Kona

The Remote Manager Survival Guide

Key Manager
Takeaways

Teammates say the most important leadership skill is the ability to give and receive feedback.

Great teams need feedback. Individual contributors rated this the most important leadership skill, followed by compassion and career development.

The average team size is about 10.2 direct reports per front-line manager.

We're watching the average team size grow annually. This is a 40% increase from 2022 as layoffs and restructures force managers to do more with less.

For learning how to lead, managers rely the most on peers, mentors, and books.

Leadership development is increasingly fragmented. Peer learning and mentors took the top spots, while company-led training took #4.

Teams prioritize work-life balance, remote flexibility, and career growth.

If you're competing for top talent, show off your company's work-life balance and remote flexibility. These were top priorities for assessing job opportunities.

93% of managers spent 12+ hours per week in meetings.

It's no surprise that meetings make up a large portion of a manager's day. However, the average manager spends more than 30% of their week in meetings!

Over half of managers and their teams felt that recent macroeconomic changes added pressure to perform.

With layoffs and restructuring affecting over 800+ teams in 2023, teams are feeling the pressure. Almost 60% of managers and their teams reported extra pressure to perform.

The hardest part of leading remote teams is real-time feedback, alignment, and building trust.

It's hard to read body language while remote. This small change has a big effect on communication, especially for conflict management and feedback.

There's less gender diversity among executives, but more BIPOC leaders.

As leaders climbed to higher positions, we saw a 13% decrease in women and non-binary leaders. However, there was a 33% increase in BIPOC leaders!

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Great managers are the future of work.

Managers play a major role in the success of companies and their teams. They serve as linchpins in company culture, enacting the changes and values that employees experience every day. Managers have the power to shape employee retention, career growth, and their team's ability to deliver outcomes.

We're at a crucial point in the world of tech. This year's recession has been extremely tough for many companies, leading to all-too-common layoffs and restructuring. Over 216,000 employees have been affected so far, already breaking last year's count.

With these changes, managers face unprecedented pressure to drive high performance with fewer staff and resources. Factor in remote work, newly promoted managers, burnt out teammates, and fragmented learning resources, and managers have quite the job on their hands.

It's clear that remote managers need extra support and comprehensive guidance, now more than ever. The success of our companies depends on it.

Every year, we release a major report on remote management. This year, we decided to create The Remote Manager Survival Guide, a practical handbook for remote managers navigating today's changing tech landscape.

Each chapter contains practical knowledge, tips, and guidance on key leadership areas. We've included key insights from surveys, interviews with leadership experts, and worksheets on manager best practices. Over 100 remote workers and 200 managers at tech startups contributed to the key data insights in this guide.

Our goal is to give remote managers the tools they need to succeed in this changing landscape and empower their teams.

The Future of Work increasingly relies on effective management and empathetic leadership. Great leaders have a big impact on the success and well-being of individuals and organizations.

We are so proud to present this year's Remote Manager Survival Guide—an exploration of the evolving landscape and the resiliency of remote managers.

Created with love by the team at Kona. We're pretty passionate about this stuff.

I

What is Management?

In her book "The Making of a Manager," Julie Zhuo defines management as "getting better results from a group of people working together." Put simply, great managers drive outcomes and make their team stronger and happier. With so many different ways to lead, defining management can be as difficult as defining "leadership."

In this chapter, we dive deep into management and break it down into its core components. Through practical insights and real-life examples, we offer guidance to help you navigate the challenges and complexities that come with this role. You'll walk away with an understanding of good management, and a vision of your journey ahead.

Here's the 2023 stats on
management

We asked 200 front-line managers about their direct reports, salary, and experience. Here's what management looks like in 2023.

How many direct reports do you have?

10.2

average reports per manager

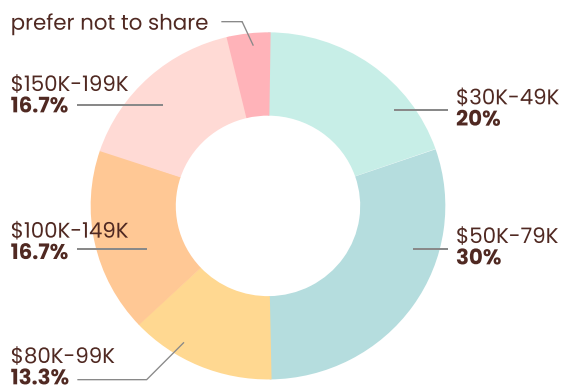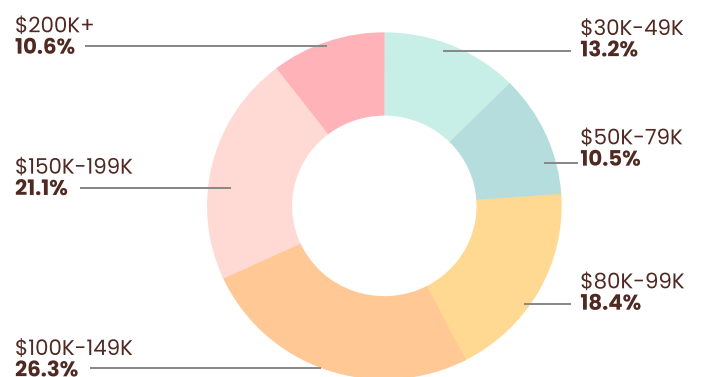### How many years have you been managing teams?

39%
managing for 0-2 yrs

43%
managing for 3-5 yrs

What's your current salary range?

managing for 0-2 yrs

- prefer not to share
- $150K-199K **16.7%**
- $100K-149K **16.7%**
- $80K-99K **13.3%**
- $30K-49K **20%**
- $50K-79K **30%**

managing for 3-5 yrs

- $200K+ **10.6%**
- $150K-199K **21.1%**
- $100K-149K **26.3%**
- $30K-49K **13.2%**
- $50K-79K **10.5%**
- $80K-99K **18.4%**

Key Leader Takeaway

Team sizes are growing! In 2022, the average team size was 7. With almost 40% of managers having less than two years of experience, it's extremely important to give managers support.

Transition to Management

If you're starting your leadership journey, there's a good chance you took one of these four paths. Inspired by Julie Zhuo.

The Four Paths to Management

Apprentice
Your manager's team is growing so you're managing a part of it.

Pioneer
You're a founding member of the group and responsible for it.

New boss
You're coming in to manage an already established team.

Successor
Your manager has decided to leave an you're taking over.

New Manager Pitfalls

With the new terrain of management, challenges emerge. Here are four common pitfalls to keep an eye out for.

New power dynamics

A new title can lead to stilted conversations. You may get hesitancy or less feedback.

No more deliverables

You may have been promoted because of deliverables. Now, it's all outcomes.

Lack of support & guidance

Management is notoriously fragmented. You may have less learning resources.

Overwhelming responsibility

You're taking on a new team and it can feel daunting to be in charge. Lean on your team!

Comparing three **leadership styles**

	Transactional	Servant	Authoritarian
Philosophy	Leaders are meant to create structure based on reward and punishment. Very outcomes oriented.	Leaders are meant to serve their team. Focused on nurturing individual strengths and wellbeing.	Leader are meant to dictate all direction and decisions. They often make decisions without team input.
Where	Very popular in larger companies and relies on results, existing structures, and rewards/penalties.	Thrives in companies with resources and time to invest in career growth and the development of people.	Especially useful in times of crisis or low visibility on key decisions. Allows for one vision to be followed.
Benefits	• Clear expectations & outcomes • Encourages team competition • Rewards high performers • Easily identify low performers	• Motivates teammates • Supports career growth • Reinforces team culture • Supports team well-being	• Creates focus, especially in crisis • Make key decisions faster • Gives experts decision power • Offers clear sense of direction
Challenges	• Less emphasis on building relationships with team • Will cause turnover for less rewards-motivated folks • Can lead to low creativity, fear of punishment • Hard times lowers morale	• Tendency to be ruinously empathetic with feedback • Takes time to develop employees' skills • Democracy means it takes longer to make decisions • Balancing accountability	• Lowers morale • Shuts down new ideas • Must be used case-by-case, not all the time • Relies on one person, power, and intimidation • Leads to micromanagement
Examples of Leaders	*Bill Gates is a notable transactional leader, making rounds to check on operations and ensure goals are being met.* *This style relies heavily on following set principles and the status quo. This can be effective in roles with clear outcomes and processes.*	*Ted Lasso believed there was potential in every individual on his team. He saw it as his job to maximize individual strengths.* *This style relies on democratic decision-making. It encourages teammates to have equal share in the success of the team.*	*Steve Jobs was known for running Apple with an authoritarian leadership style. He enforced his vision for new technology.* *This style is also often used during times of crisis, like layoffs or org-wide changes where employee input may not be helpful.*

The 10 commandments
of good managers

01

I will coach my teammates and find ways to support their individual career goals and aspirations.

02

I will invest in our team culture by getting to know my teammates as people and building trust as a collective.

03

I will clearly communicate our team's vision, goals, and expectations.

04

I will give my teammates timely feedback that they can use to improve themselves and uplevel their skills.

05

I will have regular one-on-ones with each of my teammates and prepare for these meetings.

06

I will protect my teammate's individual well-being, work-life balance, and overall happiness.

07

I will build psychological safety by asking for upwards feedback and leading with vulnerability.

08

I will empower my team, delegate, and trust that they have the skills to drive our outcomes.

09

I will reflect on my own triggers and areas of improvement as a leader and share these with my team.

10

I will build a team that works well together and enforce the No Assholes Rule.

Chatting with
Julie Zhuo

Our manager community had the chance to sit down with Julie Zhuo, best-selling author of "The Making of a Manager."

How do you balance developing processes versus delegating them to another teammate?

I love your instinct here, clearly you know you've hired great people. I'd use the framework from the book, "What is the best thing you can spend your time on that you can uniquely be able to do better than the rest of your team?"

Your vantage point as a manager may help you resolve issues or hire, where another report cannot.

What's your favorite leadership book?

Well, my favorite management book is "Conscious Business" and its sequel, "Transcendent Leadership." There's a funny story. I had been recommended this book by my manager many years ago at Facebook. I saw this book on my desk and immediately judged it because there was a piece of clip art on the cover. So I did not read this book for many years.

I finally read it after I'd already finished the first or second draft of "The Making of a Manager" and I'm blown away by this book. My first thought after I finished it was, "Wow, I'm really glad that I wrote my book before I read this because otherwise I'm pretty sure I wouldn't actually write a management book. I would just give everyone this book to read!"

How do you balance empathy with the pressure to meet goals?

I really resonate with this question because we often find ourselves having to balance these two.

My general framework for this is creating very clear transparency for "The Why." This allows skilled teammates to have the right context and make the best decision.

Especially in a down economy where every day and dollar matters, the alignment of every single person and the understanding of how their work ladders to the team's success is very important.

Of course, there will be things that come up and life happens for each of us. Sometimes it's just a one-off, everyone needs a bit of grace from time to time. But sometimes, these things aren't one-offs and the reason these situations keep happening is because there isn't a good fit.

Time has passed since you wrote this, did you have anything you'd add to it?

