

Arrogance will trip you up

Do well enough in the day job and there is every chance that you'll be promoted to a managerial position — and have a whole new set of hazards to avoid. **Carly Chynoweth** investigates

MANY ambitious professionals spend the first part of their career getting very good at their jobs so that they are first in line when a management position opens up. Such a promotion is undoubtedly a great opportunity; it's also strewn with pitfalls. Here are some examples of what not to do when you take on your first management position:

Overreach yourself. Gary Morris, the chief executive of iLoaded.com, a video download site, was once part of a smallish department at a much bigger company when his employer took on a new project manager. Although it wasn't part of her remit, one of the first things she did was look at the department's budget and decide that it could cut costs. Rather than tell her boss, she went straight over his head. "The business looked at the figures, realised how much [the department was] spending on staffing — and got rid of her," Morris says. Best to stick to your own tasks and respect the chain of command.

Think that management means more of the same. Gareth English, a senior consultant at business psychologists OPP, once worked with a new sales manager who thought that managing a sales team meant that he had to hit all his team's targets himself. He ended up incredibly stressed. "It's that classic thing of people thinking that what got them that far will get them to the next stage," English says. "But he was no longer supposed to be making sales, he was supposed to be making sales people."

Try to stay everyone's best pal. This is a classic mistake, says Piers Hollier, a business psychologist at Getfeedback, a talent management company. "I was brought into a situation where the organisation had a team of people with a new manager who until recently had been ... one of the lads — everyone loved him," he says. But the new manager was so keen on staying friends with his former peers that when their performance slumped he was unable to tell them to pull their socks up. Then his bosses started to ask why targets were being missed, leaving the manager stressed and unhappy as he tried to protect his mates from criticism.

Hollier suggests that managers promoted above their peers should spend their first weeks thinking about what the new relationship means and how it will work. "You have to realise that you cannot be everyone's mate. Accept that things will be different and plan for it."

Be arrogant. Richard Kemp, the director of the executive development programme at Henley

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Management College, once had a colleague who went into her first management job confident that she knew the best way for her team to do their jobs — the way that she had done things before being promoted. Understandably, this riled the team, who made life so hard for her that she left. "Her error was [to say] that her way was the best and only way for them to do things rather than asking 'what is the best practice among us'," he says. "She says now that she thinks she lost [the team's respect] in her first two or three days."

Be afraid to stretch your people. In 1991 Greg Searle, a practice director at the consultancy Lane4, was a top-level rower. He'd just won a bronze medal at the world championships when his relatively new coach sat him down for a motivational chat. "He told us that he'd worked out that, as we'd won bronze this time, we could get a silver medal next time," Searle says. It was one of the most deflating things he could have said; Searle and his team-mates needed a manager who believed in their potential and recog-

nised their need to be challenged. "I think it was a bit of fear about putting his own neck on the line," he says. Searle's advice to others in this position? Get to know what motivates your team and don't be afraid to set them ambitious goals. Consider another of his coaches who, when the world champions beat Searle by 11 seconds, told him that he was within touching distance and could go on to become the best in the world. He did — Olympic gold.

Assume that your team members think like you. When Jonathan Chalcroft, a consultant at MaST, a training company, worked in marketing, he was motivated by the thrill of a good campaign with strong results for the client. In his first management role, he assumed that everyone else was too. "I learnt later that one of our very good people was actually motivated by opportunities to grow her own skills and knowledge," he says. All his motivational efforts had fallen on deaf ears; she moved to a company that recognised what drove her. Better, he says, to have assumed less and questioned more.