

# Navigating the middle manager maze

**Toolkit 1** - Balancing priorities

# Prioritisation and time management

**Time pressures can be one of the most common causes of workplace stress. When we have too much to do in a short space of time, we can become overwhelmed, which can affect our concentration, productivity, and overall wellbeing. The key to managing this is to focus more time and energy into activities that are more essential to your success.**

## Balancing priorities

Middle managers often find themselves caught between the strategic vision set by top leadership and the operational realities faced by front-line employees. They must balance long-term goals with immediate demands, which can be stressful and overwhelming.










## The urgent vs important matrix

The Urgent vs Important Matrix is a well-known prioritisation tool to help you manage your time effectively by simply dividing tasks into four quadrants based on how urgent and/or important they are. Also known as the Eisenhower Principle, this popular tool can help you assess your use of time in the workplace and provide a useful framework to become better organised.

	Not urgent	Urgent
Important	<p><b>Important but not urgent</b></p> <p>Something needs to be done - but not right away</p> <p><b>Examples include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preparation &amp; planning</li> <li>• Relationship building</li> <li>• Coaching and developing team - building capability</li> <li>• Training &amp; development</li> </ul>	<p><b>Urgent and important</b></p> <p>Activities demand immediate attention, and we could suffer serious consequences if we don't react right now</p> <p><b>Examples include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crisis</li> <li>• Pressing problems that threaten objective</li> <li>• Deadline-driven projects, meetings, preparations</li> </ul>
Not important	<p><b>Neither important nor urgent</b></p> <p>Something that if we do, it will make no real impact on our lives ("busy work")</p> <p><b>Examples include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict between other team members</li> <li>• Time wasters</li> <li>• Junk email</li> </ul>	<p><b>Urgent but not important</b></p> <p>Something that seems to force us to action but after its all over we wonder why we had to deal with it</p> <p><b>Examples include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some emails/calls</li> <li>• Meeting other people's priorities or expectations</li> <li>• Some meetings</li> </ul>

# Putting it into practice:

Try this checklist to take yourself through the process of assessing how you use your time today and get yourself highly organised tomorrow. Like anything else this will take a little time to complete but the process will be worth the effort.

Start by making a list of all the things you're responsible for in your role and decide which quadrant they belong in.	
Assess how you spend your time against each of them over a one-to-two-week period, how much time do you spend on each?	
Choose your preferred method of organising yourself such as, your calendar, diary, MS Teams, or other tool.	
At this point it's worth reflecting on how proportionate and relevant the time you spent on each area has been relative to the quadrant.	
<p>Next, with a clearer understanding of how you spend your time, you should begin to plan in your IMPORTANT work, these could be things like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pressing problems that threaten an objective</li> <li>• Deadline-driven projects</li> <li>• Preparation and planning</li> <li>• Relationship building</li> <li>• Coaching and developing teams</li> <li>• Training and development</li> </ul>	
<p>The next step is to address the NOT URGENT and NOT IMPORTANT work. You can do this by filtering each task through the five Ds.</p> <div>  Can it be <b>delegated</b>  Can you ditch it  Can you defer it  Can you diarise it  Can you do it now </div>	
<p>Bonus TIP! We know that we sometimes procrastinate around tasks, especially when our roles are so busy and complex. Try these to help you overcome the paralysis of procrastination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check your planning - does the task feel too big? Chunk it up into smaller steps.</li> <li>• Confront your fears - count to five and before you get to five, just start the task without thinking about the difficulty, size or fear.</li> <li>• Find your motivation - reflect on what is blocking you from getting going and turn this into a motivator.</li> </ul>	

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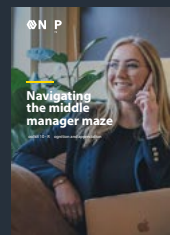
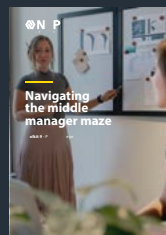
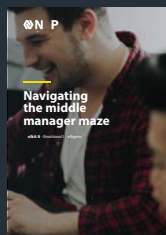
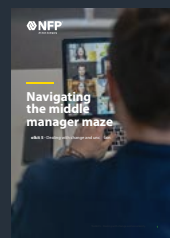
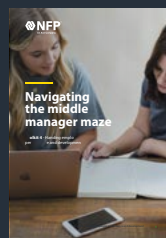
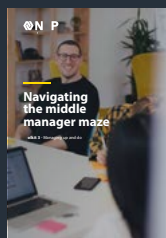
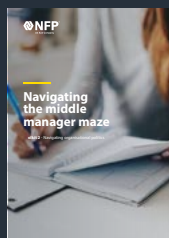
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# Navigating the middle manager maze

**Toolkit 2** - Navigating organisational politics



# Stakeholder mapping

**The role of a middle manager or leader is clearly complex, not least in recognising the need to navigate challenging organisational politics. Operating in the middle layer of the organisational hierarchy means middle managers are commonly tasked with ‘keeping the peace’ in the face of power struggles, conflicts of interest and office politics, all of which are tricky to navigate and resolve.**

## Navigating organisational politics

Middle managers also need to build alliances, manage relationships, and influence decisions often without direct authority. To do this, our starting point must be understanding our stakeholders, their challenges, what’s important to them, and their personal preferences relating to your interactions with them.

There are a number of tools and techniques freely available to help you understand your own stakeholder map, most coming from the world of project management. Some of these tools that are worth looking at are:

- Salience Model
- Influence – Interest Grid
- Power – Interest Grid



## The Influence Interest Grid

The Influence Interest Grid is one of the simplest ways to map your stakeholders, help you reflect on their needs and choose how to treat each group. This could be true for day-to-day workplace relationships, specific projects, or understanding the politics of the organisational landscape.

	Less interested	Highly interested
High influencer	<b>High influence, less interested</b> <b>KEEP FULFILLED</b> Work with these stakeholders to meet their needs, but not over communicate with them.	<b>High influence, highly interested</b> <b>MANAGE CLOSELY</b> Fully engage these people, and make the highest effort to understand, work with, and involve them.
Low influencer	<b>Low influence, less interested</b> <b>LOW EFFORT</b> Monitor these people, but don't spend too much time and effort trying to engage them.	<b>Low influence, highly interested</b> <b>KEEP INFORMED</b> Stay connected to these people; while their influence may be low, their level of interest may be useful.





# Putting it into practice:

Complete this checklist to understand how you can navigate organisational politics and harness relationships effectively.

