

acas working
for everyone

Guidance

Managing people

September 2016



About Acas – What we do

Acas provides information, advice, training, conciliation and other services for employers and employees to help prevent or resolve workplace problems. Go to www.acas.org.uk for more details.

'Must' and 'should'

Throughout the guide, a legal requirement is indicated by the word 'must' - for example, a manager who decides disciplinary action may be necessary must follow certain minimum procedures set out in the Acas code of practice on discipline and grievance.

The word 'should' indicates what Acas considers to be good employment practice.

Use of 'team member' and 'staff'

This guide will usually refer to 'team members' or 'staff'. Where it uses other terms, it will do this because the right is dependent upon a team member's employment status. For example, employees who have worked at an organisation for at least 26 weeks have a right to request flexible working.

Employment law usually divides staff into three main categories:

- employees (those with a contract of employment)
- workers and agency workers (those with a contract to do work or provide services)
- some self-employed people (where they have to personally perform the work)

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Information in this guide has been revised up to the date of publishing. For more information, go to the Acas website at www.acas.org.uk. Legal information is provided for guidance only and should not be regarded as an authoritative statement of the law, which can only be made by reference to the particular circumstances which apply. It may, therefore, be wise to seek legal advice.

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About this guide

The first experiences of managing people often come as a front-line manager, a team leader or a supervisor. Alternatively, an owner of a small business may be expanding and employing staff for the first time. While the precise responsibilities of these positions may differ, the fundamental management skills required are often the same.

This guide uses the term 'manager', but the steps and guidance apply to everyone taking on management responsibility for the first time – or even for more experienced managers looking to refresh or develop their knowledge. In addition, it should help employers and HR teams support new and existing managers.

Section 1: Understanding the role of a manager

When starting in management, the manager, their team members and the employer should all be clear about the manager's responsibilities and duties so expectations of the manager are both evident and realistic. If this is not done, issues that may damage management performance and team performance are more likely to occur.

It is important to understand:

- the difference between being a team member and a manager
- the key employment rights of team members (these come from contractual terms, policies and employment law)
- the key responsibilities of team members (again these come from contractual terms, policies and employment law)
- how the manager can resolve issues arising in the workplace
- how to work with a senior manager

Keep up-to-date

Over time, it is natural for a manager's role to develop as the employer's structure and needs change. As managers become more experienced they may be given additional or more challenging tasks. Also, employment law and an organisation's policies might change over time, altering how a manager should handle certain situations.

This means, it is important for a manager:

- to be part of a system that keeps them up-to-date
- to recheck (from time to time) what is expected of them

Transitioning from team member to manager

Becoming a manager can be an exciting and energising opportunity, offering greater responsibilities and the chance to learn new skills. However, it can be difficult transitioning from a team member to the manager of the team. A new manager may be unsure how they should behave. It can be tempting for a manager to act like 'one of the team' or try to 'assert their authority' on the team. Unfortunately both approaches are often detrimental to a team's motivation and performance.

While friendships can continue after a promotion to management, **a manager should keep a clear distinction between a friendship and a working relationship**. This boundary can help prevent difficulties such as, concerns around favouritism, colleagues' resentment or the manager being torn over some tough decisions.

A new manager should have a clear and productive conversation with each team member they are managing. It should include:

- how the new role will affect the working relationship
- what they can expect from each other
- the chance to raise and address any potential issues
- if necessary, what is and is not suitable for discussion in the work environment

For example...

Ron has developed good working relationships with his colleagues over two years as a bartender, many of whom he considers close friends. On being promoted to bar manager Ron understands that he will now be in charge of selecting team members for both popular and unpopular shifts, reviewing performance and managing any conflict.

He has one-to-one meetings with his team members to discuss the transition to manager and how their working relationship is distinct from their personal friendship. This allows Ron to make clear what he expects of his team members and ensures that they understand the responsibilities of his role.

Understanding the key employment rights of team members

All employees and workers have employment rights. These rights will originate from employment law, their contractual terms and conditions of employment, and the policies of the organisation. A manager must ensure that their staff receive their rights and entitlements. These include:

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Duty of care: managers must take all steps which are reasonably possible to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of their team members.

Health and safety requirements vary depending on the industry and type of work. For example, protective equipment must be worn on a building site, and in an office protections must be put in place to avoid and reduce risks associated with Display Screen Equipment. A manager should check what health and safety requirements are relevant to the work done by their team members and ensure that these are followed.

In addition, a manager's duty of care also includes checking on the wellbeing of staff. For example, keeping in touch with team members who are off sick, making sure no one is working excessive hours, and protecting staff from bullying, harassment or discrimination.

For more information on health and safety considerations, go to www.hse.gov.uk

Duty of mutual trust and confidence: managers must be honest and respectful to their team members. They must not act in a manner that will destroy or seriously damage the working relationship.

In practice, this means a manager should not give unjustified criticism, monitor team members unreasonably or fail to investigate grievances properly.

If a manager fundamentally breaches this trust and confidence, a team member may be justified in treating their contract as having been unlawfully breached. This may cause them to resign and lead to a claim of constructive unfair dismissal.

Discrimination: fairness in the workplace is vital. A manager should be aware that it is unlawful to discriminate against people at work because of the following 'protected characteristics':

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

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Many employers have policies to promote equal job opportunities, fairness for employees and job applicants, and to prevent discrimination. Where there is a policy, a manager should follow it.

