

#5

Interpersonal Skills

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This step comprises six interpersonal skills that are essential to high-performance leadership. Interpersonal skills are often not taught to many managers and especially to those in the engineering and technical professions. High-performance leadership means having skills which support engagement, psychological safety, open communication, and conflict management. Here are the basic inter-personal skills that every manager needs:

How to increase respect

High-performance managers know that respect isn't an entitlement linked to a job title, rather it is earned. To increase team members, trust in you, act as follows.

- Lead by example. Demonstrate the qualities and characteristics you expect from the team members you manage. It is essential to exhibit the traits you want team members to adopt, such as honesty, creativity, being forthright, and industriousness.
- Be humble. No one cares about where you went to school or past successes. Egotists are boring and turn people off, they need to get over themselves and do it quickly. Avoid conversations that entail self-promotion; they are obvious and do damage to your reputation.
- Know when to initiate communication and respond. In a team setting, allowing team members to speak without interruption means you are being professional and respectful. Communicating respectfully means using your time and someone else's time wisely, asking clear questions, and responding fully to any questions you've been asked.
- Show commitment every single day. Get into the trenches with your team members and get your hands dirty as often as you can. Work longer and harder than they do. Get out of your office and visit their workplaces. Talk to them, get to know their names so you can address them personally, ask them how things are going, ask what their top three issues are and follow-up.
- Share your expectations. Team members want to know what your expectations are of them; that way, they can work to meet or exceed them.
- Help people succeed and advance. Help team members gain exposure and give them opportunities for development and advancement. Be a mentor, focus on those team members who are bright, hardworking, dedicated, reliable and creative, and have skill sets that you don't or those who show potential. Mentor team members by delegating them work that uses their strengths and initiate support programs that allow them to learn a new skill or certification.
- Compromise. This is not a weakness; in fact, nothing could be further from the truth. A manager who can compromise comes across as caring and someone who

puts others before themselves and who appreciates understanding a differing point of view.

How to build trust

The definition of trust is confidence in one another's reliability, commitment, and dependability. Do not underestimate the importance of trust in being a high-performance manager. The moment team members start to doubt you, or each other, is the moment that "all is lost." This is another reason why psychological safety is so critical as it ensures that team members feel comfortable enough to express their point of view, resulting in a collaborative environment that doesn't punish them for expressing ideas.

Think about how to build trust and commitment in a team – first, you must model trust by delivering on your commitments and building trust through individualization. To build trust, the approach is to strike a balance between appearing as warm and competent so that you come across as credible and human. Team members are generally aware of your background, namely, the credentials that gained you your current position. With credibility established, it's now time to demonstrate some vulnerability and show that you are indeed a fallible human being. The combination of competence and warmth makes you seem more trustworthy.

Trust means being transparent to be open and honest in the way you speak and act. To encourage these qualities in your team, you must demonstrate them yourself. Transparent leadership means you have nothing to hide, this builds trust with your team members. Team members know what direction you're leading them in and what your intentions are, therefore, you need to be honest about the risks and potential issues attached to each task or project. Share the full scale of risks, issues and challenges and encourage team members to come up with their own ideas. Listen to the ideas they contribute and over time, you'll develop their trust. Trust and commitment mean team members will collaborate effectively on difficult projects:

- Commitment is the flip side of trust. (You give me a commitment; I trust you will do it).
- To earn trust, you must demonstrate trust.
- Trust means making yourself vulnerable.
- Trust must be accompanied by accountability.
- Trust someone until such time as you have evidence that you can't.
- Set your expectations of someone based on trust.
- Learn to trust your intuition. (If something doesn't sound or feel right it probably isn't).

Counsellors often employ one of three tactics when meeting a new client, they spill their coffee, drop their pad, or embarrass themselves somehow to show they are fallible. By making yourself vulnerable, it is possible to build trust quickly. You must demonstrate your credibility first before you exhibit vulnerability; otherwise, it doesn't work.

