4 KEY ACTIONS TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE A NEW TEAM

How to consistently achieve goals with confidence and clarity

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Uncommon Teams

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YOUR FIRST DAY *managing* A NEW TEAM IS APPROACHING

You might be feeling overwhelmed at what's to come, unsure about where to start to be successful, concerned about everything your management chain will be asking of you, or overwhelmed about everything your team needs from you to do their job.

If you can relate to any of this, you're not alone. Every manager joining a new team has these feelings, even when they're doing this for the umpteenth time.

Whatever your level of experience as a manager, knowledge about the situation you're stepping into, and amount of nervousness about your new position, you know you want a few things:

- You want to present yourself in the best possible light.

- You want your team to be the best they can be.

- You want every person on your team (including you) to feel comfortable being who they are.

While this may seem an impossible task to accomplish, there's an easy way to get there.

Through my close work with new managers, I have identified four key actions you can take to achieve these goals.

What is important to you?

What are you asking your team to do?

Who is your team?

How clear are you?

BE CLEAR

BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT'S *important* TO YOU

What's important to you is a result of the one driving force that is most important for you personally and the three to five principles that define your approach as you engage and direct that driving force.

Here's a concrete example of this first action: My driving force is helping the team do their best work. The principles that guide how I do that are:

- Whatever you need, there is a way for you to get that without harming yourself or anyone or anything else.

- Whatever you need, there is someone else who would love to give it to you.

- Whatever you produce, there is someone else who would love to have that in their life.

- You have a right to everything you need and an obligation to offer the unique value you produce to others.

Don't worry about getting these principles perfect. Make them as clear, concise, and correct as you can for now. Remember, you'll be revisiting this every day. You'll have plenty of opportunities to refine these.

While you're getting clear on each of these, remember that your driving force and your principles are not the same as your team's mission, nor are they the same as what your management chain is asking you to accomplish. Your driving force and principles are personal, specific to you, and engage your unique personality.

Now that you're clear on what is important to you, you can move on to clarifying what you're asking your team to do. The clearer you can be, the easier your team can accomplish your request.

WHILE IT MAY BE TEMPTING TO GIVE THEM EVERY GOAL YOU HAVE, *don't!*

If you give them more than one goal, you are asking them to decide which is most important, and they don't know enough about you yet to do that. Make it easy for them and you, and give them just one goal to focus on.

Once you have a goal, determine the next two to three steps you need your team to take to achieve this goal. Again, stay focused on the next few steps. Also, make them smaller than you think you can. The smaller each step is, the quicker your team can achieve it, and the faster everyone will see success.

Also, the smaller these steps are, the quicker you can all discover if they are not quite right!

With clarity on who you are and what you need your team to do, start gaining clarity on who your team is. Identify where each person is strong and where they have room to develop. As you do this, remember that your team as a whole is itself a member of the team, with its own unique needs to do its best work.

IDENTIFY YOUR TEAM STRENGTHS & AREAS FOR *development*

Identify your team strengths and areas for development, each tied to what is important to you. Develop a list, group similar items, and then decide which group feels most important to strengthen first. This gives you a filter for the work you already know about, as well as all the potential work that might add value. This, plus your understanding of what's important to each person on your team and the team as a whole, will help you coach them in what you're asking them to do.
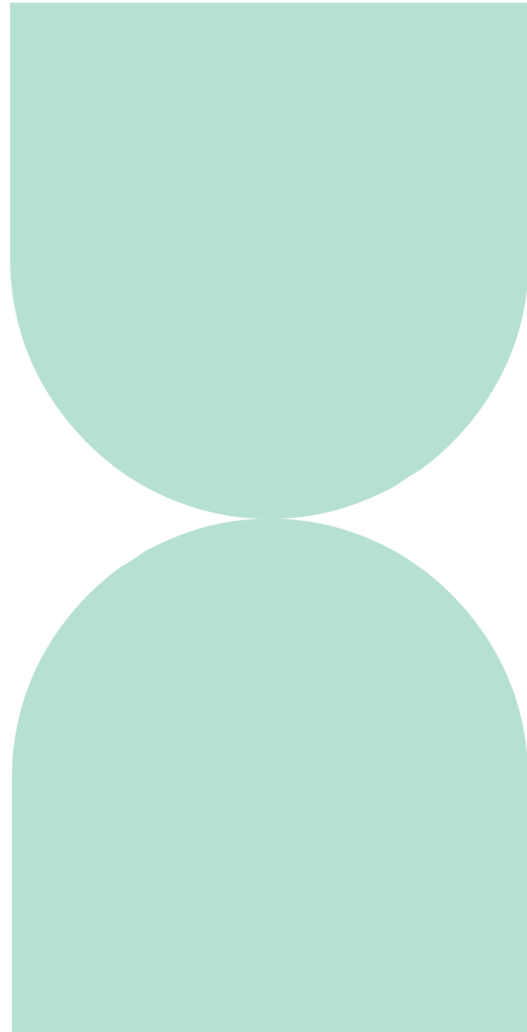
REMEMBER THAT CLARITY IS A *temporary* THING.

