

# Four Secrets to Getting Your Employees to Take Initiative... So You Can Get Your Work Done



There Is a  
Better Way

Two things I hear regularly from managers are:

*“How do I get my team to do more? I wish I could put them on autopilot.”*

And

*“Why are the people who report to me so fragile every time I try to give them feedback?”*

If you are like most managers today, you get in at 9am and are lucky to be done by 7pm, and you've only crossed one or two things off your **To Do** list. You need the people who report to you to perform so you don't have to micro-manage them...**so you can do the big thinking pieces...and look successful to your boss.** Instead it feels like herding cats and putting out fires.

- Maybe you used to be on the same level with someone who now works for you, and every time you meet it becomes a personal conversation and you can't figure out how to **“be the boss.”**
- Maybe when your team is working on a project, you feel like you give really clear direction, and even say, “we're all clear, right?” then get a totally different product than what **you know you asked for.**
- Or maybe people on your team **go around you** or speak out of turn with other departments (or your boss!) and you can't seem to make any of the people involved see why it's an issue.

You are not alone. With rare exception, today's companies don't have the time or resources to train junior professionals to work autonomously, or give managers on their way up the education that can help them **truly manage and motivate their teams.** The good news is that it's figureoutable.

Since 2008, **I have worked with hundreds of middle managers** on how to motivate their teams. The work is close to my heart. My own corporate career took me from enthusiastic newbie, to sometimes reluctant direct report, to committed, agile and effective leader.

In this guide, learn the secrets that **consistently help my clients regain the freedom to focus on their own work, while they support their teams to own and reach their goals.** And if you find what I share helpful but would like more, at the end I give you a way to get more in-depth guidance.

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## Secret #1

Know the strengths and weaknesses of each person on your team (including you!) and stop trying to make everyone good at everything.

In school we strive for good grades in everything, whether we like it or not. Work's not like that. Your job as a manager is to **figure out which role you, then each team member, will do best.**

1. Start with you. Do you know why you're good and how you contribute to your team and your company? Try this: Find out using the Gallup Strengths Finder 2.0 or the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. Then take time to **connect what you're good at to the good work you've done** in the past. You will be amazed how this small awareness will increase your confidence.

2. Think about what each of your team members is good at.

- Some people like to figure out what to do, then **get it done**. Give this person projects you are doing for the first time, where the roadmap is not totally clear. Like a product launch for a new category, or a presentation to a new client.
- Others love to **come up** with ideas and talk about all the good stuff that's possible. Let these people brainstorm -- they may imagine something no one else thought of. Then let them get others excited about what you are doing -- they're really good at that too.
- Some people will roll up their sleeves and do anything, as long as they **feel connected**. Let these people work together and with other departments to get things done. And respect that they want to pause at the water cooler now and then; they are like glue that can keep your team working effectively.
- And don't forget the people who are **amazing at detail**. Sometimes it feels like all they know how to say is 'no,' but they're great at seeing the mistakes you want to avoid. Let them "kick the tires" at the start and end of your project to make sure it has the quality and detail you want.

To learn more, check out the Belbin Roles model:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team\\_Role\\_Inventories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Team_Role_Inventories).

Teams need to use their skills to "divide and conquer" on goals.

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## Secret #2

# Know what motivates each of your team members

The worst thing is not knowing what your team wants. A lot of first time, and even more experienced managers, make the mistake of thinking that they should be the same with everyone. Yes, you want to be fair and not play favorites, but do realize that different people want different things. To motivate them, you are better off adapting to their style.

I suggest sitting down with each of them and filling out the chart below.

Name	What do they want to achieve in career?	What do they want in their personal life?	What motivates them?	What gives them a sense of purpose?	What are they good at?
Name	Are they quiet or talkative?	What would make them better at their job?	When they are tired or nervous, what bad behavior can you help them overcome?	What is their favorite ice cream? Book? Movie?	

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## Secret #3

# Know how to give feedback that is welcome and effective

1. For **positive feedback**, be generous. Research shows that we learn best when we use the pathways connected to our strengths. That means if you want your team members to do something differently, **first point out what they are doing well**. And be specific. Not, "Great job!" but "Thank you for bringing that extra research to the meeting. I didn't expect the client to ask for it, but it was so helpful to be able to give a thorough answer."
2. For **difficult feedback**, focus on **what their behavior does to you**. Instead of, "Why don't you ever proofread your work!" try, "When I find mistakes in a presentation and we are close to the deadline, it makes me very anxious. There are so many moving parts to what we do and I don't have time to proofread and get it all done."
3. And finally, be good at **receiving feedback**. If someone pays you a compliment, say thank you and let them know you appreciate it. If you brush it off, they won't do it again. And if they give you **difficult** feedback, also say thank you. If it makes you uncomfortable, let them know you'd like to think it over. Don't deny or get defensive. Remember that they are watching you -- so model good behavior. Come back to them in a day or two with your thoughts.

