

ELITE MANAGER TRAINING SERIES

The First 90 Days Manager Playbook

From New Hire to Trusted Leader

1-30

LISTEN & LEARN

31-60

ALIGN & PLAN

61-90

EXECUTE & LEAD

Mirko Samardžić — Leadership Coach

1,000+

managers trained

700+

hours of coaching

90

days. one system.

— WHY THIS MATTERS

The *numbers* are unforgiving

Most new managers fail silently — not from lack of skill, but from lack of a system.

40%

of new leaders derail
within the first 18 months

90

critical days to establish
your leadership identity

3×

higher team performance when
managers follow a clear framework

"The goal in your first 90 days is not to be liked. It's to be understood, trusted, and respected — in that order."

— THE FIRST 90 DAYS PLAYBOOK · MIRKO SAMARDŽIĆ

The CLEAR Leadership Model

C — CONNECT

Build authentic relationships before authority

Understand what motivates each individual

Create psychological safety in every interaction

Show up with curiosity, not judgment

L+E — LEAD WITH CLARITY

Define expectations explicitly, not implicitly

Link all work to measurable outcomes

Make decisions transparently and consistently

Be the first to name what is not working

A+R — ACCELERATE RESULTS

Remove obstacles, don't just point at them

Delegate outcomes, not just tasks

Build systems that outlast your involvement

Measure what matters, cut what doesn't

I

● PHASE ONE

Listen & Learn

Resist the urge to fix everything immediately. Your job in the first 30 days is not to impress — it's to understand. The best leaders diagnose before they prescribe.

DAYS 1 - 30



01

Map Your Landscape

Before you move a single chess piece, understand the board. Who are the key players, what are the unwritten rules, and where are the hidden landmines?

- Schedule 1:1s with every direct report in week 1
- Identify your boss's top 3 priorities
- Locate the informal influencers on the team
- Review the last 6 months of team output



02

The Listening Tour

Ask the same five questions to every stakeholder. You're not just gathering data — you're building psychological safety and signaling that you value their voice.

- "What's working that I should protect?"
- "What's broken that no one has fixed?"
- "What would you do if you were in my role?"
- "What do you need from me to succeed?"
- "What should I know that I haven't asked?"



03

Decode the Culture

Culture is what happens when the boss isn't watching. Understanding it is your competitive advantage as a new leader.

- Observe 2-3 team meetings before running one
- Note what gets celebrated and what gets punished
- Identify the team's unspoken agreements
- Understand how decisions actually get made



04

Secure Early Wins

Pick one visible, achievable win in the first 30 days. Not to prove yourself — to build momentum and demonstrate that things can get better.

- Identify a low-hanging pain point to resolve
- Remove one unnecessary meeting or process
- Publicly recognize an unsung team member
- Deliver on one promise you made in your 1:1s



05

Build Your Intelligence File

Take meticulous notes. Every insight from your listening tour goes into a structured doc that will inform your 60-day plan.

- Document each 1:1 with key themes
- Track recurring concerns across conversations
- Note team strengths you want to double down on
- Flag risks that need urgent attention



06

Align With Your Manager

Don't assume you know what success looks like. Make it explicit. A 30-day alignment session sets the entire trajectory of your leadership.

- Define success metrics for 30/60/90 days
- Clarify your decision-making authority
- Agree on communication cadence and format
- Identify the one thing that would make them proud

III

● PHASE TWO

Align & Plan

You've listened. Now synthesize. Turn your intelligence into strategy and your strategy into clarity. Great managers don't just have a vision — they make it legible.

DAYS 31 - 60



07

Define the Team's North Star

People work harder for meaning than money. Articulate a team purpose that's bigger than the job description and connect it to the company's mission.

- Draft a 1-sentence team mission statement
- Connect team goals to company OKRs
- Share the "why behind the what" in team meetings
- Create a visual of how the team creates value



08

Design the Operating Rhythm

Predictability is a leadership superpower. A strong operating rhythm reduces chaos, increases accountability, and frees up mental bandwidth for strategy.

- Set weekly team standup (30 min max)
- Launch bi-weekly 1:1s with each report
- Create a monthly team retrospective
- Establish a quarterly planning checkpoint



09

Assess & Deploy Talent

By day 45, you should have a clear picture of each person's skills, ambitions, and gaps. Start matching people to the work where they can do their best.