I think if there's one thing that I go back to, it's this idea that management ultimately is about context. We're trying to get better at making good decisions, which really comes down to context. I'm constantly humbled when something I've done before doesn't translate to new context. It requires going back to First Principles and rediscovering the right tools.

2

Becoming a Better Manager

Transitioning from an individual contributor to a manager requires a unique set of skills. While individual work revolves around personal output, management requires a shift towards people skills, emotional intelligence, and measuring the team's outcomes. This transition is difficult, especially when there's rarely one handbook for being a great remote manager.

In this chapter, we delve into the specific skills managers need to excel. Through practical guidance and actionable tips, we aim to equip you with the necessary roadmap to navigate your manager journey. Whether you are a new manager learning the basics or seeking to enhance your existing skills, this chapter provides a clear idea of where you can improve.

The skill gap in remote
management

We asked 100+ direct reports and 200+ managers about necessary management skills. Here's what they shared.

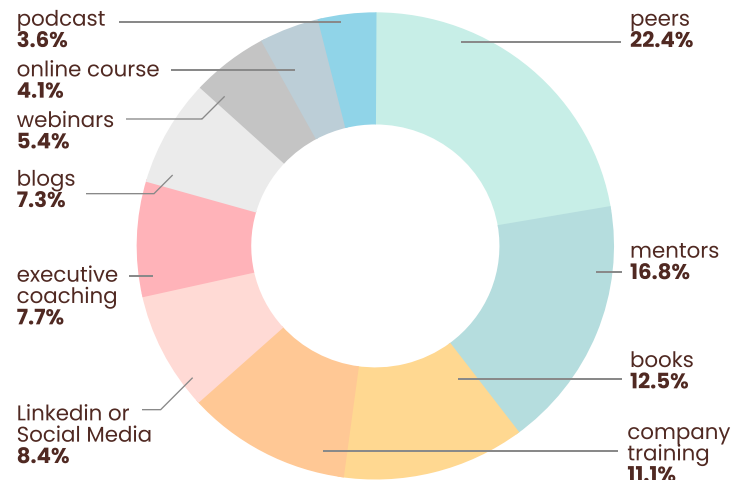## As an individual contributor, what's the most important skill that a great manager should have?

1. Ability to give and receive feedback
2. Compassion and care for individuals
3. Career development and coaching

If your manager could improve ONE skill, which would significantly improve your employee experience?

1. Career development & coaching
2. Ability to recognize teammates
3. Managing deadlines & workload

What are your top resources for learning how to be a better manager?

1. Peers and other managers
2. Mentors
3. Books
4. Company-Led Training
5. LinkedIn or Social Media
6. Executive Coaching
7. Blog Articles
8. Webinars
9. Online Courses
10. Podcasts

podcast 3.6%
online course 4.1%
webinars 5.4%
blogs 7.3%
executive coaching 7.7%
Linkedin or Social Media 8.4%
peers 22.4%
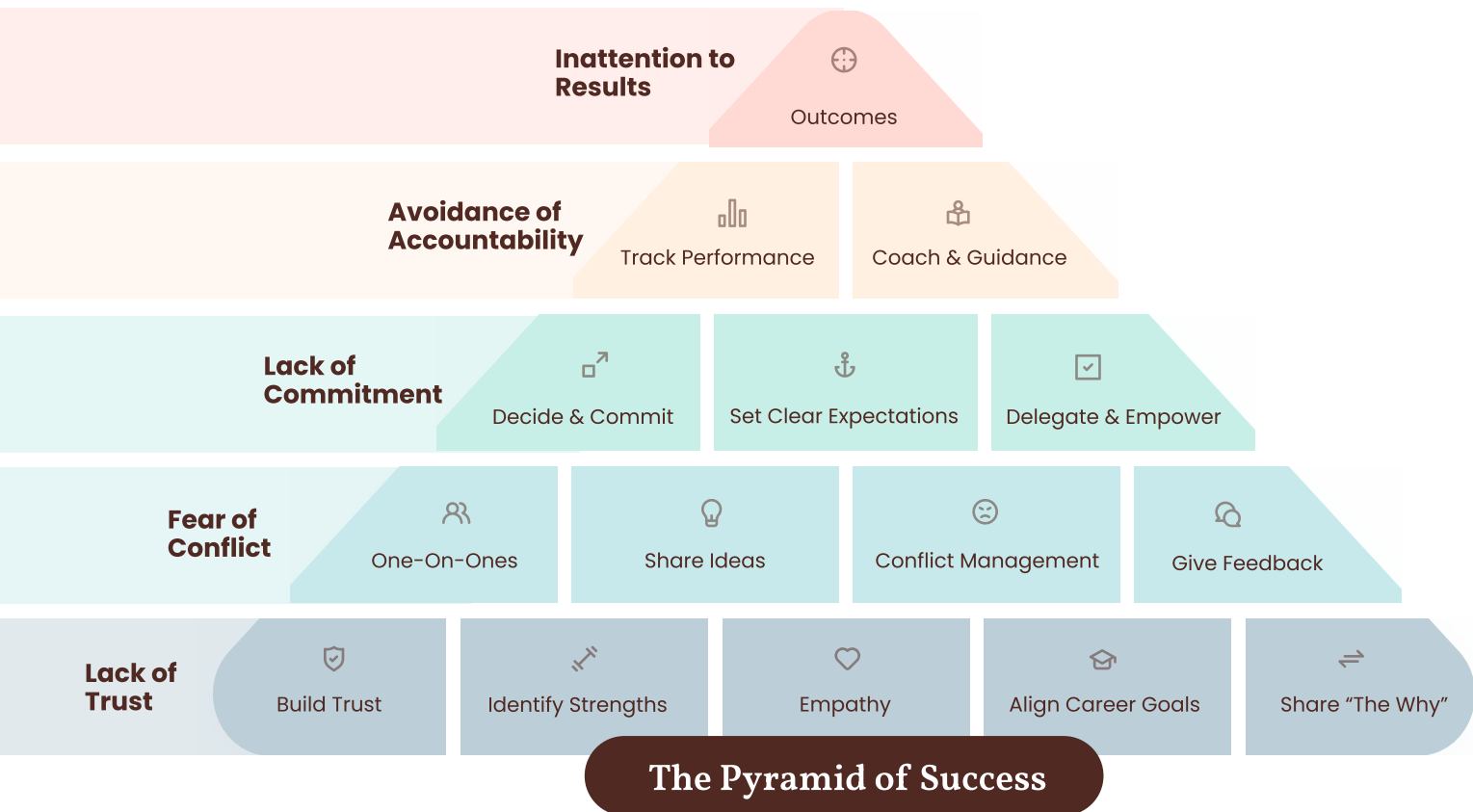mentors 16.8%
books 12.5%
company training 11.1%

Key Leader Takeaway

With increasingly fragmented resources, managers often create their own leadership courses and areas of priority.

The Pyramid of Manager Skills

Inspired from John Wooden's pyramid of success and Patrick Lencioni's "Five Dysfunctions of a Team", these are the foundational skills every manager needs.

Inattention to Results

⊕ Outcomes

Avoidance of Accountability

Track Performance | Coach & Guidance

Lack of Commitment

Decide & Commit | Set Clear Expectations | Delegate & Empower

Fear of Conflict

One-On-Ones | Share Ideas | Conflict Management | Give Feedback

Lack of Trust

Build Trust | Identify Strengths | Empathy | Align Career Goals | Share "The Why"

The Pyramid of Success

Climbing the Pyramid

Starting at the base of the pyramid, each of these skills allow managers to avoid Lencioni's five dysfunctions:

Lack of Trust

Teams who lack trust hide mistakes, jump to conclusions, hold grudges, and dread their meetings.

Fear of Conflict

Employees worry more about politics than solving problems. Ideas are stifled and creativity stalls.

Lack of Commitment

Teams begin to fear failure and second-guess their decisions. This wastes valuable time.

Avoidance of Accountability

Teams fail to develop set standards for performance. Deadlines are missed.

Manager Checklist

Weekly

☐ **One-on-Ones**

Experts recommend conducting one-on-ones every week to stay on top of team needs.

☐ **Feedback & Recognition**

Regularly giving constructive feedback and praise are key for motivating teammates.

☐ **Determine Priorities**

Your team is relying on you to help prioritize tasks and adjust execution plans as needed.

☐ **Retro on Team Outcomes**

It's helpful to have a regular meeting on team goals and their progression.

Monthly

☐ **Big Team Building Activity**

Planning a larger culture activity, workshop, or in-person event can help your team bond!

☐ **Meet with HRBPs**

Your HRBPs are here to help. Meet with them regularly to get advice on problems and friction.

☐ **Stakeholder One-on-Ones**

Meet with other managers and key stakeholders to gather info and advocate for your team.

☐ **Review Process & Friction**

Review existing processes and see if there are key areas of improvement.

Quarterly

☐ **Psychological Safety Survey**

Taking the time to measure culture metrics can ensure that they're kept top of mind.

☐ **Quarterly OKR Planning**

Review goals and ensure that you're set up for next quarter. Understand how they ladder up.
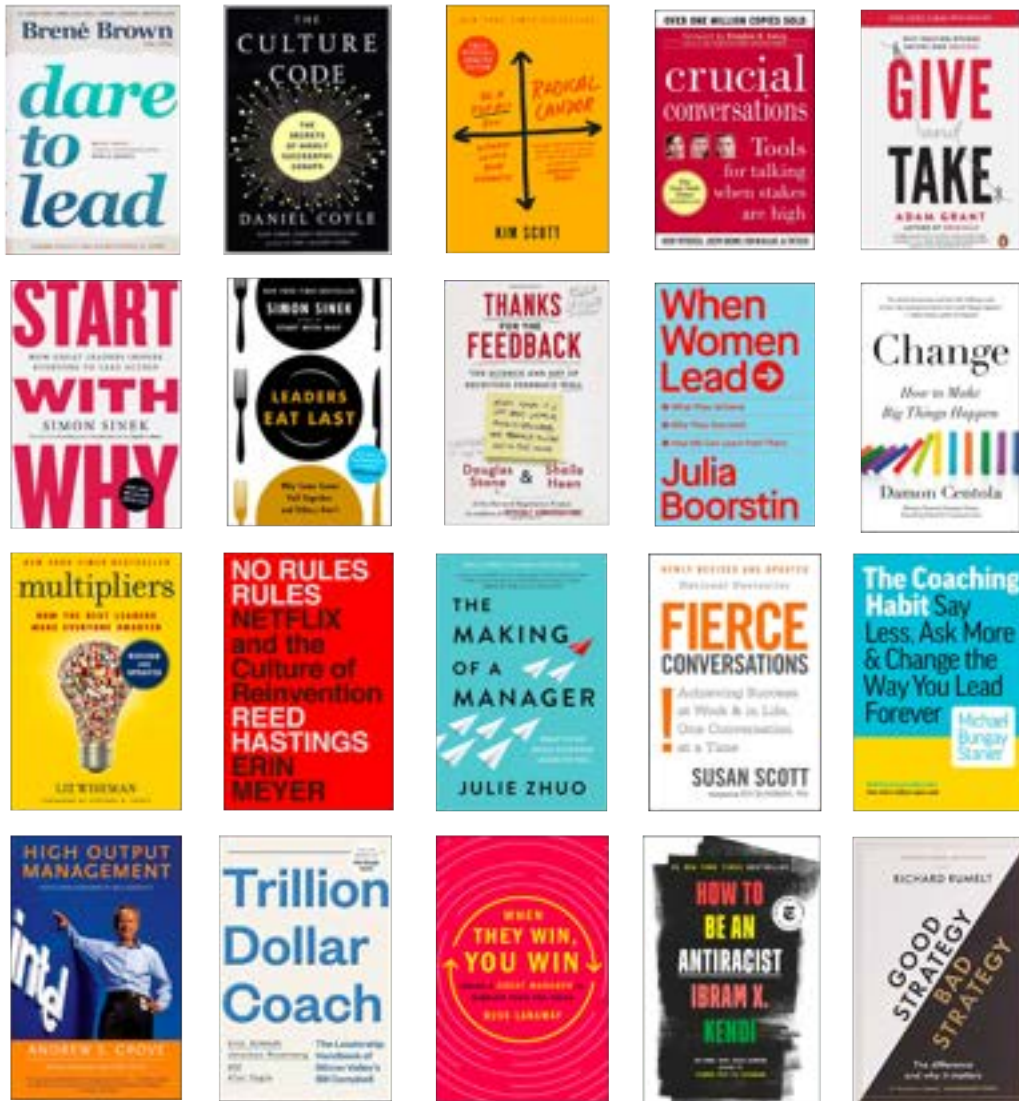
☐ **Career Ladder Check-in**

Ensure that every teammate knows they're on track to hit their career dreams.

