

How to understand your manager

Managers have a big impact on career development and engagement at work. Understanding what motivates them can help you adjust your approach and interactions to be more effective.

Ideas for action



Complete these exercises over four weeks to gain insight into your manager. Use the insights to structure 1:1s, adapt your communications and involve your manager at the right moments in projects and decisions.

Week 1 - channel your inner anthropologist

Observe your manager and notice what's happening with a bit of distance. Pay attention to:

- ☞ What questions do they ask most often?
- ☞ What motivates, energises or frustrates them?
- ☞ How do they react in different situations (meetings, challenges, successes)?

Spotting patterns of behaviour helps you to predict how they will respond in the future.

Week 2 – play detective

Copy and paste communication with your manager (e.g. emails, presentations, voice notes) into a closed AI tool to uncover new insights. Try asking:

"Based on this data, create a personality profile of my manager. Give me:

1. Three words to describe their style.
2. Three recommendations on how to work & interact with them more effectively.
3. What personality type they align with?"

Week 3 - guess their priorities & problems

Understanding what's on your manager's mind can help you to align your actions with what is important to them. Playing the guessing game is also a good way to see how connected you currently are:

- ☞ Guess your manager's top 3 priorities/challenges for the next quarter.
- ☞ Then, ask them in a 1:1 and compare your insights: what did you get right/what surprised you?

Week 4 – safety in numbers

Team activities provide a natural way to learn about your manager and also help to build stronger team dynamics.

As a team, try:

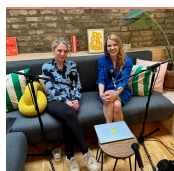
- ☞ Guessing each other's values.
- ☞ Using our 'More About Me' exercise to allow everyone to share their working styles.
- ☞ Sharing a strength you'd like to make stronger over the next 12 months.

Coach yourself questions

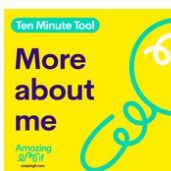
What do you and your manager have in common?

What's one action I can take to communicate more effectively with my manager?

Recommended resources



Watch our 7 minute Skills Sprint on adaptability on how to stretch yourself whilst staying true to who you are.



Download our free More About Me tool as a helpful starting place for teams to share more about themselves.



Sarah and Helen share 4 practical ways that teams can explore values together in episode **#299** of Squiggly Careers.