



Roundtable Mentor

**Kate Salmon,**

Communications  
Consultant, shared her  
perspective with our  
team on how to get  
off on the right foot  
when you are promoted  
among your peers.

## Mentoring **MATTERS**

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*I recently got promoted and my new team used to be my peers. I know that one of my new direct reports also applied for the job. How can I get off on the right foot as team leader without things being awkward?*

The transition from peer to manager is not an easy one to make. Everyone warned me when I made my jump, but I thought they were being dramatic. People get promoted all the time, right? It's a natural progression that everyone expects and understands. But, there's no guidebook available to tell us precisely how it's done, because each new manager and team is unique.

In my case, I was fortunate to have the support of my team when we put forward a proposed restructuring of the department, but that support was the result of many long conversations. Our process involved lots of questions, disagreements, and missteps on our way to finding the structure that worked best for us. My team had real concerns about reporting to me, and they were hard to hear. But, as soon as they were out in the open we could address them.

Am I suggesting that you kick things off in your new role by hashing out everyone's beef? Probably not. But it's worth recognizing that they are likely to have concerns about you as a new manager, and that's perfectly normal.

*Change breeds fear and discomfort, but open communication will give people less to be afraid of.*

When making decisions, be sure to share your rationale and give your team an opportunity to weigh in and ask questions. Every week, give them a platform to talk about how they're doing and set an example by being open and honest with them. You will be surprised by what you hear.

If there's one person in particular that you're trying to maintain your relationship with, pull them aside and ask some very specific questions. How do you feel about our new working relationship? What worries you about our new dynamic? What do you need from me as we move forward together? Demonstrate a willingness to hear their concerns and a commitment to support them. It can be an uncomfortable conversation, but it's worth it.

For me, the hardest relationship to maintain after moving into management was with my work wife. Let's call her Susan. Susan and I were not just peers, we were friends. We had our go-to after work patio and a dozen shows we watched religiously together. We fist bumped each other every morning and made inappropriate jokes in the lunch room, and then I became her boss. Our relationship changed in a way that neither of us intended.

Although the shift was difficult and it did change our relationship, it was successful because we were so close. We were able to be candid and honest with each other in a way that few colleagues are. We started off our new working dynamic with some deep conversations to determine how we want to work together. From the outset, we were clear on what the expectations were. Most importantly, I was clear on Susan's expectations of me as a manager, and we had regular touchpoints to talk about how I was doing. She was my best source for honest and open feedback, and I appreciated it even though it made me uncomfortable.

*It's going to be awkward. There's no way around that. If you face the awkwardness head-on, you can work through it and arrive at a place of mutual understanding and support.*

The moral of the story? If you shy away from the awkwardness, it will linger in the dark and turn up unexpectedly. It will visit you in tense meetings, and certainly during performance reviews. So be brave and be vulnerable. Trust yourself, and trust the people who put you in this awkward position in the first place. They knew you could handle it.



**Kate Salmon** is a word nerd and cat enthusiast from Ottawa, Ontario. Armed with a BA in Rhetoric and Professional Writing from the University of Waterloo, she has travelled the world developing marketing strategies and adding oxford commas to everything she can get her hands on. She lives in Toronto with her cat and her boyfriend.



**Glain Roberts-McCabe** is passionate about the art of leadership and supporting ambitious mid-career leaders. She created **The Roundtable** to provide emerging leaders with the navigational skills, tools and savvy needed to manage increases in scope, pressure and leadership complexity.