

12 MOST COMMON  
CHALLENGES  
FOR

# NEW MANAGERS

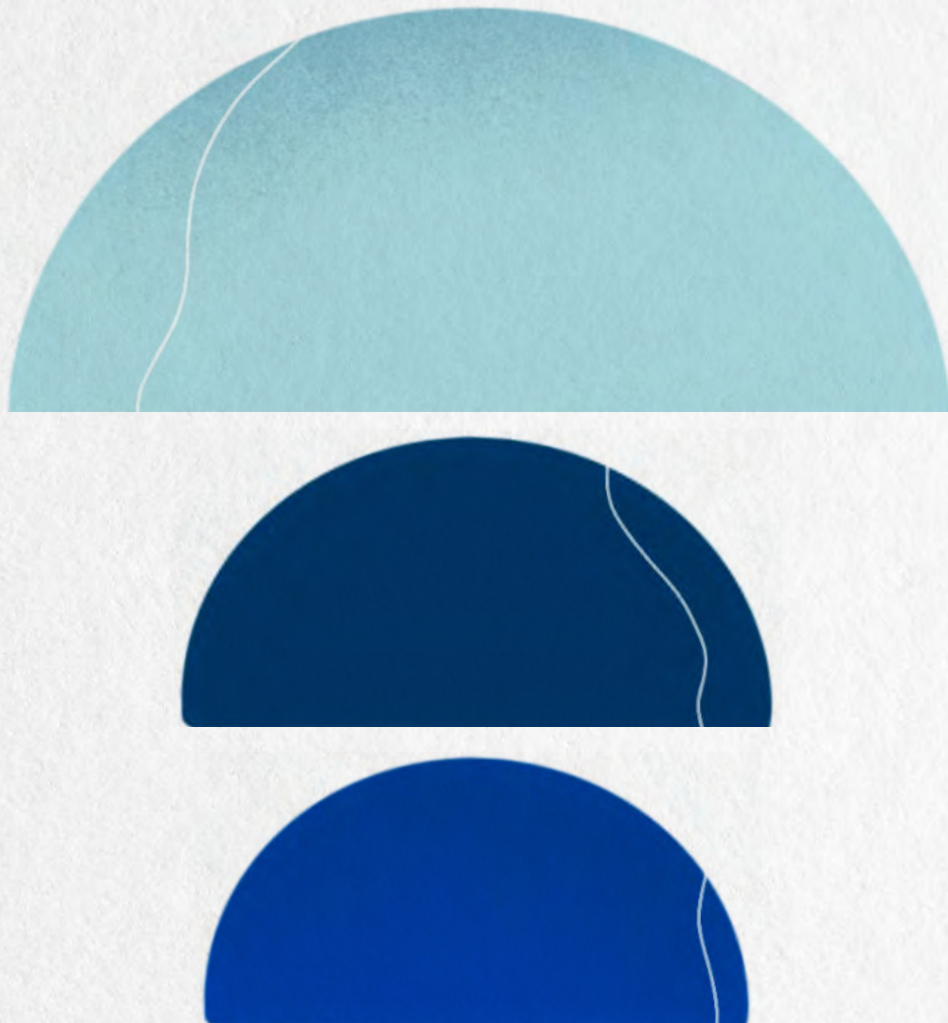


Center for Creative Leadership®

To better understand the most common challenges new managers face and to help them overcome these difficulties, we conducted a study to analyze the challenges of nearly 300 emerging leaders. We found that those new to management struggled in making the transition from being individual contributors who were doing the work themselves, to leading others in doing *their* work. These are the 12 most common challenges of new leaders — and the skills needed to tackle them.







## 1. **LEADING** former peers.

First-time managers often find it difficult to transition from being a friend to being a “superior,” all while maintaining positive personal relationships and gaining respect. New skills needed include influencing others and managing employees not in their direct line of authority.