If the person becomes defensive, denies or blames someone else, just stay calm, listen without judgment, and when you can, repeat your feedback. It can feel tense. You may go back and forth a few times, but hopefully you will both get to a place where you can have a productive discussion about some solutions.

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## Secret #4

# Be real with your team members

Recently I did some 360 interviews for a client named Heather. She was experiencing high turnover in her team and knew she was too harsh and demanding. What I discovered in the interviews is that her team loved her! They consistently said things like, “Oh yeah. When we are at off-sites and Heather is relaxed, she is amazing! So much fun! If she could only be like that more of the time.” Despite being identified as the future of her organization, Heather was so anxious and worried about her goals and performance that she spent most of her time focused on what still had to be done, and what her team wasn’t getting right. She’d lost them.

We focused on letting “Off-site Heather” show up more consistently in her daily work. She shared with her team that she was working on changing her intense behavior. She practiced smiling more and using her sense of humor, saying things like, “Uh oh, here comes the General. Better take a moment and step back.” In those step back moments, she and the team said one or two things that were going well, then moved on to discussing the work at hand.

We also worked on having Heather feel more confident and less defensive. She spent time writing down her wins and learnings. She spent time writing down what she feared might go wrong. Just to get it out of her system.

**So. Much. Better.** Remember, her team wanted her to be fun more of the time, not all of the time. Her efforts meant so much to them. They learned not to take her intense moments personally, and those moments shifted to how much she cared about their collective success. With that, they were much more willing to roll up their sleeves and collaborate with her.

Being real doesn’t have to be weird or end in a pile of public tears. Being real is different for everyone, but here are a few things to get you started:

- Smile more
- Share about your tough weekend
- Apologize! If you overreacted or were unprofessional, say you’re sorry
- If you need alone time or a break, say so. It tells the team you are real and lets them stop wondering why you look unhappy or dissatisfied
- Write down the stuff that you are afraid of/worried about, so it stops derailing you

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# Being an effective manager and leader is a journey.

I've been a coach since 2008 and was a corporate professional for 18 years before that. Here's what I believe - today's companies are leaner than ever and there is more turnover than ever. That means if you are feeling a little under-mentored yourself, you're not alone.

Managers come to me to work on a few key things:

- To get recognized and promoted. They are working so hard, but:
  - Somehow think being strategic about career is political and inauthentic.
  - They just don't know how to show up with executive presence and get their boss to trust them.
- They are doing well, but they want focus - so they can find balance, get more done and be less overwhelmed.

First I help you sort through the clutter and get clear on what you actually want. Then I give you the right tools, in the right order, to make it happen.

And then I hold your hand. Making changes to the way you've been doing things "forever" can be confusing. And challenging - realizing that the way you've always done things isn't working can be discouraging. Having a trusted guide in those moments is key to staying on track and making real change.

If you feel like the time has come to get support for you and/or your team, why not set up a conversation with me.

When we talk, we will:

- Identify how things are now and how you would like them to be (your goals and vision)
- Get clear on what is working, and how to build on that.
- Take a look at obstacles that might get in the way. BTW, the "situation" often looks like the culprit, but the real juice is in little insights that can shift how you see things.
- Create a plan and identify one or two "low lying fruit" actions you can take now.

To set up your free conversation, write to me at [claire@clearstrategycoaching.com](mailto:claire@clearstrategycoaching.com)

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In 2008 I founded **Clear Strategy Coaching**, an executive coaching firm in New York City. I have coached hundreds of mid-level and senior professionals in leadership development focused on executive presence, team motivation, and influence. I work with individuals and teams across industries, with a focus on consumer goods and multi-nationals.

I received my training and certification through **Coach Training Institute** and am a Certified Professional Coach with the **International Coach Federation**. I am certified in Tracom's Social Style and the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. I received an MBA from **Columbia Business School**. In addition to my private practice, I have coached and trained hundreds of executive education students in several programs at Columbia Business School and School of International and Public Affairs.

Prior to founding **Clear Strategy Coaching**, I spent two decades in the beauty industry, where I worked in sales and marketing at **L'Oreal**, **Christian Dior** and **Givaudan**. I've been in my clients' shoes and I bring them solutions that actually work.

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