



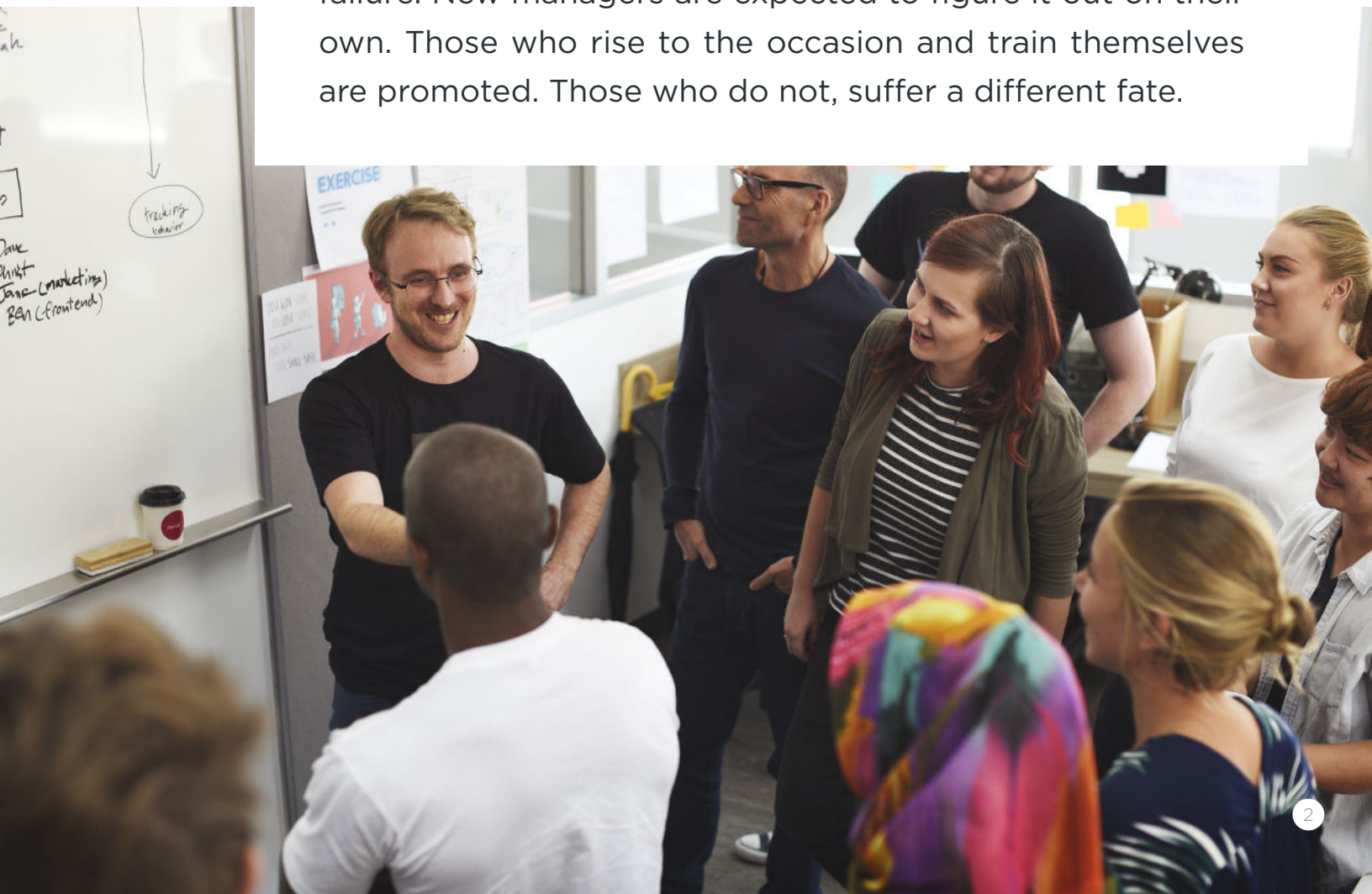
Performance Management Hacks



Overview

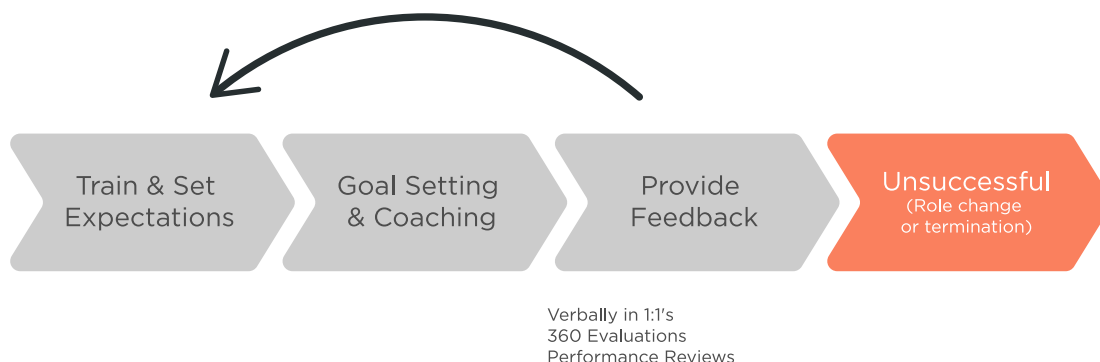
In the world of startups, organizations can grow extremely fast. Teams can double, triple, even quadruple in a matter of months. Battlefield promotions become the system of promotion as companies are desperate for leadership.

While this promotion style means opportunity for the smart and scrappy, lack of structure and training can be a setup for failure. New managers are expected to figure it out on their own. Those who rise to the occasion and train themselves are promoted. Those who do not, suffer a different fate.



A healthy management cycle requires skills training and with clear setting of expectations, followed by goal setting and performance reviews. In an optimal cycle, this loop is repeated as the manager takes on bigger challenges as the company scales. In a maladaptive cycle, in spite of numerous attempts at training and coaching, manager does not meet goals. Unsuccessful attempts at meeting company needs ultimately leads to termination or role change.