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/equality

Annual leave: most full-time staff have the right to 28 days paid leave in each year (this may include bank holidays) but employers may offer more. There is no legal right to get bank holidays as paid leave, or to get a higher rate of pay if bank holidays are worked. However, a team member's contract may entitle them to this.

When dealing with requests for annual leave, a manager should understand:

- what the organisation's procedures are to allow team members to take time off when they want
- whether there are any set times when staff must take annual leave (such as a Christmas shut down) or cannot take annual leave (such as times of high customer demand)
- that they need to be fair and consistent in considering and responding to applications for leave
- that a team member must be able to take all of their statutory leave in their leave year
- if a team member becomes sick before or during annual leave, it is usually for the team member to decide if they wish to take the sickness period as sick leave instead

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/holidays

Family friendly rights: staff may be entitled to additional leave if they are parents or people with caring responsibilities. An employee might be entitled to:

- maternity leave
- adoption leave
- paternity leave
- shared parental leave
- time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant
- unpaid parental leave

In most circumstances these requests must be accepted.

For more information go to www.acas.org.uk/parentsandcarers

Sick leave: If a team member falls ill, they have the right to stay away from work on sick leave until they have recovered.

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SSP (Statutory Sick Pay) may be due if a team member is off for four or more days in a row (including non-working days). Some employers may pay contractual sick pay for a set period. For example, full pay for up to three months.

If a team member is away from work for more than seven days in a row (including non-working days), they must provide their manager with a 'fit note' from a hospital doctor or a GP.

A fit note will clarify to a manager if the team member:

- **is not fit for work.** If this is the case, the manager must attempt to establish a reasonable level of communication with the team member to meet the duty of care requirement mentioned earlier in this section.
- **may be fit for work.** If this is the case, the manager should seek to discuss possible steps that might help the team member return to work. For example, a temporary change of hours or tasks. Unless an agreement is reached, they must still be treated as 'not fit for work'.
- **is fit for work.** If this is the case, the manager should prepare for the team member's return to work.

If a team member's absence becomes a problem their manager may have the right to take action. For more information, go to '[managing absence](#)' section in Section 4.

Data protection and confidentiality: Organisations need to retain a certain amount of information about their staff. For example, their home address and bank details, and absence and disciplinary records. Equality and diversity monitoring may also require information to be held about team member's disability, race, religion or sexuality.

Any information on a team member must be kept confidential and access restricted to those individuals who need it. For example, a manager must not discuss the reasons for one team member's absence with other staff unless they have the team member's permission.

A manager should check that all staff understand what records and information are kept by the organisation. In addition, staff have the right to access any information that the employer holds about them. To be as open as possible, many organisations have a privacy policy, stating what type of information is held and how it is to be used and stored.

Information about staff should only be kept for as long as it is needed for business purposes. It should then be securely destroyed.

For more information, go to www.ico.org.uk

Understanding the key responsibilities of team members

Team members have a number of key responsibilities to their manager and their employer. These responsibilities are set by employment law, their contractual terms and conditions, and the policies of the organisation. Understanding these responsibilities should help a manager manage their team and ensure that an organisation gets the most out of their staff. Key responsibilities include:

Do the job: a team member must carry out the role for which they are employed and a manager should be able to rely on them to do this.

If a manager believes a team member is not meeting the required standards of their role, the situation may warrant further action. For example, providing further support to help them improve. If their performance doesn't improve, a manager should take the team member through a capability procedure, which may lead to dismissal on the grounds of capability. If such action may be taken, then a fair procedure must be followed.

Act in good faith: staff must work for their employer in good faith. This means they should act honestly and not in a way that will damage the organisation. For example, by criticising their employer in public or on social media, or trying to persuade clients to move to a rival business.

If a manager believes a team member is not acting in good faith, their conduct may warrant disciplinary action.

Duty of mutual trust and confidence: team members are expected to be honest and respectful, serve the organisation loyally and not act against its interests. For example, by stealing company property or lying about their whereabouts during working hours.

If a manager believes a team member has breached this trust and confidence, their conduct may warrant disciplinary action.

Carry out reasonable requests: team members are required to carry out reasonable requests from their manager. For example, asking a team member to help unload a delivery or answering a colleague's phone while they are away from their desk.

Unless the request is clearly unreasonable or they are ill-equipped to be able to complete the task, it must be followed. If a reasonable request is refused, it may warrant disciplinary action.

Resolving workplace issues as a manager

Unexpected issues and problems arise in all workplaces. Staff may have complaints concerning their work, working conditions or colleagues which may need addressing. Alternatively, a team member's conduct or performance may become a problem.

It is important that a manager tries to resolve problems that arise in a fair and professional manner, before they develop further and become a more serious problem.

Most matters are best dealt with informally initially. A quiet word is often all that is required to improve a team member's conduct or performance.

For example...

New staff member Rudi explains to his manager Akili that a colleague has been making fun of his accent and continues to do so even though he has asked them not to. Rudi does not want to get the person into trouble, but wants the 'banter' to stop.

Akili takes the colleague to one side. He reminds them of the organisation's policy on equality and diversity, and that certain types of behaviour can cause offence. It becomes clear they were unaware their behaviour had caused distress, but accept they have gone too far and will apologise.

Later, Akili explains to the colleague that on this occasion no formal action will be taken as he and Rudi are satisfied with the outcome. However, a record of the conversations will be kept.

Sometimes the matter may be more serious or the informal approach might not resolve the issue. If disciplinary action may be taken, or a formal grievance is raised by a team member, then **certain minimum procedures set out in the Acas code of practice on discipline and grievance must be followed**. This includes investigating the matter, holding a disciplinary meeting and considering any appeal.