At your next team member check-In, embarrass yourself slightly; forget where you put your pad, spill your coffee, or simply drop your pen and have a hard time finding it. When you do this, make the comment "It's a dreadful thing to be human", showing that you're just like everyone else.

Sometimes we accidentally say or do the wrong thing and can lose the trust we have built up; here is a quick solution for recovering lost trust:

- Act quickly.
- Be candid.
- Accept responsibility.
- Apologise.
- Outline a remedy.
- Don't blame.

How to use your body language

A great deal of our communication happens through nonverbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and eye contact. So, you need to think about these as a form of communication. Your everyday body language is often what determines whether people like you or not, and when someone has made up their mind about you it's all but impossible to change, therefore, body language must be made to work for you. Here are some body language tips:

- When you're listening to someone. You should be actively listening and be paying attention to their body language. You should also be conscious of your own to ensure you're sending appropriate cues to others.
- A firm handshake. A firm handshake makes an essential first impression. A firm grip displays confidence and establishes you as someone to be taken seriously.
- Not meeting someone's eyes. A failure to look a team member directly in the eyes makes you seem shifty and untrustworthy. But too much eye contact can put some people off. If you want to hold someone's gaze, look at the point just above their nose between their eyes. To the other person, it appears as if you are looking directly into their eyes, and you can maintain the gaze for as long as you want. (A good negotiation tactic).

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- Fussy hand gestures. Your hands can be used to enhance words. But don't fuss as this can make you look nervous, distracted, bored or rude.
- Crossing your arms. This says you are on the defensive, it's a sign of disinterest, being closed off and unapproachable.
- Nodding too much. You can't be taken seriously if you nod too much. Even when agreeing with what's being said, nodding can be off-putting. It is, however, a very good active listening cue, but you need to be subtle.

"If you struggle to meet new people or join in the conversation at social gatherings, it might be that your body language is sending the message for others to stay away. Here is how to improve your body language to appear more approachable:

- Smile. Although it is possible to overdo smiling, generally it is better to smile versus frown. Try to find things that genuinely make you happy or laugh and your smile will come across as natural rather than forced.
- Be accessible. If you are constantly on your phone or buried in a newspaper, people will feel like they are interrupting you. Make sure that you are accessible and open to communication from others.
- Avoid blocks. In the same vein, make sure that you aren't using objects to shield yourself from team members. At a party, hold your drink at your side instead of close to your chest. Keeping objects between you and others makes you appear guarded and closed.
- Keep your head up. It is hard for others to know how to approach you if your head is constantly down; they need to see your face to feel like you want to get to know them. Keep your head level when walking, meeting people, and during social situations.
- Use eye contact. When you do end up talking with someone, be sure to maintain eye contact. A good rule is about 60% of the time you should be looking in the other person's eyes. Avoiding eye contact makes you appear untrustworthy or disinterested. If direct eye contact feels hard, try looking at the spot between their eyes. They won't be able to tell the difference.
- Angle forwards. Watch your feet, your legs, and your body; you should be angling toward the team member you are talking to, not away. Any body language that makes you look like you are ready to "bolt for the door" means the team member will feel like you are just not interested.
- Avoid nervous habits. Even though you might be nervous, avoid the habits that go along with the feeling. Stop touching your face or playing with your hair. Don't fidget with your pen or the change in your pocket. Keep your hands relaxed at your sides or use them to gesture when making conversation.

- Mirror the other person. Use this technique sparingly when appropriate. If you are in conversation with another person, mirror their body language to make them feel more comfortable; make some of the same movements as they do. Don't overdo this strategy or it will become obvious what you are doing.
- Nod during conversations. When listening to team members, nod to show that you are paying attention and that you are interested. Doing so reinforces for the team members that you want to be involved in the conversation. One way to take the focus off yourself during a conversation is to plan to share what you've heard with someone else afterward. This will cause you to stay focused, ask questions, and summarize to make sure you understand.
- Be Positive. Beyond body language, always be positive. Say nice things about team members instead of mean things. Approach team members and include those who seem to be left out. Be a positive person and you will attract other positive people to you.” Source: Arlin Cuncic, VeryWell Mind, 2020.

