Joanne Kamens, Ph.D.
Executive Director, Addgene

**MANAGEMENT 101 FOR SCIENTISTS AND TECHIES**

@JKamens & @Addgene
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Addgene Helps Scientists Share Plasmids

Non-profit, mission driven company dedicated to facilitating collaboration and sharing in the scientific community

*We fund this mission by making it easy to share plasmids!*
Addgene Statistics

- >33,000 plasmids stored
- >350,000 plasmids shipped to 5,000 institutions in 78 countries
- From >1,900 contributing labs, >500 institutions worldwide
- >2,000 plasmids shipped each week
- 51% shipped to scientists outside the United States

“I do science differently because I can use the Addgene library to find reagents”

Addgene’s Collection

- Plasmids and collections for experiments in many organisms: human, mouse, rat, bacteria, yeast, worms, flies, fish, plants, etc.
- Plasmids for a wide variety of applications: gene expression, gene knockdown, tagging, empty backbones, etc.
  - Genome Engineering (e.g. TALENs, CRISPRs)
  - Viral expression & packaging
  - Fluorescent tags and biosensors
  - Stem Cell Factors
  - Reporters
A Better Way to Share—Plasmids and Science

Addgene Blog
A Better Way to Share Science

blog.addgene.org

- Plasmids 101: What is a plasmid?
- The 10 Most Distributed Plasmid Technologies in Addgene's First 10 Years
- Using CRISPR/Cas9 to Edit Disease Out of the Genome
- Three Tips to Organize Your Lab Notebooks in the New Year
- Top 10 Open Science Developments of 2013
- "What Makes a Good Mentor?" and 6 More FAQs About Science Mentoring
- Drew Endy Introduces the Biobrick Public Agreement Plasmid Collection
- Overwhelmed? Take a Break with our 5 Favorite Science Comics
- Kiran Musunuru on the Newest TALEN Genome-Editing System
- From our Table to Yours: An Inside Look at Lunch at Addgene
- Let There Be LITE Plasmids
- Tag Your Favorite Yeast Genes with Ease

Addgene Resources

- A better way
- Searching the world's largest plasmid inventory
- 100% money-back guarantee
- Free shipping
- Over 20,000 unique clones
- Fast delivery
- Bernard Davis Award
- World's largest plasmid library
- Free samples
- Addgene's unique public agreement

Addgene's repository contains over 20,000 plasmids. We've helped you find what you're looking for and gathered our plasmid collections. Find hot papers on this page: Choose a plasmid by research area, vector type, or research company. You have found a treasure!
Benefits of a Central Plasmid Repository

- Save time on request mailing
- Access all plasmids in one request
- No loss due to turnover of lab members
- New labs hear about your work, more citations
- Archive historical clones and standards, rigorous QC
- Get a list of who has your plasmids any time (for grants or Tech Transfer offices)
- Collaborate! Participate in our Community!

Depositing in a Biological Resource Center Increases Citation Rates

“Climbing Atop the Shoulders of Giants: The Impact of Institutions on Cumulative Research.”
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MANAGEMENT 101 FOR SCIENTISTS AND TECHIES

How I Got Here

- Advisor with strong ties to industry
- Collaborations
- Harvard PhD
- Couple of Kids
- RNAi early adopter
- Good at managing
- Incensed by lack of diversity in science
- Collaborations
- BASF/Abbott (Pharma)
- RXi (Biotech)
- Founded MASS AWIS
- HBA BoD, etc.
- Director of Research
- Business Dev
- HBA leadership role
- Alliances
- Addgene (Non-profit)
- Executive Director and all that entails
- Number of People Managed (direct and indirect): 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 12, 16, 20, 30, 40
Outline

- What is the goal?
- Working with scientists (we are special)
- Managing vs. leading
- Why communication is at the heart of it:
  - Seeking feedback
  - Giving feedback
  - Delegating
- Getting started – the transition

What is the Goal?

