

The making of a manager

Your book club discussion guide

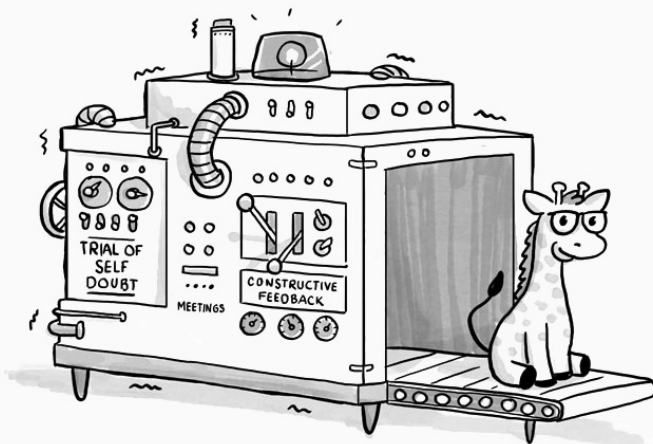
You're on a journey to boost your management skills, and reading Julie Zhuo's *The Making of a Manager* gets you started! Don't worry if you haven't read the book yet! We'll go through it together in sections over four weeks. Follow along with this guide for instructions on what to read and pay attention to each week. Then jump on zoom with your "club" to go through this simple discussion framework. Share, debate and collect your unanswered questions to share with the others in your manager cohort.

As with everything, the more you put into this, the more you'll get out of it. Work together as a group to meet each week and to support each other through this experience. So much of the benefit will come with the sharing of ideas and techniques.

It's as easy as that. Happy reading!

Check out your first weekly guide on the next page.

THE REALITY



Illustrations by Pablo Stanley from *The Making of a Manager*



Assignment: Week one

What to read: Introduction and chapters 1–2 (pp 1–53)



Great Managers are Made, Not Born

What is Management?

Your First Three Months


To think about while reading ...

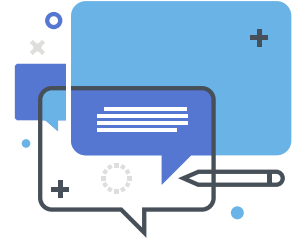
What is management?

- What's your personal definition of great management? How does it compare to Julie's? (pp 15–19)
-  What excites you about managing people? What's challenging? (pp 28–34)
-  Julie's definition of a manager is someone who *gets better outcomes from a group of people working together*. What does this look like for your team? What are the outcomes you care about? How do you get these outcomes through your direct reports?
- Think about the best managers you've had in your career. What were their strengths in terms of purpose, people and process? (pp 21–26)

Your first three months

- In your most recent role, what was your path to becoming a manager? What advice does Julie have for your situation? (pp 40–53)

 be ready to discuss



Discussion: Week one

First, we need a Captain to steer this ship! From among your ranks, choose someone to lead this first week's discussion (don't worry, this role rotates each week) With that settled ... welcome to your first book club meeting. This discussion outline will help you keep the conversation on track. Go through the questions in order, and if you don't get through them all, that's okay. Follow the energy of the conversation. If it's engaging and productive, go with it. If not, move on. In the end, though, please make sure you have enough time to:

1. Capture your questions to share with #management"
2. Choose next week's captain, and
3. Check calendars for conflicts. Reschedule the next meeting if necessary.

Ping Laura with any question and (most importantly) enjoy the discussion!

Objectives

- Get to know the members of your club and the context they bring to the conversation.
- Break the conversational ice so all will feel comfortable sharing their views.
- Capture 1–5 questions you have about this content. (Slack 'em to #management)

Discussion: 1 hour

20 minutes — Get to know

Each person shares:

- Name
- Role/Team

- Structure of team (# direct reports, where it is in org, etc.)
- Brief overview of what your team does
- The number of years of management experience you have
- What excites you about managing people? What's challenging?

30 minutes — Questions to discuss

1. Julie's simple one line definition of a manager is someone *who gets better outcomes from a group of people working together*. What does this look like for your team? What outcomes do you care about? How do you get these through your team?
2. Which of the 3 buckets — purpose, people and process — is most comfortable for you as a manager and which is most challenging? Why? Share specific examples in the context of your work at Expel. What are the similarities/differences in our group?
3. Which of the 3 buckets — purpose, people and process — is most prominent at Expel, if any? Why do you say that?