<p><b>List your stakeholders:</b> This could be your immediate manager, senior leadership, external bodies, your team, customers, suppliers, or anybody who has an interest in or is affected by your work.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Understand your stakeholders:</b> Reflect on the following and don't be afraid of asking them directly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What interests drive them? Are the financial or emotional interests that individuals hold regarding the outcomes within your organisation favourable or unfavourable?</li> <li>• What motivates them most? Understanding their drivers can shed light on their actions.</li> <li>• Desired information and communication: Identify the information they seek from you and how they want it delivered.</li> <li>• Perceptions of your work: What is their current opinion of your contributions? Is this opinion informed by accurate data?</li> <li>• Influencers and stakeholders: Who shapes their opinions in general, and do these influencers become critical stakeholders in their own right? Likewise, do the secondary individuals your stakeholders influence also become stakeholders?</li> <li>• Turning sceptics into supporters: If their initial stance isn't positive, what strategies can win their support?</li> <li>• Managing opposition: If winning them over seems unlikely, how will you navigate their opposition?</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Map your stakeholders:</b> Use the grid to map your stakeholders into the 4 quadrants. You can then also use coding (a colour or ABC rating) to show the level of relationship you already have with those stakeholders, helping inform you of who you need to build relationships with and influence more or less.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Bonus tips to help navigate organisational politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Build a network of allies:</b> Having a diverse network across different departments and levels can provide you with broader perspectives and support when needed.</li> <li>• <b>Understand the power dynamics:</b> Recognise who holds influence and decision-making power within the organisation and respect these dynamics while advocating for your team's interests.</li> <li>• <b>Communicate transparently:</b> Clearly communicate organisational changes and decisions to keep your team informed.</li> </ul>	

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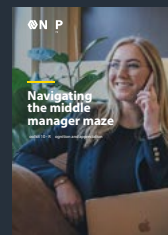
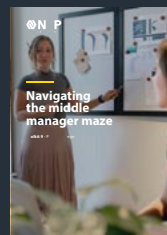
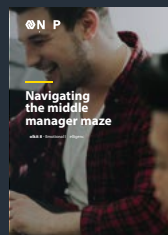
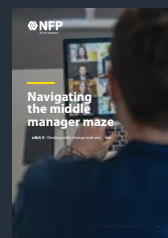
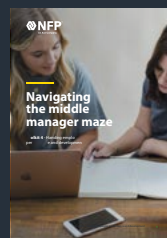
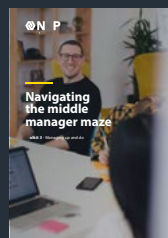
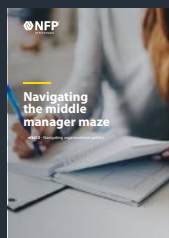
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# Navigating the middle manager maze

**Toolkit 3** - Managing 'up and down'



# Managing 'up and down'

Another main responsibility for middle managers is translating high-level strategies into actionable plans for their teams. Not only must they effectively communicate upward to senior leaders, but they must also provide guidance and support 'down' the hierarchy to their direct reports. Understanding different ways people might operate and perceive the same information can help with influencing and building rapport.

## Thinking patterns (Meta programmes)

We draw on the work of Shelle Rose Charvet, author of *Words that Change Minds*, and her deep exploration of 'Meta-programmes' - 'Meta' meaning above or over-arching, and 'programs' being habitual ways of thinking and acting. They are continuums of thinking and behaving that run from one extreme to another.

Big picture	Detail
Towards	Away from
Options	Procedures
Internally reference	Externally referenced
Similarity	Difference
People	Task
Planned	Last minute

## Application: Why use Meta programmes?

Meta programmes can help you:

- Understand how to communicate with people and influence them
- Build good rapport
- Convince people of a certain task, proposal or opinion in an honest way
- Take into account the way in which others experience reality, allowing you to build more acceptance for how someone acts
- Have more understanding for others in collaboration situations, allowing you to make targeted changes to the working method
- Maximise the use of other people's capabilities.

## How to use Meta programmes



### Step 1

Map where you are on the continuum for each element of the model



### Step 2

Map your key stakeholders based upon what you know of them already



### Step 3

Reflect on where there is similarity and where there is difference and whether that enhances or challenges your relationship? What might you be assuming about your stakeholder?



### Step 4

Set some tangible actions for how you might bridge any gaps/ differences based upon what you have learned.

## Thinking styles

To build on the meta programme insights, it's important to familiarise yourself with the wide array of 'Thinking Styles' and the key characteristics of each, to help you identify where members of your team may fall and understand how to accommodate for their styles of thinking.

For example, someone can be a **Big Picture** person or a **Detail** person. A **Big Picture** person wants an overview, to see things overall in big 'chunks' of information, compared to a **Detail** person, who wants precise, detailed, smaller chunks of information. If you are a **Detail** person and need to influence a **Big Picture** thinker, summarise your information into themes and save the detail, your 'workings' for if it is needed.

Here is an explanation for the other core meta programmes:

A **Towards** thinking style knows what they want and how to frame it, e.g. "I want a new job that is fulfilling, uses my skills to the maximum and in which I can learn and grow". Compared to an **Away from** thinker, who know what they don't want and how to frame it as a set of problems to be solved, e.g. "I don't want a new job that gets me out of my comfort zone, that doesn't use the skills I have and gives me challenges I can't face".

An **Options** thinking style looks at alternative ways of doing things, compared to a **Procedures** thinking style, who wants to follow set and proven methods.

An **Internally referenced** thinking style will have their own internal standards, criteria and evaluations - they are their own judges. Compared to an **Externally referenced** thinking style who draws conclusions based on others' reactions.

A **Similarity** thinking style wants the world to stay the same and can go decades before looking for change. Compared to the **Difference** thinking style, which will want change to be constant and drastic - ie every 1-2 years - to keep things different and interesting.

A **Task** thinking style focuses first on what is to be done, compared to a **People** thinking style who focuses first on who is there to do it and how to work with them. They focus on feelings and thoughts about themselves and others.

A **Planned** thinking style has an ordered sense of time and likes to plan in advance, compared to a **Last-minute** thinking style, where time is in the moment. They will be spontaneous and often do their best work when deadlines are fast approaching.