“"I'm slowly becoming a convert to the principle that you can't motivate people to do things, you can only demotivate them. The primary job of the manager is not to empower but to remove obstacles.” –Scott Adams, cartoonist

- People don't leave jobs, they leave bosses
- A good manager learns that her success and recognition come from the successes of her team
What is the Goal?
What is a Good Manager?

Being a good manager is not the same as NOT being a bad manager

What is the Goal?
Happy People Are Likely to Do Better—What Makes People Happy?

- Flexible work schedule
  - Flexibility to manage their personal lives to achieve a healthy work-life balance.
- A strong sense of engagement in the work
  - Behind-the-scenes support employees receive from their bosses and employers.
    Availability of superiors to consult with and bounce issues off of
- A feeling of being appreciated and valued
  - Often stems from their being included in organizational decision-making.
- Having a high degree of freedom and diversity built into their jobs
  - Chance to do/learn new things, diversity of responsibilities, which might include training or teaching others, research, and policy development
- Good relationships with clients and colleagues

A good manager helps make people happy so they are **motivated** to do well. Include this as a factor in your decision and policy making.

But remember, you can't always do things that will make people happy...

**Working With Scientists**

* A Special Case for Happy

- Need feedback on their work but prefer to be approached as peers rather than subordinates
- Need mental space and dislike intrusions
- Need challenging work, opportunities to pursue and problems to solve
- Are self-directed, but need precise leadership and support from their superiors. Set milestones
- Are continuous learners and have individual priorities for advancement in science
- Have their own working schedules and may not necessarily be comfortable with imposed deadlines

"Managing knowledge-intensive workers", Massaro, Nat Biotech 30 p.721

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**Managing vs. Leading**

“When you are a leader you work from the heart. As a manager you work from the head.”

Being a good manager is actually a great start to becoming a leader

How do you get from here to here?

INITIATIVE
Communication is at the Heart of Everything

- **Seek honest feedback** *(notice how getting feedback is first)*
  - Listen to your employees’ complaints. Even the whiny ones. If they don’t understand something, it is up to you to fix that. They will have good ideas for process so include them.
- **You must also give negative/corrective feedback**
  - If you don’t tell someone what they are doing wrong, they can’t fix it. You don’t need to be mean, but you must point out areas for improvement or address mistakes. And you should tell them right away, not once a year.
- **Delegate effectively by setting concrete goals**
  - Your team needs to know what is important to you and for the company. Also, agreed upon goals make it easier to define and recognize failure.
- **Don’t do any important communications via text message or even email**
  - Enough said
- **Document and follow up all the time**
  - People hear and remember things differently. You must record and share action items as you see them. Follow up conversations with email outlining key points and decisions. Sometimes you will need to be (very) repetitive.

Seeking Feedback

- **People won’t naturally tell you things**
  - MBWA—Manage By Walking Around
  - Ask direct feedback questions in non-public settings
  - Figure out who your information “allies” can be
  - Communicate often and clearly in multiple formats (meetings, emails, 1:1 sessions)
- **Use active listening**
  - Try to be totally non-defensive (this is hard)
  - Ask open ended questions most of the time
  - Use the PAC method
    - Patiently listen
    - Ask at least one question
    - Confirm that you heard the message accurately
- **Demonstrate that you got the message**
  - Repeat back to clarify
  - Act on information publicly
  - Credit/reward the person who gave the feedback
The Lost Samples

A Real Life Manager Role Play

In communicating through conflict you have to ask yourself—Would you rather be happy or right?

If you are in conflict, and you want to WIN, it makes sense to do what you can to weaken your opponent

If you are in conflict and you want to RESOLVE, it makes sense to do what you can to strengthen your opponent

Lydia Harris, Project Office Services

Giving Feedback

Giving timely and useful feedback is a key to being a successful manager

My tips:

- Don’t let things fester, give feedback immediately
- Use formal and informal mechanisms for feedback
- Make sure to focus on the action, not the person (intent is usually good)
- Encourage training opportunities for skills development
- Don’t pretend something went well when it didn’t...
- But don’t “punish” someone for a past infraction
- Practice, practice

“Wow, I’m so excited for my performance appraisal today!” Said no one ever.