Your understanding of your driving force and principles will evolve and change as you grow and learn. That one goal you want your team to achieve will change as you understand more about your team and its various roles. The next step you need your team to take will change as they take the ones you've already laid out and you all learn from their results.

Consider what's top of mind for you. Not what you think you should be worried about; not what you are being told to worry about; not what you think you are worrying about – what you are truly trying to figure out.

If you don't know what this is, what's blocking you from knowing? If you do know, what's blocking you from finding a solution?
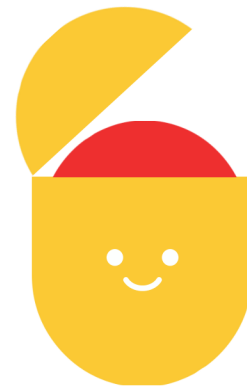
The more you can discern between what other people are telling you needs to be accomplished, what you think you should be accomplishing, and what actually needs to be accomplished, the more you can put your energy and creativity towards solving the issues that are most impacting you and your team and the more you can have the impact you want to have.

safety

clarity

trust
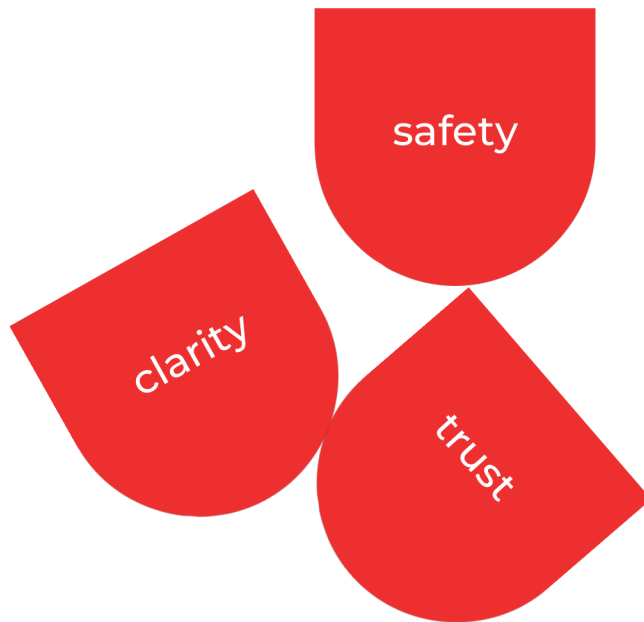
As you work towards clarity on each of these things, you will find other things starting to become clear as well:

- You will be clearer about what you're being asked to do.

- You will more easily identify the decisions in front of you and be more accurate at predicting their outcomes.

- You will better understand how to motivate your team.

- You will steadily decrease the murkiness around you and your team.

- You will increase the clarity you each have about what you need them to do and their ability to achieve it.

- You will build trust and safety within your team.

YOU NOW HAVE THE *tools* YOU NEED:

- Your driving force and the principles that guide you.

- The one thing you are asking your team to do.

- Your strategy for leveraging your team's strengths and for mitigating any gaps.

- Your map of where things are murky and where they are clear.

You likely aren't clear on all of these yet; you may not be clear on any of these. No worries! Start from where you are, take a step, and see where you are then. Your understanding of each of these will change every step you take. Sometimes they will become clearer, sometimes they may become murkier.