Successful Management Cycle



“Chaos is a ladder”

-Petyr ‘Littlefinger’ Baelish

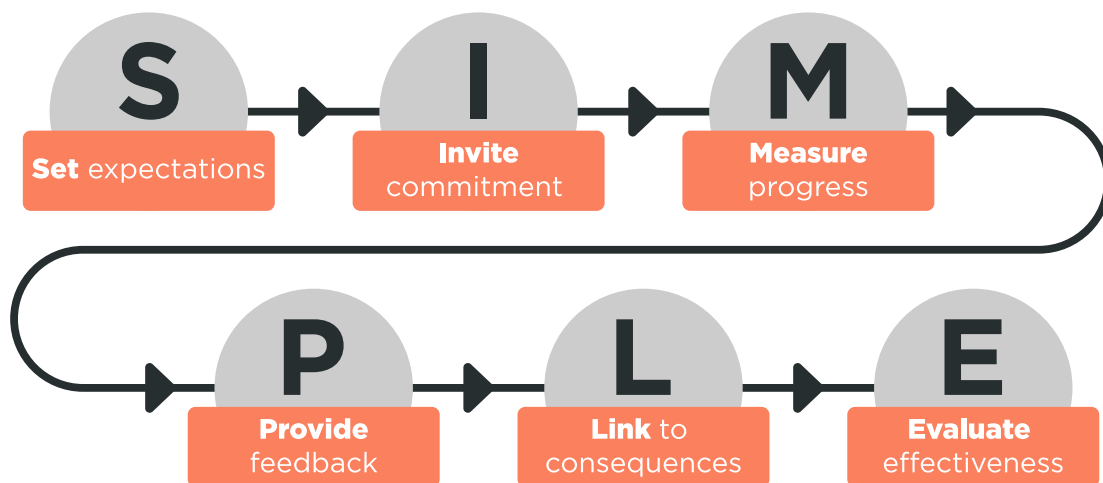
Setting Expectations

The first mistake that new managers often make is to under communicate their expectations. Employees who were fired are often shocked they weren't meeting expectations, and the common refrain is "I had no idea! I thought I was doing fine".

What this means is there is often a big difference between what a manager expects, and what they actually communicate. Employees often feel more anxiety not knowing what is expected of them. Imagine what it would feel like to be evaluated against unclear expectations. The uncertainty can leave employees misguided and judged with no clear path for improvement.



To avoid these pitfalls, a good manager will share his/her expectations in writing. Expectations can be communicated via OKRs, Trello, via email, verbally in 1:1 meetings and Google Doc! Most importantly expectations should be documented and acknowledged by both parties.