“Criticize to correct vs. Praise to promote”
Giving Feedback
Indirect language

• Imagine you usually spend Saturday morning with your significant other—Your partner has recently discovered golf and has begun playing 18 holes with friends every Saturday morning

• Let’s look at the ways you might approach this and critique them...
  1. Don’t say anything at all
  2. Honey, there’s really a lot to be done around the house this weekend
  3. Is golf so important you need to play it this often?
  4. You are simply playing too much golf!

  “I’d like to spend more time with you. Saturday morning was one of our few times to be together and as a result I am finding your golf playing very irritating”

Delegation as a Key to Success

• A Manager is not expected to DO all the work—she is expected to make sure the work gets done and done well
  • Involving others is your measure of success
  • Resist the temptation to “just do it myself”—spend the time on persuading/training others to do it
  • Don’t micromanage—you don’t have time for that and you won’t be as productive!
  • Delegation allows you to make the best use of your time and skills, and it helps other people in the team grow and develop to reach their full potential in the organization
**More on Delegating**

- Frequently, clearly review goals and expected outcomes
- Identify and agree on who is responsible
- Agree on communication channels for status reports
- Include people in deciding what is to be delegated
- Delegate to the lowest possible organizational level
- Provide adequate support, be available for questions
- Focus on results.
  - Concern yourself with what is accomplished, rather than detailing how the work should be done: Your way is not the only or maybe even the best way! This facilitates success and trust.

*From Mindtools.com*

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**But They Have Free Will**

“I can’t put your name forward for promotion unless I see you taking more initiative and paying more attention to detail. How can we work together to make this happen?”

- Used information about initiative and better work quality to try new approaches. Got promoted.
- Used information to try new approaches and offended a lot of important people. Got fired.
- Deemed information irrelevant to her career. Did nothing and life went on with no promotion.

**Getting Started**

**Tips for the Transition**

- Start off with a “Listening Tour”
- Don’t make change too early
- Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know”
- Reach out for help from others
- Remember while you are getting adjusted to the style of your new direct reports, they, too, are adjusting to your style
- Make sure your direct reports are aware of the goals and expectations for their role/Over-communicate
- Understand that first time managers are most likely to micromanage
- Remember, you are now “Management” and it is necessary to support corporate policy even if once you complained about it
- Remember, that no one becomes the perfect manager on Day 1

*Prepare yourself with training and information.*

*You are a scientist—do some research!*

*From Lori Vinick of Catalyst Consulting*

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**How Can I Practice?**

- Be the head of a group or committee (like a grad student or post-doc association)
- Start something (a journal, a science lunch club, a biotech club)
- Supervise undergrads or less experienced grads
- Manage a project involving multiple scientists, create and stick to timelines
  - Having influence without authority is a commonly needed management skill
- Be a mentor in a formal program
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Management 101 for Scientists
Joanne Kamens, PhD January, 2015

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The Three Stages of Your Career: Doer, Manager, Leader


Posting Date: December 11, 2012  By: Charlotte Beers
During my career, I often had a hard time getting the proper context for work when I counted on my various job titles and the expectations of others. I had bosses who reneged on their responsibility for taking charge, even though it was their job. They were indifferent, scared, or incompetent. From time to time, I was given a title but no authority to do the work. Most distressing was being treated like an alien simply because I had moved up a notch.

As soon as I became a management supervisor at J. Walter Thompson, the same people who had once applauded me were scowling at me because I had not managed to deflect the clients’ hostile attitude. When did that become my job? What they were asking of me felt like a sea change, but it was really only a job cycle change at work. As a manager, I had a different job to do with that grumpy client.