How to use persuasion

Persuasion is an art, not a science. We all know someone who can get us to do anything, an ability we all crave. Having had a career in Change Management, I have had to, on many occasions, convince people and teams of wholesale and often dramatic changes that need to be made. Over the years, based on pure experience and trial and error, I arrived at a set of principles that have always worked well for me and can work well for you.

As a Change Manager I had to learn how to persuade people to do things they both did and absolutely did not want to do, these were changes in techniques, behaviours and even the knowledge they used. The strongest influencer I found is a reasoned argument or pitch that is based on facts or experience (your experience is hard to argue with, if you have credibility people will accept what your experience has to say). But I also learned that there were other factors that were also important like my use of language (not what I said but how I said it, the tone of my voice and the emphasis and pauses I used). I was lucky to have had six years doing talk back radio, which taught me how to use my voice to great effect and how to use it to persuade and influence listeners.

Mastering effective influencing skills or the art of persuasion increases your self-esteem gained through self-expression and being persuasive is an important professional skill of high-performance leadership.

To get your own manager to have confidence in your ideas and career potential, you need to persuade them. No matter how much you want them to understand your work's depth, knowledge, and expertise, your managers are not studying for a test. Shifting your focus from educating to influencing, you can build the credibility you need to get where you're trying to go.

A high-performance leadership activity is the ability to easily persuade people to do things they either don't want to, have an unreasonable fear of, or think they will fail at. The key to persuasion is motivation, when delegating a task consider for example, telling the team member that if you were doing the task this is how you would do it. Below are equally effective different methods to motivate team members and others, consider each and find the method that best suits you or mix and match from each to form your own method.

1. Use motivation.

- Telling a team member that if you were doing the task this is how you would do it.
- Telling them that you are not interested in the outcome of the task but only that they have a go.
- Talking about what they'll lose if they don't do the task.
- Drawing on their past actions as examples of their ability to do the task.
- Telling them that nearly everyone is doing it or soon will be.
- Asking for a 100 when you only want 10.
- Talking about the counterargument before they do, that is, the pros and cons of doing the task.

2. Use positivity.

- Make your words powerful. Your pitch needs to be full of words that elicit a response. You can do this easily by framing your statements around key phrases. For example, "car accident" is a phrase that makes you think of many different types of vehicle collisions. But if you're trying to persuade someone to buy car insurance, you won't say that there are thousands of car accidents each day. Instead, you'll say that there are thousands of car-related deaths every day.
- Dress up, but don't talk down. Nice clothes go a long way in helping you maintain confidence, even if no one is around to see you. Be careful, though, that being well-dressed can result in you looking better than people who are above you.
- Focus on the future. Speaking in a future tense establishes confidence best done by using the word will. Phrases like "We will" and "Then we'll do this" will get the team member used to the idea that this will happen.

- Speak their language. Finishing a team members sentence is bad. This is because you're inserting your own "speak" into their independent thoughts. So instead, listen closely to how the person talks and watch how they carry themselves.
- Be a master of timing. This goes along with getting to know the team member you're pitching to. Study them and find out the best time to talk to them. For example, some busy people are swamped during the beginning of the week and check out mentally on Friday. This means that Thursday may be the best time to approach a team member you need to persuade.
- Repeat what they say. Prove that you are listening to and acknowledging the thoughts and feelings of the team member you're talking to. You can affirm their stance by simply saying, "If I'm understanding you correctly, you're saying that you find this important because of XY and Z. I understand that and think AB and C."
- Preferred communication. Study the team member and determine how they prefer to communicate. Simply asking them if they like to talk on the phone instead of email goes a long way, just as long as you give them some options.
- Individual thinking vs. Group thinking. To quickly identify if someone thinks better individually or in a group, ask: Do you prefer studying by yourself or in a group? Then ask, how do you like to relax – by reading a book by yourself or meeting friends?
- Auditory vs. Visual thinking. Does the team member think primarily in words or images? For example, draw them a picture or just explain. Auditory thinkers will tend to use verbs such hear, listen, explain. Visual thinkers are much more likely to describe a situation using see, look, watch.

