

Practical tips on how to talk about levelling up to your team and boss

Know exactly what you need to do to get started

progresiOn

How to level up your team: The Ultimate guide

Overview of the best tools on the market to help

Cherry picked examples of how leading companies approach career levelling

Introduction

Starting a company brings a long list of challenges with it. From coming up with a great idea, to putting together a business plan, to getting funding - it's a lot to contend with! Once you've got lift off, finding the best team to make your new venture fly is the next priority.

When you're starting out, you gather the best people around you to help you build the best product you can. For a while, this is likely to be the focus, which usually means operating with a flat structure where everyone pitches in on everything.

However, once you and the team have a great product to offer, thoughts turn to scaling. As the company grows and processes become more complex, some people will naturally take more senior roles. Often, the best recruitment policy is to promote from within. This will require you to nurture your employees and help them develop professionally, so that they can level up their skills and take on more senior or expert roles.

Promoting from within and helping your employees grow can save you money on recruiting expensive external candidates. It also has the potential to keep your current team happy, which means they'll be less likely to leave. More recruitment savings!

There are several ways you can help your team expand their skill set and level up their knowledge of their fields. We've gathered some information, tips and examples to help you make the most of the talent you already have in your company.

Did you know?

**Over a third of
employees *will* leave
their jobs if they're
not offered upskilling.**

What you'll learn

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When levelling up is not a priority

- Advice for early stage start ups
- How to recognise when it's time to scale
- How to approach rapid growth

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What does levelling up mean to you?

- What career pathways are available
- How to level up by company size
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SECTION 3

Levelling up best practices

- How to align hiring and internal promotion
- Best practice tips
- How to develop junior talent
- How to turn senior staff members into leaders
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- Who needs to be involved and when
- Includes an actionable checklist of steps to level up your team

SECTION 4

Putting a game plan together

- How to level up your team according to your business needs
- Which questions to ask your employees
- The stages of building a personal development plan for your team
- How other companies are doing this
- The best tools on the market to help with your tasks

SECTION 1

When levelling up is not a priority

When you're starting out with a new company, a flat structure is the best way to get everyone pulling together in the same direction. You all know each other well and know how to best work together, so complicated hierarchy structures aren't needed.

At this stage, it's usual for people to get involved in all sorts of projects and elements of the business, and so job titles and seniority levels are immaterial. The goal is to build a great product or service and, to do that, empowering people to take ownership of the process is best.

The time to start introducing elements of hierarchy to the company usually comes when there's been a burst of growth, and the number of employees increases to the point where the founders can't effectively line manage each member of staff. This is when you need to start introducing team lead roles, to make the workload more manageable for everyone.

Founders and first employees are typically really bought into the core vision and care more about that than their salary or job title. Once you add more people, particularly a layer of management between the founders and people executing, or you bring on a lot of junior staff members, that's when you have to become clearer about where people's careers can go. At this stage, people may start asking questions about their future in the organisation and how they can advance to the next stage. If you don't offer opportunities for growth, you risk losing your best team members to other companies.





Even if people aren't directly asking for advancement opportunities, you might notice the work stagnating and your team members losing focus and direction. This is another sign it's time to start building up team structures, where some people have more responsibility for moving things forward.

Having the next level to aspire to will motivate people to put in their best work so that they can prove themselves up to the challenge. This is where recognising the top performers comes in, as well as offering development opportunities and training to those who require it. It's important to note that not everyone will necessarily be after a promotion. Some people will simply look to better their knowledge and expertise in their chosen field. Recognising this, whether through additional training, project assignment or recording successes, can give these employees a sense of accomplishment at mastering their skills.

That said, the process of building a company from the ground up is in itself a levelling up exercise. Even if you hire very knowledgeable and experienced people, they're still likely to learn a thing or two from helping you develop your product or service idea. In the early stages, that is sufficient. When it's time to grow, you'll hopefully have a grasp on which of your team is most suited and ready for leadership roles, or to move up the seniority level.

SECTION 2

What does levelling up mean to you?

Levelling up can mean different things to different people, and look very different from one organisation to another. Depending on the size of the business and the individual ambitions of each team member, levelling up can mean taking on a leadership role, gaining a diploma in their chosen field, learning new skills or even moving to a different department within the company.