Eventually I made my own distinctions about what’s expected of us in order to assess the unspoken expectations that arise when we move to another position. Relationships as well as the work itself will be altered, no matter what the job description reads. I classified work into three cycles: Doers, Managers, and Leaders. Though there are many sublevels in each cycle, the way we engage with others rather than our titles separates into three big cycles:

Doers are the PRODUCERS of work.

Managers create a positive ENVIRONMENT. Managers exist in a political, competitive universe that is concerned with relationships as much as the work. They have to directly affect the way work is received.

Leaders invent the FUTURE. Leaders often find themselves alone, going out ahead of the crowd to see what’s coming, to greet the new. Business manuals may not agree with my sharp distinction between managers and leaders, but the blurring of these roles makes for some unhappy CEOs or division heads. There’s a time to lead and a time to manage; if this distinction is not recognized, a managerial style will fail caught in a leading cycle.

There are differing relationship skills required by each cycle:

- Doers coordinate.
- Managers collaborate.
- Leaders originate.

These differences are more acute when you study what behavior is expected of each:

- Doers emulate others.
- Managers motivate.
- Leaders influence and persuade.

These are very different terms of engagement because there’s not much peril in emulating when you’re a doer, and as a manager, motivating others to get the work out can be a very satisfying accomplishment. But deliberately seeking to persuade others to a new cause or action as a leader is potentially disturbing and a far more demanding cycle.

There are three reasons why understanding what’s required in these cycles will help you see the big picture.

One: You need to know which cycle you’re in, for you can experience them all throughout your career.

Two: All day long, in any one position, you may need to follow, then manage people and projects, and, more rarely, lead. One moment we dig in and work . . . the follower. The next, we direct and motivate . . . the manager. Sometimes we initiate and persuade . . . the leader.

Three: No one is a leader all the time. Trying to spend all your time in the leader mode is not much better than missing it altogether. Leadership is not a full-time role for anyone—not even CEOs or presidents. A leader initiates and then propels change forward. Change has an expiration date. No one wants to live in such flux, and no one wants the burden of leading all the time; leaders are happy to revert to managing when they can.

Though there are always overlapping duties, each cycle determines what others expect of you and how they rate you.
Doers

Doers engage by:
- Organizing
- Executing
- Being efficient
- Mastering the work

Job 1 for Doers: Step Out of the Narrow Job Boundaries

Normally the doer cycle is prominent in our earlier stages of work, but we all revert to doer, digging in when we have to get on top of the new work. When I went to the State Department, I swung between doer, buried in the government lingo and mountains of briefing documents, to leader, inventing a new way to dialogue with Muslims.

The doer specialist is known for her mastery of complex work. You see such specialists in law and science, but this can lead to great frustration. But in special cases, doers become experts. That cycle can last a long time. Companies tend to lock in their specialists, pay them well, and keep them in gilded cages.

Managers

Managers engage across broader endeavors and categories of people; they are more generalists than specialists. Managers essentially try to control the weather at work. They are held accountable for creating an environment in which the best work can go forward.

Managers are expected to:
- Hire
- Fire (sometimes the one they hired)
- Collaborate widely
- Motivate (often indifferent workers)
- Select key tasks (and there’s never time to do them all)
- Direct

Job 1 for Managers: Create a Good Environment for Good Work

To improve the work climate, managers may have to do any number of things—muffle an unfair client, make sure someone is recognized or gets a raise, and lobby higher-ups on behalf of their group and their work.

Don’t underestimate how seductive a doer’s role is; you may want to cling to it. It’s extremely gratifying to conquer the work. I have heard many a manager refer longingly to her old job, the one she knew how to do because it wasn’t as laced with unruly relationships, like managing the difficult or disagreeable client or situation.

Leaders

Leading is a cycle of choosing managers, judging people, and initiating disruptive changes. It’s going on ahead, alone. Many managers who were asked to initiate abrupt change, to step out and lead, preferred instead to stay tucked in their bunker.