## 2. **BALANCING** the new workload.

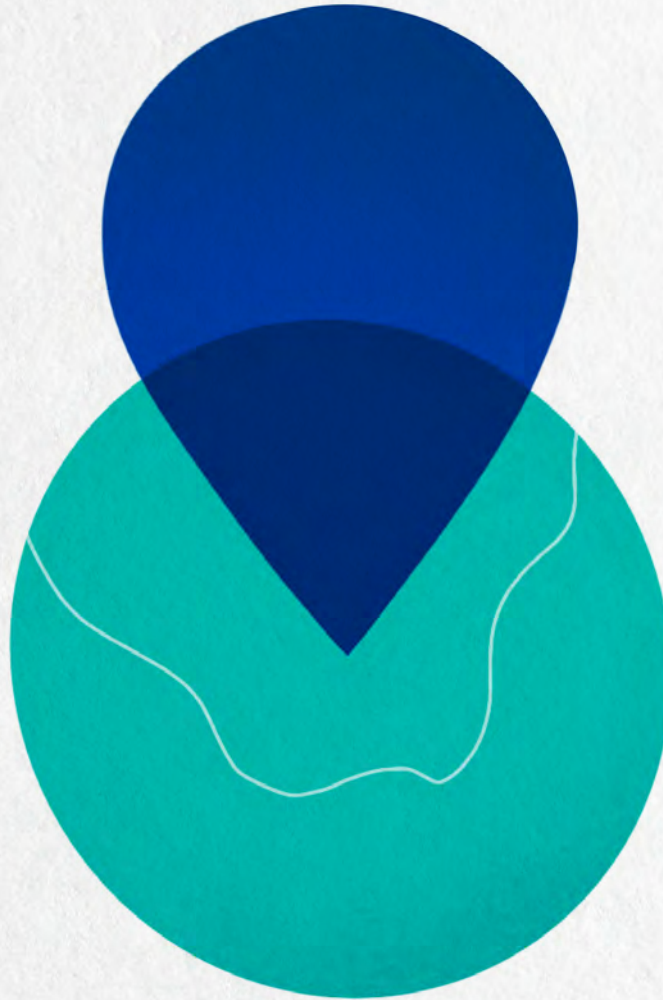
First-time managers must learn to be leaders while still being productive employees themselves. New skills needed include time management, stress management, relationship management, and industry-specific expertise.





### **3. DRIVING** team achievement.

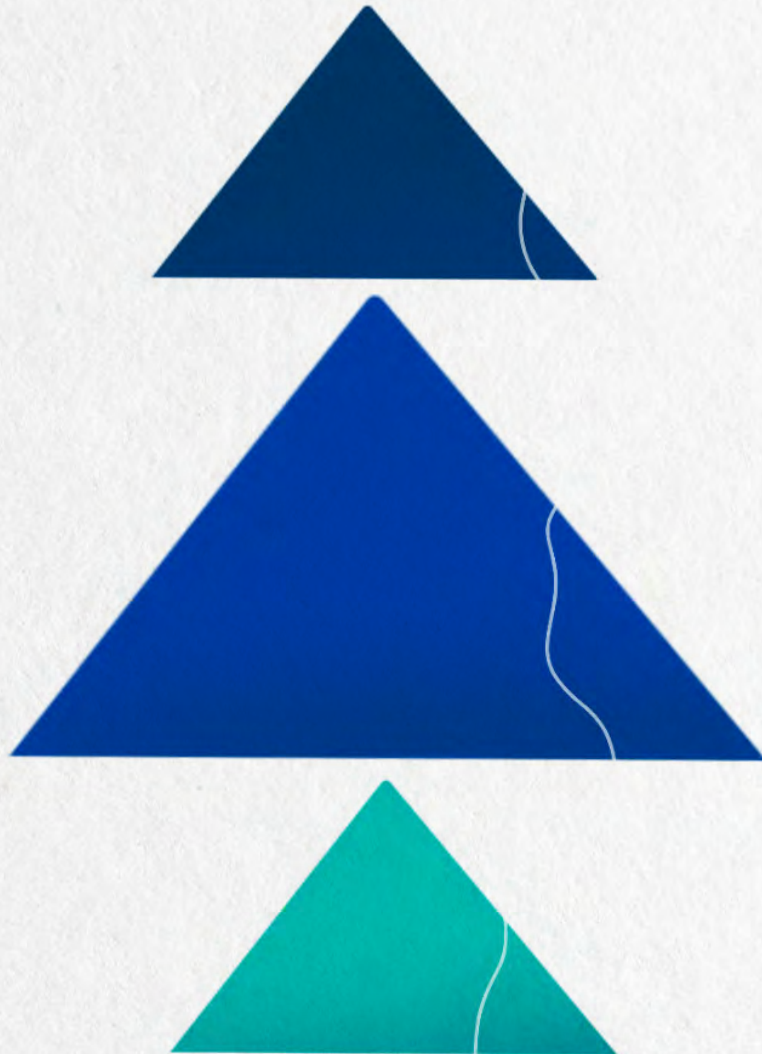
First-time managers must provide leadership and guidance to their teams, even when directions and expectations are unclear, a challenge that's magnified when leading hybrid teams. New skills needed include the ability to build and lead a team, set direction with team members, and strengthen team chemistry.