Below is a breakdown of some of the most significant impactors.

Career path tracks

Often, the assumption is that in order to advance in your career, you must become a manager. But that is not the case. Many people are not suited to leadership roles, or are simply not interested in taking on the responsibility of managing another person's development.

For these people, developing their current skills and climbing up the career ladder in terms of expertise as an Individual Contributor (IC) seems a much more promising route.

How you approach levelling up a particular team member depends on his or her personal goals. The best way to find this out is to ask. If the employee isn't sure themselves what they want to achieve, there are a few ways you can help them find their way:





- This may seem obvious, but having regular chats with them can help get them talking about their ambitions. Sometimes, just discussing things out loud with another person can help make sense of them in our own heads.
- You can set them tasks, like making presentations, helping out with interviewing candidates for roles within the company, or working in a team with others on certain projects. All of these things can highlight their strengths and weaknesses, as well as help them figure out what kind of activities they enjoy.
- If the budget is available, you can send them on external training courses. Things like developing leadership skills, and the next level of expertise in their chosen field can help open their eyes to the possibilities available and guide them in the right direction.
- A great way to inspire people is to match them with people within the company that have already achieved what your team members aspire to. Whether a senior leader in the organisation, or someone who is at the top of their game as an individual contributor, being able to see what daily life looks like in these roles can be really valuable for more junior members of staff, and help them decide if what they think they want is really right for them.

Company size

The obvious implication here is that, in a larger organisation, there will be more roles available, including senior ones. This means managers will have more options when it comes to levelling up their team members in terms of seniority.

However, gaining more seniority is not the only way to level up. Extra training, mentorship programmes, skills development and a move to a different department can all be valid options too. Larger organisations still have the advantage here, as they have bigger budgets and more people available to share their skills with more junior members of staff. But smaller companies can offer opportunities big corporations can't.

In a small, early-stage start-up, employees usually wear lots of different hats and take on projects across different aspects of the business. This can often mean people move laterally as the company grows - from engineering to product management, for example. Founding team members also get the opportunity to create their own job roles as the team grows.

It's very tempting to look at complex progression frameworks like [Medium's Snowflake ↗](#) as a small team and look to set that up, when you only have a handful of folks using it. Equally, you may be running a large team, but craving simplicity, and so go for a linear framework (like [Buzzfeed's design framework ↗](#)), when you should be offering your team more optionality and opportunities to grow in a variety of ways.

As a general rule, if you're small enough to require every person on your team to be good at a very specific set of skills (e.g Javascript, or UI design), it makes most sense to set up a simple, linear career path plan for each employee.

Team size

Much like the size of the company, the size of the team will also determine the opportunities available to staff members.

It's important to mention here that not everyone responds the same way to feedback, people learn differently and manager-employee interactions are not a 'one size fits all' kind of thing.

The best thing you can do as a manager is to get to know your team members. The better you know them, and the more you build a relationship based on open communication and trust, the easier it will be for you to tailor your approach to the individual.

Of course, this is much easier to do with a smaller team than it is with a large one. Take your time, talk to your employees and, most importantly, remember that you are only human too. You cannot be expected to develop an in-depth knowledge of every team member's entire life story. That said, recognising certain sensitivities early can save you from awkward or difficult situations later on.

Whatever the size of your team, scheduling regular check-ins is a great way to keep on top of things. These are not supposed to be a 'tell me how you're meeting your KPIs' meeting. Check ins are more about seeing how the team member is doing on a more personal level. You can ask questions like:

- What have they enjoyed about the work since you last spoke?
- What has been less exciting?
- Are they happy with their current workload?
- Where do they see themselves advancing next?
- Is there anything in particular they would like to learn?
- Is there anyone in the company they would love to collaborate with?

Having these meetings regularly (at least once every quarter) will help you recognise unease in your employees early and stop grievances from developing into notice letters. It will also mean you can answer your employees' questions and grant them their wishes (within reason) to keep them happy. Like a line manager, genie and fairy godmother all rolled into one delightful package!

