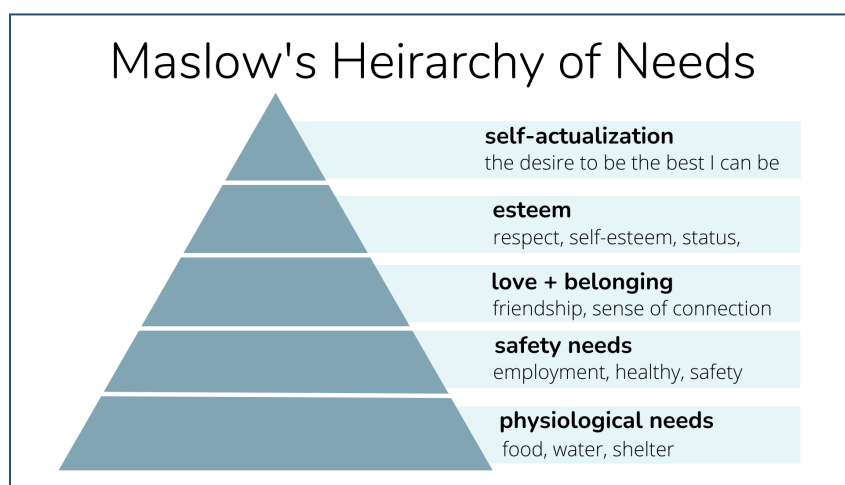


6 North Stars for New Managers:

1. Create safety for others

There was a famous psychologist named Maslow, who introduced the concept of a hierarchy of needs in his 1943 paper "[A Theory of Human Motivation](#)."



The idea here is that, as humans, our most basic needs are food, water, shelter. We can't think about anything else until those basic needs are met for survival. Once those needs have been met, though, we can start finding more sustainable systems to support our wellbeing like being safe

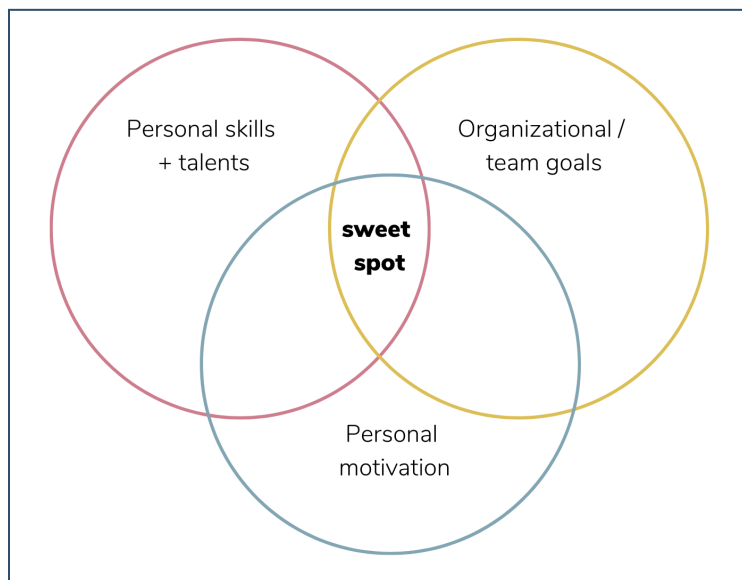
and finding employment. You can't progress to the next level of the pyramid until the previous one has been satisfied. Accessing someone's creativity, therefore - the highest notch on the pyramid - requires fulfilling all of the previous tiers of needs.

This means that people cannot innovate on your team until they feel physically and emotionally safe.

In every startup, then, you have to create the conditions for individuals to reach self-actualization - their creativity. So, as managers, your most basic job is to support each person on your team so that they can access their best selves to bring to work each day. You don't need to solve all of their problems - no one expects you to be a therapist or a realtor - but you need to think about the people on your team as whole people. They don't just arrive, produce work, and go home. You are someone who is going to help take care of your people so they thrive.

2. Motivate others

You can have the smartest, most talented people on your team but it doesn't matter if they aren't motivated to hustle alongside you. So, how do you motivate others?



There's a sweet spot. You need to figure out how to align each individual's skills and talents with the organizational and/or team's goals. And then the key ingredient to success is aligning their personal goals with the organization/team's goals, too.

Your team needs to not just be calling it in, but pushing themselves to be their very best. If you're going to blow up boundaries, create new markets,

and solve the unsolvable, the whole of your talent needs to be greater than the sum of its parts. Especially when you're still at an early stage and every person really matters.

You have to invest in getting to know people really well to understand how you can leverage their best assets to make the team the best it can be. We define "strengths" as being someone's technical expertise, how they think and solve problems, or even how they communicate and make decisions.

Part of why you meet 1:1 with your direct reports is to really dig in and learn about who they are. You can figure out an individual's strengths explicitly from a wide range of sources like their resume, personality tests, and by asking them directly. Sometimes

people don't always know what they're great at, so you can help them discover more about themselves. Another way you can get this information is by observing others in action. A great manager can help someone identify their own strengths and lean into them as they stretch and build new capacities.

To figure out what motivates someone, though, requires conversation. What matters to you? Where do you want to be heading, professionally, and how can we help you gain the experiences here that you need in order to get there? It's unlikely that talent will stay at your company forever so your job is to help them work towards wherever they

want to go and align what they are doing today with what they want to be doing in the future. You need to understand what matters to them so that they are pulling themselves out of bed in the morning excited to dig in. This isn't a one-time conversation. It has to be part of your annual review conversation and quarterly check-ins. You need to keep checking in on what matters because sometimes it can change. Someone just had their first child? That's for sure going to change what matters to them. Someone had a big success or failure? That might change the target, too.