3. Use Roger Dooley's adaptation method.

- Talk about needs they didn't know they had.
- Share a story.
- Learn to adapt to their personalities.
- Establish common ground with your manager and team members
- Use a personal note.
- Be upfront with your request.
- Use guilt to your advantage.
- Use the right words.
- Focus on what the manager and team members will gain.
- Remind them they can always say no.

4. Use Robert Cialdini's six principles of persuasion.

- Reciprocity. A common social norm, reciprocity, involves our obligation to return favours done by others. Thus, when I do something for you, you feel compelled to do something for me.
- Authority. Something as simple as informing your audience of your credentials before you speak, for example, increases the odds you will persuade the audience.
- Social proof. Manager and team members are more likely to say yes when they see others doing the same thing - social proof is not all bad.
- Consistency. If you ask your manager and team members to state their priorities and goals and then align your proposals with that in mind, you make it harder for them to say no.
- Scarcity. Have you noticed that Amazon tells people there are only a certain number of products left? That's scarcity at play. You want what is in short supply. This desire increases as you anticipate the regret you might have if you miss out by not acting fast enough. So, if you want somebody to want what you have, you must make that object scarce, even if that object is yourself.

5. Use Dale Carnegie (the persuasion guru) method.

- The only way to get the best of an argument is to avoid one.
- Show respect for the other person's opinions. Never say, "You're wrong."
- If you are wrong, admit it quickly and emphatically.
- Begin in a friendly way.
- Get the other person saying "yes, yes" immediately.
- Let the other person do a great deal of the talking.
- Let the other person feel that the idea is his or hers.
- Try honestly to see things from the other person's point of view.
- Be sympathetic with the other person's ideas and desires.
- Appeal to the nobler motives.
- Dramatize your ideas.
- Throwdown a challenge.

6. Use my 7 principles of persuasion.

Over the years, based on experience and trial and error, I arrived at this set of principles that have always worked well for me, here they are:

- Use clear language. If you can't explain your point of view to a 10-year-old, such that they can explain it to another adult, then it's too complicated. The art of persuasion lies in simplifying something down to its core and speaking slowly, constantly pausing every 30 seconds.

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- Base your argument on facts or your experience. Base your argument on facts or your experience, this makes it easy to explain your reasoning for things which is critical.
- Match the other person's voice and body language with your own. The way they talk (softly, loudly) even body language should be matched effectively. If they like to talk with their hands, that means their ideal form of communication is active, so it is helpful for you to do the same.
- Express your opinion reluctantly and use persuasive words. You want the other person to believe in you. You have all the answers, but how did you get there? Talk about what you used to believe and what you believe in now; by doing this, you control the conversation and convince the other person that this will work for them. Use the five most persuasive words in the English language: You, Because, Free, Instantly, and New.
- Get your timing right and be persistent. Everyone can be persuaded, given your timing and context is right. Keep selling your message, do not let up. The person who keeps asking for what they want, and keeps demonstrating value, is ultimately the most persuasive.
- Pay genuine compliments. Compliment people sincerely and often for things they aren't typically complimented for; it's the easiest thing you can do to persuade others.
- Be honest and energetic. Sometimes the most effective way to persuade somebody is by telling them the truth about something, especially if others are reluctant. Some people drain our energy, while others increase it. The most persuasive people know how to transfer their energy to others; they know how to motivate. Sometimes all it takes is eye contact, laughter, excitement in verbal responses, or active listening.

Use this shortlist.

The next time you feel you need to persuade a manager or team member or delegate a difficult task, prepare what you are going to say and how you are going to say it by remembering these points:

- Clear language and speak slowly.
- Use facts or your experience.
- Match the other person's voice.
- Express your opinion reluctantly.
- Get your timing right.
- Pay genuine compliments.
- Be honest and energetic.