Another valuable resource for teams both large and small is collaboration. Even boring projects can be made more fun by sharing the load and brainstorming ideas on how to make everything work better. Ideas can come from the most unexpected places and your team members will be levelling up their skills by learning from their colleagues.

One thing to keep in mind is that office politics can sometimes be tricky little beasts, so make sure your employees know to come to you with any issues, but also that they're able to iron out issues within themselves in a way befitting a professional setting.

SECTION 3

Levelling up best practices

Aligning hiring and internal promotion

Employees are increasingly looking – and leaving – for career progression. Finding, recruiting and onboarding good team members is expensive and time consuming, so you'd be wise to keep your employees' career progression top of mind.

Aligning hiring and internal career growth makes sense for employers who want to help their team members level up and stay within the company.

Why is this important?

- You satisfy employees' future aspirations
- You are better equipped to help employees progress
- You can improve organisational structure
- You are in a better position to attract top talent
- You increase job satisfaction and retention
- You increase engagement
- You become a reputable employer

Best practice tips

As a manager, an important part of your role is to help your team grow and develop in their career. But this isn't always easy to do. Every person has different goals and needs and you end up having to juggle a lot of priorities at the same time.

There are things you can do to make the load a little easier to carry. Here are some best practice tips:

Be honest and transparent

Having a solid foundation of honesty and transparency is essential to building levelling-up plans. Being straightforward with team members builds trust, even if that sometimes involves sharing uncomfortable truths. You can then build on that trust and come up with ideas to aid growth together. Instead of hinting at a promotion that doesn't exist, you could help your team member gain experience in other ways, even if that means a lateral career move to another department.

Foster a collaborative environment

One of the most important aspects of helping your employees level up is maintaining contact with the team members concerned. You want the plan to be a result of a back-and-forth discussion between management and employee, so that everyone's plan can be tailored to their own ambitions and strengths.

Provide resources and support:

Planning out a team member's development on paper is useless unless you offer opportunities and resources along the way. Some examples of effective tools you can provide are:

- Pairing team members with mentors
- Offering training courses
- Getting team members involved in certain projects
- Help identifying skills gap
- Providing a budget for seminars, conferences or courses

Remember, different people will require different resources. Any resources provided should be suitable for each person's role and goals, helping them bring their career growth plans to fruition.

Measure growth as you go

Levelling up your team members is a process, and this takes time. It's important to record your employee's progress so that you can monitor when it's time for them to hit the next level of their career progression journey. You should also encourage your employees to keep note of their achievements and their skills as they progress. They can use this information when presenting their case for a promotion or raise.

Stay engaged

Helping your team members to level up their skills and their career progression can't be achieved in a single meeting. You can prove to your team members you are continually engaged in their career growth plan by pointing out opportunities throughout the year, congratulating team members when they accomplish a task, and correcting them if they make a mistake. Not only will this maintain growth momentum, but it'll contribute to a healthy employee-management relationship.

Developing junior talent

Everyone has to start somewhere, and we were all junior members of staff once. The key here is to set high expectations and challenge your junior employees, but at the same time, nurture them and help them learn and grow.

You might think that giving junior team members easy, low-pressure tasks is the best tactic, but ultimately they're likely to get bored and frustrated if they have no real work to do.

Tell them that the work will likely be challenging, but that you believe they can do it. If you don't actually believe that, then you're hiring the wrong people.

Alongside that, offer them support - whether that's extra training in areas they are less confident in, levelling up their existing skills, or mentorships from more experienced members of the team. With the right guidance and support, your juniors will soon become seniors, to the benefit of everyone involved.

Turning senior staff members into leaders

A capable, accomplished team leader is unlikely to just show up at your company's door. Trying to find one of these gems during a hiring process can be time-consuming and frustrating. A better way can be to help your existing team grow into leadership roles within the company. Levelling up employees who you see as ideal candidates for a leadership role is a great way of fully assessing their ability - you already know how they interact with their team, their ethos and their strengths.