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/dgcode

Working with the senior manager

A manager usually reports to a senior manager, or the employer. Part of a manager's role will include receiving instructions that they need to implement within their team.

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Regular discussions are likely to be necessary so that a manager and their senior manager understand:

- current and future workloads
- any potential problems
- any future skills and development needs

To be as effective as possible there should be a good working relationship between a manager and their senior manager that encourages two-way communication. This means a manager can feed their views upwards and keep themselves informed about what is happening in the organisation.

Actions that should help a manager facilitate a good working relationship with their senior manager include:

- understanding their objectives and responsibilities, and how they fit into the organisation's overall goals
- performing well in their role
- providing brief summaries about issues facing the team
- understanding what the senior manager needs to approve and what matters can be resolved without their involvement
- when problems arise and their involvement is required, try to propose sensible solutions that could resolve the matter
- co-operating and networking with other managers to resolve problems and achieve objectives

Section 2: Leading and communicating

Becoming a leader

Leading a team is not the same as dictating to a team. Effective leadership encourages high performance and cultivates a culture of success in the workplace. Poor line management may lead to low productivity levels and high staff turnover that can have serious consequences for the organisation.

An effective leader should have a good working relationship with their team, built upon trust and respect. While this can take time to build, a manager should consider how they might encourage good working relationships.

Tips to help a manager build good team-working relationships include:

1. Be as open as possible with team members and trust them to do what is expected of them
2. Get to know each team member and take the time to listen to their concerns and ideas
3. Understand employment rights
4. Deal with concerns and potential disciplinary matters promptly
5. Set objectives with clear outcomes
6. Communicate clearly and honestly, and hold regular team meetings
7. Listen to the ideas of team members on how best to achieve goals
8. Treat all team members as you would want to be treated yourself
9. Promote training and development opportunities to keep team members interested and motivated
10. Give credit where due and highlight successes

Most teams will contain people with different motivations and concerns, and who react in different ways to issues in the workplace. For example, some staff will simply want to be told what to do, whereas others will want to know all the details before they are confident enough to approach the task. A manager should therefore try to adapt their approach depending on who they are talking to.

To help them understand their team members better, a manager should learn to be **more self-aware and more socially-aware**. A manager that understands themselves and their team members is better able to build good working relationships and identify how to lead their team in any situation that may arise.

Improving self-awareness...

- think about the emotions and moods you experience at work
- consider what you think and do because of these emotions and how they might impact on you and your team
- identify your strengths and weaknesses, and make an effort to improve key areas
- try to manage and control your emotions before addressing situations and making decisions
- continually reflect on the outcomes to situations, and how they might be better approached next time

Improving social-awareness...

- listen carefully to what team members say and note how they respond to social interactions
- seek to understand and empathise with the emotions, needs and concerns of team members
- identify how best to communicate with each team member so it meets their needs where appropriate
- make an effort to consider the needs and feelings of any affected team members before making decisions
- continually reflect on how you manage your team in situations that arise, the outcomes, and how such circumstances might be better approached next time

Acas offers training courses for HR professionals and anyone with management responsibilities on having difficult conversations. For further information, go to www.acas.org.uk/training

Motivating a team

Keeping staff motivated and engaged is an on-going challenge. There are usually a number of factors that influence a team member's motivation at work, but how they are managed can be a significant one. **A manager should try to form good working relationships with each of their team members to help understand what motivates them.** A staff engagement survey can also help highlight what motivates team members.

Common factors that can have an impact on staff motivation include:

- **feeling valued:** team members who feel that their manager and the organisation value them are more likely to feel motivated at work. A manager can help team members feel valued by having an appraisal process, giving feedback on a regular basis and thanking them for their efforts when warranted. **A simple 'thank you' can show that efforts are appreciated**

- **being treated with fairness and respect.** If a team member feels they are treated fairly and are respected by their manager and the organisation, they are more likely to be motivated to do well for the business
- **achieving personal accomplishments.** Team members often want to feel pride and a sense of fulfilment from their work. The type of work that provides a sense of personal accomplishment will vary from person to person. A manager should try to understand the personality and values of each team member and, where appropriate, tailor their work and objectives to meet them
- **good leadership.** Confidence in the future direction of the organisation is critical to motivating and engaging staff. Remember that to team members, the manager represents the organisation and should therefore act as a role model and help them understand the strategic direction of the organisation.

Successful team communication and meetings

Effective communication is an essential part of management. It can help a manager keep-on-top of issues and demonstrate to team members that they are listened to. A manager should use a wide range of communication channels to ensure the needs of the team, organisation and their customers can be met:

- **team meetings** are a good way to discuss team goals, challenges, and plans. A manager should draw up an agenda to give the meeting structure and encourage discussion where appropriate. While it is likely that some team members will take a more active role, a manager should ensure that all team members are able to contribute and that no one feels excluded. Group meetings may also be used at the start of each day to get everyone together and check each person understands the plans and/or targets for the day
- **one-to-one meetings** for any matters that may contain private or confidential information a team member or manager may not want known more widely. One-to-one meetings should be held in private
- **informal chats around the workplace** can be very important. A manager should try to make time to be around their team, see how they are doing and be willing to talk about issues and problems affecting team members where appropriate
- **over the phone** enables a manager to stay in touch and be available for team members when needed. While a manager may sometimes be unavailable, team members should have a contact number which is checked on a regular basis
- **noticeboards** (in a physical location or online) can provide a manager with a set area to put up general workplace information. A manager should make staff aware if information relevant to their work will be presented in this way

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- **email** can be a very useful tool when used appropriately. Email should be used for general communications and for keeping staff up-to-date on workplace matters. However, email should not be used to give feedback on performance. This should be given in person or over the telephone, where the matter can be discussed

Listening to team members...

