

Three years ago, you had an idea for a business: you, two other co-founders, and the dog. It turned out you were onto something, and your little seedling of an idea sprouted shoots and began to grow. You nurtured it past hiring your first employee; you even weaned it past hiring your 20th employee. One morning, you woke up and realized that your small dream was now a revenue-generating business reality. The shift in business from co-founders and early employees to a growing team of new leaders is huge, dynamic, and exciting.

Somewhere along the line, you identified your *MVP* and *Core Customer*. As a leader and startup founder, you probably read Eric Ries's [The Lean Startup](#). You got clear on who you are, what you do, and where you're going.

You probably set a lot of goals along the way and knocked them down, chalking up new ones as you went. Goal-setting was key to your success and something we could write many many blogs about – but that's not what this one's about. (Curious about goal-setting? lululemon does a great job explaining it [here](#))

Inspired by [Tony Hsei](#)'s phenomenal success in building an intentionally recognized culture at Zappos, you devoured [Delivering Happiness](#) and committed to building a [values-based business](#). One that you love working at and one that your employees were proud to say they were a part of! Sure, you had some bumps along the way, but who hasn't?



About a year ago you started courting investment and you just closed your first round (Heck Yes!!!). You created your own profile on [Crunchbase](#) (because you're legit and got funding) and you built a company profile on [LinkedIn](#) and [Angellist](#). Now the fun really begins. You are entering the scale and growth phase of your business and S*T is about to get really real. Your goal is to grow to 200 employees within the next 2 years.

So what does this mean for you and your company?

One of the biggest questions we hear from our scaling clients is how we can help them train their team to be New Leaders and New Managers.

This isn't a new problem for swiftly-growing companies. In fact, it's a very old issue. I bet in 1854 when founding partner William Cooper opened his accountancy practice in London, he didn't think that a century and a half later, PWC would be a network of firms in 157 countries,

756 locations, with more than 208, 100 people! AND I bet when he hired his first accountant and then asked his first hire to train his second hire, and so on and so on, he wouldn't see anything inherently problematic with this! (NB. I have no proof AT ALL that this is how William Cooper trained his people)



Source: Christian Pundit Files

What does it mean to be a “New Leader?” and why is

this a struggle companies have?

We know that in rapidly-scaling companies, the need to grow and expand can often exceed the ability to recruit and retain new talent. People are promoted quickly and may take on new leadership positions before they've had that level of responsibility before. They were talented at what they did, so of course they can get their team to deliver the same results you've come to expect from them. You are moving fast and basically everyone is "winging it."

AND STOP - I'm not saying don't do this. - This is awesome. Let's recognize that these smart, hard-working individuals are the reason you built your company to 20 people, defined your MVP and Core Customer, and got the backing you needed. It also means that as a company you were able to attract people who are invested mentally and emotionally in what you are doing and who want to grow their careers right alongside you.

Let's slow down, though:

These incredible individuals are now holding people management positions in your growing, thriving company and they have NEVER been a people manager before. Their individual contributions helped build what you have today, how can you help them make the leap from doing to leading? And how do you make the leap yourself? At this size, most of your time should be spent leading the business. You're setting the direction for everyone else to #GSD and planning what the next few months, maybe years, look like.



You're not alone in this journey; it's something we've seen close to home in Vancouver in hyper growth companies like [lululemon](#), [Hootsuite](#) and [Kit & Ace](#). In some cases, your young, high-performing employees may never have worked anywhere else before your company. They know your way, and that's it.

You've all been running so hard that you might not have had the time to stop and ask some important questions. Do they want this responsibility? Do they want to learn the skills they need to effectively lead people? Perhaps most importantly, do they (and everyone else at your company) need (and wants) to start managing people to progress in their careers? Can they continue to grow and flourish doing what they do best without taking on leadership responsibilities? Can you have amazingly skilled gurus who keep doing what they do so well, who feel valued and rewarded, without having to manage other people? Is leading a prerequisite to career growth with your company?

If you are going to move team members into leadership roles, what can you do to support them? You can *train* them.

The next time you're thinking about promoting someone into their first management role, stop and ask yourself these key questions:

- Are they ready? And by ready, we mean do they:
 - Want to learn what it takes to be a leader and a manager?
 - Have the skills to have feedback and feedforward conversations
 - Know the difference between enrolment and telling?
 - Understand the people that they will lead and how to communicate with them?
 - Know how to set expectations and to meet goals.
 - Know the difference between micro and macro managing and when each different style works?

Managing and leading people is both an art and a science. Your best people may have inherent leadership strengths and talent that can be nurtured. Just because someone is a natural leader, though, don't assume they will immediately be a good manager. There are some very specific skills that should be learned and practiced, and they may not have had the chance to do that yet.

Get personal

Helping your new managers and leaders (*management* and *leadership* are two very different things) understand who they are, how they impact others and how they affect the company is key to the individual's success and their teams success. There are a lot of blogs and books written about leadership and we love to read them.

For us at BLANKSLATE, it boils down to the fundamentals we have learned and practiced in our own careers. Leadership is about leading yourself before you can lead others. Once you can lead others, you can lead the company. This goes for every person on your team, from entry level roles all the way up to founders. A CEO who isn't personally responsible for their communication style isn't a true leader, and a receptionist who doesn't believe that they can make a difference isn't doing themselves or the company justice.

Our advice?

Be humble, get real and dig into where you are strong and where you need help. Learn about yourself, then about your team. Start building the leadership skills you, and they, will both need. From there, you can watch as your new leaders grow into their roles, their teams smash goal after goal, and your company flourishes.

A little tidbit for starting conversations around who you are and how you work? We love using [Strength Finders](#) as our conversation launch pad. Use your team's results to spark conversation around how you can communicate and work as a team!

[Feel free to reach out](#) and find out more about our New Leaders and Management Fundamentals Course. We'd be happy to introduce you to one of our clients that has already experienced how investing in their company by training their team can revolutionize their business!