## **4. NAVIGATING** the organization.

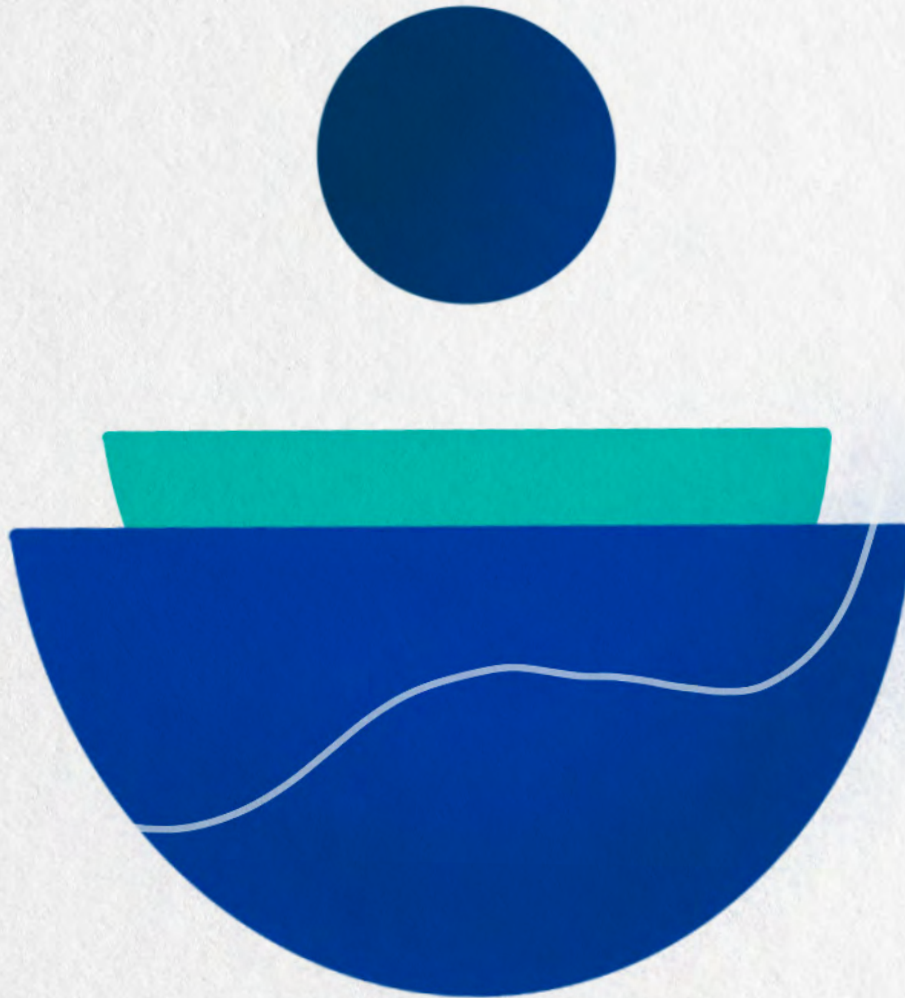
First-time managers must learn to assert their opinions to upper-level management, including speaking for their subordinates or department. New skills needed include gaining visibility with upper management; political savvy; gaining an understanding of organizational structure, culture, and politics; and navigating change for themselves and their team.