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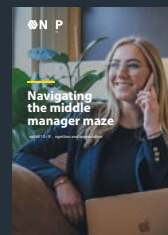
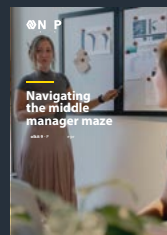
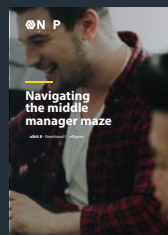
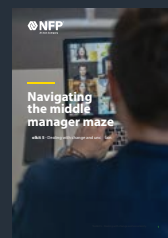
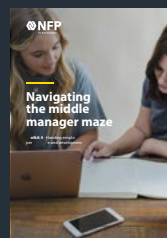
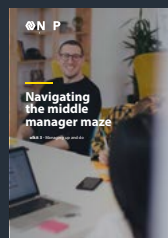
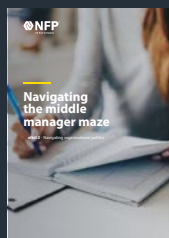
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# Navigating the middle manager maze

**Toolkit 4** - Handling employee  
performance and development





# Handling employee performance and development

**Another key responsibility of middle managers is the crucial role they play in coaching, mentoring, and developing their teams. Balancing performance evaluations, career growth, skill development and wellbeing can be challenging. By using the most appropriate style of communication, you can unlock potential and development.**

## The leadership continuum

The Leadership continuum is a five-point range of management and communication styles, ranging from 'Tell', where you give instructions, through to 'Role Modelling', where you inspire others through your own actions and behaviours.





It helps to think about these as a continuum, where at one end you have a 'push' style, required for managing tasks and people to standards and boundaries, through to a 'pull' leadership style of inspiring, setting direction, and demonstrating that through our actions. Each style has its value to certain people and in certain situations, so identifying the appropriate management style depending on the needs of the situation and the people involved is useful in helping your team members perform well.

Telling	Teaching	Mentoring	Coaching	Role-modelling
<b>Setting and maintaining boundaries and giving clarity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision for company</li> <li>• Policies and procedures</li> <li>• Standards</li> <li>• Principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job descriptions</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Objectives</li> </ul>	<b>Creating consistency of delivery and performance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing solutions</li> <li>• Demonstrating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training monitoring</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Measurement</li> </ul>	<b>Sharing experience and encouraging growth and broadening</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advising</li> <li>• Guiding</li> <li>• Sharing experience</li> <li>• Considering wider system and perspectives</li> <li>• Dissolving barriers</li> </ul>	<b>Enabling own thinking and transferring responsibility and ownership</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling thinking</li> <li>• Creating outcomes</li> <li>• Questioning</li> <li>• Listening</li> <li>• Observing and playing back working on options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple perspectives</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<b>Embodying and inspiring direction of travel</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspiring</li> <li>• Story-telling</li> <li>• Metaphor</li> <li>• Setting direction</li> <li>• Modelling behaviour - using body language, voice and actions for impact</li> </ul>
To be used when your employee needs precise instructions, rules, and boundaries	Useful for new employees or where it is a new role to convey how things are done	To be used when you need to add your experience, ideas and advice	To be used when you want to enable performance, creative thinking, or coming up with their own solutions	Being the success that you want to see in your people

# Putting it into practice:

## Top tip 1

Notice which styles you use often. Are there any that you avoid or tend not to use? Developing your own range of communication styles will help you use the appropriate style depending on the person or situation that you're dealing with. The skill is in experimenting and learning with different and appropriate styles.

## Top tip 2

In most cases, using a coaching approach can unlock potential in your employees and encourage their development faster than the more 'push' styles. So, our top tip is to experiment with coaching, particularly if this is a skill you don't often use - try it and see the difference.

The five core skills for coaching you will need, are:

**Listening and paying attention:** Avoid the urge to interrupt or add your own comments until the person has finished; use active listening to show you are really paying attention

**Open questioning:** Ask relevant and inciteful open questions to help people deepen their thinking and come up with their own solution. Open questions encourage someone to enhance their thought process about the issue. An open question might be 'how did you feel about that', 'what do you think went wrong last time', or 'what would you do differently next time'

**Playing back:** Confirm what you have heard and what you think you understand to help people hear their message in a different way, which can add clarity. Playing back or 'paraphrasing' helps show that you're listening and understanding their issue and helps build trust.

**Providing accountability:** Provide a sense of responsibility and commitment to take consistent action towards goals and outcomes. 'What could you do differently', 'what's your next step' or 'what support do you need from me' are great questions to ground into action.

**Encouraging momentum:** 'When will you do this?' and 'what next?' are great questions to encourage momentum and further development

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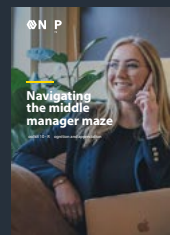
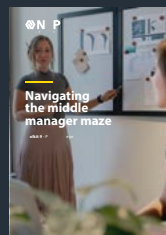
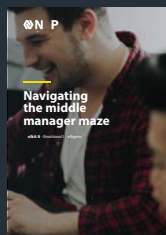
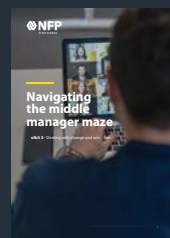
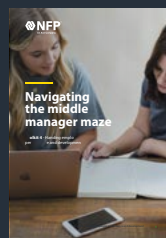
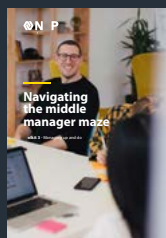
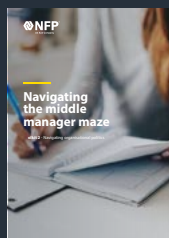
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# Navigating the middle manager maze

**Toolkit 5** - Dealing with change and uncertainty

# Dealing with change and uncertainty

**Change, like waves, never stops; it can be large or small, fast or slow, but it is continuous. Much like waves, change also comes at varying speeds and intensities, and therefore can have different impacts on us. As humans we like predictability as it gives us a sense of control, but the fact is that life doesn't always run smoothly, and the sea is not always calm.**

Middle managers are often seen as 'change agents', responsible for implementing organisational changes and supporting their people through change, often facing resistance. If managers can understand the emotional transition of change, they can better support their people through the process and keep their teams contributing positively to the organisation.