How to develop charisma

Charisma was once believed to be an innate personality trait, a gift that certain individuals possess that gives them the capacity to do extraordinary things. Thinking was that it could not be learned, you either have it, or you don't, however this is not true. When a high-performance leader displays gusto and alacrity, is curious and always upbeat, this makes them charismatic. Doing these four things puts forward a positive attitude which infects team members thinking and feelings and can extend to the whole workplace. By communicating high expectations to team members and exhibiting confidence in their abilities to meet the expectations, this in turn increases your charisma.

In workplaces where the manager has charisma there is energy, a vibe, electricity, or vibrations in the air.

Being viewed as charismatic is a powerful management tool, it encourages team members to trust in your ideology and your beliefs. It brings about unquestioning acceptance and affection of you as a leader, it promotes team member obedience and emotional involvement with your goals helping to create a shared vision of the future.

1. You can become charismatic by.

- Demonstrating gusto (showing great energy, enthusiasm and enjoyment when taking part in an activity)
- Demonstrating alacrity (doing an activity with speed and eagerness).
- Being curious.
- Being positive and upbeat.
- Communicating high expectations.
- Showing confidence in team member abilities.
- Using active listening.
- Sparingly giving praise.
- Taking responsibility for when things go wrong.
- Providing constructive criticism to team members.
- Your whiteboard is always covered in something new.
- You can test if your charisma is working by:
 - Team members feel energised, motivated, feel good after speaking with or just being near you.
 - Your speech or presence creates a sense of positivity in others.
 - A team member runs to your office.

How to increase your emotional intelligence (EI)

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to identify, assess, and control the emotions of yourself and others. It is the ability to be able to identify and express feelings, perceive and evaluate others' emotions and use emotions to facilitate thinking. It is extremely difficult to be a good communicator, to inspire others, coach, be a role model, and know yourself if you aren't emotionally intelligent. Daniel Goleman, the author of 'Emotional Intelligence,' researched people from 181 different job roles from 121 companies and discovered that 67 percent of the competencies deemed essential for effective performance were 'emotional' competencies. We learn, develop, and practice our emotional intelligence skills through real experiences.

"Emotional intelligence is how well a manager connects to their team members and is an often-overlooked management skill. Psychology Today defines emotional intelligence as the ability to spot and manage your own emotions while still understanding others' feelings. In the past, the ability to empathize with team members wasn't seen as a prerequisite to being a good manager. Progressive management styles have since realized that a team members mental well-being is as important as their physical well-being. "Managers who display emotional intelligence also display high levels of self-awareness, a trait that helps them to understand how their emotions impact those around them. They also show self-regulation. The human mind can handle several emotions at once but separating one from another is a skill not many have. This trait makes a manager able to handle challenging situations more confidently." Source: Top 15 Management Skills, Lifehack.org.

All these trait's stem from empathy, and that's a skill that you can practice. Listening and talking with your team members can help you to develop a deep compassion for their individual conditions. Moreover, research has found that emotional intelligence is very important for effective, progressive leadership. "Emotional Intelligence involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide ones' thinking and actions." Source: Emotions and Interpersonal communication, Open.lib.

High-performance managers can easily make a difference by taking decisions according to team members emotions. Inspirational, motivation and individualized consideration are components of high-performance leadership correlated with the ability to monitor emotions and the ability to manage emotions. So, it is important to improve emotional intelligence to be an effective High-Performance Manager. Findings suggest that managers higher on EI are more likely to achieve business outcomes and be considered as effective leaders by their team members.

High-performance managers make use of EI as follows.

