

# NAVIGATING THE TRANSITION INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR TO MANAGER CHEATSHEET

NAVIGATE THE TRANSITION FROM AN INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR TO A MANAGER WITH OUR EASY-TO-FOLLOW CHEATSHEET!



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# Navigating the Transition (IC to Manager)

## The Cheatsheet

As you progress through various stages in your career, you are faced with a choice of becoming a people manager. This transition can be intimidating to some and may come naturally to others. But like every other skill, you can learn and be better at it through mindful practice, open mindset and humility to correct mistakes. Experience, equity, and empathy are what enhance management, and in turn, leadership skills.

The most important thing to recognize about leadership and especially about People Management is “**It's NOT about YOU**”. This is a stage where you move from, “I achieve results on my own” to “We achieve results with and through others”.

Some key things to consider during your transition

**Develop a Leadership Mindset:** It is important to recognize early on that a large part of the transition from IC to manager will be personal work, your own mindset and your own belief that you are now in a different role. It's not “just one other thing” you do, it's a realization that you are not taking responsibility for a collective, not just yourself. Oftentimes, when you move to manage your peer group, you can have imposter syndrome or a need to prove that you belong. It's important to recognize that this is normal and part of the learning. It's on you to take the reigns and prepare for the new role

**Define your Productivity:** One of the first things you notice when you move to manage people >50% of your job, you cannot associate productivity to the number of lines of code you check in or documents you create. You need to start identifying areas that you can lend your expertise and arm your team members with the tools and opportunities to create success. Your energies will need to be towards removing roadblocks and identify patterns towards delivering results.

**Be Available:** You need to make yourself available to others and ensure that the time spent is yielding progress in not just business deliverables, but also your teams personal goals and ambitions. You are making sure that you hold regular 1:1s and establish a cadence. Consistency in your availability is key

**Be a Change agent:** Change often starts with the leader or manager. Model the change you want to see or not see. Be a champion of change. Start with the “Why” and involve your entire team to define what that change looks like. Invest in yourself and prioritize learning over perfection. If your team sees you investing in your own improvement, they will follow. A good place to start is to identify everything you need from your manager, if its a need for you, it may be a need for your team.

**Remove yourself from the critical path:** Being a manager does not mean being a hero in every situation. Ask yourself if you are creating a bottleneck on your team by taking up a difficult task instead of your team. Never ask your team to do something you would not consider doing yourself, but also find ways to delegate and coach your team to delivering vs you rolling up your sleeves every time. Shape the outcome, don't control the outcome

**Establish a Team culture:** You can never set out to chalk up a plan for culture and try to achieve it. You need to focus on nurturing a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices within your team. This is what defines your team culture. It is important that you are intentional about nurturing a culture that you see best in your organization. Borrow ideas, never try to mimic another organization's culture. Also start to understand how company culture plays into your team

**Build a feedback loop:** Great teams have transparent and clear established communication channels. Be intentional about building a culture of transparent and direct feedback. Feedback should be direct, actionable, concise, time bound and emotionless. This does not mean you have to be ruthless, you can empathize with the situation

**Embrace failure:** Accept the reality that you, and your team, will fail multiple times as you grow together. Failure is one of the best coaches and learning from failure will provide valuable insight and knowledge. Be comfortable to accept failure and use it as a teachable moment to disseminate insight and validated learning within your organization.

**Enjoy the little things and Celebrate wins:** As a team, it's important to know to take wins as they come, however small. This builds camaraderie and bonding that will be useful during a crisis. You should focus on elevating the wins and little things in your own unique way

**Be aware of your verbal and non verbal cues:** When you are up late at night working on a problem and found a cool new solution, and you send out an email sharing your excitement and pride finding the solution, think about how it can be received. Are you setting an example that you are expecting people go above and beyond working late to deliver results? It's important to take note of your own habits that brought you success and what impact it has on the team as a whole. Your late night emails might be sending a message that you expect your team to respond to incidents immediate no matter time of day.

**Be Vulnerable, Listen, drop the Ego:** As you grow in your career, it becomes more and more apparent that vulnerability is a strength, not weakness. Remember, when you become a people manager, you are playing an important role. It's not about you being better than others or winning in a contest. To be a good manager is to develop and nurture good listening skills. Treat it as a privilege to lead a team, create an atmosphere where people reporting to you can trust you with their ambitions, desires and fears. If you can create such an environment, you will be able to manage people better.