHRONUS

- On your time, when you don't expect others to be available and don't expect an immediate response, e.g. SMS/emails.

SYNCHRONUS

- When you do expect an immediate response, e.g. a phone call, video meeting.

There are 2 types of communication

ASYNCHRONUS

- Be mindful of simply flicking your to-do list without context or sensitivity to their communication style.

- Keep messages positively framed and connected to mission, values and purpose.

- Allow a minimum of 24 hours before you chase up replies.

There are 2 types of communication

SYNCHRONUS

- Make sure you have a strong purpose, that the meeting has a specific problem to discuss. Consider agenda titles and avoid the generic, e.g. *Communication Strategy* - be specific so people can arrive ready, *How can we better engage local IEA eligible residents on Facebook to be able to access our service.*

- Invite the right people, not everyone needs to be in every meeting.

- Try and mimic face-to-face meetings with video meetings, open them 10-minutes early for attendees to catch up, stay on for 10 minutes afterwards to informally debrief.

Practice Relational Listening

- More than 'active' listening (nodding and mirroring) relational listening involves genuinely trying to understand a person's point of view through open questions.

- Showing empathy, not judgement.

- Empathy doesn't mean agreeing with the other person, it just means saying you understand where **they** are coming from.

It's OK to show vulnerability

Sharing your vulnerabilities can be essential to boosting group performance.

Admitting weaknesses and mistakes signals to other group members that they can do the same. That's a great way to build trust.

You don't need to have all the answers, you just need to know who to ask.

Feedback

Be as organised and respectful as possible

Before any feedback meeting gather the facts of the matter and be specific.

Use 'I have observed…' rather than, 'You are…'

Write the majority of the follow up email in advance to give your conversation structure and save you time after the meeting.

Book the meeting into your diary with some time to prepare and get in the right headspace before it.

The optimal ratio for feedback is 5:1

A University of Michigan study found that the highest performing teams received 5.6 pieces of praise to 1 criticism.

When using 5:1 try and use WE instead of ME Strengths

ME Strengths
- If someone loves doing a resume, that's a ME strength. There is less impact praising them for it because they are already rewarding themselves with the activity.

WE Strengths
- Activities that bring the team together, an EC adapting an interview process or simplifying an onboarding form, buddying, running workshops, covering, living and breathing company values, exceeding KPIs.

Performance

4 proven performance tips

- Try to avoid group buzz meeting forecasts, it's unlikely you will get the truth. Get the information early, individually, in week 1, to give you time to plan.

- Keep your previous 'white boards' in your kitchen.

- Let under performance be under performance, don't apologise for it.

- When scheduling reviews, go for the highest performers first.

Performance questions (with struggling ECs)

- How active are their participants?
  - When was the last attended appointment?
  - When was the last booked appointment?
  - What is happening between appointments?
  - Have they 'doubled' their KPI to create a *pipeline*?

- How empowered are their participants?
  - How work-focussed are the conversations the EC is having with their participants?
  - Does the EC know the participant's motivation for work?

KPIs – Key Performance Indicators, but also

- Keep People Informed

- Keep People Interested

- Keep People Involved

- Keep People Inspired

Centre for Inclusive Employment
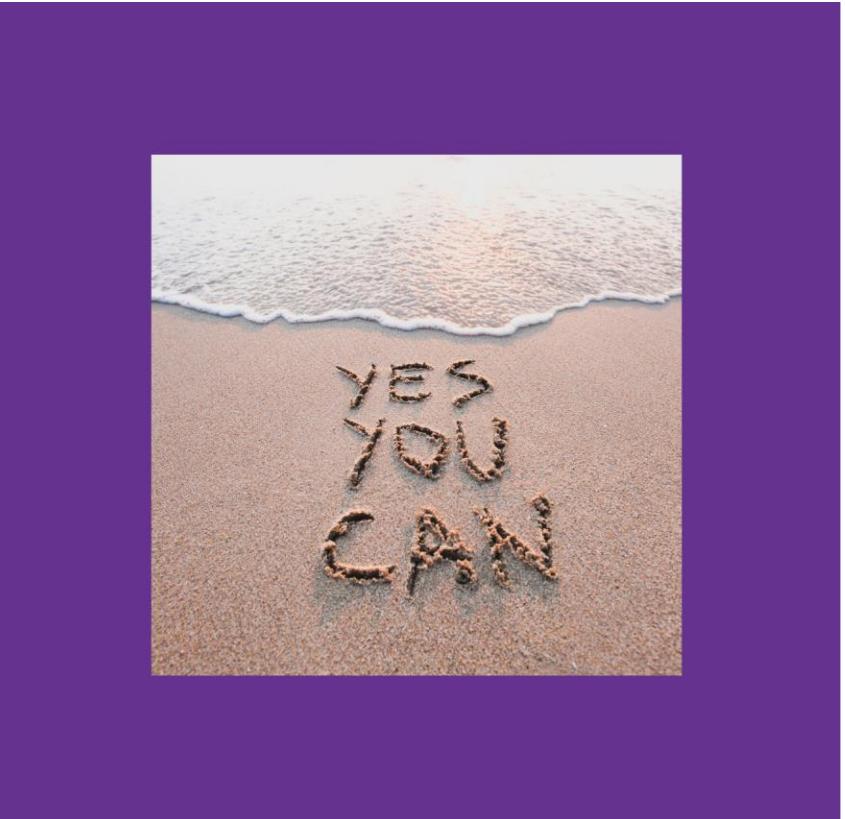
Thank you

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