☐ **Performance Check-In**

Run a casual performance check-in and ensure teammates know where they're at.

# Books Every Manager Should Read

Join Kona's Manager Book Club

Join Kona's community of 300+ executives from top companies as we read a new leadership book every month. Apply here: https://www.heykona.com/manager-book-club

Your leadership coach
built right in Slack

Management is a challenging job. Sometimes you could use a coach or sounding board for everyday problems. That's where Kona can help.

Feedback

Performance
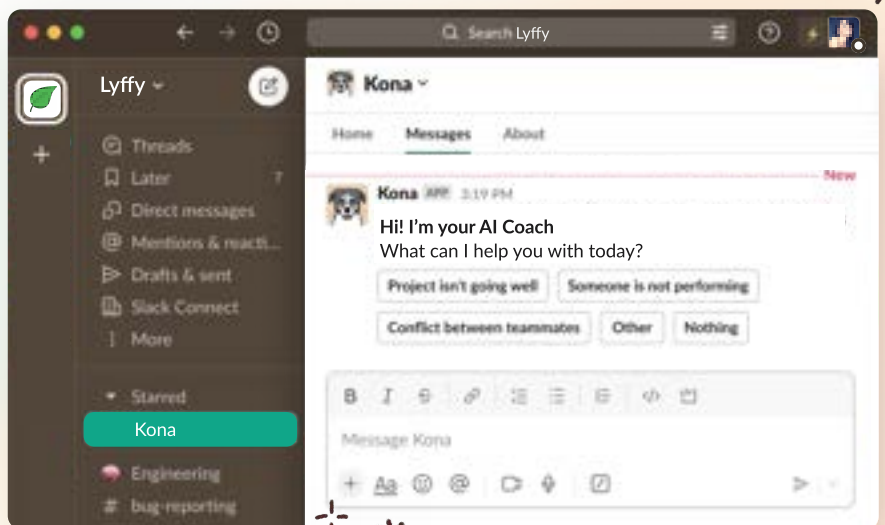
Conflict

Meetings
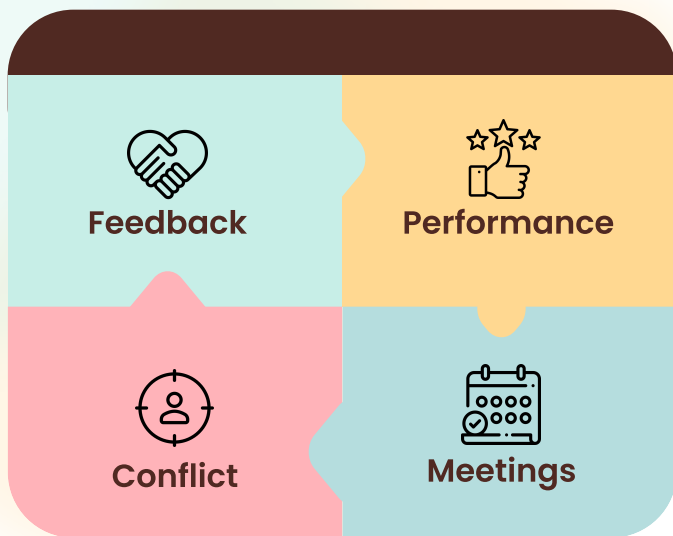
Support for every conversation.

Kona's AI has frameworks for every kind of crucial conversation. We've partnered with the top executive coaching firm behind leaders at Glassdoor, Slack, and Dropbox to bring you expert, confidential advice in your pocket.

🎚️ Start AI Coaching Session →

Built right in Slack.

We've added Kona's AI Leadership Coach to Slack, giving you confidential conversations and advice, without breaking your workflow.

Try Kona for free today at https://heykona.com

Kona APP 3:19 PM

Hi! I'm your AI Coach
What can I help you with today?

Project isn't going well   Someone is not performing

Conflict between teammates   Other   Nothing

3

Building an Amazing Culture

Company culture creates a thriving work environment for success. As a manager, you have a significant influence on shaping and nurturing the culture within your team. A strong team culture enhances employee retention, engagement, and productivity. However, defining an amazing culture can hard to quantify and action on.

In this chapter, we explore the importance of company culture and the role that managers play in cultivating it. We'll go over key elements for a vibrant and inclusive culture. With practical strategies and actionable steps, you'll know how to create an environment where your team members can achieve exceptional results.

The importance of **company culture.**

Don't dismiss company culture! Research shows that teams with a great culture accomplish more, while staying happier.

Benefits of high work psychological safety.

27%
reduction in turnover

76%
more engagement

50%
more productivity

https://www.accenture.com/us-en/blogs/business-functions-blog/work-psychological-safety

Managers play a massive role in engagement and retention.

4x
Employees who rate their bosses poorly are 4x more likely to look for other positions.

https://builtin.com/company-culture/company-culture-statistics#3

33% employees
receive weekly recognition

https://teamstage.io/company-culture-statistics

76% employees
say managers create the culture at work.

https://www.culturemonkey.io/employee-engagement/

Define psych safety?

Team psychological safety is a shared belief held by members of a group that it's okay to take risks, express ideas and concerns, speak up with questions, and to admit mistakes — without consequences.

Three ingredients for
great team culture

Build Team Safety

Safety shifts the brain into connection and trust mode.

We are wired for social approval and groups. Belonging cues are actions that signal safe connection in groups.

Note that safety is extremely fragile and easy to break.

How to build safety:

- ✓ Show vulnerability
- ✓ Overdo gratitude
- ✓ Eliminate assholes
- ✓ Give everyone a voice
- ✓ Build a collective future

Vulnerable Together

Shared vulnerability enables collective intelligence and risk.

Moments of vulnerability are tests of risk-taking and safety. The best teams lean into vulnerability and use it as a catalyst for culture.

Focus on milestones where the team overcame a challenge.

How to create vulnerability:

- ✓ Lead with vulnerability
- ✓ Let them own decisions
- ✓ Find culture milestones
- ✓ Give everyone a voice
- ✓ Take time with feedback

Shared Purpose

Purpose is about focusing attention on the shared goal.

Teams are always asking the question, "Will this last?" A shared purpose not only provides vision and direction, but also a sense of security.

Great cultures focus on the future.

How to establish purpose:

- ✓ Define team priorities
- ✓ Set high standards
- ✓ Prioritize initiatives
- ✓ Know their "why"
- ✓ Celebrate shared wins

25 team building ideas
for remote teams

Building camaraderie is particularly crucial for remote teams to fight isolation and boost team culture.

Here are the best team building ideas we've heard over the past few years.

Sync Events

- Zoom-based challenges: escape rooms, puzzles, competitions
- Invite an expert to teach a cooking, dancing, or mindfulness lesson
- Cater parties with food delivery apps
- Play a game like Scribbl.io, Jackbox Party Games, etc.

Diving Deeper

- Try Dr. Brené Brown's core value activity and present it as a team
- Take a personality test and understand your working styles
- Discuss workplace triggers and create a safe word for discussion
- Build team work-with-me guides and review them as a team
- Invite a teammate to teach the team a new skill or technical activity

Async Activities

- Set up fun Slack channels around non-work subjects like #dogs, #tv-shows, #capital-hill
- Send a daily question of the day
- Create a team check-in on work and morale using tools like Kona
- Express gratitude in a #kudos channel
- Share pictures of where you're working or fun images of your pets

Fun Meetings

- Create a themed biweekly meeting with outfits and themed backgrounds
- Start every meeting with an icebreaker
- Schedule impromptu 1:1s with Donut
- Do a round-robin gratitude activity
- Share a presentation on your life

Planned Event

- Plan a company retreat for a week(end)
- Create a virtual celebration for a birthday or company milestone
- Set up Employee Resource Groups for minority groups or interests at the org
- Invite a guest speaker to do a workshop
- Prioritize wellness with group therapy
- Create themed weeks for diversity

Psychological Safety Survey

Measuring your team's psychological safety is as simple as asking the right questions. Use this survey exercise to see which areas you can improve!

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
🙏 I can make mistakes without fear that my coworkers will hold it against me	○	○	○	○	○
📣 My co-workers welcome opinions different from their own.	○	○	○	○	○
❤️ I feel safe to take a risk on this team.	○	○	○	○	○
👏 My direct manager values my ideas.	○	○	○	○	○
📕 People keep each other informed about work-related issues within the team.	○	○	○	○	○
💢 Members of this team are able to bring up problems and tough issues.	○	○	○	○	○
🌈 People on this team never reject others for being different.	○	○	○	○	○
👋 It is easy to ask other members of this team for help.	○	○	○	○	○
⚽ Working with members of this team, my unique skills are valued and utilized.	○	○	○	○	○
😾 No one on this team would deliberately act in a way that undermines my efforts.	○	○	○	○	○

Managers as Culture Builders

A Culture Guide for Leaders from evolution

Managers play a vital role in developing a high-performing team culture that fosters connection, growth, learning, belonging, equity and inclusion.

Make your team's culture a priority.

Leaders who are intentional about team culture are more successful at cultivating connective, high-performing teams.

Take action:
- Craft a culture vision
- Invest in culture building

Lead by example, lead with values.

The #1 most effective approach to cultivating the culture you want on your team is to BE the culture you want to create.

Take action:
- Understand team values
- Create personal habits that reinforce values

Strengthen key teammate relationships.

The strength of your team's culture is highly correlated with the strength of all the individual relationship pairs.

Take action:
- Team Relationship Map
- Prioritize who to focus on

Increase emotional proximity

Research shows that to be culturally connected, employees should identify with, care about, and belong within the organization.