Leaders engage by:
- Selecting managers
- Setting standards
- Persuading
- Originating
- Changing

Job 1 for Leaders: Go Toward the Future, Alone

There appears to be only a subtle distinction between the manager’s job of collaborating with other power bases and motivating the troops versus the leader’s role of compelling and persuading others. In fact, there is a huge difference. If you cannot be forceful enough to change a wrong situation, then you have failed that moment of leading.
I Missed the Lead

The division of public diplomacy and public affairs in the U.S. government used to be a freestanding unit of great power and reach—the United States Information Agency (USIA). When I came to head it, USIA had been transferred to the State Department for some two years, and I quickly realized that our charter, to create mutual understanding with foreign countries, had been diminished and spread thin in its new home at State. Our desire to speak directly to the masses in these countries naturally made the diplomats and civil service experts at State uneasy. Foreign affairs experts must concentrate on intimate and secretive dialogue with a few other elite players in their respective foreign countries. No one in this group wanted anyone taking a message directly to the people in, say, Egypt or Indonesia.

So I was overjoyed when a task force consisting of top government experts put together a brilliant white paper on the role played by our public diplomacy messages, which were really from the American people, to the peoples in foreign countries. Importantly, these experts questioned whether this function should stay in State, laying out the advantages of returning to a separate, freestanding structure. This was inspiring to me; at last, an elite group was saying that moving USIA to the State Department might have been a mistake. I went home that night feeling peaceful for the first time in months. The report offered a wise and balanced assessment, with solutions that would improve our ability to build mutual understanding, not only with country officials but with the people of foreign countries, which was the only way we would ever get a dialogue started.

Then nothing happened. Months later, when I pressed the chair of the committee, he told me, “Our job is complete; the paper is written and distributed.” I was appalled. “You mean this report is not a call to action?” He smiled pityingly at me. “No, it’s a white paper,” he said. “You’ll get used to it.”

I never did. I was invited to testify before the Senate in 2004, after I’d left my undersecretary position, about yet another study that discussed how to make public diplomacy, especially to Muslim countries, more effective. I brought up the implications of that earlier white paper—the need to make public diplomacy a separate, freestanding entity—along with my fervent belief in the solutions it posed. But I was speaking as a private citizen; it was too little, too late. I should have tried to be persuasive when I had clout as an undersecretary.

I missed that moment of leadership, when I could have translated the passion I felt about the report into concrete change. I had the same excuse you do: I was busy managing the thousands of pieces of paper and people and didn’t see that moment of leading pass me by.

Jumping into a leader cycle is unnerving. There’s no proof it will work or gain applause in the interim, and not everyone welcomes the disruption. But it’s also called growth, and the disruption doesn’t last forever.

One day, after pushing against a strong wind of resistance, your cycle of leading will be accepted as the new reality. Then you can go back to mastering your work as a doer or creating a great work environment as a manager. My goal is to get you to the leader cycle, for even a day. It’s important to stretch to get there because you care . . . and because you can.

Adapted from I’d Rather Be in Charge: A Legendary Business Leader’s Roadmap for Achieving Pride, Power, and Joy at Work.

About the Author(s)

Charlotte Beers was the first woman senior vice president at J. Walter Thompson Advertising. Later she was CEO of the advertising agency, Statham-Laird & Kudner and then chairman and CEO of Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide. From 2001 to 2003, she served as Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy & Public Affairs, where she was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the State Department’s highest honor.
Despite the best preparation, the reality of becoming a manager can be full of surprises. So, how do you - or your new managers - don't come unstuck?
This week's newsletter article highlights **seven surprises** that you need to be aware of when you role.
We also look at **Team Management Skills**, with an article that guides you through the **core skills** team; and we discuss how you can **lead your team effectively**, with our latest video.

Many new managers know that they'll have to master a new set of skills, if they want to be successful. However, despite being prepared for the challenges ahead, they can come unstuck in unexpected ways.

