

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT



Lesson: People Management

This lesson is about the skills needed to manage people effectively, either in a work environment or in terms of organising activities like projects.

Level: Intermediate and above (equivalent to CEF level B1+ and above)

Time: 1-2 hours, depending on the ages and interests of your students.

How to use this lesson:

This lesson is designed to be done in class. Depending on the needs and experience of your students, you can place more or less emphasis on certain points. For example, students with work experience should be encouraged to talk about what they have seen in the workplace. Younger students can discuss how they would like to be treated and how they might handle the situations. In either case, encourage students to share their own opinions and experiences throughout the lesson.

Teacher's notes

Worksheet A

Begin by finding out what students think about people management. You could ask questions such as:

- ▶ *What are managers supposed to do?*
- ▶ *How important are rules?*
- ▶ *Why do we need to be managed?*
- ▶ *Should a manager be strict/friendly/relaxed/organised/etc.?*
- ▶ *What's the best way to get someone to work harder?*
- ▶ *What problems might a manager have to face?*

- 1 This exercise introduces some of the key vocabulary that students will need in order to discuss the subject. Allow about five minutes for students to read the text to get a general idea of what it is about. They should then use the context to work out the meanings of the words in bold. Students should work alone for this. Those who finish early can compare notes with a partner. When they have all finished, check the answers and make sure everyone understands what the words mean. Keep discussion to a minimum here – focus on vocabulary and a general understanding of the text. They will discuss it in greater detail in exercise 2.

Answers

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1 motivate | 4 come up against | 7 dismissal | 10 flexible |
| 2 discipline | 5 bottom line | 8 goal | 11 strict |
| 3 zero tolerance | 6 factors | 9 profit | 12 performance |

- 2 Allow a further five minutes or so for students to read the text again and find answers to the questions. Their answers do not need to be extensive – they can write in note form. When everyone has attempted each question, elicit suggestions from the class. Conduct a discussion and aim to allow as many students to speak as possible. There is likely to be some disagreement about some of the answers. This is a perfect opportunity for speaking practice. Encourage students to use the target vocabulary where appropriate.

Suggested answers

- ▶ Paragraph 1: By creating a good atmosphere / By making them feel part of a team / By offering bonuses etc.
- ▶ Paragraph 2: By using bad language / By ignoring the manager / By deliberately disobeying instructions / By making fun of the manager etc.
- ▶ Paragraph 3: Students' own answers
- ▶ Paragraph 4: Students' own answers
- ▶ Paragraph 5: They might not work as hard as they should / They might expect you to cover up for them / They could, for example, ask you not to mention any mistakes they make or the fact that they were late for work etc.
- ▶ Paragraph 6: By looking at each case separately / By keeping up-to-date with what's happening / By being prepared to match their management style to each set of circumstances etc.



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Worksheet B

- Go through the list with the class, making sure students understand all the tips. Tell them to choose two tips that they think are the best advice for managers. Encourage them to try to think of reasons or examples to support each tip. Allow a few minutes for students to think. They can make notes to help them remember. Start by asking who chose tip number one. Then elicit ideas about it from different students, inviting others to add their own opinions. Continue in this way with all of the tips. Finally, ask the class if there are any tips they would add to the list.
- Allow 5-10 minutes for students to complete the task. They should work alone for this.

Answers

- | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|---|--------|---|----------|---|--------|
| 1 | members | 3 | target | 5 | chance | 7 | hire |
| 2 | approach | 4 | stuck | 6 | convince | 8 | credit |

Follow-up discussion

For years, many companies have underused and underestimated the resources that young people have to offer. The text reflects a more positive approach to employing young people. It paints young people in a better light. What do your students think? Are young people good or bad for a company? Would they hire someone they know to be argumentative? Do managers get stuck in a rut? How important is it to be given credit for your ideas?

- Students can work in pairs for this if you prefer. If you choose to do this, allow 5-10 minutes for them to discuss and note down their ideas. They may need slightly less time if they are working alone. Remind them to give reasons for their answers.

Students should attempt to comment on all of the situations. When they have finished, go through the list and elicit a variety of ideas for each one. Give guidance where necessary, encouraging students to use the vocabulary from this lesson. You can invite others to comment, and you can add ideas of your own to further the discussion (see the notes / prompts below).