Take action:
- Celebrate success
- Show the greater purpose

Transform Your Team

Evolution is the trusted coaching firm for high-growth startups like Slack, Notion, and Glassdoor. Buy their latest book, "Scale without Losing Your Soul: The Startup Culture Guide" for a step-by-step guide on discovering, designing, and evolving your culture as your organization grows. Reach out to us at contact@evolution.team to learn more about our culture, team performance, and coaching services.

4

Managing Remote Teams

Managing remote teams presents unique challenges and requires a different approach compared to traditional in-person management. After studying over 1,200 remote managers in the last three years, we noticed a paradox among remote managers. Trust building was the X-factor for team success, and yet it was the hardest thing to build while remote.

In this chapter, we delve into the key challenges of managing remote teams across time zones, cultures, and locations. You'll find practical tips to excel in remote management. Whether you are transitioning to remote work or looking to enhance your remote management capabilities, this chapter provides valuable guidance for navigating our changing future of work.

The 2023 state of the
future of work.

We asked 100+ direct reports and 200+ managers about their relationship to remote work. Here's what they shared.

What's the hardest part about working remotely?

1. Lack of human connection, cross-departmental silos, and persistent feelings of isolation.
2. Communication and collaboration across time zones.
3. Work-life boundaries and an inability to disconnect from work.

What's hardest about managing remote teams?

1. Difficulty in reading body language, addressing issues promptly, and gathering real-time feedback.
2. Meetings, collaboration, and aligning teams across time zones.
3. Building and maintaining team culture, trust, and engagement.

How many days do you work in the office on average?

68%
of managers worked completely remote-first

15%
of managers worked hybrid, with 1-2 days in office

everyday
8%

3-4 days
9%

1-2 days
15%

none
68%
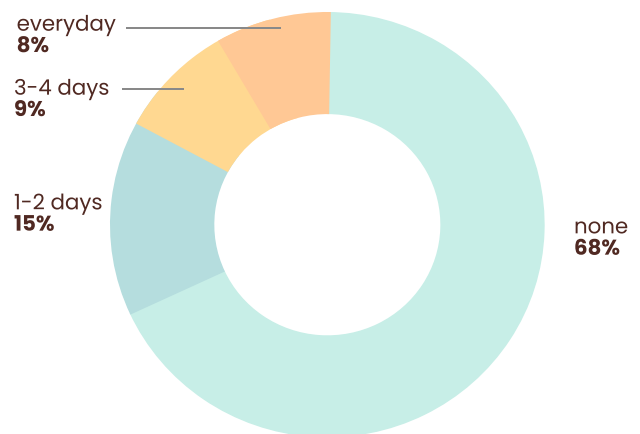
Key Leader Takeaway

It's clear that remote work isn't going away any time soon. To sustain the future of work, we need to address the unique difficulties and challenges of working distributed.

Comparing designs for the future of work

	In-Person	**Hybrid**	**Remote-First**
Philosophy	**Working together in offices allows for more bonding, collaboration, and exposure to others' work.**	**Knowledge work shouldn't be location specific and workers should be trusted to work where they want.**	**Remote work requires intentionality to succeed. It must be designed with remote as the key priority.**
Pros	• Creative brainstorming is easier while in person • In-person work allows for faster collaboration • Proximity creates belonging and feelings of community • Having an office allows you more work-life separation • Giving more opportunities for career development	• Employees choose to work in the office or at home • Flexibility improves well-being and productivity • On-site time can be used for collaboration, career development, and bonding • WFH time can be used for deep work and independent tasks that require focus	• Remote allows employees the freedom to design their own schedules and days • You can hire excellent talent from anywhere • Teammates can focus on their deep work and engage over real-time meetings • Remote gives workers more time with family & friends
Cons	• Technology allows for collaboration, creativity, and location agnostic meetings • Commuting takes time away from employee schedules • Unable to hire outside of key office locations • Offices are distracting • Workers must be mandated to return to office	• Even while hybrid, many offices are empty or unused • Hybrid creates uneven employee experiences and pressure to show up in person • Some bosses may bias towards in-person employees • Hybrid work makes it harder to design processes that scale	• Remote work can be isolating and repetitive • There's no clear divide between work and life • Less coworker interaction may lead to miscommunication • Remote work requires a lot of discipline and self motivation • Timezones can make remote work extra challenging
Examples	*Twitter has had a strict office policy and banned remote work unless given specific approval to work elsewhere. CEO, Elon Musk, says not showing up to the office is the same as a resignation.* *Twitter believes in a fully in-person environment to succeed.*	*Google mandates some office attendance for its employees. They emphasize the importance of in-person for community building and serendipitous conversations.* *Google has created many of its products through in-person work and aims to capture this creativity.*	*GitLab is proudly remote-first with over 1,000 employees spread across the globe. They have designed their company around transparency, documenting processes, meetings, and key decisions.* *At GitLab, all employees can choose their schedules and location!*

Common remote work
challenges & fixes.

Isolation & Silos

Optimize for collaboration
Ensure that teammates have open lines of communication and a chance to ask for help.

Invest in team building
Team building is intentional while remote. Plan events and touch points to support culture.

Define your team culture
What values and practices makes your team unique? Lean on these to create belonging.

Work-Life Boundaries

Set a clear cut off time
Pretend you're a small business. What time do you open? What time do you close?

Reward taking PTO
Unlimited PTO doesn't work if companies don't encourage it. Model good PTO behaviors.

Track team well-being
Well-being, like any metric, needs to be tracked. Visibility can help you improve it!

Navigating Time Zones

Lean on documentation
Time zones require more async friendly communication. Rely on documentation for info.

Be strict with meetings
Not all meetings are necessary. Figure out which meetings could be better as an email.

Time block as a team
Agreeing on meeting blocks and collaboration periods can help with schedule planning.

Career Growth & Opportunities

Schedule career convos
Regular career conversations can quiet fears of getting passed up for career growth.

Give regular feedback
Ensure your 1:1s and syncs include time for feedback that helps your teammates grow.

Build a career action plan
Keep an ongoing plan for better career growth. See Chapter 7 for more examples.

Distributed Work Score
10 areas of assessment with Remote-First Institute
Powered by Remote-How

How effective is your organization at remote work?

We evaluate your remote work capabilities across 10 essential areas. By understanding your strengths and weaknesses in these areas, you can create a more efficient, productive remote workforce.

1 Transparency

Evaluating the level of openness and information sharing within your remote team, fosters trust and enables better decision-making.

2 Equality

Ensuring equal opportunities and treatment for all team members, regardless of their location, background, or personal circumstances.

3 Communication

Ensuring effective communication practices among distributed teams, both synchronous and asynchronous, to prevent miscommunication and enhance collaboration.

4 Collaboration

Fostering a collaborative environment that enables remote team members to work together seamlessly, sharing ideas, knowledge, and resources efficiently.

5 Adaptation

Assessing your team's ability to adapt to changing circumstances, new technologies, and evolving best practices in remote work.

6 Leadership

Evaluating the effectiveness of leadership in guiding remote teams, setting clear expectations, and providing timely feedback.

7 Soft Skills

Identifying the presence and development of essential soft skills, such as empathy, emotional intelligence, and active listening, among remote team members.

8 Remote Ops

Analyzing the efficiency of remote work processes, policies, and procedures that support a smooth and productive workflow.

9 Culture

Assessing the strength and inclusiveness of your company culture within a remote work context, ensuring a sense of belonging and shared values.

10 Satisfaction

Measuring employee satisfaction and well-being to promote a healthy work-life balance, reduce stress, and improve retention.

Get your Distributed Work Score.

Work smarter with AI Mentor, the intelligent partner designed to optimize your distributed work experience. Get started at: https://remote-first.institute/ai-mentor

Support your team
while fully remote.

As a remote manager, you're often flying blind. You may catch slumped shoulders or signs of stress in an office, but these often go unnoticed in a remote setting. Support teammates every day with Kona's check-ins.
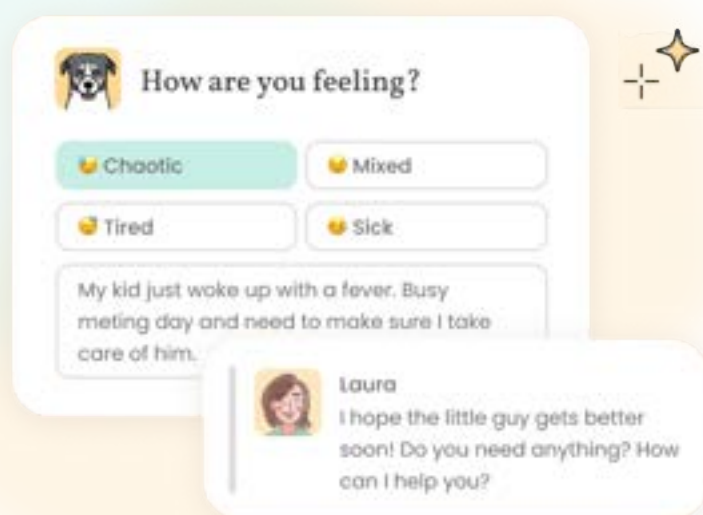
Take a pulse & build morale.

Sharing how your feeling is as easy as picking an emoji. Spark conversations and reveal blockers with Kona's lightweight check-ins, built for Slack.

Alerts built for your workflow.

Kona compiles morale data to give you relevant insights before 1:1 meetings. Spend less time preparing and more time diving into key problems and focus areas.

Try Kona for free today at
https://heykona.com

5
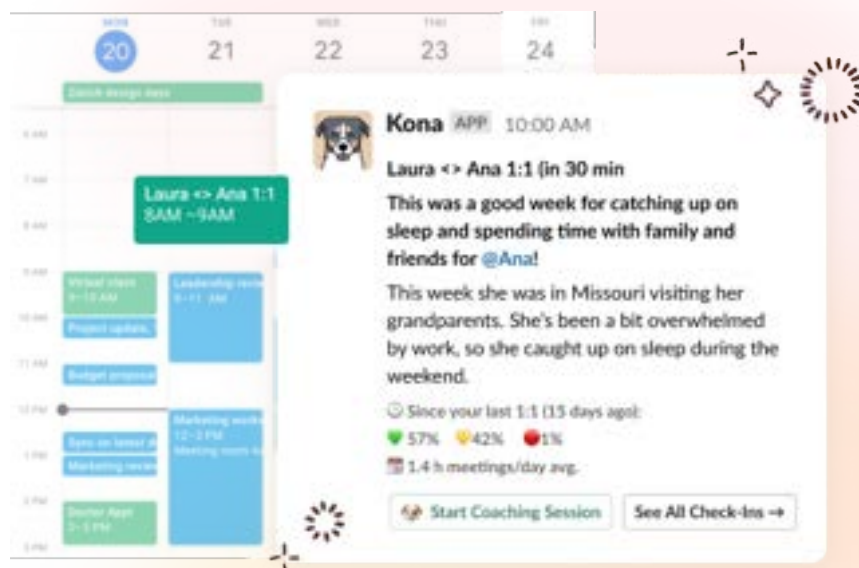
Running Effective Meetings

Meetings form a significant part of a manager's day and serve as crucial opportunities for team alignment and collaboration. However, poorly run meetings can hinder productivity and team dynamics. Effective meeting management is a skill that requires thoughtful planning, and one that doesn't get talked about enough!

