

6 Critical Traits - Breaking into IT Management

6 Critical Traits for Breaking into IT Management



For many experienced IT professionals who've set their sights on moving into management, it's often difficult to work out how to take that first step. Ultimately, your goal is to prove that you have potential to be a leader by showing you have the right mentality and skillset. To help you do exactly that, here's our six tips for breaking into IT management.

1. Be Results-focused

Putting it simply; delivering results and showing you understand the importance of meeting targets and expectations is paramount as a leader. To be more results-focused, think with the end in mind and look at what actions will lead toward your objective. When you're identifying what tasks should take priority, consider the **80/20 rule** and focus on the 20% of tasks that provides 80% of your results. It's also important to turn everything you do into a case study and find a way to measure your outcomes. Doing so will help you to promote your own work and analyse where you can make improvements.



2. Be a Problem-solver

Strong problem-solving skills are the amalgamation of resilience, logic, and creativity, and it is crucial for Managers to possess these. Many talented IT professionals are great at analysing what's in front of them to reach out-the-box solutions. However, before using your own analytical skills to showcase you're a problem-solver, you need to develop the level-headed and proactive mindset of a leader.



To develop this mindset, consider changing the way you approach an issue. Instead of telling your boss that a problem exists and waiting for direction, take the time to identify obstacles and examine your options. Doing so will enable you to provide a series of solutions when you present the problem to your Manager. It can also be a good idea to use the same mentality with your role, and find ways to improve your productivity by testing solutions and supplying evidence. This forward thinking will highlight your proficiency as a great problem-solver.

3. Show You Can Listen

If good leaders talk, great leaders listen. Being mindful of those you work with and actively listening to them can help you to receive better information and make better decision. When you converse with people, consider the impact your body language and attentiveness has. Show that the person in front of you has your full attention by removing any distractions whilst being mindful of your posture. Negative body language, such as crossing your arms, can have a detrimental impact on how comfortable the other person is talking to you.



Keep an eye out for the other person's body language as well during the conversation. Does their posture make them seem hesitant? Are they avoiding eye contact with you? As you pay more attention to their body language, you'll become better at spotting these nonverbal cues. Understanding what is and isn't being said is key to becoming an attentive listener, and will enable you to gauge what people are truly thinking and feeling.

4. Expand Your Vision



An effective leader needs to have a 360-degree view of their employer and industry. Although this can be a challenge for IT specialists with specific roles, do what you can to actively expand your vision. Start with the basics and research your employer as if you were interviewing for a job; find out your employer's mission, business objectives, and goals to get a sense of the direction they're headed in. Then, compare your employer to its competitors to get a sense of the position your organisation is in within the industry.

Next, consider the internal workings of your organisation beyond your team or department. Identify which areas of the business you don't understand and find professionals you know in those areas. Ask for a chance to work in projects that involve the cooperation of other teams or departments, or to be involved with your employer's Health & Safety committee. These opportunities will enable you to learn about the other key business functions and people throughout your company. Showing that you're interested in more than just your own job will help impress your Manager, and build a better understanding of how each department comes together to contribute to your employer's success.

5. Gain a Reputation of Integrity

For a leader to be taken seriously, their peers need to respect them for their integrity. For you, this means to show exemplary behaviour to your peers. Even though you're not a supervisor yet, display a great work ethic by being respectful, approachable, reasonable, punctual, and honest, at all times. Avoid office gossip and aim to build a reputation of being someone everyone can trust and depend upon.



6. Take on Small Management Opportunities



One of the best ways to show your capacity to be a leader is to take on leadership responsibilities. When you're ready to start managing, ask your direct report for the chance to take on small opportunities to manage people or projects. Ask your Manager if there's anything you can take off their plate to help them, such as training new hires or leading meetings. This will help you to build your management skills and you'll start being viewed as a leader yourself.

Summary

Soft skills can often be difficult to improve, hence why taking that first step towards becoming a leader can be strenuous. However, I hope the above short guide has helped to give you direction so your Manager can see you as the right choice when a leadership opportunity next arises. If you need more leadership advice or you're looking for great management jobs in New Zealand, don't hesitate to [contact us](#) today.