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# 5 PRACTICAL SKILLS EVERY MANAGER NEEDS

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A guide for business owners, senior execs and HR professionals

**HOWARDCO BUSINESS & HR SOLUTIONS**

[info@howardco.com.au](mailto:info@howardco.com.au)



Whether you're a business owner, senior exec, or HR leader that supports managers, you've probably seen it firsthand: someone gets promoted into management, and suddenly things start to wobble. Not because they're not capable, but because no one ever showed them how to practically manage people.

At Howardco, we've worked with hundreds of managers across industries, and these five skills come up again and again as the foundation for better results, stronger teams, and more time back for those running the business.

Here's what to look for and what to do next.

## 1. Clear, Confident Communication

### The issue:

Managers aren't always heard clearly, or their messages are misinterpreted. This leads to confusion, frustration, and repeated conversations.

### How to spot it's missing:

- Team members seem confused or need constant clarification
- Meetings go around in circles
- Messages are inconsistent or misunderstood

### What to do about it:

- ☐ Encourage managers to tailor communication to different people and contexts
- ☐ Use simple structures like SBI (Situation, Behaviour, Impact) to give feedback
- ☐ Teach active listening, not just waiting to speak

## 2. Giving (and Receiving) Feedback

### The issue:

Feedback is avoided, sugar-coated, or delivered in a way that creates defensiveness. Positive feedback is also often overlooked.

### How to spot it's missing:

- Issues go unaddressed until they escalate
- Employees feel unsure where they stand
- Managers are nervous about tough conversations

## What to do about it:

- ☐ Normalise regular feedback as part of team culture
- ☐ Make feedback specific, timely, and actionable
- ☐ Teach managers how to receive feedback as well, as it builds trust

## 3. Handling Underperformance Early

### The issue:

Managers wait too long to address performance issues, often hoping the problem will go away. It doesn't.

### How to spot it's missing:

- Ongoing low performance from certain team members
- Morale issues or resentment in the team
- Delayed involvement from others higher up

## What to do about it:

- ☐ Equip managers with early-stage, informal conversation techniques
- ☐ Make expectations crystal clear from the start
- ☐ Maintain consistent records and follow-ups

## 4. Managing Conflict and Team Dynamics

### The issue:

Many managers avoid conflict or escalate it unintentionally. Either way, trust is damaged, and time gets wasted.

### How to spot it's missing:

- Small issues turn into big ones
- Team tension or blame culture
- Manager says, "I'm sick of playing referee"

## What to do about it:

- ☐ Teach de-escalation and reframing skills
- ☐ Encourage early, respectful intervention
- ☐ Show managers how to reset team dynamics after disruption

## 5. Accountability Without Micromanagement

### The issue:

Managers either chase every detail or disengage completely. The balance isn't there.

### How to spot it's missing:

- Managers feel overwhelmed and step in constantly
- Team members rely too heavily on their manager
- Deadlines slip without consequence

### What to do about it:

- ☐ Build habits around shared expectations and regular check-ins
- ☐ Teach managers to delegate with context, not just tasks
- ☐ Clarify consequences and celebrate wins

## What next?

We built [The Practical Manager program](#) to teach these exact skills. It's not theory. It's six online sessions, supported by live coaching and real-world application, designed for managers who want to build capability and confidence fast.

Every participant tracks their growth using the Manager Impact Tracker, so you can see where the value is.

Want to learn more?

[Click here](#) or email us at [info@howardco.com.au](mailto:info@howardco.com.au) to speak to our expert team at Howardco. The program also includes smarter hiring techniques to help avoid mis-hires and reduce churn.