In this chapter, we explore the art of running effective meetings. We discuss strategies for effective one-on-ones, meeting design, assessing whether meetings are needed, and exploring other options around async work. By implementing these best practices, you can maximize the productivity and impact of your meetings.

A snapshot of team
meetings in 2023.

We asked 100+ direct reports and 200+ managers about meetings.
Here's what they shared.

On average, what % of your work week is meetings?

93%

Managers spent 12+ hours
of their week in meetings

37%

Reports spent 12+ hours
of their week in meetings

How often do you do 1:1s with your direct reports?

66%

Managers conducted their
1:1s on a weekly basis

20%

conducted 1:1s biweekly

11%

conducted 1:1s monthly

Key Leader Takeaway

With over 30% of a manager's week spent in meetings, it's more
important than ever to create sustainable meeting structures.

Six kinds of meetings
every team needs

These are some of the most popular meetings that leaders shared with us and the common goals, cadence, and preparation needed.

1:1 One-On-Ones

Cadence	Weekly
Goal	rapport, coaching, eliminate roadblocks
Format	30 min.
Prepare	1:1 questions to dive deeper into the week

Team Buildling

Cadence	Weekly
Goal	invest in relationships and culture
Format	30 min.
Prepare	Virtual activities your team will enjoy!

Stand-Ups

Cadence	Daily
Goal	get visibility on the team's projects
Format	15 min.
Prepare	A format for sharing what you're working on

Sprint Retro

Cadence	Weekly
Goal	Recap learnings from the sprint/project
Format	30 min – 1 hour
Prepare	Analysis on the sprint and its key learnings

Team Review

Cadence	Weekly
Goal	Watch calls, review work, or gather ideas
Format	1 hour
Prepare	Set up materials to review or feedback

Performance Review

Cadence	Quarterly
Goal	give employees an idea of their performance
Format	30 min – 1 hour
Prepare	Feedback & examples of where they stand

Run better meetings

Get support with your 1:1s meetings, crucial feedback conversations, and more with Kona. Try Kona for free at https://heykona.com

Our favorite 1:1 questions

Life Beyond

- What's happening in your life?
- If you could wave a magic wand and make something in your world better right now, what would that be?
- How was your weekend?
- How's your week going so far?
- What are your weekend plans?

Team Morale

- How are you feeling 💚 💛 ❤️
- How often in the last week have you felt stressed or overwhelmed by work?
- Rate your work life balance from 1-10
- What's energizing you this week?
- What's draining you this week?

Review the Week

- What do you want to discuss today?
- Share a highlight and lowlight.
- What part of your work are you really enjoying or most proud of at the moment? What victories do you have to share with me today?
- What's your outlook on next week?
- What would you want to stop, start, and continue for next week?
- What did you learn this week?

Explore Conflict

- What about this keeps you up at night?
- Tell me more about the situation. What feels unfair or frustrating about this?
- What are you working on that seems unimportant or counterproductive?
- What are you teammates doing or not doing that you wish that they'd do?
- Have you talked with these other teams directly? If not, why not?

Refining Ideas

- What are three things that would need to happen to make this idea work?
- Playing devil's advocate here, what if...
- What do you need to develop this idea further so it's ready to discuss with the broader team? How can I help?

Getting Feedback

- What, if anything, feels harder than it should be in your day to day work?
- What can I do or stop doing that would make this easier?
- What does support from me look like?
- If you were me, what would your main focus be right now?
- What do you want to work on?

Is this meeting needed?

It's easy to set meetings without thinking about whether a meeting is needed in the first place. Use this checklist before you take up valuable time on your team's calendar!

☐ **Is the matter urgent?**

Synchronous time is best used for urgent tasks that require immediate discussion.

☐ **Am I looking for discussion?**

If you don't need other opinions, there's a chance documentation will do.

☐ **Who is responsible for this task?**

Knowing who owns the task being discussed ensures the right attendees.

☐ **How many ideas do we need?**

Setting a benchmark for brainstorms ensures time is used wisely.

☐ **Do I have an ideal outcome?**

Every meeting should have a clear goal and ideal outcome before starting.

☐ **Is there enough time to prepare?**

You'll often get better discussions when teammates have time to think.

☐ **Are all attendees necessary?**

You may have invited teammates that won't get much out of the conversation.

☐ **Does this meeting have an agenda?**

All meetings should have a clear agenda to create accountability and goals.

☐ **Can this meeting be an email?**

If you could share this meeting as an email, a meeting may not be needed.

☐ **Are we meeting too early for this?**

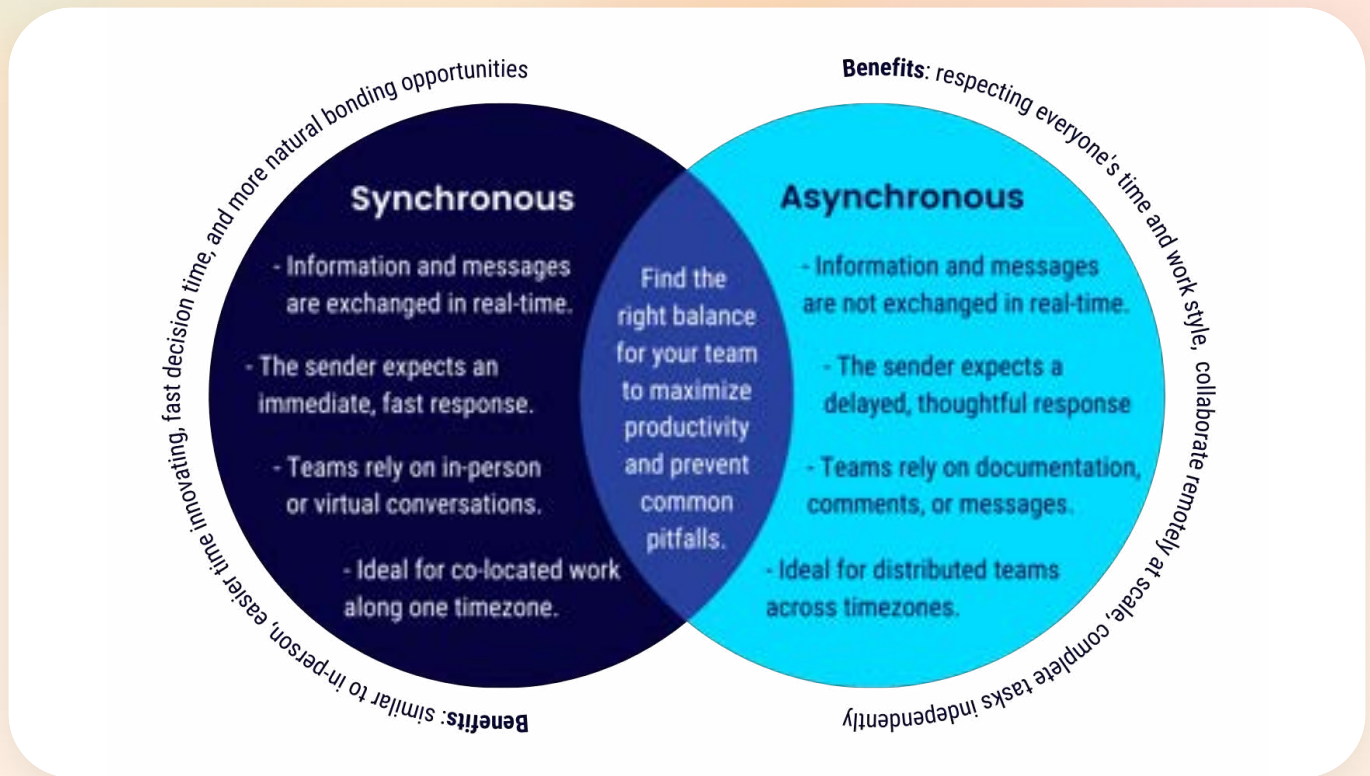Sometimes topics are discussed too early, before there's enough data .

Run better meetings

Meetings take up valuable time on the calendar. Ensure you're making the most out of your meetings by being intentional, creating clear agendas, and using this checklist!

Together & Apart
Learn async work with **W WORKPLACELESS®**

Benefits: similar to in-person, easier time innovating, fast decision time, and more natural bonding opportunities

Synchronous

- Information and messages are exchanged in real-time.

- The sender expects an immediate, fast response.

- Teams rely on in-person or virtual conversations.

- Ideal for co-located work along one timezone.

Find the right balance for your team to maximize productivity and prevent common pitfalls.

Asynchronous

- Information and messages are not exchanged in real-time.

- The sender expects a delayed, thoughtful response

- Teams rely on documentation, comments, or messages.

- Ideal for distributed teams across timezones.

Benefits: respecting everyone's time and work style, collaborate remotely at scale, complete tasks independently

For better async communication...

Convert meetings to async

Meetings have become the default for remote communication. Replace them with documentation or collaboration tooling!

Identify your info bottlenecks

What decisions or behaviors require an immediate response to move forward? Can you proactively share documents or summaries?

Establish a placeless mindset

Your team shouldn't have to prove that they're working. Embrace your team's flexibility, transparency, and trust with a placeless point of view.

Learn to work async.

Remote work requires all sorts of skills, and Workplaceless is the perfect partner. Use the code "KONA2023" for 50% off their Async at Work eCourse.

6

The Art of Giving Feedback

Feedback is a powerful tool for motivating teammates, improving performance, and driving outcomes. However, providing feedback is a skill that many managers struggle with. Difficult conversations can get nerve-wracking and many managers worry about hurting team relationships in the process. Great feedback requires a combination of empathy and candor.

In this chapter, we delve into the art of giving feedback. We explore different feedback models, techniques for delivering feedback, and approaches for fostering a culture of continuous improvement. This chapter equips you with the tools to become great at delivering and receiving feedback, enabling your team to achieve exceptional results.

Management and feedback in 2023.

We asked 100+ direct reports and 200+ managers about feedback. Here's what they shared.

I feel comfortable giving my manager feedback

67%
teammates agree

My manager acts on my feedback

59%
teammates agree

My manager gives me enough constructive feedback.

64%
teammates agree

18%
teammates disagree

Managers prefer to give feedback...

1. Weekly (27%)
2. Biweekly (23%)
3. Every few days (18%)
4. Monthly (12%)

Individual contributors prefer to receive feedback...

1. Weekly (25%)
2. Monthly (23%)
3. Biweekly (21%)
4. Quarterly (11%)

Key Leader Takeaway

When it comes to feedback, delivery and follow-through are everything. Acting on feedback, giving regular feedback, and matching feedback styles ensures you're building trust.

Difficult Conversations:
Emergency Kit

What makes a conversation difficult anyway?

Difficult conversations are defined by three factors: opposing opinions, strong emotions, and high stakes. These often require a unique approach and careful planning.