Communication, of course, is a two-way process. While being able to give staff direction is important, a manager should also be a good listener. How a manager responds when a team member is talking to them will have an impact on how productive the conversation will be and their relationship with the team member. Being skilled in the art of listening can help to ensure that work-related discussions and meetings are effective and worthwhile.

Typical actions that a manager should follow when talking to a team member include:

- remain focused on them and what is being discussed
- be open minded
- concentrate on exactly what is said
- don't guess what will be said
- allow them enough time to put across their point fully

Giving feedback

A manager should give regular and prompt feedback to their team, irrespective of whether it is positive or negative. Feedback should focus on a specific task, what was done well and/or what could be improved. When done sensitively and skilfully, feedback can help team members:

- remain focussed and motivated
- improve their performance
- develop their skills and handle more responsibilities

Good or exceptional work should be praised. In many cases this can be acknowledged at a team meeting, with a simple 'thank you' or expression of encouragement. On occasion, truly outstanding work or effort may be worth mentioning to senior management or other colleagues.

It is likely that not all feedback will be positive and this can be challenging when managing people for the first time. A common approach that can help a manager become more confident in giving feedback when mistakes have been made or performance needs to improve is to do it in **three steps**:

1. **positive feedback**, focus on something they did well

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2. **developmental feedback**, discuss what they could do differently or improve upon
3. **positive feedback**, finish the feedback by again highlighting something that went well

Approaching feedback in this way can often take some of the sting out of what could be perceived as criticism. However, if used repeatedly then over time team members will start to recognise the pattern, disregard the positive feedback and become defensive when developmental feedback is given.

As a manager becomes more confident in giving feedback they should try to tailor it to best suit the needs of each team member.

For example...

Lesley employs five people in her business. They all have different needs that Lesley tries to consider when managing them. Two members of the team, Harinda and Callum, are particularly different.

Harinda is very focussed on facts. When something could be improved, she prefers to be told what went wrong and what she should do next time.

Callum can often take criticism to heart. Over time, Lesley has learnt that an open discussion with Callum, looking at how the task went and what could be improved, is the best way forward. This gives Callum time to consider the matter and come to a mutual agreement on it.

Having difficult conversations

Managing staff can be the most rewarding aspect of a manager's job, but may also be the most challenging. A manager might have to deal with a wide variety of difficult situations such as:

- a team member having family problems
- two colleagues accusing each other of bullying
- jealousy in a team over nominations for training and bonuses
- dealing with poor performance
- giving bad news to the team or a team member

Dealing with these kinds of issues takes patience, training and judgment. For example, when is the right time to ask a senior manager or HR section for help?

It may be tempting to brush problems under the carpet and avoid them for as long as possible. However, it is much better to try to resolve

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problems at an early stage even though it may involve having a difficult conversation. It can nip issues in the bud before they escalate further and can demonstrate to staff that the manager is competent in their role and able to handle difficult situations when necessary.

Approaching a difficult conversation	
Before the conversation takes place	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• choose an appropriate time and place. It should be in private and usually be one-to-one• make it clear to the team member as to whether it's an informal discussion or a formal meeting (allowing for representation for the latter)• gather any relevant information on the matter. For example, samples of unacceptable work or a record of recent absences• check policies and procedures have been followed• where appropriate, talk to a senior manager or HR about the issue for further guidance• consider what outcome is required• plan how to approach the conversation (considering the situation and the team member)• prepare relevant questions
During the conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• approach the conversation in a sensitive manner and manage emotions carefully• explain the reason for the conversation• ask open questions to explore their viewpoint, position and understanding of the matter• listen carefully• probe for more information, but not in an adversarial manner• adjourn for a break if emotions take over
At the end of the conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• check if anything else needs to be discussed• focus on how the matter may be resolved• be clear about what behaviours and/or performance are expected• offer support where appropriate• seek to agree a way forward• make clear what may happen if the agreement is not followed
After the conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide any support that was agreed and monitor the situation• arrange a follow up meeting and give feedback on progress

Acas offers training courses for HR professionals and anyone with management responsibilities on having difficult conversations. For further information, go to www.acas.org.uk/training

Section 3: Handling day-to-day tasks

Many people moving into management for the first time will be experienced and highly skilled in their previous role. In the new role, there are likely to be new issues to deal with and a different range of skills to develop.

Managers will benefit from:

- familiarising themselves with the **day-to-day management tasks** they are routinely expected to undertake
- **balancing their own time** between management tasks and any other personal workload they have
- **setting common goals** for the team and establishing what tasks they need to complete to achieve those goals
- deciding and regularly reviewing **what team tasks need to be given priority**
- **delegating tasks** to team members in a way that is fair and effective

Day-to-day tasks

Typical day-to-day management tasks usually focus on ensuring that a team works as productively as possible in line with the policies and procedures of the organisation. Responsibilities will vary in each organisation but often include:

Being the main communication link between the employer (or senior management) and their staff: managers should ensure that organisational values are promoted, and policies and procedures are followed. In addition, a manager should explain senior management decisions which affect their team members along with reasons for any changes. A manager should also listen to any concerns staff have and, where they cannot resolve matters themselves, raise appropriate ones to senior management.