Suggested Reading

BizJournals - <http://bit.ly/2iDdlOY>

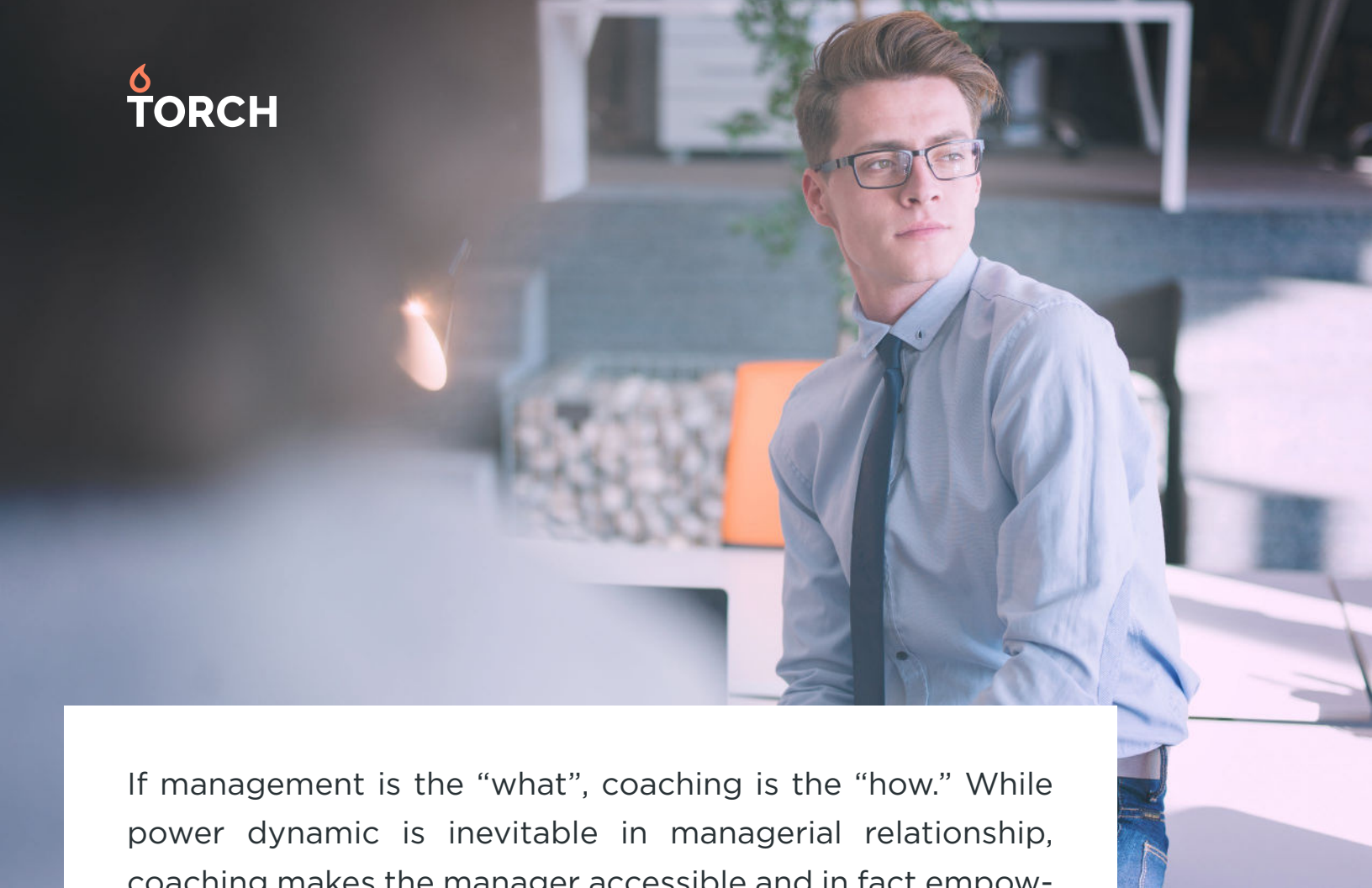
Inc Magazine - <http://on.inc.com/2mMZF8u>

Coaching

Much of great management can be achieved through coaching skills. Coaching is a set of soft skills that inspire another person to perform at their highest level. A person can be further motivated to stretch their comfort zone in the context of a trusted relationship. Below are some coaching core principles:

- Trust is vital
- Listening is home base
- Thought partner instead of “telling”
- Challenge defensiveness with compassion
- Empathy and positive regard are foundational
- Balance positive and negative feedback
- Open ended questions





If management is the “what”, coaching is the “how.” While power dynamic is inevitable in managerial relationship, coaching makes the manager accessible and in fact empowers the direct report. Great coaching is focused on the needs of the employee and therefore should not be treated as an opportunity for the manager to talk at someone.