Opposing Opinions

High Stakes
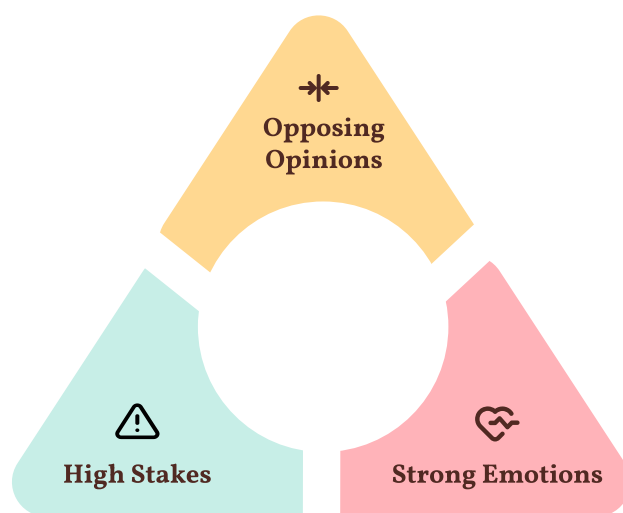
Strong Emotions

Approaching the convo

Enter the conversation with the right focus on what you truly want out of this conversation.

Dealing with strong emotions

Use active listening to navigate strong emotions. Ask questions, paraphrase, and clarify.

Notice when safety is at risk

Look out for non-verbal cues of dialogue breaking down, so you can bring it back on track.

Speak honestly and kindly

Understand the stories you may be telling yourself and point out when you're reacting.

Make it safe to share

Show that you care about their concerns and their well-being. Share good intent.

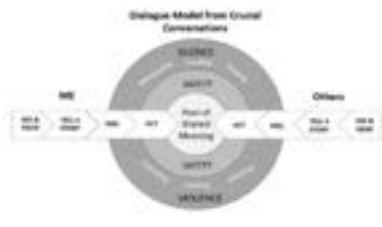### Explore paths and next steps

Be specific about the decisions made and follow-up actions. Make clear assignments.

Prepare for crucial conversations

With Kona's AI Coach, you can get real-time support for upcoming feedback conversations. Prepare for discussions and workshop ideas, all in Slack.

Three popular **feedback frameworks**

	McKinsey Model	**Radical Candor**	**Crucial Conversations**
	MjKinsey Feedback Model "When you did [A], it made me feel [B]. In the future, I would recommend that you do [C]". a. specific action you'd like changed b. impact of that behavior c. suggestion for different behavior	*(Radical Candor quadrant diagram)*	*(Dialogue Model from Crucial Conversations diagram)*
Philosophy	**The best kind of feedback is specific, fact-based, less personal, and direct. This model enables this.**	**Feedback is difficult because people often fail to balance caring personally and challenging directly.**	**High stakes conversations are difficult because of differing opinions and strong emotions.**
Use when	• Everyday feedback, behavior, and task-specific • You're having trouble capturing objective facts • Looking to improve on task-specific feedback and small behavior changes	• Everyday feedback and praise conversations • Feedback isn't quite landing because you're to soft or harsh • Looking to improve on behavior-based feedback	• High-stakes, difficult conversations • When emotions are running high and there are negative consequences at stake • Looking to create clear outcomes from a hard convo
Benefits	• An easy model for phrasing feedback conversations • Forces you to stay objective and fact-based • Easy to remember and implement as a habit	• Helps you understand your own feedback habits • Improves your frequency around feedback • Helps you identify poorly delivered vs. quality feedback	• Provides a reliable script for volatile conversations • Can help you get necessary points across without being dismissive of emotions • Creates clear next steps
Example	*"When you arrived 15 minutes late for the team meeting, it left the team feeling frustrated as we couldn't get started. This also meant that we didn't have time to cover everything that needed discussing. In the future, can you please let us know if you are delayed and going to be running late?".*	After Kim Scott had dismissed her boss' feedback and brushed it off, her boss had to challenge her directly: "I can see I am going to have to be really, really direct to get through to you. You are one of the smartest people I know, but saying 'um' so much makes you sound stupid."	*Crucial Conversations normally look like this:* • *Start with yourself* • *Notice if safety is at risk* • *Make it safe to share* • *Master your stories - dealing with strong emotions* • *Speak honestly without offending* • *Explore others' paths* • *Go over actions*
	website.com	website.com	website.com

Ways to
Improve Feedback

Team Rituals

Feedback Fridays - end of week reviews to share what you're thinking about

Best, Thanks, Learnings - team exercise for wins, shout-outs, and learnings

One-on-Ones - weekly opportunities to get feedback from your direct report

Rose, Bud, Thorn - individual format for praise, opportunities, and challenges

For Managers

Ask for upwards feedback, particularly criticism and areas to improve

Encourage teammates to read books or get special training feedback

Respond to employee suggestions and make them feel heard!

Share personal failures and what you're working on

Acknowledge when times are challenging & celebrate wins together

Always show up prepared and on time for one-on-one meetings

Feedback Hacks

Create dedicated shout-out channels

Design surveys for anonymous feedback

Review process feedback as a team, share ownership, and discuss next steps

Create guidelines on what good praise and criticism look like for your team

Tools We Love

- OfficeVibe
- Kona
- Bonusly
- Pando
- Fellow
- Lattice

Ways to Recognize

Share positive feedback publicly and give shout-outs over Slack

Buy small, thoughtful gifts for employees

Create a rewards and recognition system

Give shout-outs at the end of meetings

Chatting with
Kim Scott

Our manager community had the chance to sit down with Kim Scott, best-selling author of "Radical Candor."

How do you give radically candid feedback to a manager who gets hostile or defensive?

I want to first acknowledge that this happens. This can be really alarming when you have a manager who has a reputation for punishing those that give them feedback.

There are a few things you can do to make radical candor a bit safer for yourself.

First, follow the order of operations: solicit feedback before you give it. Show that you're receptive and lead by example.

Second, give praise and show that you appreciate this person. Withheld feedback can fixate us on the negative. Gratitude is productive.

Third, when it's time to give feedback, don't start at the outer edge of Challenge Directly. Try to approach it in a neutral way: "There's something I'd like to chat with you about, is this a good time?" Notice how they respond and adapt.

Avoid predicting how this person will react and try to read their emotional response. If they're sad, move towards Care Personally. If they're brushing you off or not taking the feedback seriously, move towards Challenge Directly.

How should you react to anger in feedback conversations?

Anger is a great signal to move up on the Care Personally dimension. It can be really difficult to Care Personally towards individuals that are angry, yelling, or hold power over you (like a boss or executive.)

If you're noticing that you're getting angry back, try to remember this: "When furious, get curious." Why is this person so mad? Could the feedback been delivered better? Do they simply disagree?

If they disagree, that's okay! We're having a conversation and we can discuss this further. Try to extend grace and avoid sending moral judgments based on their reaction. Emotions mean we care about this.

How can you pitch Radical Candor to other managers or executives?

Using data can really help, and thankfully Amy Edmondson has done fantastic research to prove the business case for psychological safety.

Often business leaders get worried that Radical Candor will cause too many changes. Make it more manageable by pointing out one thing to work on: "Let's work on soliciting feedback."

7

Coaching Career Excellence

Coaching plays a crucial role in motivating teammates, unlocking their potential, and driving outstanding outcomes. Unfortunately, many managers overlook the importance of coaching or lack the necessary skills to effectively coach their team members. Developing coaching skills and understanding career conversations can help you up-level your people.

In this chapter, we explore the significance of career coaching and provide actionable tips and techniques to help you navigate career growth conversations. We delve into the art of active listening, asking powerful questions, and providing guidance to foster growth and development. Use the worksheets in this chapter for better development conversations!
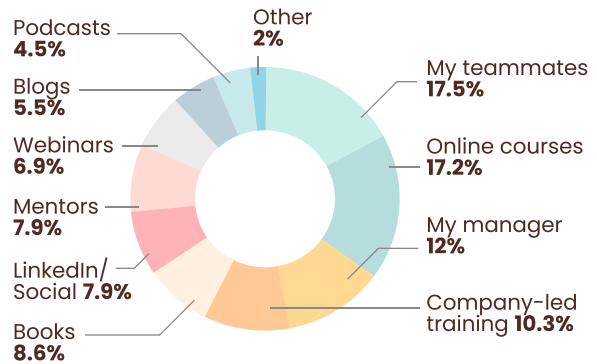
Looking at 2023 career **coaching & growth.**

We asked 100+ direct reports about how their growth opportunities and learning at their organization. Here's what they shared.

Individual contributors, what are your top sources for learning new skills at work?

1. My teammates
2. Online courses
3. My manager
4. Company-led trainings

Podcasts **4.5%**
Other **2%**
Blogs **5.5%**
Webinars **6.9%**
Mentors **7.9%**
LinkedIn/Social **7.9%**
Books **8.6%**
My teammates **17.5%**
Online courses **17.2%**
My manager **12%**
Company-led training **10.3%**

I feel satisfied with the career coaching I've received from my manager.

41%
reported feeling satisfied.

28%
reported feeling disappointed.

I feel satisfied with the career advancement opportunities available at my organization.

37%
reported feeling satisfied.

34%
reported feeling disappointed.

Key Leader Takeaway

Investing in your team's careers are one of the biggest team retention and engagement strategies managers can utilize.

Career Development
Conversations

How to talk about career development & growth areas

Leadership expert, Russ Laraway, shared this fantastic framework for guiding career conversations. Use these questions in your next development 1:1 to dig deeper.

"Starting with kindergarten, tell me about your life."

What do their pivots say?

What are their values?

What patterns emerge?

"What would you be doing at the peak of your career?"

What's their lighthouse?

What makes work fulfilling?

Define your team culture

"Do you want to be a manager or senior contributor?"

People vs. production?

What fits their personality?

What is high-performance?

Prepare for career growth conversations

Want some help with these important conversations? Kona's AI Coach has you covered. Prepare for conversations in a confidential Slack chat. Try Kona for free at https://heykona.com.

Career Development
Action Plan

🏃 Develop their role.

Adjust their responsibilities.

What new tasks can you give this person to help them grow in their current position?

Share more ownership.

Can you share some of your ownership to give them more scope and control?

Identify the gap.

What is the gap between their performance and the next promotion cycle?

🤝 Build their network.

What intros will help?

What introductions can you make to help boost their network and understanding?

Teach them new things.

Are they looking to learn about a new industry to function? Try to make introductions to help.

Set up the meeting.

Are you able to follow through and set up a meeting? Follow up and ask how it went.

⚙️ Define next steps.

The next promotion cycle.

What are clear next steps or improvement areas for them to work on?

Assign clear next steps.

Who owns these improvement tasks? By when? Who else needs to get involved?

Set quarterly goals.

Can you check in on a quarterly basis to see improvement here?

🤝 Enlist outside help.

Find courses & conferences.

What courses, conferences, and learning opportunities can your report index on?

Introduce a mentor.

Is there a particular mentor that can help them with this skill or technical capability?

Cover any skill gaps.

What other skill gaps are you noticing? How can they improve these areas well?

The best feedback I received...

We asked 100+ direct reports about the best feedback they had received from their manager. Here's what they shared.

Recognizing Impact

"You cultivate a safe space for our LGBTQ+ employees."

"You're a key, irreplaceable factor in our company culture."

Calling Out Strengths

"I think very highly of you and your skills. You also bring a very jovial energy to our team. I can see you becoming a manager in less than three years."