Michael Porter, Jay Lorsch, and Nitin Nohria explored common misconceptions about management in a 2004 Harvard Business Review article titled, "The Seven Things That Surprise New CEOs." Although their article on work with new CEOs, we can apply their findings to other management roles as well.

In this article, we'll take a closer look at each of the seven surprises, and we'll help you to be more prepared for them, whether you're managing an organization or a small team.

**Surprise One: You Can't Run Everything, in Detail**
As a new manager, you first need to realize that you can't be directly involved in every detail of every project that your team is working on. Otherwise, work will bottleneck around you, you'll become exceptionally stressed, and your team's effectiveness will plummet.

So your perspective has to shift from getting things done yourself to getting things done through other people. (This sounds obvious - but many new managers struggle with this!)

To avoid the problems associated with this surprise:
- Learn how to **delegate** effectively.
- Only attend meetings that you really need to attend.
- Question whether you need to participate in tasks, or simply be informed of their outcomes.
- Be careful not to make too many decisions for people; when people come to you with a question, ask them what they recommend.
- Give people the guidance and resources that they need to do their jobs themselves. This frees you to do the job of managing and leading your team.

**Surprise Two: Giving Orders is Costly**
As a manager, you need to work towards a situation where you don't need to tell people what to do, and can, instead, trust them to make the right decisions.

Some people may doubt their ability to make decisions. When this happens, they're likely to come to...
you for approval of everything. This creates "manager dependency," and can make you a decision-making bottleneck, potentially stalling your team's progress.

In a similar way, overruling decisions or making last minute changes can waste a great deal of time and resource; and it can also undermine your people's confidence.

To avoid the problems associated with this surprise:
- Communicate your organization's vision and values, keep people informed, and train them so that they have the confidence to make decisions, based on what's best for the organization.
- Create systems and structures so that your people understand what needs to be done.
- Endorse robust decision making tools, and teach people how to use them.
- Let people know that mistakes are part of the development process, and that you'd rather they take some risks than be indecisive. (Clearly, this may not be suitable in all types of work, so use your best judgment.)
- Recognize how placing trust in people can improve your team's performance.

**Surprise Three: It's Hard to Know What's Really Going On**

No one wants to give his or her boss bad news. So, the reality is that by the time you get information, it won't necessarily be reliable.

However, you need accurate information to manage effectively, so you'll have to gather information from as many sources as possible.

To avoid the problems associated with this surprise:
- Use Management By Wandering Around. This keeps you in contact with your people, and allows you to see and hear what's going on first-hand.
- Talk to customers and suppliers on a regular basis, and build strong relationships with these people.
- Analyze all of your stakeholders, and communicate with them often to ensure that you know what they're thinking.

**Surprise Four: You're Always Sending a Message**

As a manager, your words and your actions hold a lot of weight. People may speculate about why you said or did something; and they'll try to interpret whether your words or actions contained any hidden messages. Your mood will also affect your team, and everything that you say will be analyzed.

Managers lead by example, whether they want to or not. You need to be careful about the example that you're setting, and be fully aware of the messages you're sending - deliberate or not.

To avoid the problems associated with this surprise:
- Use simple, clear language when you communicate with people.
• Double check that people understand your message, and don't assume that people have grasped the real meaning of what you're communicating.
• Think about your body language, and learn how to use it to convey the right message.
• Use storytelling to communicate the messages that you want people to hear.
• Be a good role model for your people, and lead by example.

**Surprise Five: You Aren't Always the Boss**
While you might be the boss of your team, you aren't the ultimate boss. (Even a business owner is accountable to his or her customers.) There will always be someone that you need to report to, so you can't allow yourself to get caught up in your own importance.

As a manager, you should know who you need to keep informed, and you should work hard to gain the support of people around you. You will also need to manage upward, and be aware of how you stand with the people you report to.

You also can't let the flow of information stop with you, just because you're the manager.