This is normal.

Success is not achieving perfect clarity.

Success is increasing the clarity of where you are now and of what your next step is.
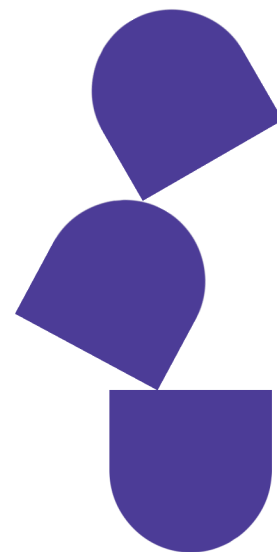
RIGHT NOW, TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO STATE, HOWEVER CLEARLY YOU CAN:

- What force drives you.

- What principles guide you.

- The one thing you want your team to do.

- Which strengths of your team already support doing that one thing.

- Where your team needs to grow to better do that one thing.

- What you are clear on.

- What you are not clear on.

Then, tomorrow, take another few minutes to do this again. Do this day after day, and you are on your way to building your Uncommon Team!

Want help with this? I help software leaders just like you build Uncommon Teams who meet goals with confidence and clarity.

Let's chat about your situation and how I can help!

ABOUT MICHAEL & UNCOMMON TEAMS

HEY THERE! I'M MICHAEL, AND I'M BUILDING UNCOMMON TEAMS TO FOCUS ON WHAT I'VE MOST ENJOYED OVER MY CAREER: HELPING SOFTWARE LEADERS — THOSE WHO ARE FORMING TEAMS AROUND THEM, WHETHER CONSCIOUSLY OR NOT—TO CREATE TEAMS WHERE EACH PERSON FEELS:

- Valued: for who they are; for the unique gifts and experiences they bring; for their contributions, however niche or non-standard those may be.

- Safe: to be who they are; to speak the truth they're experiencing; to ask for what they really need.

- Comfortable: being who they are; speaking the truth they're experiencing; asking for what they really need.

- Transparency: about what is going on for them; about potential issues they foresee or are worried about; about all the things we aren't "supposed" to talk about.

- Confident: that everyone else really does value them; that everyone else really does have their best interest at heart; that everyone else really is trying their best.

Whether you are building tools and apps for internal use or packaged software and services aimed at business or consumers; whether you are a tiny startup, a mid-size company, or a megacorp, I consistently find that teams focused on these principles are not only more effective and more consistent at meeting their goals, they are happier and more joyful as well!

If you believe work should be dull or dreary, or that you are not allowed to bring your full self to your team, perhaps the following testimonials from people I've worked with will show you how your world can be.

HIS MENTORING AND ADVICE HAVE CHANGED HOW I APPROACH MY WORLD

"

Michael has been a major influence as I've grown from a quiet and shy young software engineer into a confident and strong technical lead and Scrum Master. He consistently helps me understand how who I am at my core is exactly what my team needs and his approach of finding small changes to experiment with has helped me take on challenges I would not have been comfortable with otherwise. His reframing of situations helps me move from "Oooh, that's scary" to "That's exactly what I want, and all it's going to take is tiny step after tiny step." His mentoring and advice have changed how I approach my world.

— Yamin, Lead Software Engineer

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Michael has been an invaluable guide as I've grown from a just-out-of-college newbie engineer into a senior dev. He has helped me understand who I am, what I want, and how to find that in whatever job I find myself in. More importantly, he has helped me learn a different way to approach problems and decisions that helps me bring my whole self rather than attempting to pigeonhole the bits of myself I think people are asking for. It turns out that those bits and pieces are never enough, and that my true self is not only what makes me happiest, it's also what solves the problem most directly and effectively. Michael's help finding my way to be has helped my career and the rest of my life flourish!

— James, Senior Software Engineer

A DIFFERENT WAY TO APPROACH PROBLEMS & DECISIONS THAT HELPS ME BRING MY WHOLE SELF

WANT TO CHANGE YOUR APPROACH AND BRING YOUR WHOLE SELF?

I help software leaders just like you build Uncommon Teams who meet goals with confidence and clarity. Let's chat about your situation and how I can help!