"You are someone I can go to with questions, even if they're not in your domain. You do a great job taking ownership on what's best for the company."

Support Well-being

"Focus on your mental health, you're going through a lot right now and we understand that."

"If you're overworked, sometimes you have to consciously let the ball drop for your teammates to recognize how overcapacity you are."

Constructive Feedback

"If some another party isn't doing what they need to, don't just wait around, figure how you can get it done."

"Some constructive feedback. You come off as arrogant, even though your teammates know you're not meaning to. Here are some of the ways this is showing up in our team meetings."

Encourage Onboardees

"You've made such an impressive change in your first couple of weeks in your new role. Thank you for being so structured and organized!"

"It's very rare that I get to meet someone that gets the idea and understanding of our product so quickly and adapts so well to our dynamic working environment!"

You'll notice that some of the most memorable pieces of feedback were praise. Acknowledge teammates!

The Power of Appreciation
Recognition calendar with ⚡ Stadium

Employee Appreciation Calendar

JAN
1 - New Year's Day
Lunar New Year
National Thank You Month

FEB
Black History Month
14 - Valentine's Day
17 - Acts of Kindness Week

MAR
Women's History Month
3 - Employee Appreciation Day
31 - Trans Day of Visibility

APR
Stress Awareness Month
17- National Volunteer Week
22 - Earth Day

MAY
AAPI Month
Mental Health Awareness Month
14 - Mother's Day

JUN
Pride Month
Father's Day
Summer Solstice

JUL
17 - World Emoji Day
23 - Parents' Day
27 - National Intern Day

AUG
Back to School Month
19 - World Humanitarian Day
26 - Women's Equality Day

SEP
Hispanic Heritage Month
5 - Labor Day
10 - Suicide Prevention Week

OCT
9 - Indigenous People's Day
10 - World Mental Health Day
31 - Halloween

NOV
1 - Dia de los Muertos
8 - World Kindness Week
28 - Giving Tuesday

DEC
Winter Solstice
Winter Holiday Season
31 - New Year's Eve

83% increase in employee engagement
when companies recognized wins at work.

4 parts of Employee Appreciation

Tangible Gifts
Personalize them and balance personal yet professional.

Acts of Appreciation
Support and praise can show employees that they matter.

Virtual/In-Person Activities
Give employees the chance to unwind outside of work.

Holistic Benefits
Your benefits should equip employees with what they need to thrive.
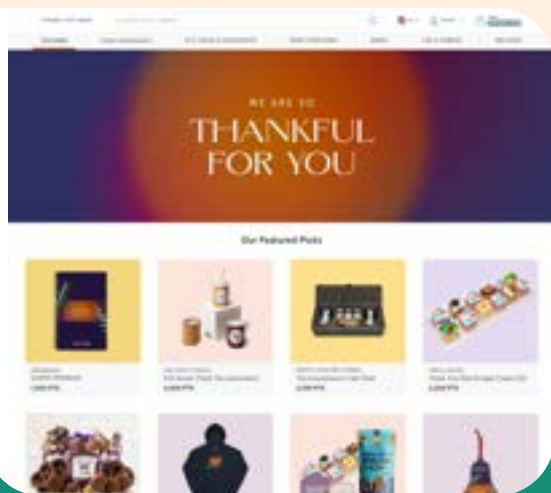
Create free online shops for anyone, anywhere

Use our ready-made shop templates to create a dedicated shop for gifting employees, new hires, and interns. Try creating a free shop at bystadium.com.

8

High-Performance & Empathy

Remote managers face unique pressures in driving outcomes, especially during times of economic uncertainty. Balancing the pursuit of high performance with empathy is essential to prevent burnout, maintain team morale, and foster a positive work environment. However, it can be unclear how to strike this balance and where to push harder or hold back.

In this chapter, we explore the intersection of high performance and empathy. We discuss strategies for setting clear expectations, providing support, and recognizing achievements. By incorporating empathy into your leadership approach, you can create an environment where your team members feel valued, understood, and motivated to excel.

How macroeconomics **affects performance**

We asked 100+ direct reports and 200+ managers about performance during the 2023 tech recession. Here's what they shared.

A recession is hitting the tech sector.

By July, over 838 tech companies laid off 216K employees in 2023. That already surpasses 2022, where 1058 tech companies had laid off 164K employees.

216K

employees laid off in 7 months of 2023.

"I feel that recent layoffs and macroeconomic changes add extra pressure to perform."

57%
managers agree.

58%
individual contributors agree.

"I have experienced frequent burnout symptoms in the last three months."

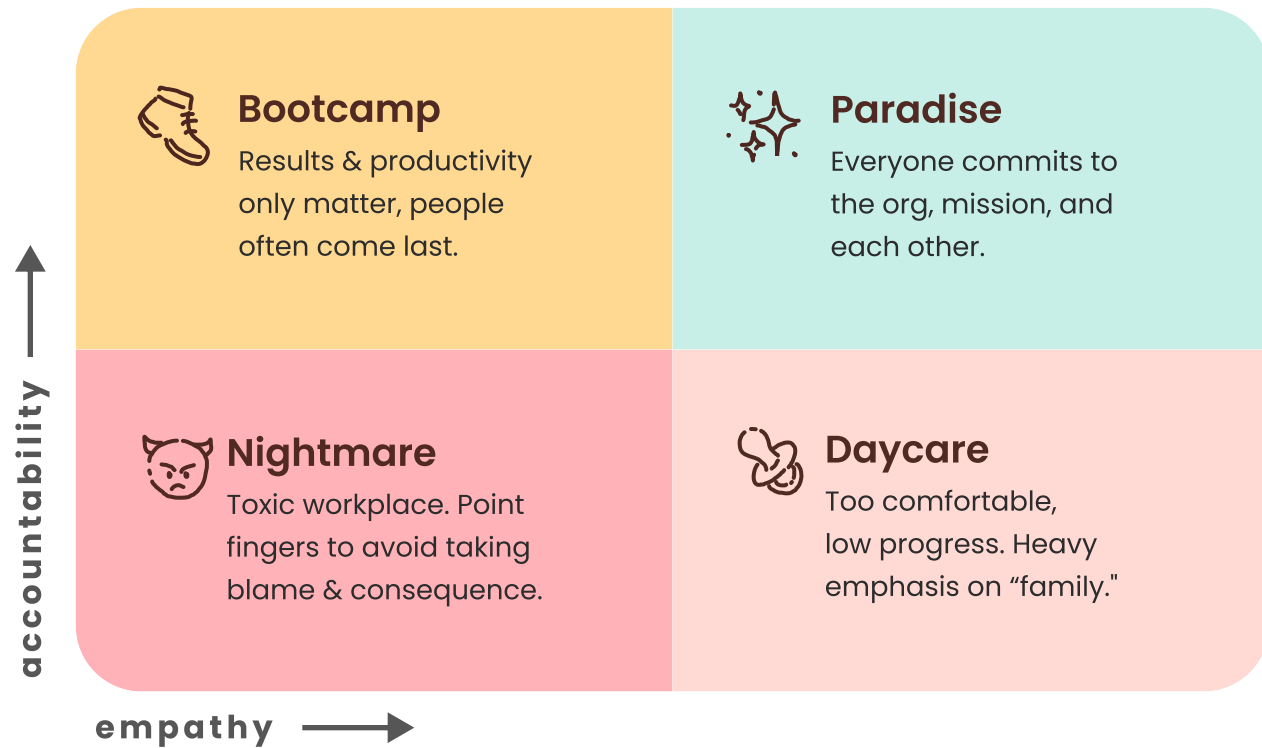### 73%
managers agree

66%
individual contributors agree

Key Leader Takeaway

With more pressure from macroeconomic conditions, teams are feeling the burn. It's more essential than ever to lead with empathy.

Empathy &
Accountability

accountability →

Bootcamp
Results & productivity only matter, people often come last.

Paradise
Everyone commits to the org, mission, and each other.

Nightmare
Toxic workplace. Point fingers to avoid taking blame & consequence.

Daycare
Too comfortable, low progress. Heavy emphasis on "family."

empathy →

Build Empathy

Give space & grace
Stuff happens. Know when to give space.

Be curious
Ask questions and try to understand.

Lead with vulnerability
Build trust by leading by example.

Build Accountability

Create action plans
Design clear steps forward for the team.

Assign owners
Know exactly who owns which task.

Check in regularly
Communicate your follow up cadence.

Prepare for performance conversations

Performance conversations can get nerve-wracking, especially when teammates are feeling pressured. Prepare for these crucial conversations with Kona's confidential AI coach. See https://heykona.com for details.

Common Performance
Problems & Fixes

Absenteeism or avoids work.

Clearly express concerns.

Express that you've noticed a change. Is this a one-time situation or a longer signal?

Reset clear expectations.

Set clear expectations around team processes and get their commitment to improve.

Give benefit of the doubt.

Your teammate may be having a hard time. Figure out what support they need.

Hostility, ego, aggression.

Share specific examples.

Be specific of when these acts occurred and point out any patterns or triggers.

Express the impact.

Show the impact on the affected teammates or culture if this continues.

No "winning" the convo.

Try to stay on the same side of the table and stay close to facts. Make a clear ask.

Low quality work.

Give task-specific feedback.

Point out exactly where the task wasn't executed properly and what needs improvement.

Reset clear expectations.

Ensure teammates know what's expected of them, by when, and who else is involved.

Design a path forward.

Create a clear plan forward, including check-ins or additional training.

Poor urgency & prioritization.

Talk about the impact.

Show the impact of this on other stakeholders. Emphasize the need for teamwork.
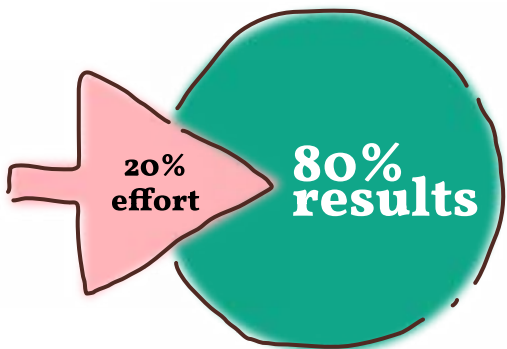
Help them prioritize.

Help them prioritize the macros of their schedule and create a framework they can use.

Define clear next steps.

Create an action plan including additional check-ins or reporting.
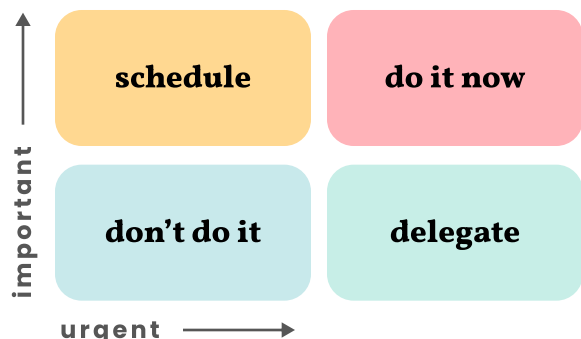
The Best Productivity
Frameworks

Pareto Principle

Also known as the 80/20 rule, this rule states that 80% of outcomes often come from 20% of causes. This can help teams prioritize their efforts.