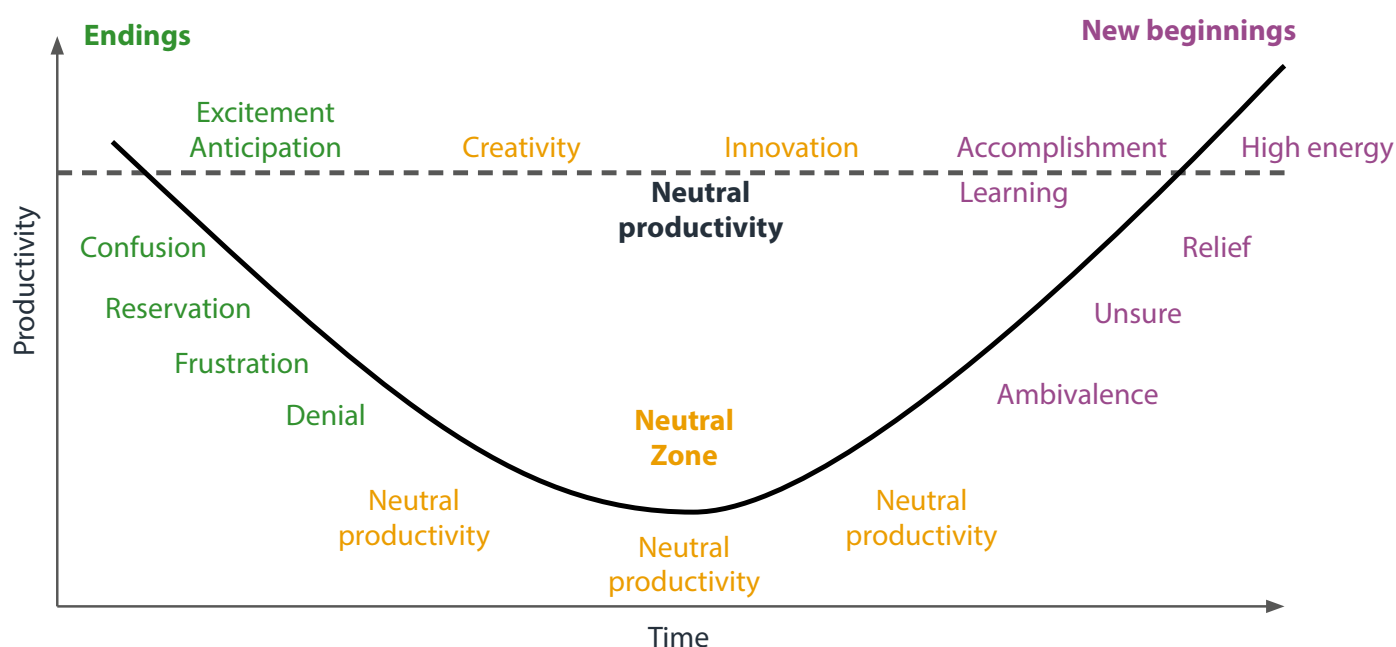


## Managing transitions, William Bridges

Change is something that happens to people even if they don't agree with it. Transition, on the other hand, is internal: it's what happens in people's minds as they go through change. Change can happen very quickly, while emotional transition usually occurs more slowly.

The model below helps you understand the emotions attached to personal transitions, and that different people will have different levels of emotional reaction depending on their different personalities and life experiences. It's also important to recognise that as people move through the phases their productivity can naturally reduce depending on the nature of the change and the individual impact on them.

### Change and emotional transition



### Things to consider:

- Identify where you think your team are individually on the transition curve and what emotions are they feeling.
- Use coaching skills and questions to promote dialogue to explore and identify what will move your people forward.
- Maintain regular and clear dialogue with your people throughout the change.

# Putting it into practice:

## Stage 1 - Endings zone

This first phase of transition begins when people identify what they are losing as a result of change and learn how to manage and adjust to these losses.

### Questions to promote conversation

- How do you feel about the change?
- What elements of the change are unclear for you?
- What excites you about the change?
- What would help you feel less concerned about the change?

## Stage 2 - Neutral zone

When the old is gone but the new isn't fully operational, that is when the critical psychological realignments and re patterning take place. It is the very core of the transition process. People are in flux and may feel confusion and distress, so what support may they need for this?

### Questions to promote conversation

- What keeps you from being excited about this change?
- What questions do you have about the change?
- How do you think this change will impact you personally?
- What are you worried about?

## Stage 3 - New beginnings

Beginnings are marked by a release of energy in a new direction and involve new understandings, values, and attitudes. Well-managed transitions reorientate and renew people, allowing them to establish new roles with an understanding of their purpose, the part they play, and how to contribute and participate most effectively.

### Questions to promote conversation

- What do you want to ensure we continue to do (relative to this change)?
- What will keep you energized (relative to this change)?
- What concerns did you have about the change that you would describe now as "nothing to have worried about"?
- What are you most proud of (relative to your role in this change)?



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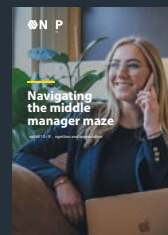
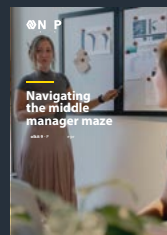
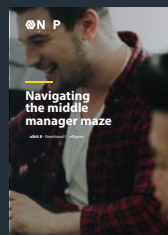
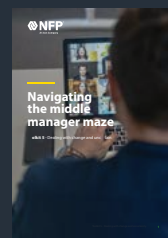
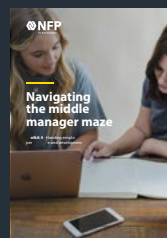
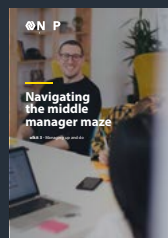
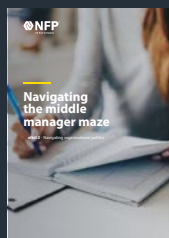
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# Navigating the middle manager maze

**Toolkit 6** - Communication challenges

# Communication challenges

**Communication is one of the single most critical things to get right as a middle manager. There are very few more effective substitutions for building and maintaining strong relationships, particularly through periods of change.**

Middle managers serve as a link between senior leadership and front-line employees, which can be a challenging position because of the potentially stark differences in communication needed between these two sets of colleagues. Effective communication upward and downward is essential, but misalignment can lead to confusion and frustration, making this a high stakes 'balancing act' at times.