Of course, transitioning an employee into a leadership role has its obstacles. After all, there is a difference between an employee being good at their current job, and an employee having leadership potential. But there are a few ways you can assess their compatibility:





- **Determine if the employee is a good fit for leadership.** Ideally, the employee you are working with should not only fit the responsibilities of the position, but their approach should align with your company's core values and ethos. They should also have a clear understanding of the company's expectations for the leadership role.
- **Start small and slowly make changes.** Once your employee has blossomed into a successful leader, they should be capable of influencing positive change. However, whilst you are helping them to transition into a leadership role, it may be wise to keep prior systems in place until they become more experienced. Regular feedback and close mentorships are great tools here. Starting small also means that senior level employees can learn and try new things without the risk of damaging company performance or making any permanent changes.
- **Allow room for creativity and growth.** You don't want your employee to feel boxed in too quickly, or feel as if they're already committed to something they haven't decided is the right fit. When the transitioning employees have gotten to know their new positions and have had time to get comfortable, they should be left to exercise their own creativity within the standard responsibilities. Seeing real changes getting made, thanks to their own input, can be a huge boost to a transitioning employee's confidence. Provide guidance. Providing meaningful guidance doesn't just mean the occasional pat on the back or one-off email. You may want to look into providing on-the-job training, personalised coaching sessions and networking opportunities. This doesn't mean solving all their challenges for them, but nudging them in the right direction, while letting them figure things out for themselves. Also, it'll be useful to check in on the team members the new leader is supervising. The employees they are responsible for will be a great source of information on how your employee interacts with their team.
- **Build leaders.** When transitioning an employee into a leadership role, you are doing a lot more than merely filling a job vacancy. You are changing the way they interact with their team and how they view themselves as a figure of authority. For example, you can help develop transitioning employees as people by focusing on things such as self-awareness, ownership mentality, how to motivate and support team members, and showing empathy.
- **Foster community and partnerships.** Encouraging a positive culture of inclusion and a sense of community will help everyone involved (like the transitioning employees, their peers, and existing leadership) get accustomed to the transition. Building partnerships with people already in leadership roles will also help to deepen a transitioning employee's understanding of your organisation. Developing relationships with other team leaders means your transitioning employee will understand the company's mission, important goals, and how their role impacts the success of the organisation.

Motivating employees

Helping your employees reach the next level in their career is great, but it doesn't replace looking after them in the here and now. What you don't want is for everyone to get so focused on future goals, that both you and your team get overwhelmed with pressure.

It's not always easy to keep team members motivated and engaged. Of course, as grown adults, it is up to your employees to make sure they turn up to work, both physically and mentally, and do their best to succeed.

That said, there are things you can do as a manager, and that the company can offer in general, that are likely to help keep your employees happy in their role. Happy employees are more productive, which benefits everyone in the workplace.

Flexibility

Offering flexibility, both in terms of working hours and location has become increasingly important in recent years. Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, this has become even more crucial if you want to attract the most talented people to your company.



Did you know?

**80% of U.S. workers
would turn down a
job that didn't offer
flexible hours.**



Wellbeing

This is another aspect that's been gaining more attention in recent years, and especially since the start of Covid. Burning the midnight oil is not something most employees are willing to do anymore, with money and big job titles no longer providing the incentive they used to. Most people now place their physical and mental health, as well as time with their loved ones, at the top of their priority list. Offering flexible working is a great way to address some of these concerns. You will also do well to remember that your team members' health - physical and otherwise - should also be at the top of your priority list. Working your employees into ill health will benefit no one in the long run.

Transparency

Honesty is an important part of any relationship, and professional relationships are no different. Whether that's open and honest feedback about an employee's work, or transparency when it comes to the type of opportunities you can offer them. Making false promises is the worst thing you can do in terms of building trust with your employees. Of course, honesty goes both ways. Knowing how to accept feedback from your team is just as important as knowing how to dish it out. If your employees know they can come to you with issues, they are more likely to feel safe in their working environment.

Learning

Even the most experienced and expert amongst us don't know everything. Offering your employees opportunities to learn and level up their skills is crucial to keeping them feeling fulfilled in their role. This doesn't necessarily mean expensive external courses - offering internal skill share and mentorship, as well as recommending useful resources, can be just as effective.

Did you know?