The “home base” of any great coach is the act of listening. In the course of any 1:1, a manager should listening much more than talking. When the manager does speak, questions should be open ended, and focused on helping the direct report find their own solutions. Questions should be framed as “What does success look like in this situation? vs When are you going to fix this?” In best cases, the relationship is one of guidance over instruction.

Suggested Reading

Harvard Business Review - <http://bit.ly/2zXew5S>

Here are a few items that every coach should have in their toolkit:

Clarification Questions

- What emotions does it bring up?
- What is important to you about it?
- Can you walk me through your thinking?

Removing Obstacles

- What are the obstacles?
- What is stopping you? What is holding you back?
- What concerns you most about it?

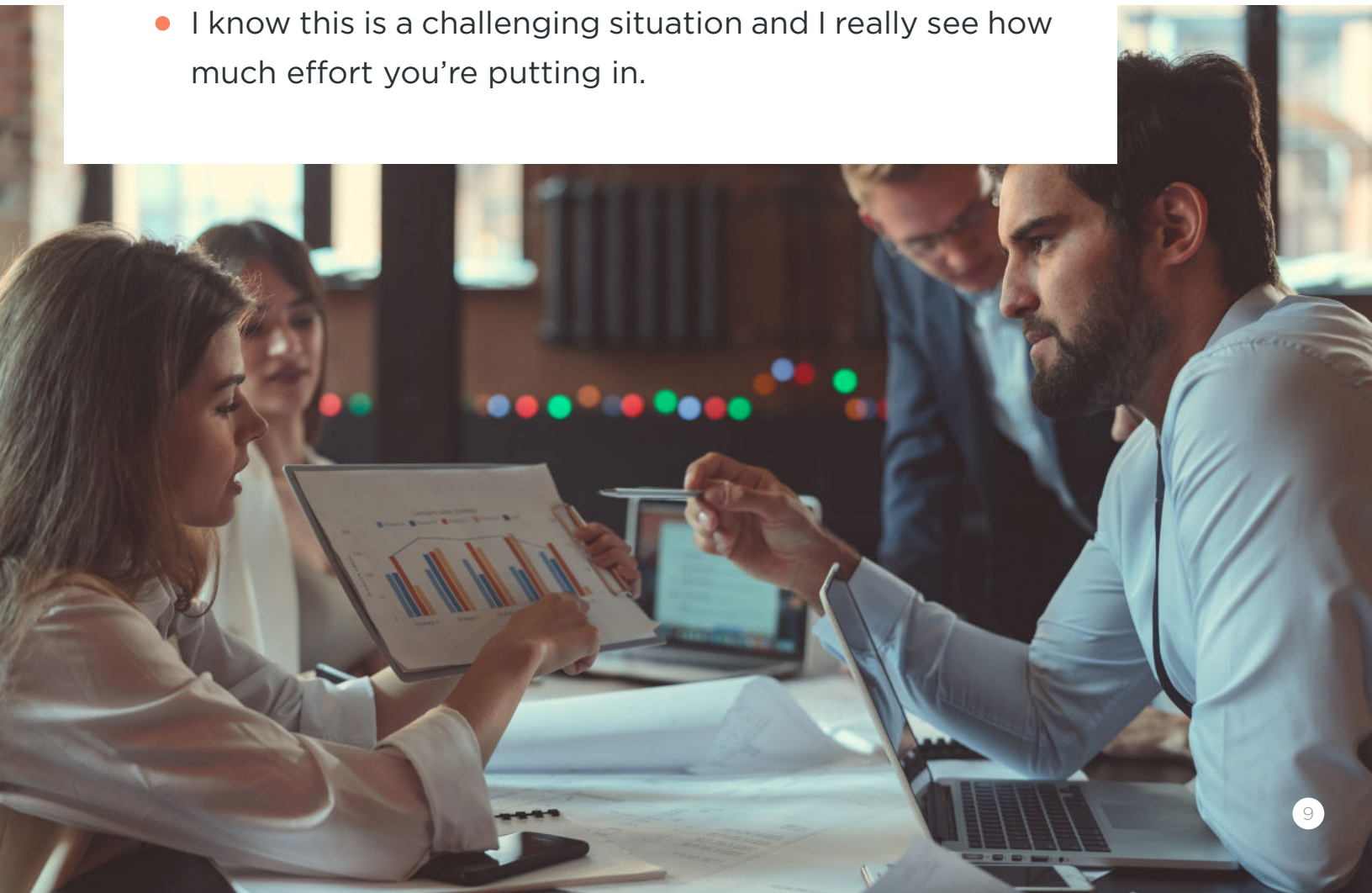


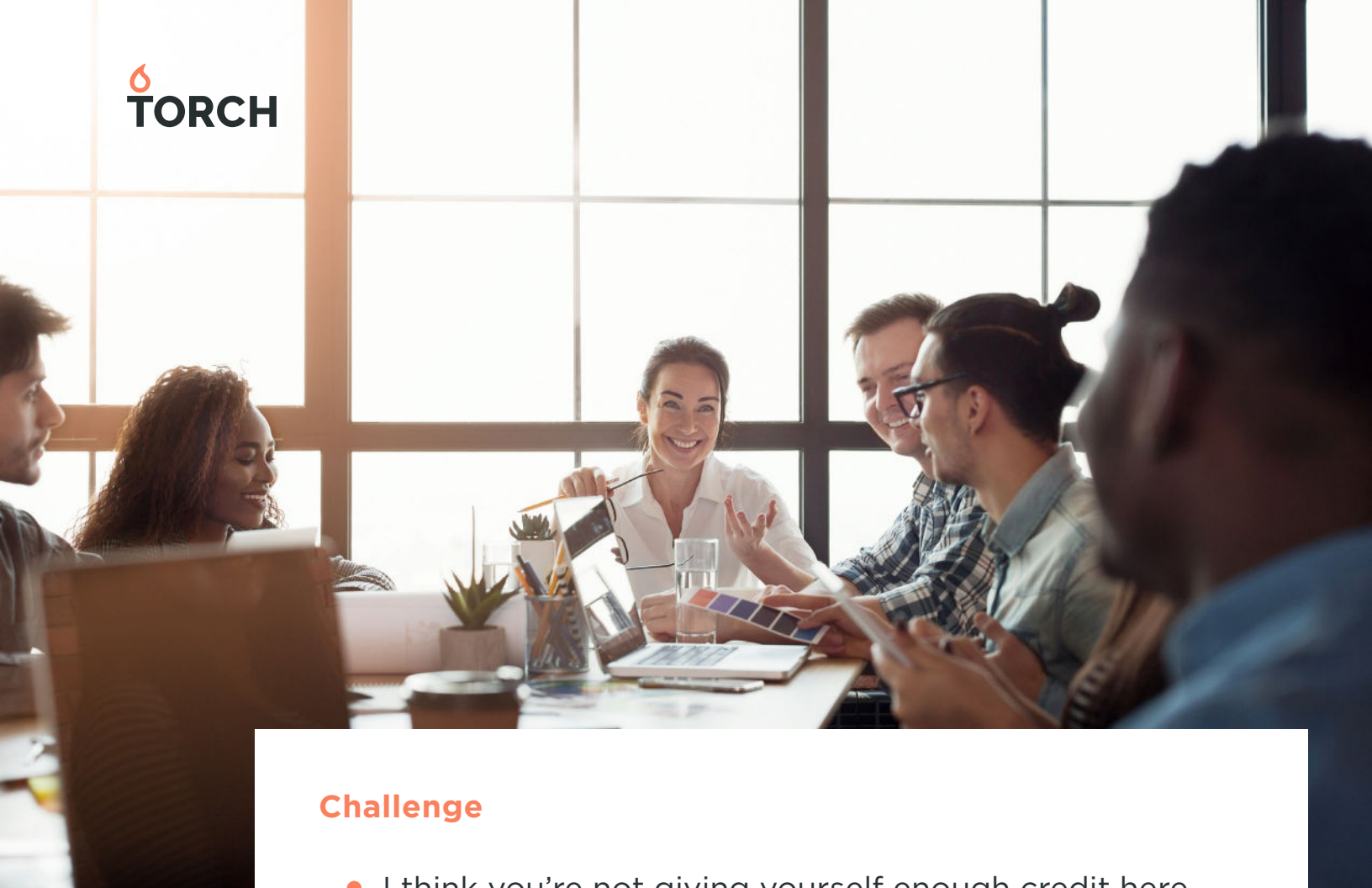
Solution Focus

- How would success look?
- How are things going? Are you making progress?
- How should we go about thinking about this?
- What would tell you that you've reached your goal?
- What would be the benefit of this outcome?