To avoid the problems associated with this surprise:
• Learn how to develop effective relationships with powerful people in your organization.
• Find ways to collaborate with people that you report to, and to gain their trust.
• Remember to share information and resources on a regular basis - both with your team, and with others.

**Surprise Six: Pleasing Shareholders is not Always the Goal**
Shareholders typically have a short-term perspective, and may be profit or performance oriented.

However, there are other longer-term considerations that can be more important than the goals of shareholders, and you need to be aware of these.

For instance, should company profits outweigh safety concerns? Should you push your team to finish a project unfeasibly early, because your boss is putting pressure on you? If an executive is behaving inappropriately with one of your people, when should you decide that enough is enough?

Making this type of decision requires knowing who you are ultimately accountable to.

To avoid the problems associated with this surprise:
• Take some time to understand your personal values, and how they fit with company values.
• Understand the vision of the company and what it stands for. Make decisions based on that vision and those values. Reward team behavior that promotes these values.
• Develop a clear strategy for your team, and ensure that it's aligned with corporate strategy.
• Attract and recruit people in your team who fit the vision and values of your organization.
- Understand Value-Based Management - the idea that you should be chasing the best long-term value of your business, not sacrificing the future just to boost this quarter's earnings.

**Surprise Seven: You're Still Only Human**

As a manager you must remember that your position doesn't make you better or more capable than anyone else. You'll continue to make mistakes, and people around you will still have opinions that are different from yours.

However, being a manager does make you more responsible, and you need to demonstrate this responsibility.

To avoid the problems associated with this surprise:
- Be humble and thankful, and reward the people around you who make you and your team look good.
- Be accountable to yourself.
- Use your emotional intelligence to remain connected with colleagues, family, and friends.
- Create your Wheel of Life, and remind yourself to find the balance you need to be the best you can be.

**Key Points**

The seven surprises for new CEOs were first identified by Michael Porter, Jay Lorsch, and Nitin Nohria. This article looks at how these apply to managers more generally, highlighting seven misconceptions that people have when they start out in a management or leadership role.

The seven surprises are:
1. You can't run everything, in detail.
2. Giving orders is costly.
3. It's hard to know what's really going on.
4. You're always sending a message.
5. You aren't the boss.
6. Pleasing shareholders is not always the goal.
7. You're still only human.

The transition to manager can be a challenge. But by being aware of these common misconceptions and the issues associated with them, you'll increase your chances of being successful.
Terrible Teacher and Mentor, Top 10 Reasons Yoda Was

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Yoda (Via Wookieepedia)

The Grand Master of the Jedi Order, Yoda, is one of the most beloved movie characters of all time. You will find references to him in almost every context of working life. In technology services start-ups, we talk about how certain people are the ‘Yoda’ of some given topic, where the term Yoda is meant to indicate they know all things, and are the go-to source for acquiring said knowledge.

That is all fine and lovely and good, but I think there are several things about Yoda’s approach to teaching and mentoring that are actually not great practices, and are perhaps even counter-productive to the process of teaching, learning, and collaborating with others. Before I start complaining about Master Yoda, I want to be clear…I love Yoda. You can find an ocean of scholarly articles about the ways in which Yoda is an example to teachers and mentors the world over. This makes sense since he was the heart and soul of a millennium of light side force instruction for the Jedi. Basically, if that guy came around here, I’d be first in line to give him a hug. So, you know, mea culpa. I’m about to dis Yoda:

Yoda Rides Luke (Via Wookieepedia)

Number 10: Micro-manage much? Communicating information from life form to another is a super complicated process that just can’t be micromanaged. Riding around on your mentee’s back directing them to do this, then do that, with no consideration of the mentee’s motivations, desires, mental states makes for a pretty inefficient process, rife with frustration. The scene where Yoda is riding around on Luke’s back is a classic, and a classic bad example of bossing your student to death.