10 minutes — Wrap up

- What is the most valuable thing you're taking away from the reading and/or the conversation this week?
- If you could ask the author anything about this content, what would it be? (Slack to #management)
- Who will lead the next meeting?
- Check calendars for next week.



Assignment: Week two

What to read: Chapters 3–5 (pp 57–138)


Leading a Small Team

The Art of Feedback


Managing Yourself

To think about while reading ...


Leading a small team


- How well are you doing on building relationships founded on trust? (pp 60–63)
-  How have you been transparent and authentic as a manager? Think of specific examples. (pp 69–70)
- What are the strengths of each of your reports? How can you leverage them more? (pp 72–73)
- Can you say with confidence that each of your direct reports would want to be on your team again?

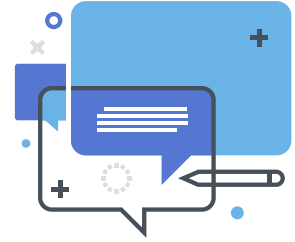
The art of feedback

- What's your relationship to feedback? How challenging is it for you to give it? To receive it? How has that changed over time? (pp 83–85)
-  Think of the most impactful feedback you've ever received. Why was it so meaningful?
- Think of feedback you've given to a direct in the past couple months. Did it lead to the behavior you hoped for? (pp 93–99)
- Are you giving your reports enough feedback?

Managing yourself

- Every manager sometimes feels like an imposter. When have you felt this way? What situations tend to bring this out for you? (pp 109–111)
- Play along by jotting down your answers to the questions on pages 112–114. What themes emerge regarding strengths and weaknesses?
- What is your ideal environment for doing your best? Which situations trigger reactions that can derail your effectiveness? (pp 118–122)
- How do you incorporate reflection and goal setting into your routine? (pp 135–137)
-  What do you want to become twice as good at in the next 6 months?

 be ready to discuss



Discussion: Week two

Welcome back! Now that you've broken the ice, you're ready to do some fishing, or at least hook into some deeper conversation. Follow the guide below, going through the questions in order. Didn't get through them all? Don't sweat it. Follow the energy of the conversation. If it's engaging and productive, go with it. If not, move on. In the end, though, please make sure you have enough time to:

1. Capture your questions to share with "#management"
2. Choose next week's captain, and
3. Check calendars for conflicts. Reschedule the next meeting if necessary.

Objectives

- Make it real: Draw concepts back to your own experiences, share openly and listen for common experiences.
- Strengthen supportive connection with the group.

Discussion: 1 hour

50 minutes — Discuss

1. Which of the topics in this week's reading (i.e. building trusting relationships, 1:1 meetings, giving feedback, getting feedback, knowing yourself, etc.) resonates most with you right now? Why?
2. What's the most impactful feedback you've received in your career? Why was it so meaningful?
3. How have you been transparent and authentic as a manager? What was the impact? Share specific examples.

4. What do you want to become twice as good at in the next 6 months? How can we help?

10 minutes — Wrap up

- What is the most valuable thing you're taking away from the reading and/or the conversation this week?
- If you could ask the author anything about this content, what would it be? (Slack to #management)
- Who will lead the next meeting?
- Check calendars for next week.



Assignment: Week three

What to read: Chapters 6–8 (pp 142–213)


Amazing Meetings

Hiring Well

Making Things Happen

To think about while reading ...

Amazing meetings


- Think about the meetings you run regularly. What is the desired outcome for each of these? (pp 143–149)
- How effective are you at encouraging everyone to participate in your meetings? Which of Julie’s tips will you try? (pp 153–157)
- Browse your calendar for the coming weeks. Are there meetings on your calendar that you don’t need to attend? Or meetings that shouldn’t exist? (pp 157–159)
-  Generally, how effective are the meetings you attend at Expel? What works well about them? How would you improve them?


