OKLAHOMA CareerTech

OBLIGATIONS OF A MANAGER TO THE TEAM

with some strategies to meet them

Managers have several key obligations and responsibilities toward their team members to ensure a productive, fair, and safe work environment. To effectively meet these commitments, managers must translate obligations into daily habits.

1. Obligation: Setting Expectations and Goals

- **Write standard operating procedures:** Document critical workflows and share them in a central team archive so there is no ambiguity about processes.
- **Co-create SMART goals:** Visit with team members to build Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound objectives together, ensuring mutual buy-in.
- **Provide project guidance:** Start each project with a kickoff meeting. Share guidance that defines what "done" looks like, identifies decision boundaries to prevent unnecessary dependency, and sets milestones and deadlines.

2. Obligation: Delegating Work Equitably

- **Maintain a skills and workload matrix:** Track team members' projects and core skills to gauge task balance and avoid burning out top performers or overlooking growth opportunities.
- **Rotate repetitive or less desirable tasks:** Ensure administrative or tedious duties are shared across the team.
- **Delegate for growth, not just speed:** Assign "stretch assignments" to team members who want to develop new skills, rather than giving the task to the person who may do it fastest.

3. Obligation: Evaluating Performance and Providing Feedback

- **Establish regular 1-on-1s:** Hold weekly or bi-weekly individual meetings dedicated entirely to each team member's progress, challenges, and feedback.
- **Apply the STAR model:** Give feedback by stating the specific Situation or Task, describing the observed Action, and explaining the Result it had.
- **Keep a performance log:** Note team members' achievements and areas for improvement so annual reviews are data-driven and contain no surprises.

4. Obligation: Supporting Training and Development

- **Chart development plans:** Dedicate at least one meeting per quarter exclusively to discussing career aspirations and mapping out concrete learning steps for each team member.
- **Protect learning time:** Allocate a specific number of hours per month (such as Friday afternoons) where employees can pause regular work to focus on training.
- **Establish a peer-learning network:** Pair team members with peers across the organization for cross-training on skills or systems.

5. Obligation: Removing Operational Roadblocks

- **Ask the "key question" regularly:** Close every 1-on-1 session by asking, "What is blocking you right now that I can remove for you?"
- **Advocate for better tools:** Secure the necessary funds, upgrades, or human resources to maintain optimal processes.
- **Buffer against red tape:** Handle cross-departmental friction or administrative hurdles yourself so your team can focus on their core work.

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6. Obligation: Ensuring Workplace Safety and Compliance

- **Support a "no-fear" policy:** Implement clear channels for team members to report safety or other concerns without fear of consequences.
- **Conduct regular safety audits:** Review physical workspaces, ergonomic setups, or digital security compliance to ensure all relevant standards are met.
- **Model healthy boundaries:** Refrain from sending non-urgent messages late at night or during weekends to safeguard team members' psychological safety and respect their work-life balance.

7. Obligation: Ensuring Fairness and Equity

- **Use structured interview templates:** Assess internal and external job candidates using identical, objective rubrics to minimize implicit bias.
- **Implement data-backed calibration:** Review compensation and performance criteria to ensure parity for equal work.
- **Audit speaking time:** Ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to speak in meetings by interrupting or redirecting when a few voices dominate the room.

8. Obligation: Resolving Conflict

- **Intervene early and objectively:** Address friction immediately before it escalates into a larger interpersonal issue.
- **Hold neutral discovery sessions:** Listen to each party's perspective individually and separately without taking sides or jumping to conclusions.
- **Facilitate a collaborative solution:** Bring parties together to agree on a written and forward-looking plan rather than dwelling on blame or grievances.

9. Obligation: Maintaining Accountability

- **Own team setbacks publicly:** Take responsibility when the team misses a target, rather than deflecting blame onto individual team members.
- **Carry out commitments:** Deliver on the promises you make to your team within the promised timeframe.
- **Address underperformance directly:** Have timely conversations with team members who miss deadlines and specify unambiguous options if performance does not improve.

10. Obligation: Enabling Open Communication and Trust

- **Default to transparency:** Share the why behind organizational changes, strategy shifts, or budget cuts as soon as the information is cleared for release.
- **Admit your own mistakes:** Build psychological safety among your team by admitting when you make a bad call or don't know the answer to a question.
- **Keep confidences:** Never talk about team members or share private personal details disclosed to you during 1-on-1 sessions.

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