Planning/agreeing work rotas: it is important to plan the hours and days that staff will work to meet the needs of the organisation and its customers. Where practicable, a manager should be flexible about start and finish times, and be fair and consistent in how they treat members of their team.

Managing a budget: An organisation needs good budget management to be successful. A manager may need to make or seek accurate predictions for work or projects being undertaken by their team, and regularly monitor these in order to make appropriate adjustments for any unexpected costs.

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Providing technical expertise on jobs and tasks: team members will usually have queries about how best to carry out their tasks on a daily basis. A manager is usually the person that the team go to for guidance when difficulties arise and to clarify how to approach a specific task. A manager will often be experienced in handling similar situations and resolving similar problems. If they are not, a manager should have an approach or contacts so that they can help the team member find a solution.

Handling leave requests: most staff will be entitled to take annual leave. When receiving an annual leave request a manager may need to check rotas to see if other team members are already off and consider how leave at popular times might be accommodated. While a manager can refuse a leave request, they must ensure that each team member is able to take all of their statutory leave in their leave year.

Staff may be entitled to take additional leave if they have caring responsibilities. This includes maternity, paternity, adoption, shared parental and parental leave as well as time off to care for a dependant. In most circumstances these type of requests must be accepted, so a manager may need to consider how the leave may impact on the team and organisation and how this might be mitigated.

Other types of leave requests may include, staff being called up for jury service, having public duties, are a reservist or encounter travel disruptions. A manager will usually have to accommodate these requests.

For more information go to www.acas.org.uk/timeoff

Handling short-term sickness absence: most managers will need to deal with some level of short term sickness, such as migraines, colds or minor injuries. These sorts of absences should be monitored in line with policy and practice to ensure there are no underlying issues to deal with. For the most part, they will require a manager to be contactable, able to reallocate or reprioritise tasks, and ready to swiftly and effectively return the team member to their duties when they return.

For more information go to www.acas.org.uk/managingabsence

Managing the team and a personal workload

Managing a team is very likely to require a manager juggling several different tasks. This can feel overwhelming but can be handled if they plan and prioritise their workload and try to stick to deadlines for their own tasks.

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Some approaches that should help to balance the workload include:

- prioritising work each day so the more critical work is carried out first and other work can be done later
- delegating work when it is appropriate to do so
- having a simple and effective filing and organising system so work does not go missing or get forgotten

Doing this should help a manager balance their time between their personal workload and their responsibilities as a manager.

Setting team goals

While each team member may be required to carry out individual tasks, a manager should make sure all team members understand how their tasks contribute to the overall goals of the team and organisation.

Explaining team goals can help bring a team together, reduce the chance of counterproductive rivalry, and make a team better prepared for any difficulties or changes that may arise.

Team meetings can provide a good opportunity to discuss team goals, individual responsibilities and to hear views on how goals may be achieved. During meetings, a manager should try to ensure that all team members have the opportunity to put forward their ideas.

For example...

Raheem is a manager in an insurance firm. When deciding on a future sales target, he takes into account his team's very strong performance last year and the launch of two new products in the coming year. He proposes to set a more challenging target.

However, he knows it is vital to get his team on board with his proposal, so sets up a team meeting to discuss it. While the new target is higher, each team member is enthusiastic and accepts that if they perform well they should be able to achieve it.

Prioritising team tasks

In many workplaces, a team will have several different tasks that need completing. The manager is ultimately responsible for ensuring that work is completed on time and should therefore decide what work takes priority.

Regular reviews – weekly or daily depending on the type of work - can help a manager prioritise tasks. They might include:

- what the team needs to achieve in the short, middle and long term to meet its objectives
- weighing the relative importance of different tasks the team needs to carry out
- deciding what resources - money and staff - to allocate to the key tasks

Categorising tasks...

There are a number of ways for a manager to prioritise tasks. For example:

- **non-urgent tasks**, can be done if there is time, but don't require immediate attention
- **important tasks**, are often linked to team objectives, but can be done at any stage in the coming week
- **critical tasks**, will have a negative impact on team performance if not completed very soon

Delegating tasks appropriately and productively

Delegation is an essential tool that allows a manager to pass appropriate tasks to their team members, leaving the manager time to focus on tasks only they can perform.

Delegation can often be used as a staff development opportunity. Giving staff challenging and worthwhile tasks allows them to learn new skills and responsibilities. It can help team members to take a wider view of their role and the organisation, and become more engaged with their work in general.

If tasks are delegated then it is important that a manager is prepared to hand over responsibility for the task to the team member, otherwise such delegation will often be of little benefit to the team.

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When delegating work, a manager should:

- clearly define the task, what needs to be achieved and by when
- choose someone appropriate and capable of the task but try to vary the work around the team where possible
- consider what resources may be required to complete the task. For example, equipment, money, or further training
- check that the team member understands the task and is comfortable doing it
- inform others relevant to the task about what is happening
- provide support and advice where necessary
- trust the team member to do the job
- give them constructive feedback once the task is completed

For example...

Manager Jan has two tasks which senior management say are urgent but her time is limited. One task - relating to a sensitive legal matter - cannot be delegated but the other requires the preparation of some team performance statistics for a meeting tomorrow.

Jan considers her team and decides that Sanjit has the time if he shifts non-urgent tasks to later in the week, plus he might benefit from a change of work and a bit more responsibility. She talks to Sanjit, clearly explaining what would be required.