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- Not being afraid of expressing feelings clearly and directly. Letting their feelings lead to positive choices that benefit the whole team.
- Having thoughts that are not dominated by negative emotions like fear, worry, hopelessness, and victimization. Instead of asking "why me?" they develop self-awareness by asking, "Why does this issue keep coming up over and over?"
- By being great at communicating not just through words, but by being able to listen intently and read body language.
- Balancing emotions and decisions with reason, logic, and reality. Assessing a situation from all angles before making a final call.
- Not being motivated by power, wealth, status, fame, or approval. Instead by being humble and acting with moral authority.
- Do not internalize failure. Rather speaking about the good, the bad, and the ugly openly, because everything is a learning opportunity.
- Probing team members emotions in any given situation to understand what they're feeling and why. This is key for understanding how to appropriately respond, rather than just impulsively reacting.

To develop or improve your EI, this is what you need to do.

- Become more self-aware by paying attention to how your emotions are affecting your decisions and actions. Pay attention to managing strong emotions such as excitement, anger, frustration, and distress.
- Improve your social skills by being 'curious', start a conversation by asking benign questions like: "That's an amazing tie, where did you get it?", "Those are fabulous shoes, where did you buy them?"
- Focus on being more empathetic by using active listening to look for 'emotional' cues and words.
- Work on motivating yourself to do things you don't like such as starting difficult tasks as early as possible. It's most often a lack of confidence and self-doubt that stops you from doing such things. Breaking a difficult task into smaller chunks and just doing a bit at a time builds confidence and lessens your resistance.
- Have empathy, meaning that you understand and share in the emotions of others. This communication skill is important in both team and one-on-one settings. In both cases, you will need to understand team members emotions and select an appropriate response. For example, if a team member is angry, empathy can help you diffuse their emotion. At the same time, being able to understand when a team member is feeling positive and enthusiastic can help you get support for your ideas and projects. Put yourself in your team members shoes. People are drawn to empathy, it's an attractive quality to have in building successful relationships at work. Empathy is something any manager can develop. It is all about thinking of other people's circumstances, understanding their current state

of mental health, and knowing that their emotions are every bit as real as your own. This helps you develop perspective and opens you up to helping others.

- **Manage your emotions better than most.** Reasonable people, the ones who maintain control over their emotions are the people who can sustain psychologically safe workplaces. In these settings, productivity is high and top performers flock to these organizations and rarely leave them. Self-control is a skill high-performance managers must learn so they can be present, calm, and focused during times of stress.
- **Respond instead of reacting.** So often we react when faced with an emotionally charged situation. We get defensive or act out in fear about something that triggers us. High-EI managers understand the root cause of their negative emotions and reactions, in this way they can respond, not react, with confidence and self-control. By modelling an appropriate and effective response rather than let emotions get the best of them, managers with EI set the example for others to follow as a cultural trait.
- **Being open to feedback.** High-performance managers ask peers and respected team members, "How am I doing?" then they listen to the feedback so they can become more self-aware. The key is acting on the feedback you receive. This shows team members you are listening to what they have to say. This sets the tone that if they come to you with issues, questions, or concerns, they will be heard and taken seriously.

Summary

1. **How to increase respect.** - High-performance managers know that respect isn't an entitlement linked to a job title, rather it is earned.
2. **How to build trust.** - Trust means being transparent to be open and honest in the way you speak and act. To encourage these qualities in your team, you must demonstrate them yourself. Transparent leadership means you have nothing to hide, this builds trust with your team members.
3. **How to use your body language.** - A great deal of our communication happens through nonverbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and eye contact. So, you need to think about it as a form of communication. Your everyday body language is often what determines whether people like you or not, and when someone has made up their mind about you it's all but impossible to change, therefore, body language must be made to work for you.
4. **How to use persuasion.** - Persuasion is an art, not a science. We all know someone who can get us to do anything, an ability we all crave. Having had a career in Change Management, I have had to, on many occasions, convince people and teams of wholesale and often dramatic changes that need to be made. A high-performance leadership activity is the ability to easily persuade

people to do things they either don't want to, have an unreasonable fear of, or think they will fail at. The key to persuasion is motivation, when delegating a task consider for example, telling the team member that if you were doing the task this is how you would do it.

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