Hiring well

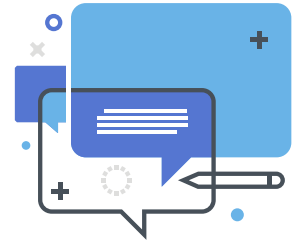
- Make a future map for your team using the questions on pages 165–166.
- How well are we hiring for diversity in all its aspects? (pp 176–178)

- If you were told hiring is the only thing that matters, what would you do differently? (pp 180–181)
- How strong is the “bench” for your team? Could you take an extended vacation? (pp 184–186)

Making things happen

- What is your bold, tangible vision for your team? How do you measure it? Consider it using the questions on page 194. (pp 192–194)
- If you could achieve only one goal this quarter, what would it be? (p 197)
- How well is your team executing? Use the questions on page 204 to think it through.
-  How do you ensure continuous learning and improvement on your team? Think of specific examples and how well they’ve worked. Which of Julie’s ideas would you like to try with your team? (pp 210–213)

 be ready to discuss



Discussion: Week three

Here we are again! You know the drill: Follow the guide below, going through the questions in order. Didn't worry if you don't get through them all. Follow the energy of the conversation. If it's engaging and productive, go with it. If not, move on. In the end, though, please make sure you have enough time to:

1. Capture your questions to share with #management
2. Choose next week's captain, and
3. Check calendars for conflicts. Reschedule the next meeting if necessary.

Yada yada ...

Objectives

- Make it real: Draw concepts back to your own experiences, share openly and listen for common experiences.
- Share practical, Expel-specific, ideas for improvement in things such as meetings, hiring and learning from success and failure.
- Continue the connection.

Discussion: 1 hour

50 minutes — Discuss

1. Which of the topics in this week's reading (i.e. amazing meetings, hiring, communicating vision, planning and execution, etc.) is most relevant to you right now? Why?
2. In general, how effective are the meetings you attend at Expel? What works well about them? How would you improve them?

3. How do you ensure continuous learning and improvement on your team? Share specific examples and outcomes.
4. What was your experience being recruited to Expel? Where did we find you? How did it feel? Why did you choose to take this opportunity? How do insights from our stories impact how we think about recruiting great people?

10 minutes — Wrap up

- What is the most valuable thing you're taking away from the reading and/or the conversation this week?
- If you could ask the author anything about this content, what would it be? (Slack to #management)
- Who will lead the next meeting?
- Check calendars for next week.



Assignment: Week four

What to read: Chapters 9, 10 and epilogue (pp 217–260)


Leading a Growing Team

Nurturing Culture


The Journey is 1% Finished

To think about while reading ...

Leading a growing team


-  What is currently (or, if you are not yet leading a big team, what do you anticipate will be) the hardest thing about scaling management? (p 218–223)
- How many hard problems have you delegated in the past 3 months? Why or why not? (pp 225–227)
- Think about the intersection between “*what is important to the organization*” and where “*you can add unique value.*” Which of your projects fit squarely there? Which do not? Which will you delegate? (pp 231–236)
- Talk to your manager about what’s important to him or her with regard to people, purpose and process. Use the questions on pages 228–229 for inspiration.

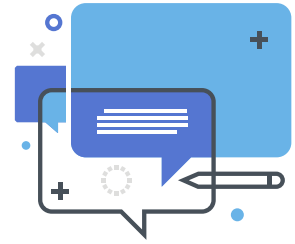
Nurturing culture

- Imagine how you want your team to work in a year’s time? How would you describe to someone on your team what will be different then compared to now? (p 242)
- What values do you want to nurture within your team? How do these relate to Expel values? How will you do it?
- How well and how frequently are you communicating to your team what’s important? (pp 243–244)
-  What rituals do you have on your team currently? In what new ways can you celebrate your team’s values? (p 250)

The journey is 1% finished

- What are you most excited about next in your management journey?*

 be ready to discuss



Discussion: Week four

Follow the conversational energy, as you have all month, and enjoy!

Objectives

- Make it real: Draw concepts back to your own experiences, share openly and listen for common experiences.
- Give your club some appreciation for the time spent together.
- Capture any final, overarching questions or observations from any of the content to share with #management

Discussion: 1 hour

40 minutes — Discuss

- What's currently (or, if you're not yet leading a big team, what do you anticipate will be) the hardest thing about scaling management at Expel? Those with larger teams, what advice can you give based on your experience?
- What traditions do we have at Expel to celebrate our values? (For the company overall as well as examples from your team.) What else would you like to see?
- What are you most excited about next in your management journey?

20 minutes — Wrap up

- Thinking of everything you've learned, what questions or overarching observations does your team have? (Share with #management)
- What is the most valuable thing you are taking away from the book club experience
- What else would you like to say to your club members before you sign off?



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