Sanjit is happy to be responsible for the task, completes the work and sends it to Jan for feedback. She agrees a few minor amendments and then uses it at the meeting. She feeds back to Sanjit that his work was very good, explaining the few changes she made and why.

Section 4: Handling less frequent and/or longer-term tasks

From time to time a manager may need to add additional tasks to their day-to-day duties. A manager should ensure that these less frequent tasks are handled appropriately and professionally.

A manager should also take steps to ensure their day-to-day tasks are still completed on time, either by themselves or delegated to an appropriate team member.

Performance management and staff appraisals

Managing performance is a continuous process which involves making sure each team member meets the standards expected of the team and the organisation. At the heart of managing performance there needs to be regular informal discussions that focus on:

- how the team member is performing against their objectives (or equivalent measures)
- tasks that might be further developed
- areas for improvement and any concerns about performance
- any concerns the team member might have

A manager should keep a record of any important discussion points. These can then be revisited, when going through the organisation's staff appraisal system.

For example...

Eimear is the manager of a small team. She makes sure she talks to each member of her team each month to discuss how things are going. Recently Victor has been underperforming and has seemed less engaged in his work. She has an informal catch up with Victor to discuss his performance. Victor confesses he has been finding the work too repetitive and has been struggling to motivate himself.

Eimear confirms her understanding of Victor's concerns. She explains that it is important that his performance improves otherwise further action may be taken. However, she will also look for development opportunities in order to provide him with a more varied workload.

She arranges to have another informal discussion with Victor once she has considered the options available.

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An organisation should also have a performance appraisal/review system that provides a formal framework for feedback and recognising performance over the year. This will often include:

- an agreed performance plan that includes the team member's objectives for the coming year, any areas for development and how these will be achieved
- a mid-year review to discuss progress against the performance plan and the required expectations
- an annual appraisal meeting where the work of the past 12 months is reviewed and discussed, and a performance plan for the next 12 months agreed.

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/performance

Developing team members

Development of staff should be an on-going consideration and should be reviewed regularly. Development approaches include:

- providing opportunities for team members to work alongside more experienced staff members
- delegating more challenging duties
- allowing an individual to move to a different area of the organisation to learn new skills
- arranging coaching sessions
- providing a mentor and/or buddy
- arranging external/online training courses
- supporting membership of career-relevant associations or institutes

An annual appraisal meeting can be a good opportunity to talk about training needs and relevant interests.

Coaching

Coaching is an increasingly common approach organisations use to develop staff and ensure standards are met. Arranging one-to-one coaching sessions can give a team member the opportunity to reflect on their own performance and help build confidence in their own abilities.

Coaching usually involves a manager:

- arranging a time to shadow the team member undertaking a set task
- taking a break to have an informal discussion about how the task went
- asking the team member to self-evaluate what went well and what could be improved
- giving feedback for them to consider
- encouraging the team member to consider whether a different approach may have led to a better outcome
- agreeing goals for the future

Flexible working requests

All employees who have worked at an organisation for at least 26 weeks have a right to request flexible working. If a manager receives such a request they should arrange a meeting to discuss the request and how it might be accommodated. While a manager may not have the authority to make the final decision on a request, they should keep the team member up-to-date about its progress.

A request should be carefully considered and must only be refused if there is a business reason defined in the flexible working regulations. Although there is no statutory right to appeal a decision, a team member should be allowed to if they believe there is new information which was not previously considered, or if they believe the application was not handled reasonably.

The whole process, including any appeals, must be completed within three months of the request being received unless an extension is agreed by the manager and employee.

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/flexibleworking

Recruitment and induction

A manager may be in charge of recruitment within their own team. When recruiting a new member of staff, a manager should:

- consider current staffing needs and what will be needed in the future
- pinpoint the key tasks of the vacancy and the personal qualities required of applicants, including the skills and knowledge essential for the post. Make these clear in the job advertisement but make sure there is no direct or indirect discrimination
- try to have more than one person involved in choosing candidates to interview, and present at the interview itself. This can help to avoid unintended bias

Once a new recruit has been appointed, a manager should plan how best to settle them into the organisation. How long an induction should last will be dependent on the organisation and the role. Some inductions may only need to be for a day or two, or a week, while others may last several months.

An effective induction should include:

- welcoming the new team member to the organisation, showing them around and telling them about facilities
- explaining the role and how they fit within the team and the organisation as a whole

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- making them aware of the organisation's policies and procedures
- any necessary training to do the role
- regular catch-ups to get to know them, discussing how everything is going and addressing any concerns that may arise

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/recruitment

Acas also offers a template induction checklist that employers can amend for their own needs at www.acas.org.uk/templates.

Monitoring long-term absence

From time to time, team members will become ill and unable to attend work. While short-term absence can cause difficulties, it usually has less impact on the team than long-term absence. It is important to handle long-term absence sensitively and consistently.

When dealing with a long-term absence, a manager should:

- assess if other team members can manage for a while without a replacement, or whether a temporary replacement can be found
- consider if the absence may be for disability-related reasons and whether reasonable adjustments may be required. For example, adjusting the organisation's absence triggers
- keep in regular contact with the team member to check on how they are doing and update them on changes at work such as staff changes and relevant job opportunities
- ensure that 'fit notes' are received when required and check if the GP's position has changed
- consider when it may be necessary to refer the team member to 'Fit for Work', the Government's occupational health advice service which can carry out a health assessment

Many organisations have policies in place for dealing with absence. Where there is a policy, a manager should follow the process and seek guidance from senior management or HR where necessary.