And while it's really important to identify individual motivation, there also has to be a collective goal. What is the company's future going to look like? Storytelling is essential. The vision that you sold to your funders and investors - it's the same skillset. You have to excite a movement about what is possible. You have to keep reminding them about where you're heading, especially when the day-to-day hustle can sometimes be far removed from the grand master plan.

3. Provide support

Your job as a manager is to support your employees; they don't serve to support you. Your job is to help them shine. They are not here to help *you* shine. If you really believe this, everything else will follow.

In order for the organization to be its best, every individual needs to be excelling - not just you. Once you become a manager, your job becomes about supporting the people

under you. One of the main reasons to have regular 1:1 meetings is to be able to offer coaching and support to your direct reports. In these meetings, I like to train my team to come [prepared with an agenda](#). Their job is to surface successes and challenges and to help me understand how to help them. Your job, as the manager, is to troubleshoot whatever is slowing them down and getting in their way. What needs to be done to help you bring your best to the team? A regular touch-point also helps you build relationships and gives you an ongoing opportunity to provide feedback so that learning can occur - both what's going well and what can be improved.

How you have your 1:1 conversation is equally as important as having it in the first place. Remember that this is a learning opportunity, so your job is not to solve all of their problems for them. Your job is to teach them to fish so that they can solve the problems themselves in the future. One way to achieve this is by using open-ended

questions. Questions that will guide your employee to think about solutions. Here are some of my [favorite manager questions](#).

My all-time favorite manager question: **What can I do to support you?**

I like to end every meeting with that question - and then really listen to what they need. Ask for clarity if you aren't sure you get it. And then do whatever it is that needs to get done. Do you want me to call the client to speed up their response? Do you need that done today? Done. When your team knows you have their back, they'll trust you and they'll dig in and give you more.

4. Identify and measure success

Imagine you're a student in a new calculus class and the professor gives you a surprise test that determines whether you pass or fail. You'd be pretty upset, right? You didn't know there would be a test. You didn't realize it was today or what was on it and that it had big implications on your future. You'd be pretty frustrated, I imagine. Right?

The same is true with your job. No one ever wants to be surprised about how to be successful.

The clearer you can be about what it looks like to be successful and how success is measured, the easier you are making it for people to actually succeed. Give them the final exam on day one so they know how to prepare. Think about the messaging you are giving on a daily basis, on your website, and what your [performance review](#) and reward processes look like. A [30-60-90 review process](#) is a great way to teach new hires about being successful at your company because it structures a feedback loop into onboarding right from the start.

Then you have to actually measure performance and provide feedback. If you can articulate success, measure it, and reward it - that's the simplest reinforcement cycle that exists. Think about setting organizational goals annually and quarterly and then having each individual set [SMART goals](#) that align to them. When everyone knows where the mark is and you measure against it, people can be successful.

5. Focus on the positive

If you've ever had a dog you know that if you want to train it to do a new trick, you always give your pup a cookie as soon as they've done the desired action. Want to teach them to retrieve a ball? The first time they pick up the ball and bring it back to you, you give them a cookie, some praise "good dog!" and maybe even a little back scratch. You don't yell at your dog every time she doesn't pick up the ball. You simply reinforce the good stuff because the dog really likes cookies and being called a "good dog." Heck, those back scratches are the best.

Humans are no different. We do better with praise. There's tons of research out there to back this one up, but trust me - as a former teacher - pointing out the good stuff works. Praise is most valuable when it's concrete and specific. You're teaching someone where the mark is by showing them exactly where it is with the positive remarks. "I love the way that you anticipated three problems and identified solutions." Or "I love that you just shared your concern for that approach. You're right and we might have missed that if you hadn't spoken up." Whatever it is, you're naming it right away - as soon as it happens. It's always good to give praise on the spot - and in front of others because then the rest of the team learns from this positive example, too. They realize that you want them to speak their mind or that you want them to be a few steps

ahead. You're giving everyone cues when you point out good stuff that's happening. And who doesn't love some praise?

By all means, there comes a time to give critical feedback. But if you can give positive feedback 90% of the time, people generally feel valued and want to improve. And when you come in and give them a specific thing to work on, it will be heard and acted upon. Your positive approach will help your team see that you want them to be successful and you notice all of the good stuff that's happening. Carrots work better than sticks.

6. Be clear

Clarity is essential for communication purposes (wait, what did you mean?) but also organizationally. Who is doing what? Who manages whom? People need structure to help avoid the ambiguity that can destroy productivity. When there are clear lanes and expectations, it frees us up to know exactly what we need to do. When there are organizational charts, it helps make sure every individual has someone who is there to support them and give them feedback to improve. Even if you have only one employee this person needs to know who they report to so they know who to go to for help and guidance.

On a project-level basis, you need to know who is taking the lead on what. I love the RACI model for this and I usually take a few minutes at the start of each project to identify who, on the team, is playing what role on which task. I typically create a [RACI worksheet like this](#) so that the lanes are marked. When someone crosses into someone else's lane, it's a great reminder about who has the ultimate decision and who is merely a consultant. When you're clear about everything from the start you proactively avoid a great deal of confusion and conflict - and have channels set up to address them when, inevitably, issues arise.

We all make mistakes, it's how you handle them that matters.

As a new manager, the only way you're going to learn is by doing. You're going to make mistakes. That's part of the learning process. It's uncomfortable and embarrassing

sometimes. It's okay. If you think about a situation and realize you should have handled it differently you actually can fix it. One of the most powerful things you can do as a manager is to admit that you made a mistake, to circle back, and to correct the course. It's a great model for everyone to see: you are learning, too.