Eisenhower Matrix

This matrix helps teammates prioritize along urgency and importance. The most important and urgent tasks should be done first.

Timeblocking

Time blocking is a strategy that bundles similar tasks together, reducing the amount of context switching needed between tasks.

Parkinson's Law

This law observes that work expands to fill the time needed for completion. This accounts for why procrastination sometimes leads to results.
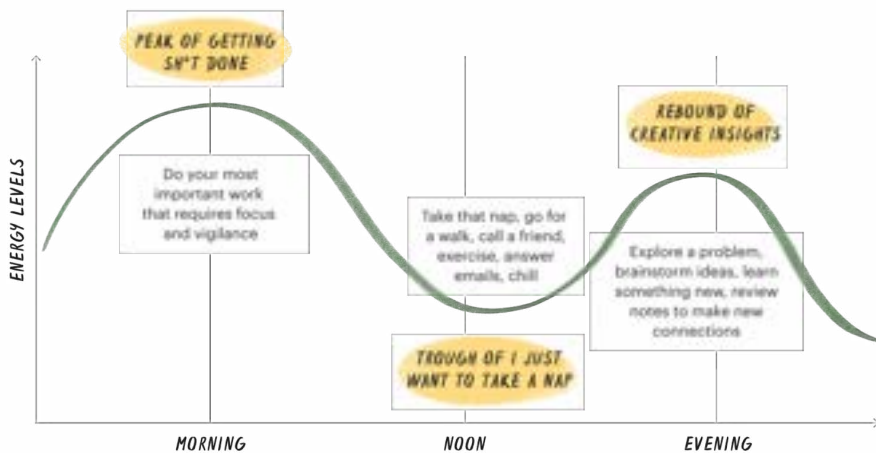
more time = less effort
less time = more effort

Productivity Inspiration
Tips from todoist

SCHEDULE YOUR ENERGY NOT YOUR TIME

PEAK OF GETTING SH*T DONE

Do your most important work that requires focus and vigilance

REBOUND OF CREATIVE INSIGHTS

Take that nap, go for a walk, call a friend, exercise, answer emails, chill

Explore a problem, brainstorm ideas, learn something new, review notes to make new connections

TROUGH OF I JUST WANT TO TAKE A NAP

ENERGY LEVELS

MORNING   NOON   EVENING

The perfect schedule

Eighty percent of the population has energy and mood fluctuations through the day. Picking the right task can help design your ideal schedule.

There are three zones to keep in mind:
- **Peak time:** when energy is highest.
- **Trough time:** when energy is lowest.
- **Rebound time:** when you're not at a peak, but able to focus.

Beat these common productivity myths:

Copy successful people.

Habits don't work for everyone and putting celebrities on a pedestal can backfire. Use them as inspiration, not idols!

Set big goals.

Hyper-focus on goals can take out the joy of pursuing them. Instead, focus on habits that are small and consistent.

Maximize every moment.

We only have about 3-4 highly productive hours per day. Design your day around when you feel most productive.

Optimize all your apps.

Productivity systems can have diminishing returns and can distract from the work itself. Be picky about the apps you use!

Get more done with Todoist

Todoist is an award-winning task management app that helps millions of people worldwide get organized, plan, collaborate, and enhance their productivity. The app's intuitive interface allows you to set due dates, add labels and priorities, and even collaborate with others to delegate effectively. Todoist is available on all major platforms at www.todoist.com

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Building Diverse Teams

Building successful teams hinges on creating a diverse and inclusive workforce. As a manager, you play a key role in the hiring process and have the opportunity to shape the composition of your team. However, hiring and onboarding wrong can have massive consequences for team culture, performance, and diversity.

In this chapter, we explore the importance of hiring diverse teams and provide practical tips to attract and retain diverse talent. We discuss strategies for creating an inclusive hiring process, onboarding teammates, and adapting to different working styles. By leveraging these insights, you can build a team that will reach new heights.
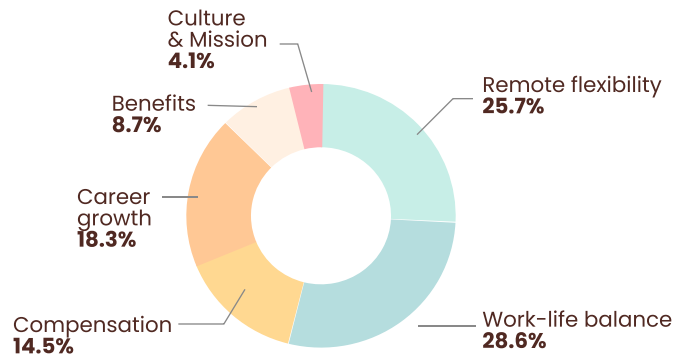
The current state of
hiring & diversity.

We asked 100+ direct reports and 200+ managers about diversity and job opportunities. Here's what they shared.

When it comes to assessing a job opportunity, my top three priorities are:

1. Work-life balance
2. Remote flexibility
3. Career growth

Culture & Mission **4.1%**

Benefits **8.7%**

Remote flexibility **25.7%**

Career growth **18.3%**

Compensation **14.5%**

Work-life balance **28.6%**

Diversity among middle managers

62%
identify as woman or non-binary

27%
identify as BIPOC

Diversity among Directors, VPs, and CXOs

49%
identify as woman or non-binary

60%
identify as BIPOC

Key Leader Takeaway

There appears to be a significant drop-off in gender diversity as leaders jump from middle management to higher rungs.

6 strategies for inclusive
hiring processes.

Diversity efforts aren't limited to your company's Head of DE&I. Everyday hiring practices have a huge impact on your company's diversity.

Define what DE&I means to your org.

Race, gender, neurodiversity, and veteran status are only some of the factors to consider.

Write inclusive job descriptions

Emphasize job responsibilities over job requirements to maximize your reach.

Expand where you're searching.

Candidates look for jobs beyond LinkedIn and Indeed. Use diverse job boards and creative methods.

Establish a diverse interview panel.

Reduce bias and improve candidate impressions with a diverse set of interviewers.

Watch out for algorithm bias.

Understand how your recruitment technology works and how it might be excluding candidates.

Measure your inclusive hiring.

Track the number of people from diverse backgrounds and how they progress through the funnel.

Diversity is heart work.

Understanding your own biases and participating in anti-racism education can help you further your efforts towards diversity!

Work-with-Me Guide
New Hire Template

in

Hello, I'm Stacy Kim.

Pronouns: she/her/hers

Role: Head of Sales

Email: stacy.kim@companyemail.com

LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/totallystacykim

My background.

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My interests.

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My goals.

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How I divide my day.

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How I communicate.

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How I like my meetings.

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How I give feedback.

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30-60-90 Day Plan & Examples

After 30 days...

☐ **Understand goals, mission, and OKRs**

Understand my team's goals and OKRs. Ask smart questions about the business.

☐ **Build product/department knowledge**

Dive into metrics, mock-ups, and product features to understand what we're selling.

☐ **Establish team connections**

Meet with teammates and stakeholders and build relationships! Get to know working styles.

☐ **Map out existing processes**

Map out existing processes and tools needed. Potentially identify areas of improvement.

After 60 days...

☐ **Make five sales calls a week**

Break down job responsibilities into SMART goals that I can easily measure!

☐ **Run first outbound campaign**

Design an outbound campaign that puts a helpful twist on existing campaigns.

☐ **Shadow and get teammate feedback**

Watch how other experts on the team are running key responsibilities. Ask for feedback.

☐ **Take notes on recorded calls**

Ask for recordings of previous calls, watch them in-depth, and take extensive notes.

After 90 days...

☐ **Develop and pitch project idea to manager**

Based on understanding of existing processes and audience, pitch an innovation.

☐ **Perform all core responsibilities**

Review the job description and ensure I'm hitting all expected functions of the role.

☐ **Track, analyze, and hit metrics**

Begin hitting targets that I was brought on for. Figure out the gap in my performance so far.

☐ **Get involved in company culture**

Look out for events and ERGs that I can participate in to get to know other coworkers.

Hiring in the Future of Work
Remote Talent Tips with Oyster

In Oyster's 2023 Employee Disillusionment report, 2500 knowledge workers opened up about their experiences. Oyster discovered what's driving employee disillusionment, and shares a blueprint for companies to "win back" their people.

Disillusionment (n.)

The condition of being disenchanted: the condition of being dissatisfied or defeated in the expectation of hope.

50%
of participants said their #1 priority is their mental health, career advancement is #5

75%
say taking time off is very important to their overall well-being

54%
of workers say their focus at work has changed over the last 12 months.

75%
say they find it hard to focus on work due to the cost-of-living crisis.

What managers can do to combat this

Good managers matter.
Managers make a huge difference to our working lives. It's important for managers to take care of employees in meaningful ways.

Culture is a mixed bag.
There is no "silver bullet" for culture problems. Teams are best off building it together, listening to their ideas, and taking action together.

Benefits aren't the whole story.
Benefits won't fix a disillusioned workforce. The difference comes from supportive managers, flexible working, and trust.

All for working less.
The antidote to disillusionment is working less. This doesn't mean less productivity though. Vacation and flexibility create win-wins.

Find top remote talent with Oyster.

Oyster is offering a 20% discount on the country's list price for the first 7 Team Members you hire through Oyster. The discounted rate will be applied for the first 12 months.
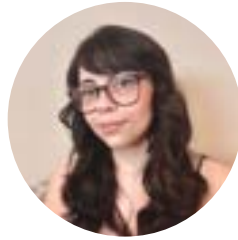
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Final Thoughts

Our Manager Survival Guide covers the tip of the iceberg when it comes to remote management and the various skills needed for leading teams. We owe the wisdom in here to the countless managers surveyed, experts that took the time to share their insights with us, and the countless researchers and leaders who documented their findings and shared them.

Remote leadership is tough, but if this guide goes to show anything, it's that you're rarely alone in these struggles. Every manager struggles to get leadership right and it's a never-ending journey of self-improvement and self-discovering. We're so thankful that you've taken the time to read The Manager Survival Guide, you're already well on your way to leading people-first.

Meet the Authors

Kona

Yen Tan
Co-Founder

Abbi Martinez
Founding Designer

Our Partners:

todoist

Stadium

evolution

Remote-First
Institute
Powered by Remote-How

WORKPLACELESS®

Oyster

Kona's founding team came together because we'd all been burned by remote work before. One fear-based culture. One failed startup from low morale. One isolating position. The three of us agreed that remote work could be better.

Without much experience ourselves, we looked to experts. We interviewed a hundred remote managers before writing a single line of code. We found that the human side–relationship building and team emotions–were the biggest asset and hurdle for remote work success.

Of course, we wouldn't have gotten far without our customers. Many of the remote managers we interviewed became our testers and first customers as we engineered a solution to these "squishier" problems. We tried a few solutions before landing on Kona. Kona is the manager co-pilot for remote teams, a Slack app that helps leaders and teams implement the habits that drive high performance and employee happiness.

We've raised $5M to date to build the manager co-pilot for remote teams. Our team is growing fast, but we're still sticking to our roots and staying close to customers. This guide compiles some of our favorite advice for remote managers.