

# **THE STARTING IN MANAGEMENT POCKETBOOK**

***2nd Edition***

By Patrick Forsyth

*Drawings by Phil Hailstone*










"An excellent introduction for the new manager. Even as an experienced manager I gained useful insights and reminders from this book."

**Pippa Bourne, Head of Marketing and Business Development, Centre for Management Development**

"A wardrobe-sized subject brilliantly condensed into a pocket-sized book. Straightforward, sound advice - much of it simple common sense once you are made aware of it. There's no need to attend expensive training courses; this book covers the subject perfectly."

**Peter O'Riley, Learning & Development Manager, Ernst & Young**

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## STARTING AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON

### FIRST THINGS FIRST



Day one as a manager: a great deal to consider if you are moving into a new situation. You should:

- **See your new manager early on:** confirm your role and priorities and set up communications procedure between you both, especially to make clear how you check things during the first few days.
- **Arrange introductions to other key people:** if your work involves contacts with others (another department, people on the same level as you, etc), make sure you know them and begin to cultivate a relationship from the word go.
- **Meet your own staff:** (more of this anon).

Once again, remember that *you only get one chance to make a good first impression* – especially in a new environment. This may be a cliché, but it's true. So, consider the details and get them right. For example:

- Be sure to arrive on time (or a touch early)
- Look the part (think about what you wear)

## STARTING AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON



## MEET THE PEOPLE

Make a point of speaking to everyone on day one. If this is not possible (for example, someone may be away) set a time for an initial word. This can be informal (just a word at their desk) or in your office or meeting room. It needs to do various things:

- Act as a personal introduction
- Clarify, briefly, how you see their role (or how the other person sees it)
- Dispel any immediate fears the team member may have
- Answer any immediate questions (or say when they can and will be answered)
- Begin to show you as the kind of manager you want to be
- Ask questions and canvass opinion from the team (about how things are going, what might need change, challenges for the future, etc)

Keep these exchanges positive. Do not be afraid to put things on ice for the moment but be specific - *I can't answer that now; give me a day or two and I will say something about that when the whole team gets together.*

**Keep notes – and keep promises made during such conversations.**

STARTING AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON

## ASSESS THE PEOPLE



You need to begin to get the measure of people early on. Beware of thinking you are an expert psychologist, but do:

- Listen to what people say and how they say it
- Read between the lines
- Check immediately anything that is unclear
- Address (or note) any apparent hidden agendas
- Be aware of the informal communications channels as well as the hierarchical ones
- Note any areas requiring further investigation

You need to get to know people, their working methods, strengths and weaknesses. This cannot be done in five minutes; start early and handle it objectively.

**Beware of making and acting on unwarranted, instant assumptions about people.**



## STARTING AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON

### A FIRST STAFF MEETING



Get the team together as soon as possible, on the first day if you can. Remember, your meetings speak volumes about the kind of manager you are. Plan to make them really effective, therefore.

- Set the time and date to be as convenient to people as possible (you may need to check this with a new group)
- Organise the administration (place, refreshments, acting to stop interruptions, etc)
- Issue a clear agenda in advance
- Make sure the agenda is worthwhile, fits the time available and is useful for those attending
- Tell people what you expect from them (for instance, if someone is to give you a run down on their section or work, let them plan how to do it from your clear brief)

**Continued** 

STARTING AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON

## A FIRST STAFF MEETING



- Set start and finish times – and try to stick to them (you are setting up habits here so be sure to start *on time*)
- Give people a say – listen – make notes and be seen to take an interest in their views
- Make any action points clear (whether for the group or for individuals)
- Link to the next meeting (you might set a date)
- Confirm anything necessary in writing

**A meeting should motivate. People will wonder how your presence and style will affect them. Show them your impact will be beneficial. Spell out how.**



**STARTING AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON**

## **A FIRST STAFF MEETING**



The agenda for this first meeting will depend on your precise role. It is likely to include items such as:

- Your understanding of the team's role and immediate goals
- Any necessary explanations for change (eg: why you are now manager)
- The current position (progress, problems, opportunities)
- A chance to ask questions
- Details of, and reasons for, any immediate changes
- Reporting and communications procedures (eg: when and how you plan to keep in touch with individuals and the group)
- Action points on immediate operational issues

You should ask as much as inform, and not change existing procedures without good reasons (and knowing the facts). However logical changes may be, people will be suspicious (*Will it adversely affect me?*) so see, and explain things, from their point of view.

**Empathy is your greatest ally in the early stages of managing a group.**



STARTING AS YOU MEAN TO GO ON

## EARLY ISSUE: EARLY ACTION



Here is something to do as soon as possible (though always with a firm basis of information). Identify an issue waiting for attention and which is *seen as needing attention*. And sort it out.

Something where you can:

- Tell people you recognise it is a priority, one that must not be left
- Explain the basis of a decision
- Specify action to be taken (this could be a temporary measure)
- Take any additional action necessary (eg: confirm in writing, consult or advise further afield than your section)
- Get it off the department's *to do* list promptly and definitely

You need a task that is seen as due (overdue?) for action, one that will also be seen as well resolved – an example of how you mean to go on. **Select carefully, act in a considered fashion and this will not only clear an outstanding issue but will also say something positive about you.**

## About the Author

### Patrick Forsyth

Patrick runs Touchstone Training and Consultancy, an independent firm specialising in work in marketing, sales and management and communication skills. With more than twenty years experience as a consultant, he has worked with clients in a wide range of industries and in many different parts of the world. He also conducts courses for a number of management institutes.



He is the author of five other pocketbooks and a number of other successful business books including: *How to write Reports and Proposals*, *Successful Time Management*, *How to craft successful Business Presentations* and *Detox your Career*. He has books in 22 languages and writes regularly for a number of business journals.

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