



# 10 Mistakes to Avoid as a New Supervisor

Good intentions are admirable but if they are producing challenges for your team, their goodness only goes so far. Below are some common mistakes that result from good intentions.

1. ***Asking for input without implementing it***—It is not feasible nor necessary to implement every idea your team has, but if these ideas are *never* implemented, staff will stop offering them. If you ask for their input, hear it, and be upfront when you will implement it or not. If you need to make an executive decision without your staff's input be upfront about that too. They may not always like it, but they will respect your honesty and they will appreciate not having their time wasted.
2. ***Rewarding everyone for the accomplishments of one***- In a perfect world, all team members would contribute positively and consistently. In reality, different team members will vary in their work ethic, productivity, dedication and contribution. Despite this, many managers, in the name of team camaraderie and oneness, will praise and reward all team members in the same way despite drastic differences in contribution. Instead of building team dynamics, this can cause resentment and can demotivate those who work hard only to be recognized in the same way as those who do not. Instead, it is important that a manager recognizes outstanding staff and works with staff who are not pulling their proverbial weight.
3. ***Punishing everyone for the transgressions of one***- This is the result of managers wanting to address a negative situation that happened with one employee by doing so with all employees. Like that one time that one staff member was allowed to work from home and abused it so now no one can work from home. The intention is sincere, if not lazy, and generally only serves to cause resentment among staff who are unfairly punished for the mistakes of others. It is far more effective- and challenging -to confront and work with the offender rather than the entire group.
4. ***Implementing a policy or memo for everyone that is really targeted toward one***- In the spirit of not wanting to single someone out, managers will frequently use this tactic. Unfortunately, people see right through this, particularly in smaller offices and smaller teams. This causes resentment among staff members who are being negatively affected by something they did not do. Additionally, it sends a message to the team that the manager is not willing to confront employees who need confronting.
5. ***Saying you have an open-door policy when you don't***- Most managers want to be accessible and most of them believe they are, so with all good intention, they let their teams know that they have an open-door policy. In reality, this is often not the case. Once staff reaches out and you say you are too busy or you react in a way that signals as such, they will receive the message that your words were empty. An open-door policy is not necessary for strong, effective management. It is okay to be busy and it is okay to want to maximize and manage your time.



6. ***Saying you are open to feedback when you are not-*** When managers say they want feedback, they may really think they want it and they may really think they are open to it. In reality, too many managers react badly when staff offer feedback and in many cases, it is held against staff. This all may happen with very little intentionality or awareness on the manager's part. If you are sincere in wanting open and honest feedback from your team- and I hope you are- do not put the onus on your team members to take the initiative. Create consistent and expected space for staff to offer feedback. Always thank your staff for providing feedback, whether you agree with it or not- and you do not always have to agree with it. This will encourage them to continue giving it and will model an appropriate way to receive it.
7. ***Granting a "surprise" early release-*** Every office I've ever worked in has done this, and my very planned and organized self has questioned it every time. Once again, the intention is good- to provide some extra time off for staff and to do so in a way that has the appearance of spontaneity and generosity, but there are too many problems with this "surprise" way of doing it. People travel and/or shop and are coordinating with countless other people. It makes it incredibly challenging if they don't know when they will be getting out of work. It would be far more beneficial and appreciated by staff to know ahead of time when they can go home so they can plan accordingly.
8. ***Not addressing issues directly when they come up-*** When a staff member does something that needs to be addressed, it needs to be addressed. If not, a number of negative consequences can result. Instead, it benefits everyone involved for the manager to confront what needs to be confronted in the time and manner in which it needs to be confronted. It is not easy but it gets easier with time and uncomfortable or not, it is a necessary part of being a manager.
9. ***Treating employees the same-*** Each staff member has their own skills, motivations, communication styles, strengths and goals. Some meet expectations, some surpass them, and some miss them altogether. People have different titles, tasks and responsibilities. Despite all this, in the name of fairness and good intention, managers will often treat each team member the same. Get to know each of your staff members and cater your interactions accordingly without showing favoritism.
10. ***Treating employees differently-*** This is a common offshoot of #9. With the good intention of catering to the individual needs of each staff member, managers often implement a style and system that is unfair. There is a fine line between individualizing a relationship and creating one based on stereotyped assumptions and factors unrelated to work.

Managing well is not easy, and it requires more than good intentions. You must make a commitment to getting better and investing the time and energy that is required. Once you supervise other people, this becomes the most important



part of your job. It is unfair to your staff to continue saying that your intentions are good. Instead, your results must be good too.