Seeking medical assessment

A GP or a 'Fit for Work' referral can assess:

- when a return to work will be possible
- whether there will be a full recovery and whether a return to the same role is advisable
- whether a phased return on lighter, less stressful, duties would be advisable
- whether the team member is disabled and if so, what reasonable adjustments could be made to facilitate their return to work

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Once a team member returns to work, a manager should arrange a **return to work interview**. This should usually be informal and focus on:

- welcoming them back
- confirming the reason for their absence
- checking they feel well enough to work
- updating them on any workplace news

If a team member has been absent from work often, a manager should also use a return to work interview to find out if there are any underlying problems causing the absence. For example, the sickness might be work-related or there may be problems at work or home. In many cases, a policy will measure absence in some way to trigger when such a return to work interview should be considered.

If a team member is unlikely to be well enough to return to work within a reasonable time period then a manager may decide that further action may be necessary. This would usually involve taking the team member through a capability procedure, which may lead to dismissal on the grounds of capability. If such action may be taken, then a fair procedure must be followed.

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/managingabsence

Managing pre-agreed absences

Team members may take pre-agreed prolonged absences, which could range from a period of recuperation following a major operation to maternity, adoption and shared parental leave periods. Losing a team member for a long period of time can put strain on the rest of the team. A manager should therefore take all reasonable steps to minimise the impact.

Once a manager is aware of an intention to take such a period of leave, they should consider:

- how long the team member may be away
- what impact their absence will have on the team and the organisation
- what steps can be taken to mitigate this impact
- whether someone needs to be hired on a temporary contract

While the team member is away, reasonable contact should be maintained to keep them up-to-date on any changes at work, such as staff changes and job opportunities. This could involve arranging keeping-in-touch days where the team member comes into the workplace or through a regular phone call.

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How and when contact will take place should be agreed in advance of the leave starting.

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/parentsandcarers

Handling a resignation

A team member may resign for many different reasons. It may be because of factors outside the workplace. For example, an external promotion or caring responsibilities. It could also be for reasons related to the workplace. For example, lack of career prospects or problems with work colleagues.

In most circumstances a team member will only need to give one weeks' notice before they can leave their employment. However their contract can require them to give a longer notice period. For example, a two month notice period. During the notice period **a manager should hold an exit interview to understand why the team member is leaving** and obtain any feedback on what the organisation does well and what could be improved.

Holding an exit interview...

In an exit interview, a manager should:

- hold it in private
- keep it informal
- explain the purpose of the meeting
- ask the reasons for leaving
- ask what they enjoyed about working at the organisation
- ask what might have encouraged them to stay
- record what was discussed and note if any further action is required

While the person leaving may not always disclose the real reasons for leaving or their true views about the organisation, what they do say can be valuable. Collecting information about why team members leave can highlight whether there are any common factors to address that would help to retain other team members. Where appropriate, the information should go to the HR department, to inform HR policies.

Conducting investigations

Sometimes a manager may be required to conduct an investigation into a matter to establish the facts. Not completing a reasonable investigation where necessary, may make a decision or action unfair and leave an employer vulnerable to legal action.

For example...

Shazhad manages a small team in a council department. He receives a grievance from Liza alleging that Sarah has been bullying her. While Shazhad does not think Sarah would bully anyone, he knows that the allegation must be investigated to establish the facts of the matter.

Conducting a fair and objective investigation shows that Shazhad has taken the grievance seriously and reduces the risk that the council may be vulnerable if the matter leads to legal action.

When conducting an investigation, a manager should:

- understand what exactly needs to be investigated
- be objective and fair, and not prejudge what will be established
- have a timeframe for completing the investigation
- plan what evidence might be relevant and how this can be collected. For example, are there witnesses to talk to or specific written documents to collect?

In potential disciplinary matters, an investigator should only decide if there is a case to answer. If there is, they may recommend a disciplinary hearing to be arranged to consider if any action is warranted. Wherever possible, a different person should hold the disciplinary hearing.

For more information, including a step-by-step guide on conducting workplace investigations, go to www.acas.org.uk/investigations

Managing discipline and grievance issues

When a grievance has been raised or disciplinary action may be warranted, a manager in charge of handling the matter must follow **the minimum procedures set out in the Acas code of practice on discipline and grievance.**

Handling a grievance fairly requires...

- an investigation to establish the facts of the matter
- informing the employee in writing of arrangements for a grievance meeting and advising them of their right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or trade union representative
- allowing the employee to put forward their case and how they may see it being resolved
- providing an outcome in writing, including whether any action will be taken and how the employee may appeal if unhappy with the decision

A fair disciplinary process requires...

- an investigation to establish the facts of the matter (where practicable,

the investigator should be someone not involved in the disciplinary meeting)

- informing the employee in writing of the allegations against them, outlining the arrangements for a disciplinary meeting and advising them of their right to be accompanied by a workplace colleague or trade union representative
- allowing the employee to put forward their case
- writing to the employee to tell them the outcome of the meeting and how they may appeal if the outcome is disciplinary action

Many organisations have incorporated these minimum procedures into their own policies and procedures. Before beginning any formal process, a manager should check if the organisation has a relevant policy that should be followed. Not following the minimum procedures outlined above and/or the organisation's own policies may make any future decision unfair.

For more information, go to www.acas.org.uk/dgcode

Working with trade unions

If the organisation has trade union representatives, a manager should try to build a good working relationship with them. Trade union representatives are often trained and experienced in matters that can make them particularly useful if a problem arises. Trade union reps generally possess an awareness of the wider organisation and how issues that arise have been successfully dealt with in the past.