## 5. **MOTIVATING** and inspiring.

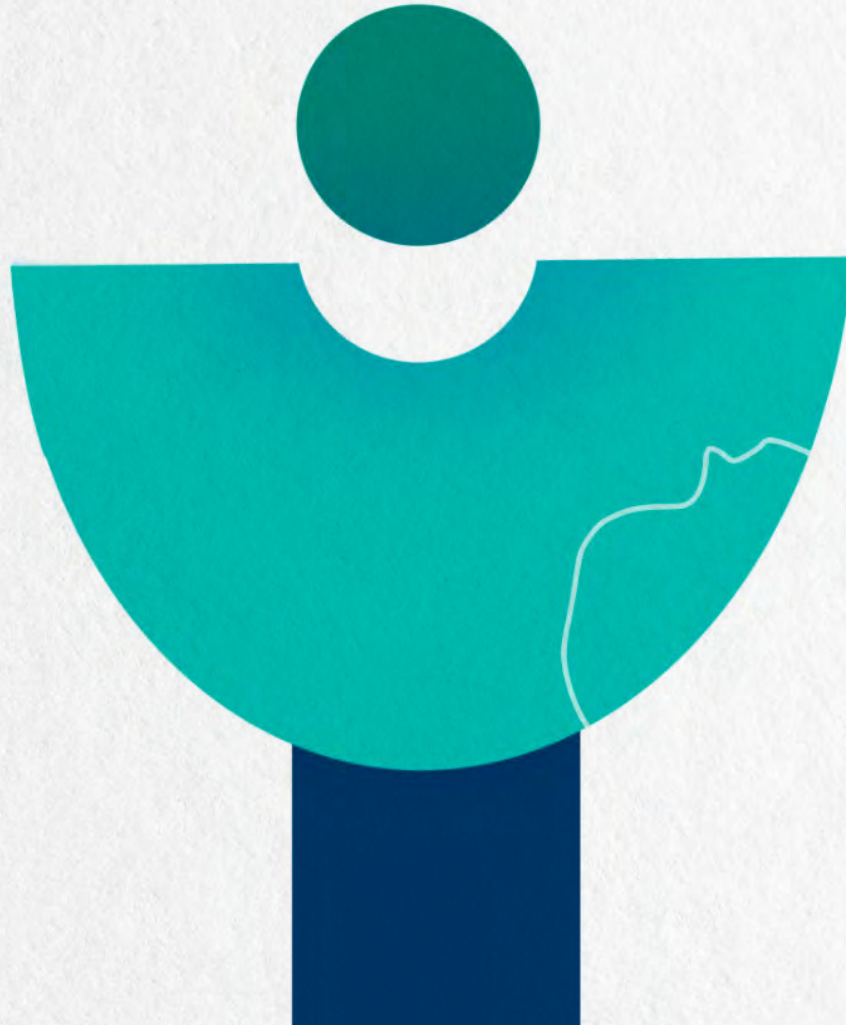
First-time managers must be able to motivate both direct and non-direct reports. New skills needed include the ability to inspire others to complete assigned work, to encourage them to meet or surpass expectations, to understand and boost employee motivation, and to be able to communicate the vision of the organization to subordinates.



## 6. **HOLDING** people accountable.

First-time managers have to overcome discomfort with giving feedback, particularly negative feedback, and this can be even trickier when it involves managing remote or hybrid teams. New skills include needed holding subordinates accountable for their actions, and effectively dealing with employees who lack ability, knowledge, or experience.





## **7. COACHING** and developing others.

First-time managers are now in a position to develop subordinates' knowledge, skills, and abilities. New skills needed include mentoring team members in their career development and holding coaching conversations with their people. For most new managers, a focus on developing other employees (not just themselves) is new.