Positive Regard

- What you came up with to solve _____ was really impressive.”
- It really is incredible how far you've come.
- I know this is a challenging situation and I really see how much effort you're putting in.





Challenge

- I think you're not giving yourself enough credit here.
- What would help you feel more engaged?
- What do you see could be your blind spots in this situation?
- What does your best self look like amidst this crisis?

“People don't leave jobs,
they leave managers.”

-ancient Silicon Valley proverb

Having effective 1:1's

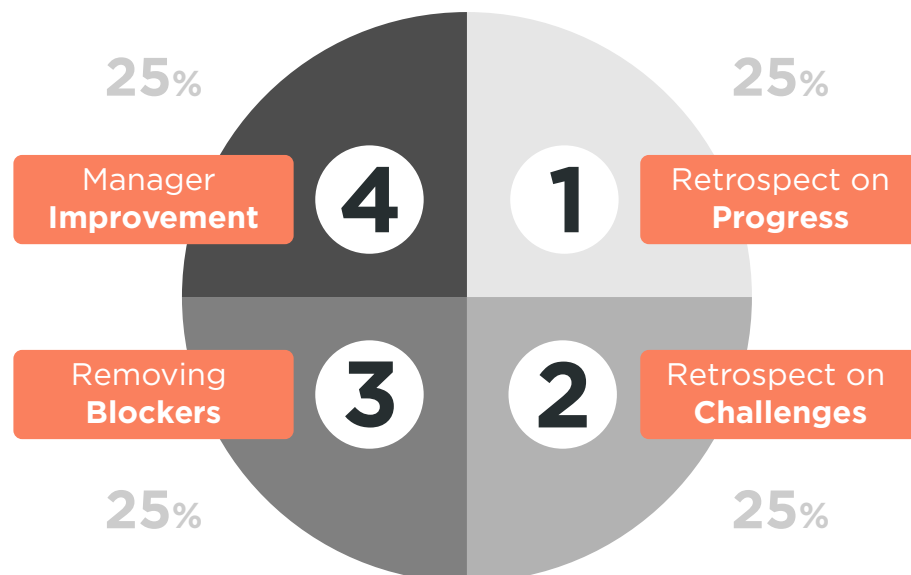
Regular check-in's with employees are essential. One on one meetings are the best opportunity for managers to practice coaching skills on a regular cadence. Managers sometimes get busy working as individual contributors and assume their direct reports aren't needing guidance. But

more often, employees are feeling untethered and even hungry for better instruction and thought partnership.

One on one meetings between manager and direct report are a powerful solution. Typical cadence is once per week or once every other week. More regular meetings will serve the trust building process and increase collaboration. Some managers assume their direct reports don't need regular 1:1 meetings. Do not make this mistake.



Data from 360 reviews often suggest that employees want more rather than less feedback from their managers. One on one meetings can be partitioned into four, 15 minute blocks for reviewing progress, reviewing challenges, thought partnering on how to remove obstacles, and feedback for the manager. Below is a graphic display of an effective 1:1 between manager and direct report over the course of a one hour meeting:



Suggested Reading

Radical Candor - <http://bit.ly/2A19yCA>

Giving Positive & Negative Feedback

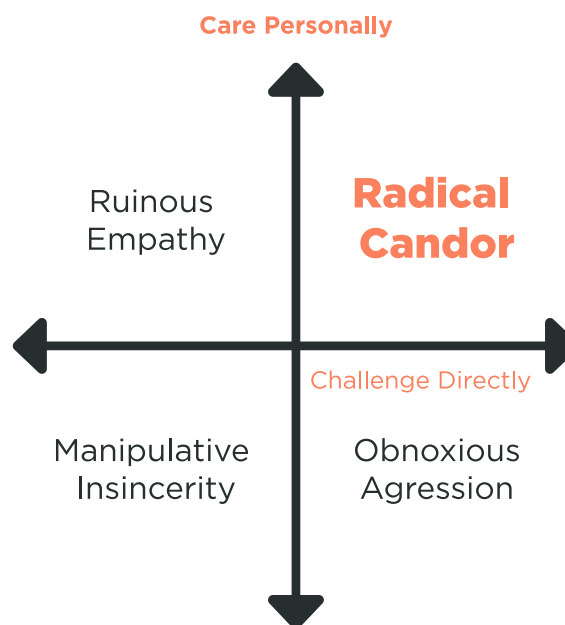
Giving feedback is an artform unto itself. Skilled managers are unafraid to provide feedback to employees. As basic as it may sound many managers avoid it. A common refrain is “we hired smart people for a reason, they should just know whether or not they are doing a good job, I shouldn’t have to tell them!”

In fact this is generally a bad excuse for avoiding feedback. Some managers are skilled at giving positive feedback, but avoid giving negative feedback. Others avoid giving positive feedback and easily deliver negative feedback. In *Radical Candor* by Kim Scott, she refers to the first kind of managers as ruinous empathizers, and the second as assholes.





Opportunity for feedback comes in manager's weekly 1:1's but can also come through quarterly performance reviews, and 360 degree assessments. The key is to deliver the feedback that is both direct and compassionate. Use the Radical Candor 2x2 for a balance of directness and empathy to hit the sweetspot that Kim Scott refers to as radical candor.



Suggested Reading

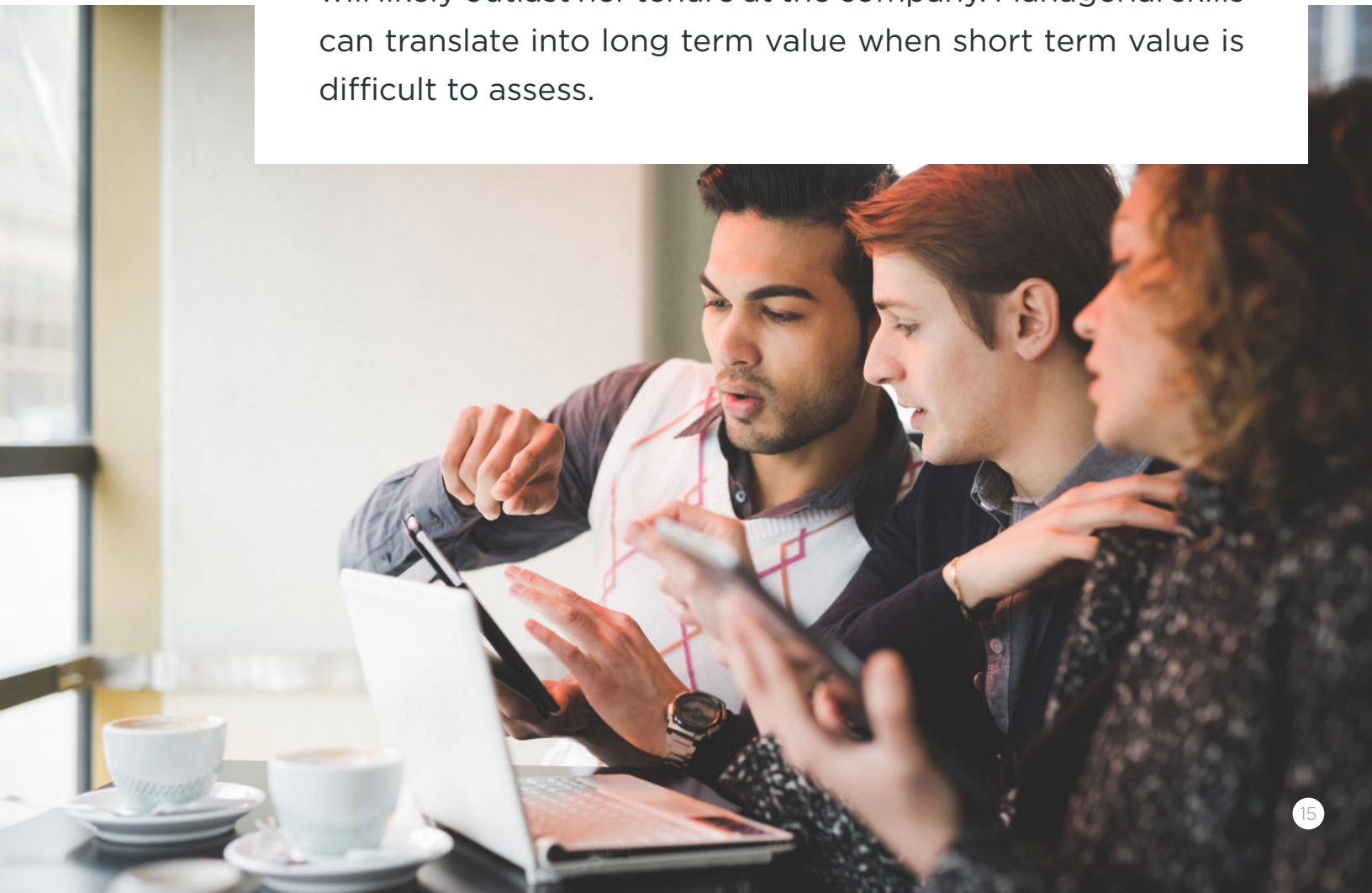
Radical Candor - <http://bit.ly/2jNhNhD>

