

Roadmap to Engineering Leadership

FROM IC TO PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

At our latest roundtable, we brought together aspiring and early-stage engineering leaders to explore how to grow leadership skills beyond technical expertise. The session followed a retrospective format, diving into current challenges the group were facing as they step into people management roles.

SESSION LED BY:



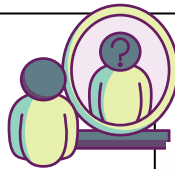
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ESTABLISHING YOUR LEADERSHIP IDENTITY



- Find a balance between **authority** & **approachability**. You need to set boundaries and expectations clearly while also being empathetic and accessible.
- **Consistency** in decision-making and leading by example builds **trust** and **respect**.
- Focus on **guiding** your team, not just managing them.
- Own your **unique** style rather than trying to fit into a mold.
- **Confidence** comes from being **authentic**, **transparent**, and willing to face challenges head-on.

MANAGING IMPOSTER SYNDROME

- Imposter syndrome is common for everyone. Acknowledge it, but don't let it stop your progress. Trust that you're doing your best & are in your position for a reason.
- Keep a "**Ta Da List**" to track your accomplishments – this is useful to look back on for EOY reviews too.
- Recognise that your team may have more expertise in certain areas. Your role is to guide and mentor, not to know everything.

BALANCING PROJECT DELIVERY WITH TEAM SATISFACTION

Job satisfaction hinges on four key factors:

- **Agency**: Do team members feel they have control over their work?
- **Growth**: Are they developing their skills and advancing?
- **Impact**: Do they feel they can do their best work?
- **Belonging**: Do they feel part of the team?

During busy times some factors may drop temporarily. If multiple factors consistently drop, it indicates a problem. As a leader, observe these patterns, communicate with your team, and address issues before they impact performance and morale.

LEADING THROUGH INFLUENCE

• Know when to decide & when to explain:

As a leader, not every decision requires an explanation. A key skill to develop is recognising when a quick, straightforward decision is necessary and when more context is required. Consider:

- ★ **Urgency**: Does the decision need to happen right now, or can it wait?
- ★ **Risk**: What are the potential consequences of making the wrong decision.

• Facilitate discussions rather than dictate:

Some decisions require you to make a call while others are better made collaboratively. Encourage team discussions and create space for them to learn and contribute. Know when to step in and take charge when necessary, but don't dominate the conversation.

• Embrace risk & learning:

If the decision is low-risk, let the team explore the options. By giving them the freedom to make mistakes, you build trust and demonstrate your confidence in their abilities.

• Ask questions:

Great leaders guide their teams by asking insightful questions rather than telling them what to do. This fosters critical thinking, encourages ownership, & holds individuals accountable for their actions and decisions.

Recommended resources:

BICEPS framework + 'Never split the difference' 

MANAGING TECH DEBT

- **Tech debt is inevitable**. Set clear expectations with your team and stakeholders on when and how it will be addressed.
- Prioritise tech debt as part of the product roadmap, dedicating time and resources without delaying project deadlines.
- As a leader, advocate for your team's needs, balancing tech debt and workloads to ensure optimal performance.