## **8. COMMUNICATING** more effectively.

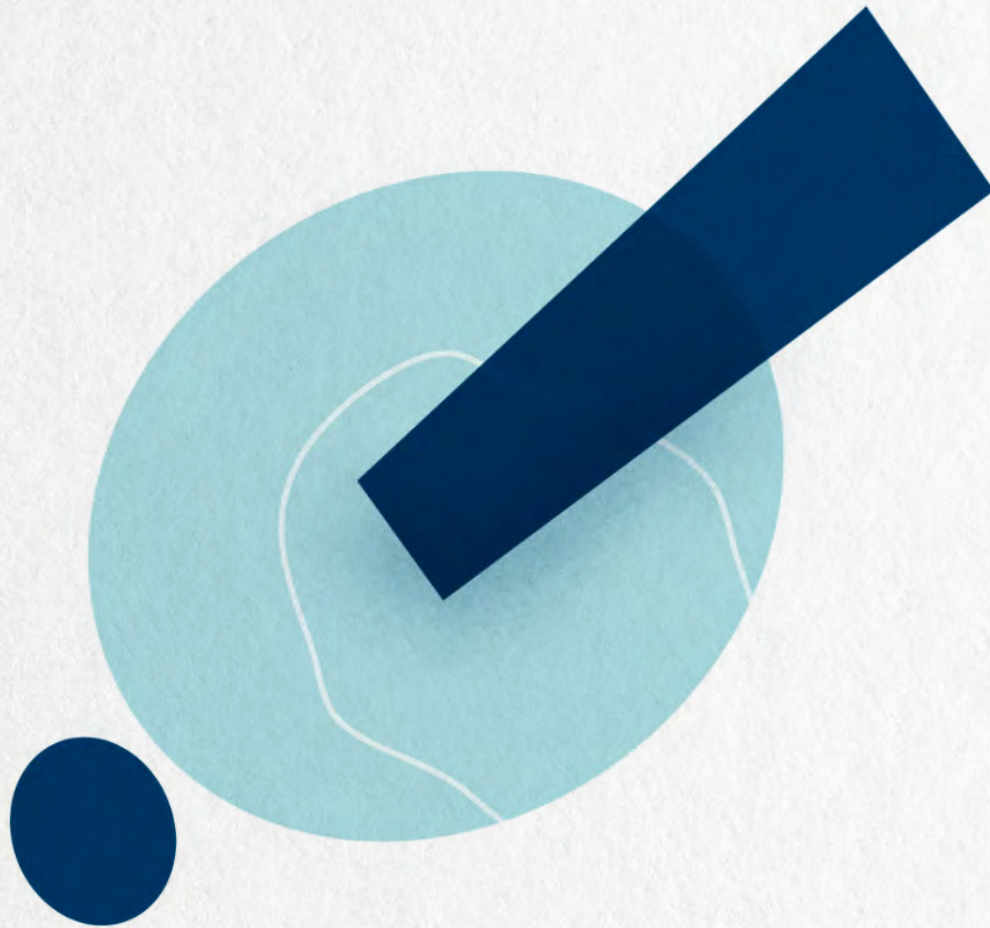
First-time managers must be able to span boundaries and communicate with people across all levels in the organization, including team members, superiors, and peers. New skills needed include keeping lines of communication open, learning how to communicate effectively to achieve the best outcome, and setting goals and expectations with subordinates and superiors.





## **9. DELEGATING** and trust-building.

First-time managers need the ability to identify which tasks can be done by themselves, versus which tasks can be given to subordinates. New skills needed include giving up control, knowing when to interfere or assist team members without micromanaging or taking over a task, and trusting others on the team to do the work.



## **10. RESOLVING** interpersonal conflict.

First-time managers must proactively and reactively resolve conflicts between group members. New skills needed include identifying and addressing smaller issues before they turn into larger conflicts, mitigating conflict once it occurs, holding difficult conversations, and dealing with confrontation or resistance from team members.





## **11. CONNECTING** across differences.

First-time managers must be able to work effectively with (and lead) employees who have different opinions, personalities, backgrounds, and abilities. They must be able to understand others' perspectives, as well as how aspects of their own identity affect the way they lead. New skills needed include the ability to adapt their behavior based on the ways in which different people work, and showing sensitivity and compassion.



## 12. **PRIORITIZING** competing demands.

First-time managers have to learn to hold competing interests in mind and discern how they align with organizational goals. New skills needed include the ability to manage paradox and understanding how to balance competing tensions, moving from a mindset of “*either/or*” to one of “*both/and*.”



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