- Complete a skills inventory for each team member
- Identify your high-potential players
- Have honest conversations about development gaps
- Begin adjusting roles to strengths



10

Fix the Broken Systems

You've had 30 days of data. Now choose the 2-3 most painful process problems and fix them. Do it visibly. Let the team see you solving what they've suffered.

- Prioritize fixes by impact vs. effort
- Involve the team in designing solutions
- Communicate what's changing and why
- Measure the before/after impact



11

Establish Your Voice

Leadership is communication. By day 60, your team should be able to predict your decision-making principles. Consistency is credibility.

- Articulate your 3 non-negotiable values
- Share your leadership philosophy openly
- Give feedback early, specifically, and kindly
- Over-communicate on priorities and direction



12

Build Cross-Functional Bridges

The most effective managers are connectors. Map your key dependencies and invest in those relationships before you need them.

- Schedule coffees with 5 peer managers
- Identify your key internal stakeholders
- Understand each partner team's goals
- Find one way to create value for each partner

III

● PHASE THREE

Execute & Lead

By day 61, the training wheels come off. You've built the foundation — now it's time to perform. This is where good managers become great ones.

DAYS 61 - 90



13

Accelerate Through Others

Your output is no longer measured by what you do — it's measured by what your team delivers. Master the art of high-leverage leadership.

- Identify your 3 highest-leverage activities
- Delegate everything else with full ownership
- Coach decisions, don't make them for your team
- Create space for the team to lead initiatives



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Drive Measurable Results

By day 90, you should have at least one clear data point showing the team has improved under your leadership. Make impact visible.

- Track your team's core KPIs weekly
- Build a simple dashboard for the leadership team
- Celebrate quantifiable wins loudly and often
- Document ROI of your process improvements



15

Grow Your People

The managers people remember most are the ones who made them better. Build individual development plans and actively invest in your team's growth.

- Create IDPs for every direct report
- Give stretch assignments to high-potentials
- Sponsor team members for visibility opportunities
- Hold monthly career conversations



16

Protect the Team's Energy

Great managers are a buffer between organizational chaos and team focus. Be ruthless about protecting the work time and mental space of your people.

- Audit and cut unnecessary meetings by 30%
- Shield team from scope creep and side requests
- Create "deep work" norms and protect them
- Model sustainable pace at the top



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Build Feedback Loops

The best-performing teams have a culture of continuous feedback. Don't wait for annual reviews — build feedback into the fabric of how your team works.

- Ask for feedback on your own leadership monthly
- Normalize peer feedback in retrospectives
- Share your "working with me" document
- Act visibly on the feedback you receive



18

Write Your 90-Day Narrative

On day 90, present a clear picture of where you started, what you've changed, and where the team is going. This is your leadership brand in action.

- Compile a "State of the Team" brief
- Present your 6-month vision to leadership
- Ask your team what they'd change about the plan
- Share wins AND lessons learned — be human

— KEY MILESTONES

Your *90-Day* Timeline

Concrete, time-bound milestones to keep you on track and accountable.

- 
- DAY 1
First Day Protocol
 - DAY 7
Complete the Listening Tour
 - DAY 30
Phase I Review
 - DAY 45
Talent Assessment Complete
 - DAY 60
Phase II Review & Plan Reveal
 - DAY 75
Full Delegation Complete
 - DAY 90
The 90-Day Leadership Presentation

Your *90-Day* Action List

Print this page and check items off as you complete them.

PHASE I — DAYS 1-30

- 1:1 with every direct report
- Identify boss's top 3 priorities
- Complete 5-question listening tour
- Observe 2 team meetings
- Document intelligence file
- Secure one early win
- Align with manager on 30/60/90 metrics
- Decode cultural norms

PHASE II — DAYS 31-60

- Draft team mission statement
- Launch weekly team standup
- Start bi-weekly 1:1 cadence
- Complete skills inventory
- Fix 2 broken processes
- Articulate 3 leadership values
- Coffee chats with 5 peer managers
- Share 90-day plan with stakeholders

PHASE III — DAYS 61-90

- Complete full delegation of execution
- Create individual development plans
- Build team KPI dashboard
- Cut meetings by 30%
- Ask for personal leadership feedback
- Share "working with me" document
- Prepare 90-day narrative
- Present State of the Team brief

— READY TO GO DEEPER?

Day 1 starts *today.*

Every great leader you admire had a first 90 days. The ones who thrived had a system. Now you have one. If you want personalised coaching and competency development — let's connect.

 [Connect on LinkedIn](#)

[ftm.rs](#)