**59% millennial
respondants said
opportunities to
learn and grow are
important when
applying for a job.**

Who needs to be involved and when

The obvious answer is you, as a manager, and your team. The important thing here is communication.

Beyond the initial chat, where you develop and set up a plan of action, you should be checking in often. The conversations should be used to see where your employees are and whether where they want to go is still the same as it was the last time you spoke.

Talking about new opportunities, whether a new role, a new training course or a mentorship programme, should also be included in these regular catch ups.

If you are not the main decision maker in the company, you will also need to involve the senior leadership in conversations around hiring and growth plans. Budgets for any training and development courses will also need to be agreed. Make sure you are realistic when discussing opportunities for levelling up with your team. Promising something you can't deliver is almost guaranteed to lose you your employees' trust.

If you have an HR department, they might be the best people to go to with these questions. They will also be able to help with arranging mentorships, as they'll have a good overview of everyone's exact job role.

Levelling up prep checklist*Schedule talks with all employees*

- Questions to ask in the initial meeting:
- What do you enjoy most about your role?
- What aspects of the job are less interesting to you?
- Are there any specific areas you would like to improve or train in?
- Is this job what you expected it to be when you started? If not, how so?
- Is there anyone in the company you would be interested in learning from?
- Are there any different parts of the organisation you would like to know more about?
- What projects would you like to work on or be more involved in?
- What has been your professional and personal highlight this month?
- What do you most enjoy doing outside of work?
- What would you like to have learned or mastered by this time next year?
- Do you have any suggestions for how I can best support your career progression?

*Schedule a meeting with senior leadership*

Questions to ask senior leadership:

- What roles will be opening up in the business?
- What are the hiring plans for this?
- What progression do you need to see from team members?
- How do we balance this against other priorities?
- What resources are available?
- What would success look like?

✓ *Schedule a meeting with HR*

Questions to ask HR:

- How are we doing this right now?
- Is it done in the same way across the whole business?
- When it was last done, what worked well?
- What could have been done better?
- What resources are available for this?
- What would they like to see from this process?
- What would success look like for them?

✓ *Look up learning opportunities for the team. You can find some tools to help with this [here](#).*

✓ *Schedule regular 1-2-1s with employees (we recommend meeting at least once every quarter).*

Questions to ask in the check-in:

- What have they enjoyed about the work since you last spoke?
- What has been less exciting?
- Are they happy with their current workload?
- Where do they see themselves advancing next?
- Is there anything in particular they would like to learn?
- Is there anyone in the company they would love to collaborate with?

✓ *Employee survey.*

If you have the capacity and want to get company-wide feedback on how you're currently handling employee growth, there are tools that can make this a pain-free process. You can find a few suggestions [here](#).

✓ *Look up more best practice tips for managers. You can find guides and information about helping your team climb the career ladder in our [blog](#) and [library](#).*

SECTION 4

Putting a game plan together

As a manager, building a personal development plan with your employees is a great idea. A personal development plan, or PDP, is a document or file laying out a person's career goals. It defines where they would like to get to in their career and lists all the skills and experience they will need to get there.

Look at your business first

Supporting your employees is great, but ultimately it all needs to benefit the business. If you run a fintech startup, helping your Product Lead train as a psychologist, because that's what he really dreams of doing, makes no business or financial sense.

So, in order to have a better understanding of what it is your company needs from its team members, take a look at your own levelling up needs first. Where is your business currently and where is it heading? What skills do you need within the company for it to thrive and grow?

Do a gap analysis of these two points, and tailor your hiring plans to the findings. This will include internal mobility and the kind of up-skilling and training you should be offering your existing employees.

Once you know the requirements of your business, you can talk to your team members and see whether these align with their goals and ambitions.

Before you start those conversation, taking these actions can help focus the process:

- Looking at Job Descriptions for people in their current role
- Looking at team wide success criteria and identifying skills that would help you get there
- For new roles, look at key skills needed for them to be impactful
- Think clearly about the different expectations of skill accomplishment at different levels

Start by asking the right questions

As you prepare to discuss a team member's personal development plan, have some questions ready that would be useful for you in offering support. These can be different things, like:

- What do you enjoy most about your role?
- What aspects of the job are less interesting to you?
- Are there any specific areas you would like to improve or train in?
- Is this job what you expected it to be when you started? If not, how so?
- Is there anyone in the company you would be interested in learning from?
- Are there any different parts of the organisation you would like to know more about?
- What projects would you like to work on or be more involved in?
- What has been your professional and personal highlight this month?
- What do you most enjoy doing outside of work?
- What would you like to have learned or mastered by this time next year?
- Do you have any suggestions for how I can best support your career progression?