When problems arise, having a trade union representative involved can help to ensure that a fair process is followed. An employee has a right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a work colleague at any grievance or disciplinary meeting. Having a companion can make a team member feel more comfortable and willing to talk openly about a matter. Also, a union rep may be able to suggest alternative options for resolution which might otherwise not have been considered.

Section 5: Support and personal development

To become fully effective in management, a manager should be given sufficient training and have a strong supportive framework as they learn new skills and get used to their new responsibilities. As they grow in the role, a manager should be continually looking to learn additional skills and approaches, and develop themselves further.

Support from a senior manager

In the same way that a manager should manage and support their team, a senior manager should ensure that the managers they have a responsibility for have a supportive network around them.

While a manager is learning their new role, the senior manager should:

- be in a position to help, support and mentor the manager when problems arise
- help the manager identify their strengths and areas to develop
- delegate tasks in a manner and quantity that the manager can realistically handle whilst learning their role

Senior managers have a number of techniques to achieve these goals, but options include:

- being easily contactable and available
- arranging frequent reviews and catch ups
- suggesting, discussing and supporting appropriate training, shadowing of colleagues and other developmental opportunities
- encouraging networking and collaboration between managers to share experiences and approaches

A new manager will benefit from approaching their senior manager to discuss support options.

Self-reflection

As a manager becomes more experienced they should continuously reflect on their experiences to help improve their actions in the future. Self-development requires a manager to identify their strengths and their weaknesses, and take steps towards improvement.

A manager should set aside time (at least once a week) to reflect on their actions and behaviour, and how they may be perceived by those they manage. A manager should focus on:

- how they approached matters

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- what went well and what could be improved
- how they handled the needs of their team members
- whether an alternative approach may have been more appropriate
- how they should handle similar matters in the future

Encouraging feedback from the team

A manager may also improve their performance by seeking feedback from their own team if there are matters within the team they feel could have been handled differently. This can also make a manager aware of potential issues within their team at an early stage and allow the manager to resolve them before they become more serious.

Feedback could be sought at regular catch-ups or at performance reviews. A manager should:

- encourage the feedback to be constructive
- be patient and listen
- ask for specific examples

Once a manager has received feedback from their team, they should carefully consider the points raised and decide whether it is appropriate to act upon the feedback or disregard it.

Identifying further skills to develop

A manager should try to continually develop their skills and knowledge. The workplace is constantly changing and therefore it is important that a manager is able to adapt and cope with any pressures or new responsibilities that may arise. As part of an organisation's appraisal system a manager should consider:

- what skills or areas of their knowledge they think could be improved
- how they might be able to develop these skills further
- what approach would be of most benefit to their team and the organisation

A manager should discuss development opportunities with their own manager and agree a development plan for the coming year.

How might a manager further develop their skills?

To develop their skills further, a manager could:

- shadow more experienced staff members
- complete online courses
- listen to podcasts on employment matters
- attend external training courses
- read and understand the organisation's policies
- join a relevant association or institute that discuss employment matters and management approaches

Further information

Acas learning online

Acas offers free E-Learning on a wide range of topics including, Managing people and Discipline and grievance. For more information go to www.acas.org.uk/elearning

Acas training

Acas offers training courses for HR professionals and anyone with management responsibility. The courses are led by experienced Acas staff who work with businesses every day.

Go to www.acas.org.uk/training for up-to-date information about our training and booking places on face-to-face courses.

Also, Acas specialists can visit an organisation, diagnose issues in its workplace, and tailor training and support to address the challenges it faces. To find out more, go to the Acas website page Business solutions.

Acas guidance

Discipline and grievances at work

Employing younger workers

Guidance on discrimination is available at www.acas.org.uk/equality

Additional help

Employers may also be able to seek assistance from groups where they are members. For example, if an employer is a member of the Confederation of British Industry or the Federation of Small Businesses, it could seek its help and guidance.

If an employee is a trade union member, they can seek help and guidance from their trade union representative or equality representative.

Keep up-to-date and stay informed

Visit www.acas.org.uk for:

- Employment relations and employment law guidance – free to view, download or share
- Tools and resources including free-to-download templates, forms and checklists
- An introduction to other Acas services including mediation, conciliation, training, arbitration and the Acas Early Conciliation service
- Research and discussion papers on the UK workplace and employment practices
- Details of Acas training courses, conferences and events.

Sign up for the free Acas e-newsletter. The Acas email newsletter is a great way of keeping up to date with changes to employment law and to hear about events in your area. Find out more at:

www.acas.org.uk/subscribe

The Acas Model Workplace. This engaging and interactive tool can help an employer diagnose employment relations issues in its workplace. The tool will work with you to identify areas of improvement you can consider, and will point toward the latest guidance and best practice:

www.acas.org.uk/modelworkplace

Acas Helpline Online. Have a question? We have a database of frequently asked employment queries that has been developed to help both employees and employers. It is an automated system, designed to give you a straightforward answer to your employment questions, and also gives links to further advice and guidance on our website:

www.acas.org.uk/helplineonline

Acas Helpline. Call the Acas Helpline for free and impartial advice. We can provide employers and employees with clear and confidential guidance about any kind of dispute or relationship issue in the workplace. You may want to know about employment rights and rules, best practice or may need advice about a dispute. Whatever it is, our team are on hand. Find out more: www.acas.org.uk/helpline

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