Number 9: Lack of transparency. Okay, so I get that force is complicated and dangerous. You can’t possibly explain everything there is to know about it in one sitting. But telling your mentee some basic
information that you are pretty certain they would want to know, and would help frame their education seems like it should be pretty high on your learning objectives. Not cool, Yoda. Vader’s in the family, and we probably should have told Luke that a tiny bit sooner. Deception has no place in mentoring.

Number 8: The importance of goals. Why am I standing on my head in the mud again, Yoda? I think this is a common kung-fu movie motif, because the obtuse teaching method which makes students do things they don’t understand happens a lot (wax on, wax off…pick up your jacket…you think that’s air you are breathing now?). Yoda seemed to be executing on the Jedi version of ‘because I said so’ teaching method. Being clear about what it is that you are trying to achieve with a learning interaction, and why you are undertaking some set of activities will yield much better results…seriously.

Number 7: Communicate clearly. Trying to explain something here, am I. Yeesss. While Yoda’s speech patterns are basically hilarious, they were often a hindrance for clear communication. Layering on complicated and inconsistently applied speech patterns (object-subject-verb, but only sometimes) can be a serious hindrance in mentor relationships. Finding a way to minimize information friction should be job one for all mentors!

Number 6: Authentic assessments. Does anyone understand that whole Luke’s face in the Vader mask in the swamp in the log scene? Did that mean that Luke’s greatest enemy was himself, just like his father? I can’t tell. Also, testing your student by making them force-float a giant X-Wing fighter through the air is pretty much not fair. I’ve only done that one or two times…max. Mentee’s should understand clearly what the standard is, how to get there, and how they know they’ve achieved the skill. Mysterious success criteria does not a good student make.

Number 5: Authority problems. So, we should respect our elders, especially if they are 800 years old. Luke clearly made some specious inferences when he first met Yoda, resulting in hilarious who’s on first shenanigans. Yoda didn’t help things by being 2 feet tall, green, and basically a crazy person (since when does the Grand Master of the Jedi Temple LOVE tiny flashlights?), but when it came time to actually get down to force-learning business, Yoda spent a lot of time expressing frustration at an apparent lack of respect from Luke. The mentor-mentee relationship is a delicate one, that cannot scale with strict hierarchies of power. When you’ve got one participant with all the authority, and the other with none, you get the Sith Rule of Two, and that results in galactic genocide, oppression, and general sadness. Don’t do that!
**Number 4:** Constructed learning from existing contexts. Remember that time when Luke got all cocky and was bragging about targeting *Womp rats* in his *T-16* back home, and then *he saved the galaxy*? There was something really powerful about the context that Luke grew up that fueled his desire to perform well. Yoda failed to figure out how to relate *force learning* to things that Luke already knew about. I bet Luke never did a handstand on *Tatooine* even once.

**Number 3:** Dispel cult auras. When you are as old and awesome as Yoda, it is hard to not have *cults of personality* built up around you. He didn’t do much to minimize this cult, and here we are many long longs into the future and the cult of Yoda is bigger than ever. Learning from a cult leader, not surprisingly, does *not result in awesome learnings*. Students need to understand and respect who they are learning from, and not be distracted by hero worship and *myths*.

**Number 2:** Accessibility in all ways. I want to cut Yoda some slack on this point because he was being pursued by a pretty powerful, committed, and *merciless set of dark side force users*. Hopefully this wasn’t standard practice for the previous 800 years of instruction, but getting to *Dagobah* was unnecessarily difficult. Knowing that you have easy, comfortable access to your mentor is enormously helpful in making progress, and for course correcting your practice with good feedback.

**Number 1:** There is nothing magical about learning new things. This is mostly a complaint about the *Star Wars metaphysics*, and Yoda did make Luke work pretty hard. All mentee’s should know that learning is hard work, and no amount of *midi-chlorians* is going to make you excellent at something. There are no shortcuts, and no books you can read to have the *secrets of a skill* revealed to you. You have to do the thing you want to be better at…over and over and over again.