

## Transcription - Case Study: New Manager Self Assessment

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Welcome back. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. Today I'm going to look at a case study and it's about a new leader, new to the management role, been in the role for about six months, everything's going very well, very happy, the team's happy, the manager's happy. And he's now sitting down to have a think about his own performance and do just an initial review of the first six months to see how he feels that his management style is developing and how he has performed, as a manager, in his own eyes.

So this is a self-assessment, not anyone else's assessment, but it is as a result of him feeling that perhaps some of the team are not as comfortable with his management style as he would have expected because what he's decided to do, in his management style, is to learn from all of the managers that he has worked with in the past and to bring in all of their good qualities, obviously, but also to bring in some of the things that he felt were lacking when he got to a level where he could identify them. So he's come into this role with a game plan I guess you'd say and decided this is the way he's going to approach his management. He's done that for six months. He feels that the team are all, as I said, working well together, working well with him, getting things done, but there's still some hesitation with some of the team members with his management style and he would like to identify for himself what that gap is in the acceptance of his management style given that he decided that he would manage on the basis of what he felt was lacking with some of the managers that he'd had in the past. He kind of felt that he's done very well in his career and he's very happy with where he's at however, felt that if there were certain things that his leaders gave him would have even made it better.

So his motivation is to give all those things plus more to his teams and he's very, very focused on their success. In summary, he wants to be a good leader, he wants to be a good mentor and a good coach for his people. I think that's what we bring to every management role. Whenever we take on a management role, we certainly think about the managers that we've worked with in the past and we know what our own skills are. We know what things would have been good if they had happened when we were working on a particular project in the past and so we'll try to fix those gaps, I guess, is the best way of putting it to make the team work more cohesive. So it would be confusing when you get to a point where you think well, I'm doing all these things because that's what I identified in my experience that was lacking. And now that those things are there, this team is not happy. So what should I do or what am I missing? Where is the gap and how do I identify it without asking the team, without putting them on the spot?

They might not be able to identify themselves. They may not know what that grey area is. And it's really not a black and white thing. It is a grey area. It's a grey area being comfortable, but not completely satisfied. So you know, you've done this often, how else have you worked out that there is some sort of grey area there? How do I identify what it is? And then that should give me the path for you to do something about it.

So I guess for identifying what it is, you still have to look at individual responses and look at the context of those responses. And if there are sorts of things where they go off and do it,

but they're not wholeheartedly with you on the process, then perhaps it's something in your communication. So I look at the communication, first of all, and see that you are communicating clearly, if you're giving directions, giving instructions, the reasons that you're doing it. And perhaps it's not your place to actually give instructions, but to be more open to being there as a research tool or as a background tool, so you say things like, "Here's the project, run with it. As you probably know, I have been involved in a very similar project in the past. I'm happy to share with you what my experiences were with this kind of project. But I want you to have a look at it with your eyes because we're in a different environment." It's never going to be exactly the same project so there's no point in you overlaying your experience onto other people's activities.

I think as a leader, there's no difference to being a parent. Sometimes you've just got to say to your kids, "You go, you go to catch the bus and if you haven't got the right money, well, you should have thought about before you started out. If you get lost where you're going, you should have taken a map with you or had it on your phone and looked up the app, whatever it is." But at some point, you've got to let go. You've got to allow them to explore that environment and come back with their findings. And then when they come back with their results, with their findings, with their recommendations, then you look at that. And if there are things that you have some concerns about, then you ask the question, you don't say, "When I did it, it was like this." Instead you can say "Is there something you can use here, or is there some reason why, that you haven't told me, you've gone down this way."

One of the other tools that the person, was very good in a sense, they picked up, even though everything indicated, or they indicated was positive, he's still picked up something. Then he found a way in which to go and turn that into thinking aloud with someone like a mentor, in this case, and where you think aloud to try and figure out, "What is this thing I'm feeling and what's the basis of it?" That is a very, very good process in a sense, that it's not jumping to conclusions, but trying to identify. Also, it highlighted in going through a process like that, what is the root cause?

It also found that what is it that is making me go in a certain direction?

And in this case, it seemed to be very, very strong passion to helping people, this team, as well as making sure they succeed. They succeed very well, and they succeed, and they don't get hurt.

So, that if we talk about, the same as Kim just said, the protection space, being overprotective to your team, and stopping them from hurting or making a mistake, or the same as you do with your friends and family.

In this case, once you identify that, maybe that's what stopping them. Is it a way to make a mistake? Absolutely. Making a mistake is a great way of fermenting with new ideas, coming up with ways of doing things differently, maybe even making a great idea better, even a great idea can be made better. In that sense then, all those things that Kim talked about, allow them to explore the environment, give them the opportunity to grow, is good. But when things go as wrong, you just, if you're a good leader, you just own it together.

It's about saying "We tried that now, let's analyze it, what worked, what didn't work, and how we are going to now get to the next stage where it'll become successful." If you don't do that,

if you don't make it a safe environment to make mistakes or a safe environment to explore opportunities, then they won't. They won't explore opportunities, they will make mistakes, everyone makes mistakes. The issue is about managing those mistakes and owning the mistakes, as we say, and moving forward, just recognizing that it happened and not dwell on it, not going back to it every time you have a meeting, or every time you want to have a new process or try something different. You don't go back and say, "Oh, remember, we made that mistake, so we can't do that again." It's over, it's done, it's in the past, that's not the direction we're heading, so you should always be looking forward because that's the way you should be moving.

Making it a safe environment, making it an environment where it's clear that people can make mistakes, they can try things, and it's not going to be an issue, and it's not going to hold them back, and it's not going to be a blame throwing situation either, that makes it easier to manage in a lot of ways, because you're not worried about anything really. So, you're free to explore, to do things, to try things, to bring up new ideas, to bring up new processes, and know that you will be recognised for thinking about the project, thinking about the process, looking for solutions, working towards solutions without the overriding worry being we can't get this wrong.

I think too many work environments these days still have a legacy of we can't get this wrong because it's going to cost us money. If you keep thinking that way, you'll end up going backwards, and not only that, but if it is a straight mechanical process then why are you involving people? Why don't you just automate it, and then that's the end of it. But that's not what we need and want. We want to grow, we want to come up with new ideas, that's why you have people, that's why you have a team, where leadership has got to come with all the good intent of helping and passing on all your experience and expertise, but you can't just give it and expect people to follow it and then you've been a good leader. You've got to give them benefit of your experience and expertise and the freedom and the support to come with them.

A leader is individual, it's not about being a nurse-maid. We'll probably go back to a little bit about one of my pet topics, which is individual responsibility. So you have to allow people to be individually responsible for the work that they're doing, and by being overprotective you are not allowing that responsibility to develop in them, and you won't be developing future leaders. If you don't allow them to feel their way, then they will never be prepared to be managers, and you're not doing your job as a leader to find a succession plan if you're not allowing them that opportunity to grow.

I think we've talked that through as much as we can today. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.