## Style characteristics

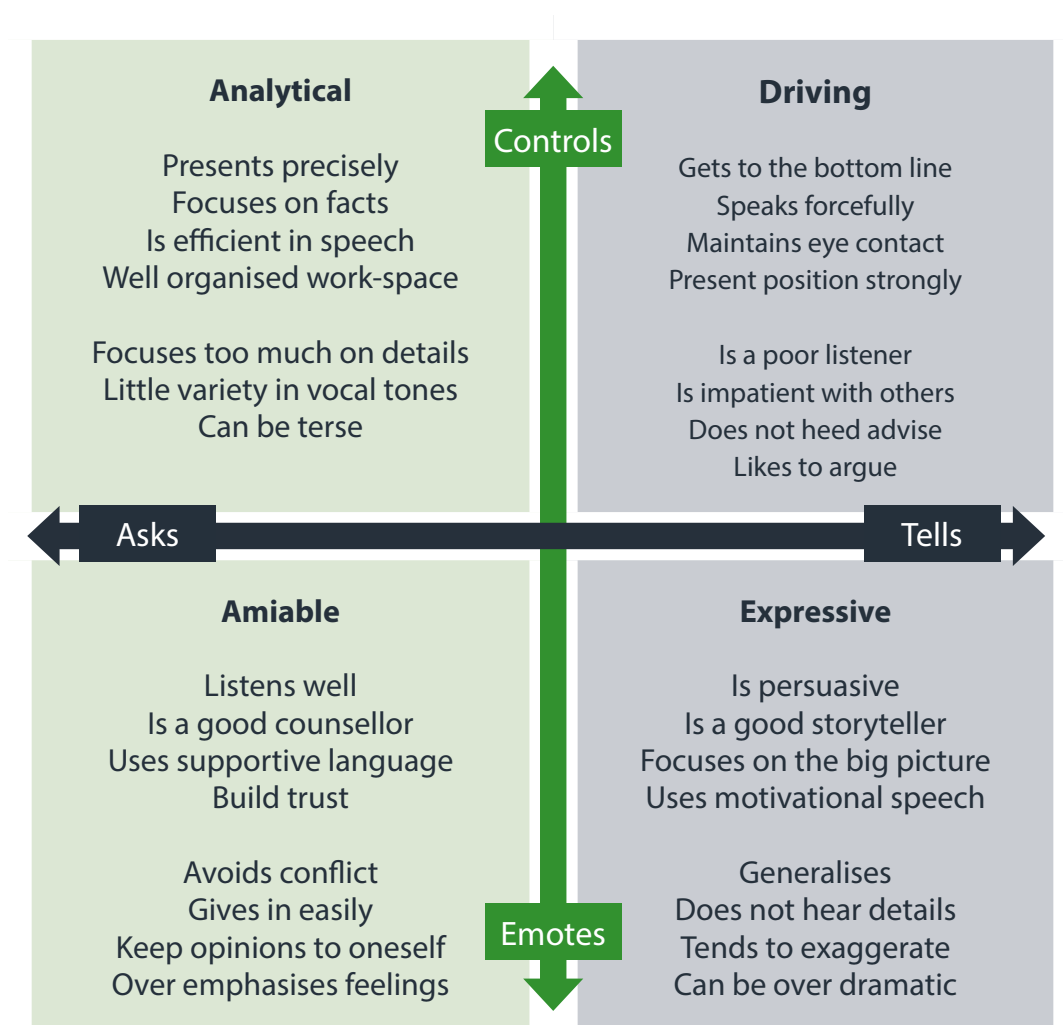
Analytical	Data	Driving	Tasks
<b>Needs you to be:</b> <b>Comms process:</b> <b>When challenged:</b> <b>Seeks:</b> <b>Priority:</b> <b>Fears:</b> <b>Decisions are:</b> <b>Measures success:</b>	Precise Thinking then talk Avoids - disconnects Accuracy The process Being wrong Slow & deliberate Accuracy, precision	<b>Needs you to be:</b> <b>Comms process:</b> <b>When challenged:</b> <b>Seeks:</b> <b>Priority:</b> <b>Fears:</b> <b>Decisions are:</b> <b>Measures success:</b>	Pertinent Action independent Dictates - controls Productivity The results Loss of control Fast & decisive Results, progress
Amiable	People	Expressive	Ideas
<b>Needs you to be:</b> <b>Comms process:</b> <b>When challenged:</b> <b>Seeks:</b> <b>Priority:</b> <b>Fears:</b> <b>Decisions are:</b> <b>Measures success:</b>	Pleasant Talk with others Acquiesce - gives in Attention Maintaining relationships Confusion Slow & considered Harmony, rapport	<b>Needs you to be:</b> <b>Comms process:</b> <b>When challenged:</b> <b>Seeks:</b> <b>Priority:</b> <b>Fears:</b> <b>Decisions are:</b> <b>Measures success:</b>	Stimulating Brainstorm then action Criticise - sarcasm Recognition Interacting with others Loss of influence Fast & spontaneous Esteem, appreciation

## Social styles - reference model

The Social Style model categorises people according to personality traits and how they interact with others.

It can be very useful in improving communications when you want to improve rapport or there are style differences. Identifying your own style and then that of someone else can enable you to adapt and communicate in the way they prefer, improving your effectiveness and deepening relationships.

The model is based on two dimensions, assertiveness and responsiveness, and categorises social styles into 4 buckets:





# Putting it into practice:

## Know yourself

Plot yourself on each axis of model on page 3 - your usual preference between control and emote is your style of responsiveness, whereas the horizontal axis determines assertiveness.

## Know others

By observing a person you want to build rapport with more objectively, you can estimate which style they are. Using the table above, you can then start to understand their style characteristics, how these differ from your own, and how you can bridge this gap effectively.

## Manage yourself

Practice showing tolerance and understanding for other styles and manage your own reactions to the styles of others.

## Do something for others

Showcase your own style and learn varied responses to create more productive relationships.

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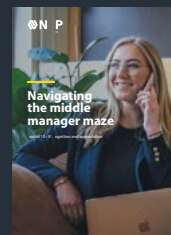
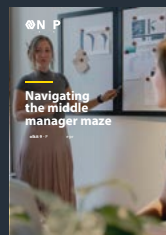
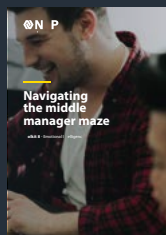
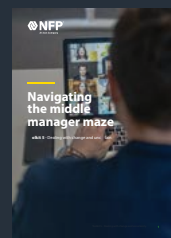
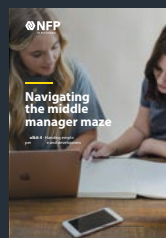
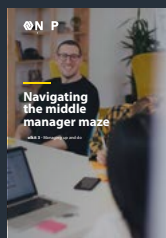
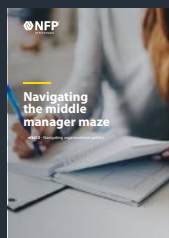
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# Navigating the middle manager maze