Notes / Prompts

- Being rude covers a wide range of offences, from ignoring the manager to contradicting/humiliating/ridiculing him or her. Students might want to give examples of specific offences and suitable courses of action. Their answers are likely to vary between a tolerant, laissez-faire approach to a strict, disciplinarian, no nonsense, zero tolerance approach. Encourage them to discuss the merits and disadvantages of these two extremes.
- In this situation, the manager could negotiate a bonus or time off on completion of the project. This would act as motivation for the team. Students might also mention praising their work so far, stressing the importance of the project, promising that they will be given credit for the completed project, etc. Other managers would simply point out that they have a job to do and, if they don't like it, they can leave. Of course, the disadvantage here is that you will lose dedicated staff – people who might be difficult to replace.
- Answers might include a team-building activity which some companies use. An informal meal or drink might also be suggested. Others might suggest a more formal meeting on company time with each team member.
- Students should be aware of how Phil's behaviour can reflect on his manager and put the manager's job in danger. Since Phil is a friend, the first course of action should perhaps be a private chat. The manager needs to make Phil more productive so Phil's views on the matter are important. The manager could suggest that Phil moves to a different department – one where he would enjoy the work more. As a last resort, the manager could privately suggest that Phil starts looking for a different job. The manager could possibly help him find one.
- This situation will help determine what kind of a manager each of your students would make. Some would be career-driven and fearless, so they would take the promotion in the belief that they could motivate the 'difficult' team. Others would probably prefer to stay with a team and a job that gives them satisfaction, even though it might not help their career.



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Optional extra task (30 minutes plus)

For further speaking practice, you could put students in pairs and ask each student to write a problem (see prompts below). When they have finished, they take turns presenting the problem to their partner (who acts as the manager). They discuss how they might deal with each other's problem. You then ask them to report to the rest of the class what was said.

Students might come up with their own problems, which they can show you before they show their partner. You can also prompt them, if necessary, with the suggestions below.

Prompts

- ▶ One worker can't stand another worker and goes to the manager saying that they can't work together. What should the manager do/say?
- ▶ The company is losing money and, as a result, the manager has to make two members of his team redundant. What is the best way to decide who should leave?
- ▶ A worker complains to the manager that his/her ideas were used in a successful project but no credit was given. What should the manager do/say?
- ▶ The manager receives a complaint that his team is over-worked. They feel that they are being asked to do more and more and are threatening to take action, such as a strike or a go-slow. How can this damaging action be avoided?
- ▶ You are the manager of a shop and you suspect that one of your employees has been stealing from you. What is the best way to find out who it is, and what action will you take when you find out?
- ▶ Someone working under you tells you in private that they are going through a very stressful time at home and their work is suffering. What can you do to help?
- ▶ Your company is re-locating to another town some distance away and you have to break the news to your team. You would like as many members of staff to come with you but you know that it will mean moving home. What would you say to your staff?
- ▶ You discover that one of your team members has been using social media to say terrible things about your company. What is your next step?
- ▶ A team member asks for a rise in salary. You can't really do this for one person and not for all of them, and you know that your bosses will not approve that. The worker is threatening to leave. What can you say to persuade him or her to stay?
- ▶ A company emergency means that you need to ask as many members of your team as possible to work over the weekend or during their annual holiday. What is the best way to get them to do this?
- ▶ Your company has a zero tolerance approach to absenteeism. One of your team members has received all the official warnings given and you now have to dismiss him or her. You are aware of the very personal reasons why he/she has missed work. What could you say to your superiors to try to persuade them to bend the rules on this occasion?
- ▶ You have been working with the same team for several years and you feel that nobody is being as productive as they used to be. What can you do to refresh things?
- ▶ Because of a misunderstanding, a member of your team has just spent a week doing something that was not required. You can't get that week back but what can you do to stop it happening again?
- ▶ You have to spend a lot of your working week helping members of your team do their jobs. The result is that you can't find enough time to do your own work. What is going wrong?
- ▶ You have just been promoted and now you are managing some people who used to be your equals. How do you maintain a successful working relationship with these people?



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Worksheet A

1 Read the text and match the words/phrases in bold to their definitions from the *Macmillan Dictionary*.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 To make someone feel enthusiastic about doing something _____ | 8 Something that you hope to achieve _____ |
| 2 A strict set of rules that controls a situation _____ | 9 Money that you make from your business _____ |
| 3 A policy of punishing people for even very minor offences _____ | 10 Able to deal with a situation that is changing _____ |
| 4 To have to deal with something difficult or unpleasant _____ | 11 Someone who has definite rules that they expect people to follow _____ |
| 5 The most basic fact in a situation _____ | 12 The standard to which someone does something such as a job _____ |
| 6 Things that influence the way an event happens _____ | |
| 7 An act of making someone leave their job _____ | |

What's involved in managing people?