The stages of building a PDP

A good professional development plan can't be created in a hurry. Take the time to complete the different stages with your team:

- **Self reflection.** Every journey needs a starting point. By assessing where your employee currently is in their career, you can help them plan the next step. Make a list of their current duties and responsibilities, and the skills these require to excel. They will need to do some inward-gazing and be honest about what skills they are confident they already have a good grasp on, and which they need help mastering. Additionally, they should list the things they're passionate about, what they most enjoy about their current role, what they least enjoy and what transferable skills they have (this is especially important if they want to move to a different department or role).
- **Goal setting.** Now that you know where your team member is, it's time to talk about where they want to go. Everyone dreads the 'where do you see yourself in 5 years?' question at job interviews, but this is the time to think about it and answer it honestly. It's important to remember that climbing the career ladder doesn't necessarily mean taking on a managerial position. Growing as an expert in a certain field can be just as fulfilling. Make sure to present all possible career paths to your team.
- **Strategising.** When you have a start and end point, you can see what you and your team members need to do to get from A to B. Do they need specific training? If they want to become a manager, you could maybe send them on a course to develop leadership skills. Remember that it's not just external training that can help here - networking events, mentorship from within the organisation and time spent working with people from other departments can all be valuable resources.
- **Resource list.** When you've set out the exact steps your employee needs to take to advance, you'll need to have a think on your own and decide how you can best support them. What courses do you have access to? Can you get a discount by sending several members of your team on the same course? What budget are you working with? You may need to seek advice from upper management or other parts of the organisation for this. You can also set them questions regarding supporting your team members from within your organisation with mentorship and secondments.
- **Final timeline.** We love it when a plan comes together! When you've collected all the information above, you can put it all together and create a personal development plan for your team members, including details of their current role, their future goals and the training and support needed to get from one of the other. Assigning deadlines for achieving certain goals can also be helpful, as it will provide some focus and an actionable course of action.

Naturally, this plan needn't be set in stone. Plans and circumstances change, so it's perfectly possible for your employees' life plans to change as well. A professional development plan is a dynamic thing that can grow with the person it's attributed to.

How do other companies do this?

[Progression.fyi](#) ↗

If you want to see how other companies are structuring the progression frameworks for their employees, this is the place to look. There are dozens of examples available, including from household names like Monzo and Spotify. If you find a framework you particularly like, you can repurpose it to your own needs by inputting the levelling up plans for your own team into the template.

[Levels.fyi](#) ↗

This focuses more on salaries by location, company and job title. You can see what kind of remuneration you can expect in different roles and different levels of seniority, and see which companies pay the best. There's also the option of applying for paid internships, but this seems to be for North America based companies only.

What are the best tools to help with this?

Most professionals would immediately think of spreadsheets when it comes to creating complex plans, like what is required here. And that could be an answer for very small companies or teams.

However, larger organisations might end up swimming in an excel ocean, with no land in sight. Fortunately, there are several tools on the market that can make helping your team level up easier and more manageable.

Skills assessment tools

The SFIA Foundation (Skills Framework for the Information Age) has a lot of resources available, including their [collection of standard SFIA skill profiles](#) ↗ and [self-assessment guidelines](#). ↗

General career strength and aptitude tools

[123 Career Test](#) ↗ This is a short (5-10 minutes) assessment of your career personality, that can help determine the direction you (or your team members) should take. It works by getting you to choose your preferences out of images showing specific work activities.