**Toolkit 7** - Managing conflicting priorities

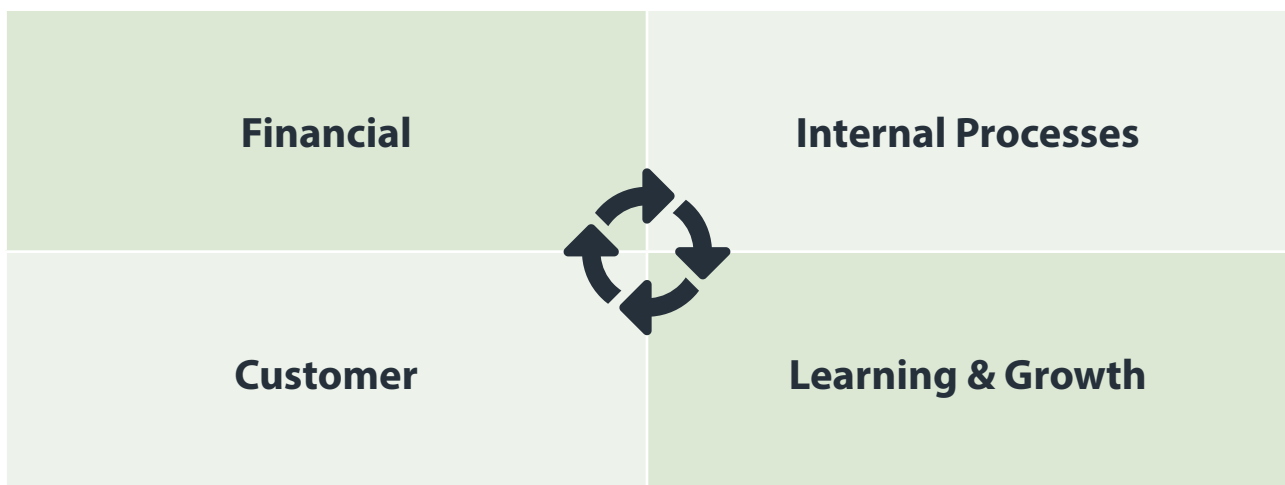
# Managing conflicting priorities

**Strategic thinking is a vital addition to every middle manager's toolkit, as it enables them to navigate complex environments and manage conflicting priorities effectively. Strategic thinking is about understanding the big picture and setting a course for the future, and at its heart involves the ability to anticipate, challenge, interpret, decide, align, and learn.**

This Toolkit provides practical steps and incorporates the well-known Balanced Scorecard model to help middle managers enhance their strategic thinking capabilities.

## The balanced scorecard model

Developed by Dr Robert Kaplan and Dr David Norton, the Balanced Scorecard is a visual strategic planning and management system. It's designed to help businesses align their activities with their strategy, improve internal and external communications, and monitor organisational performance against strategic goals. This model doesn't have to only be used at the highest level of the business; it can be used at any level to map out the interrelated priorities.





## Using the balanced scorecard

**Identify the core vision:** At the heart of the Balanced Scorecard lies the organisation or team's central vision. This vision should be the focal point, guiding every aspect of what you do.

**Include perspectives:** Surround the core vision with the four perspectives of the Balanced Scorecard, forming a cohesive framework.

**Establish objectives and metrics:** For each perspective, articulate clear objectives, metrics, benchmarks, and action plans.

**Create synergy:** Draw connections between the perspectives with arrows, symbolising their synergy in fulfilling the company's overarching vision.

**Disseminate and collaborate:** Employ the Balanced Scorecard as a tool to illustrate how various projects and immediate tasks align with and support the company or team's long-term strategic goals.

	Organisation/team vision and strategy			
	Objectives	Measures	Targets	Initiatives
Financial Perspective How do we look to shareholders?				
Customer Perspective How do customers see us?				
Internal Process Perspective What must we excel at?				
Learning & Growth Perspective Can we continue to improve and create value?				

# Putting it into practice:



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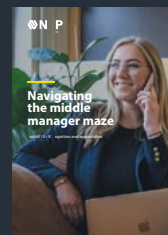
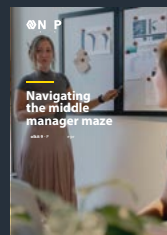
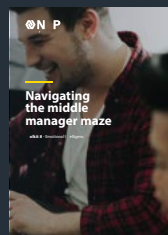
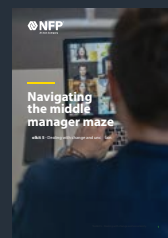
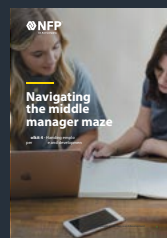
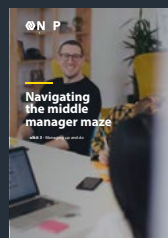
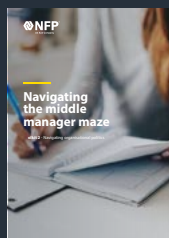
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# Navigating the middle manager maze