To put it simply, if you're in charge of the work of people working below you, you have to be able to **motivate** them. A manager's **goal** is to organise their work so that they do things better, work faster, or both.

However, as anyone who has been in this position will tell you, it's not simple at all. You can **come up against** all kinds of problems. First, there are **discipline** issues, such as people breaking the rules. What if someone is rude to you or doesn't respect your position? You might also have problems with an employee's **performance** – maybe he or she is just lazy or bored with the job. How do you respond to these situations?

Some managers have a strict, **zero tolerance** approach – do it once, and you get a verbal warning, twice and the warning is written and official. Doing it a third time will mean **dismissal**. The advantage of this management style is that you treat everyone in the same way, and everyone knows where they stand, so it's pretty fair. At the end of the day, they're paid to take orders from you and to work hard. The **bottom line** in any company is that it makes a **profit**, and it's your job to keep that happening. There's no room for time-wasters.

Other managers are on first name terms with their workers, know them outside work, and talk to them on a more personal level. If this is you, then you'll know that John in Accounts is having problems at home, or Mary in Sales has just had a baby and is lacking sleep. You'll take a more relaxed approach to these problems, talk them through, and try to find solutions. You'll do this because you know that John and Mary are good, faithful workers and their performance will soon get back to normal – after all, nobody is a robot.

[5] Neither of these two styles is perfect. Being too **strict** is not always the best way to get your staff to work at their best. If they're constantly living in fear of you, they won't be very creative. They might also try to hide things from you. On the other hand, if they're too relaxed with you, they might not get the job done in time. They might not take you seriously, and they might put you in a difficult position or start to ask for favours that threaten your own job.

[6] A good manager has to find somewhere in between the two styles, and that's just the problem. There are a thousand ways to manage people. The best one depends on you, the people under you, the company, the job, the time available, and many other **factors**. These things often change too. That's why the best managers are people who are **flexible**.

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2 Now write an answer to each of the main ideas in each paragraph.

Paragraph 1

What is the best way to motivate workers?

Paragraph 2

In what ways could a worker be rude to a manager or not respect his/her position?

Paragraph 3

Would you have respect for a manager who treated you in this way? Why? / Why not?

Paragraph 4

Is this type of manager better? Why? / Why not?

Paragraph 5

What do you think the writer means by the last sentence in this paragraph?

Paragraph 6

In what ways should a manager be flexible?

Student's copy



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Worksheet B

3 The list below contains different advice given to managers. Choose two of the tips that you think are the most important. Then share your ideas with the class, giving reasons and examples where appropriate.

- 1 Be at your best. Stay fit, alert, informed and in charge.
- 2 Make sure everyone knows who is doing what. Give clear instructions.
- 3 Be enthusiastic. Encourage others to be positive about their work.
- 4 Do your job and trust others to do theirs.
- 5 Work on your relationships with others. Treat people well. Listen to them.
- 6 Give praise and credit for good ideas and good work.

4 Read the text and fill in the gaps with the words in the box.

approach

convince

hire

stuck

chance

credit

members

target

A different way of doing things?

Managers should not always assume that younger, less experienced 1 _____ of a team should keep quiet and do what they're told. A better 2 _____ is to use the ideas of young people. They are more likely to understand some things. For example, if your company produces things that young people buy or use, your younger staff will be closer to your 3 _____ market.

Older managers can get 4 _____ in a routine and become out of touch with what is happening today. Meanwhile, many young people have great ideas. Give them the space to use these ideas. Give young people the 5 _____ to say what they think. You will quickly find out who has ideas and who doesn't. Don't let years of doing it your way 6 _____ you that it is the best way. Some experts even say you should 7 _____ people who are prepared to argue with you. Listening to new ideas can keep your business fresh.

Finally, make sure you give 8 _____ to people who have good suggestions. Nothing kills enthusiasm faster than someone stealing your best ideas.

Student's copy



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5 Look at the situations below and make a note of what you would do and say if you were the manager. Give reasons.

Situation	What would you do/say? Why?
<p>1 A worker is rude to you. It has happened before and you feel that it is time to take action.</p>	
<p>2 You have a dedicated and hard-working team. Unfortunately, the next project requires them to work even harder than they normally do. How would you motivate them?</p>	
<p>3 You have just been given a new team to work with. What is the best way to get to know them?</p>	
<p>4 Phil is a friend of yours but you are also his manager. You know that Phil is not very interested in his job any more. The situation cannot continue like this. How can you change things?</p>	
<p>5 You have been offered a better job with more money but with a team which has a reputation for being 'difficult'. You like the team you are with now and would be sorry to leave them. What would you decide?</p>	

Student's copy



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