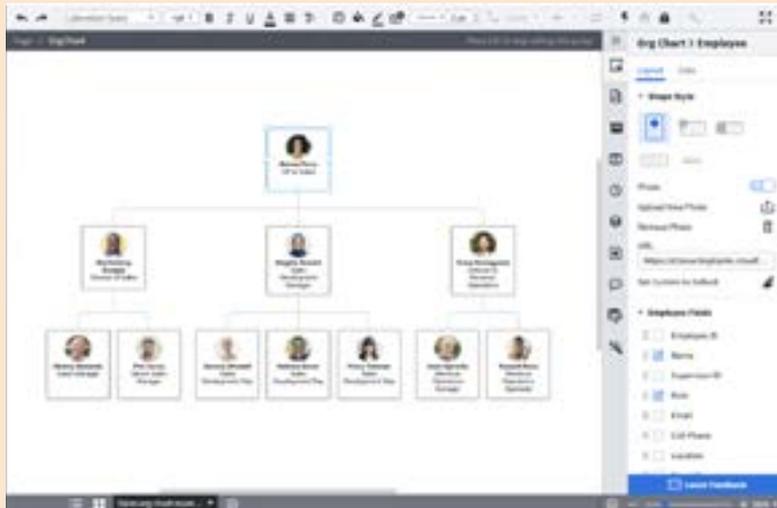
[Princeton Review Career Quiz](#) ↗ Very similar to the 123 test, this quiz also requires you to choose your preferences. However, this one uses sentences like 'I would rather be a newspaper editor' vs 'I would rather be a tax lawyer', and later asks personality related questions, like whether you agree with arguing a point when right and whether you like to bargain on a price. Note you'll have to create an account to be emailed your results.

[MAPP career test](#) ↗ The Motivational Appraisal Personal Potential helps you to figure out your career motivations, then matches you to both industries and specific careers from a database of over 1,000 roles. It's been taken by over 8 million people since 1995, is offered in six different languages, and has undergone reliability testing by psychologists.

[CliftonStrengths](#) ↗ (formally StrengthsFinder). If you're looking for a more heavy-duty tool and have the budget to play with, you might want to splash out on this tool. Starting at \$49.99, it uncovers your unique rank order of 34 CliftonStrengths themes, which explain the ways you most naturally think, feel and behave. Aimed at both team members and leaders, it can lead to enhanced engagements and increased productivity at work.

Organisation mapping tools

[Lucidchart](#) ↗ An easy to use diagramming application that teams can work on together.



[TLDRaw](#) ↗ This is a very cute tool, but you'll need actual drawing skills.



Employee engagement survey tools

[Tinypulse](#) ↗ This tool helps you set up employee surveys, then presents the results in an easy-to-digest format. If you like your analytics super detailed and presented in a very visual way, then this one's for you.

[Officevibe](#) ↗ An engagement and performance management tool, that allows you to understand what your employees need. This is built more for individual managers than HR teams and is very cute looking and fun for employees to use.

[Cultureamp](#) ↗ This is based more around general company culture, rather than specific work tasks. The survey results aim to help you to create a culture built around increasing employee happiness and engagement.

Learning management tools

If you want to track your employee's learning progress, these tools can offer this option:

[LearnAmp](#) ↗ New on the market, this LMS start-up lets you onboard new employees, upskill your team members and share knowledge within the team. They're used by big-name companies like Metro Bank and SpecSavers and consistently get 4+ stars (out of 5) reviews on consumer comparison sites like GetApp and Capterra.

[Tovuti LMS](#) ↗ There is a long list of features on offer here, including eLearning, administration tools, branding capabilities, event management and content creation (plus more). You can also conduct group lessons in a virtual classroom. The tool has a 4.6 stars rating on G2, and 4.8 stars on Gartner.

[360Learning](#) ↗ This tool focuses on collaborative learning. Features include course templates, video recording and answer correction. You can create a course in just 17 minutes, and have multiple editors working on it. The dashboard lets you keep track of employees' progress. Gartner gave 360Learning 4.7 stars out of 5.

[TalentLMS](#) ↗ This tool allows you to personalise your experience by matching your branding, and even localise your users' language. There's training available in various categories, including onboarding, sales, compliance and customer service. The reviews here are strong as well, with 4.4 stars on Gartner, and 4.6 on G2.