**Toolkit 8** - Emotional Intelligence

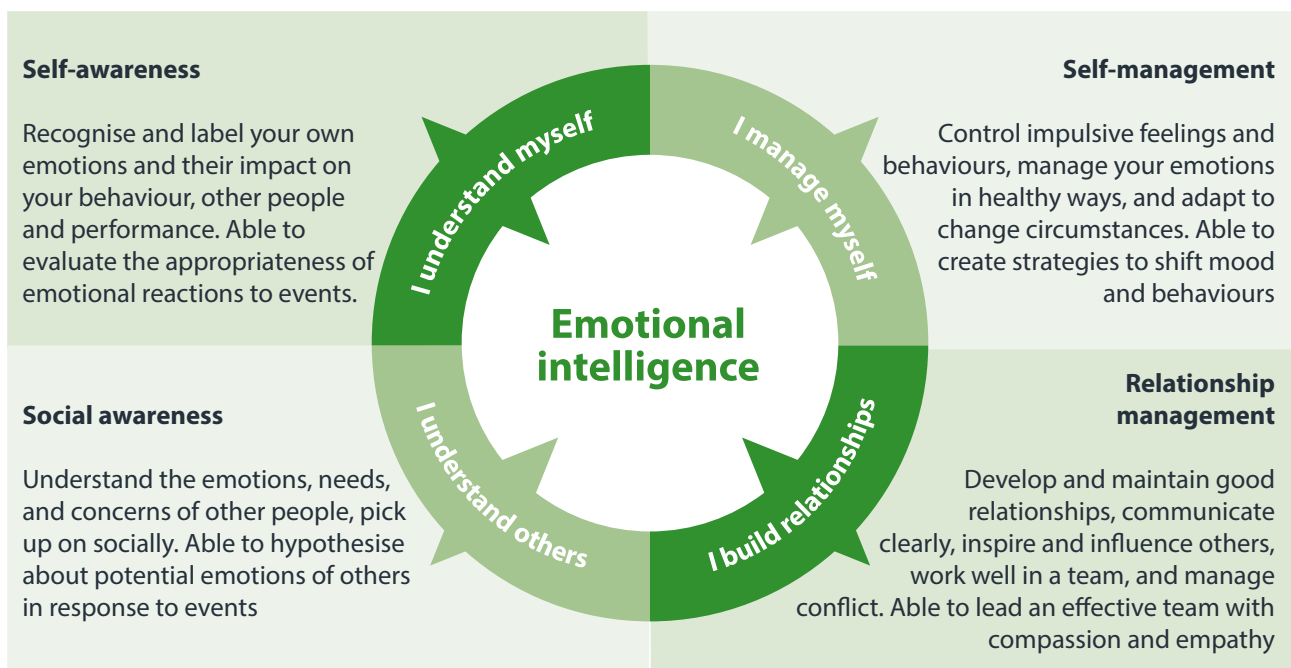


# Emotional intelligence

The ability to navigate the complexity and individuality of human emotions is crucial; it enables middle managers to shape an environment where empathy and understanding drive performance. By balancing the needs of their teams with the strategic vision of the organisation, emotionally intelligent managers can cultivate a culture of trust, enhance communication, and lead their teams to success in a dynamic and often challenging corporate landscape.

## What is emotional intelligence?

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, and those of the people around you. For leaders and managers, EI is crucial for leading effectively and developing a positive work environment.



## Workplace benefits for emotionally intelligent leaders and managers

- Improved communication
- Enhanced team morale and motivation
- Conflict resolution
- Adaptability and resilience
- Better decision-making
- Stress reduction
- Increased employee engagement
- Build trust, understanding and better relationships

# Putting it into practice:

## Developing emotional intelligence

Our EI is not fixed and can be developed over time with focused effort and practice. Try some of these practical tips to help you develop in the context of your leadership or management role:

<p><b>Self-awareness</b></p> <p><b>Exercise:</b> Keep a journal of your emotions. For one week, write down the emotions you feel during the day and what triggered them. Reflect on patterns and consider how your emotions influence your decisions.</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> Set aside 10 minutes each day and review your entries at the end of the week. Look for patterns and trends relating to the events that may have triggered an emotional response from you.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Self-regulation</b></p> <p><b>Exercise:</b> When you feel a strong emotion or a trigger, take a moment to breathe deeply. Count to five as you inhale, hold for five, and exhale for five; this pause is a powerful technique allowing you to recompose and be more choiceful about how you respond.</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> Use this technique in moments of stress or anger to help regain control of your reactions. Viktor Frankl said: "Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom."</p>	
<p><b>Relationship management</b></p> <p><b>Exercise:</b> Next time you engage in some form of team activity or participate in a group exercise, pay attention to the people dynamics and your role in the group. What do you notice? What might not be being said? How do people interact with each other?</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> After the session spend some time reflecting on how you communicate and work with others, how people reacted to you, how you reacted to them, and identify one area for improvement.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Empathy

**Exercise:** Active listening practice. In your next conversation, focus entirely on what the other person is saying, their tone and their body language. If you find your mind wandering to what you might say to them next, or anything else, keep bringing your full attention back to the person in front of you. Repeat back what you understand (paraphrase) and ask clarifying questions. Try to understand the emotions behind their words, not just the content.

**Tip:** Focusing your attention on another person shows you're invested in them, that you're willing to give your time to understand what they're saying. It builds trust and empathy for you and those around you. Try doing this more often for a few weeks and reflect on what changes for you and your team.

### BONUS TIP

The Think-Feel-Act model is a concept in psychology that illustrates the connection between our thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. It's a framework often used in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help individuals understand and change their patterns of thinking and behaviour.

**Think (Cognition):** Our cognition can include beliefs, perceptions, and assumptions about ourselves and the world around us. These thoughts are often automatic and can be positive or negative.

**Feel (Emotion):** Depending on the nature of our thoughts, we may feel happy, sad, anxious, or angry. Emotions are powerful and can affect our state of being and how we view situations.

**Act (Behaviour):** Our emotions can drive our actions or behaviours. If we feel happy, we might smile or engage in social activities, if we feel anxious, we might avoid certain situations or people.

The model suggests that these three components are interconnected, meaning that a change in one can lead to changes in the others. For example, by challenging and changing negative thoughts, we can alter our emotional responses and, consequently, our behaviours.



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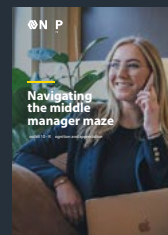
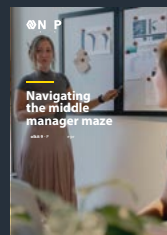
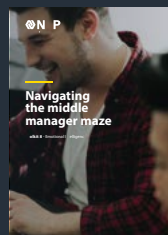
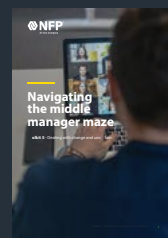
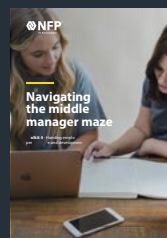
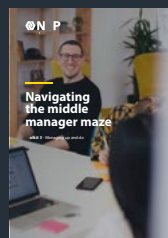
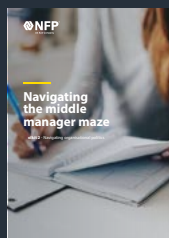
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# Navigating the middle manager maze

**Toolkit 9** - Performance pressure

# Performance pressure

**Middle managers are in a uniquely challenging position, in that they are 'sandwiched' within the organisational hierarchy. Not only are they held accountable from above for team performance, meeting targets and achieving results, but there are different (also demanding) pressures from below, as their teams look to them for support, guidance, and to aid their professional development.**

This pressure from all angles to deliver can have an impact on a middle manager's own wellbeing, potentially causing a ripple effect as mood and productivity of the whole team suffers. It's therefore vital that middle managers are equipped with the skills to help them develop resilience and handle pressures at work; enter the Resilience Pyramid.

