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Overview

The purpose of this document is to describe Yard Stick PBC's management performance standards. Yard Stick's core values speak repeatedly to our ambition to not just have impact on the atmospheric chemistry problem of climate change, but also to have impact in the lives of each of the people who comprise the organization. We are literally nothing without the people who work here - our technologies cannot deploy themselves.

Hence it is essential that Yard Stick managers are exceptionally high-performing. We will not accomplish our mission if we have amazing science and technology and sales and field work but weak management.

A Note On Language

This document will repeatedly refer to "management," which we define as having direct reports, including durable/"most time" 1099s. Management is defined by being personally responsible for the time and priority allocation of employees who report to you and are firstly accountable to you, their manager.

In contrast, at Yard Stick "leadership" is a behavior of ownership and excellence available to all employees, regardless of seniority or managerial responsibility. Everyone at Yard Stick can be a leader; it is a choice. Not everyone **must** be a leader, but the highest-impact and highest-performing team members are likely to exhibit leadership more frequently than others.

"Executives" are the members of the executive team and represent the most senior managers of the organization responsible for day-to-day coordination between key teams and functional roles.

What Is The Goal Of Great Management?

The goal of great management is to build an organization which delivers exceptionally high-quality work via highly-fulfilled people. We aspire to amazing results **and** amazing experiences.

Yard Stick faces four managerial challenges which make this difficult:

1. Our work is inherently very difficult. We are at the bleeding edge of many of our disciplines. There are few "experts" out there who can show us how to do it better.
2. People are complicated. Any organization trying to align the output of any reasonable size of humans is doing hard work, because we're each complex people.

3. We are a remote-first organization. Evolution has refined our in-person communication skills for millenia, but it hasn't equipped us as well for a primarily async/written culture. This is especially true during conflict.
4. The company is changing rapidly. That's both because we're growing, and because our market is inherently unstable. Soil carbon is a market creation situation, which means the external context in which we work is changing constantly. The definition of "our market" is materially different every 9 months. Again, we're not evolutionarily predisposed to handle this well.

Our goal is to deliver exceptional workoutputs and life-giving team experiences.

Principles Of Great Management

Following are the initial key management principles Yard Stick will focus on. These will change, like everything at Yard Stick. They are also not exhaustive, but rather represent the subset of all management behaviors which are most essential to the specific work we're doing and the specific way we're doing it.

Great managers at Yard Stick must provide three things:

1. **Clarity:** Ensure every direct report knows exactly what their responsibilities and priorities are, how high performance is defined, and how to get what they need to succeed. Align individual responsibilities and priorities clearly to company goals and broader strategy.
2. **Support and Development:** Ensure every direct report feels valued, supported, resourced, and appropriately challenged. Provide feedback, coaching, and opportunities to grow commensurate with direct reports' needs, ambitions, and desire for promotion or other advancement.
3. **Accountability and Acknowledgement:** Hold each direct report accountable to performance criteria with a supportive orientation. Proactively ensure tough conversations happen when expectations are not met. Consistently acknowledge great work and growth.

A helpful phrase which highlights the tension of #2 and #3 is "hug and push." Great managers provide both the "hug" of encouragement, care, love, and support and they "push" direct reports towards improved performance and greater ambition. Both are required.

These principles are embodied in a variety of managerial **Interactions** which occur throughout a working experience (e.g. 1:1s, performance evaluations). More detail on these three principles and key/common interactions is provided below if you want to learn more.

Alignment to Core Values

It's valuable to consider how these management principles build on and reinforce Yard Stick's [core values](#):

- **Climate Impact Above All Else:** Measuring soil carbon is insanely hard. We won't have any impact of substance if we can't build a culture of excellent management.
- **Pursue Justice:** Any justice ambition of the organization, however modest, will be the product of team members' willingness to express themselves openly and honestly. The path to justice is murky. Managers must help their team connect with and advance this often-secondary aspect of what we're trying to accomplish with our work.
- **Your Whole Self Is Welcome:** Managers must actively affirm the value of each teammate's unique identity, beliefs, preferences, and style, while "right-sizing" team norms to both ensure strong team alignment and also not inappropriately exclude the inherent diversity of the team.
- **Commit And Deliver:** Without the principles above, no great work can possibly get done!
- **Spread The Love:** Encouragement and praise, both shared privately and team-wide or beyond, is essential to the culture we want to experience at Yard Stick. Great managers ensure their team gets the overwhelming majority of credit for great work.
- **Speak Up!:** Great managers tell the truth, especially when it's hard, and live out Radical Candor every single day.
- **We're All Owners + Teammates:** Teams at Yard Stick which see their work as separate from the whole will underperform and create cultural distance between themselves and others. Trust is essentially important on remote-first teams, and great managers foster their team's sense of belonging in and accountability to the broader organization.

How Will This Be Used?

The executive 360 review process we're in the middle of speaks to the three principles above explicitly and richly, so that process will hugely inform our understanding of what management excellence and gaps we're experiencing today at Yard Stick.

Since this is the first time we're implementing a shared organizational perspective on great management, over Q2 2024 every manager will speak to **their** manager about these principles and discuss in what ways they're performing highly and in what ways they can improve. Those action items will be communicated clearly to each manager's direct reports in the appropriate forum (e.g. team stand-ups, 1:1s).

The overall goal is to embody these management principles in our everyday language of working together. The same way our values show up with some frequency to help us figure out what to do, when, and why, our hope is that this shared management worldview similarly becomes a toolkit for our interactions which we use constantly and helpfully.

Examples Of Principles In Action

Every person is different, so the embodiment of each principle will look different in each manager/report pair. Nonetheless, here are some examples of these principles in action to

inspire your own choices as a manager and help direct reports know what to expect and how to keep managers accountable.