HR tools

[Charlie HR](#) ↗ This tool has evolved a lot since its launch, and includes functionality for logging days off, controlling access to other apps and tools, benefit management, performance reviews and engagement surveys.

[HiBob](#) ↗ A similar, but newer tool that lets you automate your paperwork, track working hours, manage performance and build an inclusive and engaging culture.

[Workday](#) ↗ This is an Enterprise Management Cloud lets you integrate your finance, HR and planning functionality into one place.

[Progression](#) ↗ Aimed at both HR teams and individual managers, it contains an extensive skills library to help you put together individual job specs for each role and show your team what they need to achieve to excel in their job.

OKR setting and tracking tools

[Koan](#) ↗ This tool lets you and your team set goals collaboratively. It encourages regular reflection on success and areas for improvement.

[Clickup](#) ↗ Presented as a productivity and project management tool, this features tasks, chats and docs, as well as goal setting functionality.

[Profit.co](#) ↗ A tool offering OKRs tracking, as well as employee engagement and performance and task management.

[15Five](#) ↗ Positioned as an HR tool, but useful for non-HR managers as well. This tool allows you to track OKRs, as well as manage training and coaching.

Employee recognition tools

[Slack](#) ↗ Many teams are already using this to recognise achievements, with things like weekly high-5s and shout-outs. Slack is a great communication tool, but things tend to get buried in the ether almost immediately. That makes it difficult to use these accomplishments as evidence in 1-2-1s and check-ins.

[HeyTaco](#) ↗ This takes the Hi-5 practice away from Slack and into its own space. Employees can send recognition to their team in the form of digital tacos, and add special gifts like sauces for people who've really gone the extra mile. These don't translate into edible regards, but team members can trade their tacos for things like an extra day off or a team party.

[Kudos](#) ↗ An employee engagement, culture, and analytics platform. It allows both management and peer recognition, which can be turned into points and rewards. Additionally, it provides analytics on culture, performance, equity, and inclusion, and lets you monitor how closely your employees align with your company's core values.

[Bonusly](#) ↗ This works by providing team members with a monthly allowance to give small bonuses to their colleagues in recognition of their help, a job well done or a special event (like a birthday). It's integrated with a long list of other apps, and employees can choose rewards from some of the most well-known brands around, or cash out with PayPal.

[Nectar](#) ↗ This allows both managers and peers to send special mentions to others within the company. You can send recognitions through Slack and Teams, as well as internally in the app. Recognised employees can choose rewards from companies like Amazon and gift cards, and you can also highlight special milestones, like employees' birthdays and work anniversaries.

[Guusto](#) ↗ Possibly the most comprehensive tool out of these examples, Guusto includes a recognition and rewards programme, as well as an onboarding programme, a wellness programme, goal setting and quarterly and annually awards. It also has the added bonus of providing one day of clean drinking water to a community who needs it for every gift sent through the app.

[Progression](#) ↗ This works differently to the examples above, as it doesn't offer peer-to-peer recognition or rewards in the shape of Starbucks drinks or gift cards. Progression allows managers to record Wins for their team members, which they can choose to recognise in any way they choose. It also gathers all of these achievements to make it easier for both manager and employee to use in 1-2-1s and performance reviews. The reward here can be a promotion or raise, which is really the ultimate goal of most employees.

Managing a team brings with it a lot of pressure - there are people who are literally relying on you to help them better themselves and their life. However, if you take on the advice you've read in this guide, and adapt it to suit your own personal style and your team's individual needs, there is nothing stopping you or your team from achieving all your goals.

Remember that however you choose to level up your team - through training, mentorship, promotion or lateral move within the organisation - these things take time. Stay engaged and keep channels of communication open throughout the year - both your team and your bottom line will thank you for it.

Here are a few more guides to help you be the best manager you can be:

[How to be a good manager and leader: The ultimate guide](#) ↗

[A manager's guide to personal development planning](#) ↗

[Creating a career growth plan: 6 best practices for managers](#) ↗

[6 tips for creating a more human workplace where employees thrive](#) ↗

[Leadership development: transitioning senior-level employees into leadership roles](#) ↗

[Aligning hiring and internal career growth - why it's essential](#) ↗

progression

progressionapp.com ↗