## Resilience pyramid

What helps develop resilience?

There are many thought leaders who have conducted research in this area and have identified several key areas that contribute to building and maintaining our resilience which are shown in the resilience pyramid. We always start with self as we can't support others if we are not well resourced ourselves. It is important to have strategies in these areas that can support us to build our base resilience as well as in the moment when things get tough.



# Putting it into practice:

We recommend using the Resilience Pyramid on yourself first, not just to check in on your own wellbeing but to understand each stage for when you use this as the basis of team discussions. Good leadership includes role modelling and healthy behaviours and habits.

Shown at the base of the pyramid is self-awareness. As an individual, do you know what you need to perform well and feel healthy?	
Do you have an awareness of how you respond to stress and what helps you feel more in control?	<input type="checkbox"/>
How can you help someone in your team develop their self-awareness? Feedback can help.	
The next level is self-care, which will look different to everyone. Whatever activities, hobbies or strategies to rest and recharge and give you a boost when times get tough, ensure you incorporate these into a strategy to help you through periods of high pressure.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Next relates to your energy management. Your focus is valuable but not infinite, so it's important to direct your energy and focus towards things you can control.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing your mindset is next, which includes positive self-talk, having a growth mindset, and practicing positive habits, such as gratitude, mindfulness, and self-compassion.	
Social Support is about creating a strong social support system. This enables you to talk about your experiences with a supportive figure(s), which could include family, friends, work colleagues or others in your network.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finally, and importantly, having meaningful goals creates a purpose in life, especially if you have goals that are in alignment with what is important to you. Design goals around different areas of your life to create momentum and a sense of achievement.	

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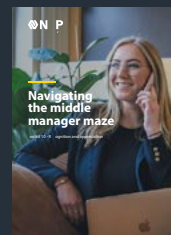
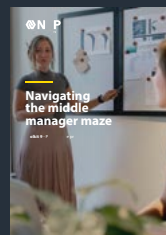
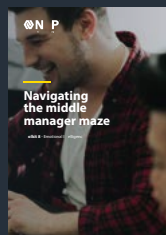
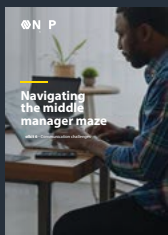
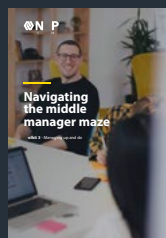
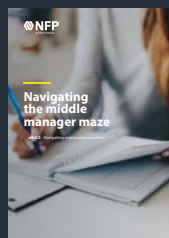
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# Navigating the middle manager maze

Toolkit 10 - Recognition and appreciation

# Recognition and appreciation

**Middle managers often operate behind the scenes, orchestrating operations, delivering diligently against targets, and supporting their teams. This role, while crucial, may not always be in the spotlight, leading to less recognition compared to front-line employees or top executives.**

When middle managers feel unappreciated, it can lead to a pervasive sense of being undervalued which, if left unaddressed, can seep into the fabric of their motivation and job engagement. Over time, this can not only affect the individual's performance but also have a cascading effect on the morale and productivity of the team they lead.

The Self Recognition Model (SRM) supports managers to create a framework for self-appreciation that compensates for the missing external recognition. This proactive approach can help maintain motivation and job engagement, develop self-awareness and emotional intelligence, and shape a more positive work environment.

## The Self-Recognition model

### Self assessment

- Reflect on your personal achievements and contributions to the organisation
- Keep a record of successes, no matter how small, to serve as a reminder of your value

### Peer networking

- Build a network of peers for mutual support and recognition
- Engage in regular discussions to share experiences and celebrate each other's accomplishments

### Upward communication

- Communicate your team's achievements and your role in them to higher management
- Use data results to highlight the impact of your work.

### Professional development

- Invest in continuous learning and development to enhance your skills and marketability.
- Attend workshops, seminars and courses to increase visibility and recognition.

### Self reward

- Set personal milestones and reward yourself upon achieving them.
- Rewards can be as simple as a day off, a special treat, or a new learning opportunity.

# Putting it into practice:

<p><b>Set clear goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin by reflecting on what recognition truly means to you. Is it public acknowledgment, a private thank you, or something else?</li> <li>• Determine specific, measurable goals that will increase your visibility within the organisation. This could be leading a high-profile project or presenting in company-wide meetings.</li> <li>• Develop a step-by-step plan to achieve these goals. Break them down into daily or weekly tasks to make them more manageable.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Seek feedback</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish regular channels for feedback, such as one-on-one meetings, anonymous surveys, or performance reviews.</li> <li>• Encourage honest and constructive criticism that can help you grow and improve in your role.</li> <li>• Act on the feedback received. Show that you value others' opinions by making visible changes or adjustments where necessary.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Celebrate team success</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create rituals or events to celebrate team milestones, such as project completions or hitting targets.</li> <li>• Ensure that team successes are attributed to all members, as this can foster a sense of collective achievement and shines a light on your leadership.</li> <li>• Use company newsletters, meetings, or social media to publicly acknowledge your team's hard work.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>Advocate for your team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open up lines of communication with upper management to regularly share your team's progress and successes.</li> <li>• Use storytelling to make your team's achievements more relatable and impactful to upper management.</li> <li>• Demonstrate how your team's work aligns with the organisation's strategic goals, emphasising the importance of their efforts.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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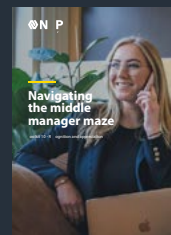
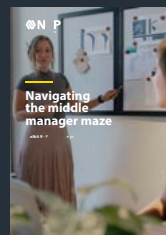
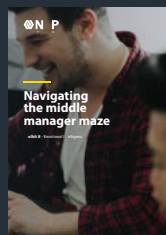
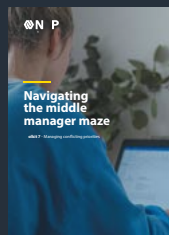
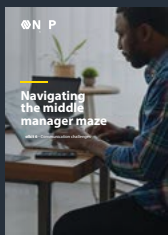
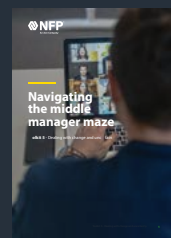
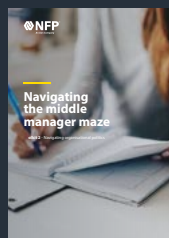
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