



# MANAGER OR MATE?

Striking the balance between friendly and professional behaviour can be tough for new bosses. **Karen Deehan** explores how to get results while getting on with staff

**R**emember David Brent's infamous dance in *The Office*? That's an extreme example of what happens when a manager's desire to be liked means he loses his team's respect. If you're new to the role, striking a balance between being friendly and being a leader can be challenging.

The need to be liked is part of human nature, but Jenny Murray, director of Spectrum HR, warns that becoming too close to your team makes it difficult to address serious issues. "It's important to have a degree of distance and not always try to be one of the gang," she says. "Managers may have to provide constructive feedback, which can be harder if they see you as a friend rather than a boss."

When making the transition from being managed to becoming a leader, one of the first hurdles is establishing your authority. Michael Revill, customer service operations manager at insurance company Simplyhealth, found his first few months in the role challenging. "I faced considerable pressure in establishing credibility," he says. "I was 23 years old and before I even arrived there was a perception that I wouldn't understand the people working in my team, or have the ability to lead them. I also felt that if there was any disconnect within my team it would be a direct reflection on me."

Understanding individual motivations, facing difficult decisions head on and being clear about goals helped Revill to earn respect, but he admits it was a steep learning curve.

As well as establishing credibility, there is the added pressure of adjusting to new responsibilities and making a good impression. Maria Chapman recently became head of marketing at a publishing company. "There was a lot of pressure because I felt I had to prove myself, so I had to build up my self-confidence," she says. "I'd been promoted internally and already had a good level of trust with the team, which helped, but it

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