The Gottman Institute - <http://bit.ly/2hQPwWI>

Development Plans

It can be said that employees stay at a company for mission, compensation, culture, and professional development. Particularly in companies in which cash compensation is low, professional development plans can motivate an employee to remain engaged in his/her role.

At startups, employees assume considerable risk due to ephemeral nature of most up start companies. A strong dev plan allows the employee to internalize valuable skills that will likely outlast her tenure at the company. Managerial skills can translate into long term value when short term value is difficult to assess.





Professional Development Plan - Template

Development needs for forthcoming year (include as many learning needs as required to achieve agreed objectives)

Learning and Development Need	Type of Development	Who is responsible?	Timescales	Further comments
Provide a specific description of the desired changes (e.g. skills gained, knowledge acquired, topics/themes/ content covered).	E.g. Course, Workshop, Conference, Self-development (researcher, reading, etc.), Coaching, Mentoring, Job Shadowing, Project Work, Committee Membership, etc.	E.g. Staff member, UoE L&D programme to support, Manager to arrange, Staff member to work with team and Manager, etc.	E.g. End of April, to be completed in the next 6 months, Over next 1-2 years.	E.g. Resource requirements, Additional notes.

Suggested Reading

Forbes - <http://bit.ly/2zc6jH4>


Inc Magazine - <http://on.inc.com/2A1boUO>

Discipline

Discipline is the shadow side of good management. It isn't to be avoided. Disciplinary action ranges from performance improvement plans to termination. A good manager doesn't avoid discipline employees who are consistently underperforming or interfering with the success of other employees.

To succeed in startups, companies must recruit world class teams. The flip side of recruiting great employees, is terminating the ones who aren't. In other words, it is just as bad to retain someone who is failing as it is to hire a B or C player. Following are a few examples of when discipline may be necessary:



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- A blurred background image of an office meeting. A man with a beard and glasses is in the foreground, looking towards the right. Other people are visible in the background, and a laptop is on a table.
- In spite of numerous attempts to coach and train the employee, the person isn't meeting expectations set by the manager.
 - Employee is creating a toxic workplace environment that interferes with ability of others to thrive and succeed.
 - Employee continually demonstrates values that are in conflict with values of the organization.
 - Employees breeches fundamental company policies for employee safety such as sexual harassment, diversity/inclusion.

Suggested Reading

Business News Daily - <http://bit.ly/2hTv5IO>

Entrepreneur - <http://bit.ly/2z9F1Bd>

Zip Recruiter - <http://bit.ly/2B3mBTf>

About Torch Labs

Leadership coaching is in high demand. But with top coaches charging up to \$5,000/month, many companies cannot afford to offer this service to those who need it most.

Torch was founded by a team of executive coaches and experienced psychologists who are passionate about helping all professionals perform at their highest level.

We are on a mission to empower new managers to thrive in high growth, high performance cultures by building the self awareness and skills required to manage and lead effectively.

Torch is a virtual coaching platform that matches new managers with experienced coaches for personalized leadership development. Our proven model blends human intelligence and digital technology to accelerate talent development and deliver measurable leadership outcomes.

TORCH.IO

“Leadership development can not take place in a vaccum”

-Keegan Walden, Torch Co-founder



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