Clarity

- Onboard every new direct report joining the organization for the first time with clear steps and appropriate background materials to provide context to our work.
- Create a specific plan for new direct reports to ensure a great first-day experience and beyond as necessary/appropriate (e.g. first week, 90 days).
- Ensure every direct report has a clearly-documented job description. Update these job descriptions as direct reports change jobs and levels of responsibility.
- Over-communicate about how day-to-day actions connect to organizational mission, commercial goals and strategy, and cultural ambitions/standards.
- Help each direct report develop clearly-articulated goals via every performance evaluation cycle (or off-cycle as necessary). Scaffold these goals into smaller resolutions (e.g. monthly) to track progress over time.
- Maintain a mutually-agreed professional development agenda so that coaching can focus on specific areas for growth tightly linked to the direct report's goals and likely progression inside the organization. Review progress towards these goals and iterate frequently. Discuss desired promotion opportunities specifically and ensure alignment on a path towards those opportunities.
- Make quick, transparent decisions on issues when direct reports are blocked. Clarity which enables progress is almost always more important than getting the perfect answer!
- Explicitly guide direct reports' prioritization among various work streams when resources are limited, which they literally always are. Ensure you are aware of trade offs facing direct reports as they work plan, and directly participate in that conversation to ensure alignment to team- and company-level priorities.

Support and Development

- Get to know each direct report personally to develop an authentic, trust-based relationship as the basis for working together. Understand each direct report's motivations, aspirations, and preferences.
- Be vulnerable with direct reports. Frequently admit your own mistakes, apologize, ask for forgiveness, talk openly about your own development needs, failures, and anxieties, and appropriately celebrate your own successes.
- Be optimistic and maintain high expectations, especially during periods where they are underperforming. Ensure in high-push scenarios you are also high-hug.
- Provide required context, purpose, and background information on all key work. Ensure direct reports have the right skill for the work at hand. Unblock them as necessary, both via your own activities and by holding others in the organization accountable for theirs.
- Hold effective, consistent weekly 1:1 meetings with each direct report (see below for more detail).
- At least quarterly:

- Hold two-way 1:1 feedback sessions which are not evaluative, but formative, oriented toward helping the manager and direct report both grow.
 - Step back and talk about the big picture. Ask how the direct report is doing/feeling on the quarterly time scale.
- Provide intensive support for professional growth directed at the direct report's career goals, both within the organization and without:
 - Engage in the direct report's work directly. Avoid entirely "hands off" management. Find opportunities to engage with and directly observe the direct report's activities to stay connected to their in-the-weeds reality.
 - Find opportunities to teach new skills and mindsets to help direct reports advance towards their career goals. Regularly offer options and ideas.
 - Understand the direct report's ambitions within the organization, identify promotion or other advancement opportunities and goals, and develop a growth plan which can result in the desired promotion/advancement outcomes.
- Celebrate each direct report's successes both privately and publicly.

Accountability and Acknowledgement

- Ensure (through all interactions) that the direct reports consistently know whether they are meeting your high expectations for performance or not. Work towards direct reports' long-term respect rather than popularity.
- Hold concrete discussions about specific goals and progress against them at least monthly to ensure direct reports feel managerial engagement with their goals and results.
- Conduct formal performance reviews at least once each year.
- Reinforce high expectations in conversations, goal-setting, and work-planning. "I have very high expectations for your performance, and I know you can meet them."
- Provide precise praise privately and/or publicly to acknowledge high-quality work, positive risk taking, and moments of cultural embodiment and growth.

Examples of Interactions

Similarly, different management circumstances require materially different interactions, but here are common interaction types and characteristics which managers and direct reports can consider drawing from for maximal connectedness and managerial relationship quality.

1:1s

- Regularly scheduled. Weekly or biweekly as mutually agreeable.
- Rarely missed. Only rescheduled when unavoidable and mutually agreeable ahead of time.
- Structured. May have a substantial written framework/agenda or be loosely organized, but one way or another is not improvised. Each party knows what is expected of them and what would benefit the other.

- Support-focused. Primary topic is enhancing connectedness and supporting the direct report towards success, not providing status updates or work planning.
- Documented. To-dos and other commitments are captured in writing, with dates if relevant, to ensure clarity and allow ease of reference in the future.

Weekly Team Meetings

- Prepared agenda. Manager and direct reports agree on agenda ownership and process.
- At meeting start, agree on priorities. There is always more work than time. Before diving in, all participants must agree on priority topics/order.
- At meeting start, revisit prior commitments, as necessary. Review past to-dos and action items to ensure all participants have a shared understanding of current status.
- Documented. Especially at meeting end, to-dos and other commitments are captured in writing, with dates if relevant, to ensure clarity and allow ease of reference in the future.

Quarterly Big Picture Check-Ins

- Provide a pulse check:
 - How is the direct report doing/feeling generally about work at the organization?
 - What were they feeling/thinking about after a good day at work recently?
 - What were they feeling/thinking about after a bad day at work recently?
 - What's the balance between those two kinds of days right now?
 - How connected do they feel to the organization's mission?
 - How valued and supported are they feeling by you, their manager? By others?
- Discuss professional growth:
 - How stretched are they feeling in a good way? What could be done to enhance that?
 - How stretched are they feeling in a bad way? What could be done to minimize that?
 - How do they feel about the coaching they're receiving from their manager? How can it be improved?
 - What change in focus should we make, if any, for professional development in the coming quarters? Why? What is the direct report's desire for promotion or advancement, and are there plans in place to accomplish those goals?
- Narrate the journey:
 - Revisit the longer term direction of the organization and team and note any changes in direction or priorities to enhance clarity and connectedness.
 - Point out connections between the direct reports' day-to-day work and these broader organizational goals. Discuss any misalignment.

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