

Template: Your “User Manual”

A “How to work with me” guide for your partners and employees, to give some perspective on your thinking, quirks, and expectations to pave the way for teamwork and success.

Instructions

1. For each section below, answer the prompt questions.
2. Send it to people who know you well and collect their feedback.
3. Share this with new hires.

For an example of a completed User Manual, I’ve included mine on page 3.

Introduction

- Why are you writing this user guide?
- What do you hope will be the result of writing and sharing it?

How I view success

- What does being good at your job mean to you?
- What are some of the values that underpin your understanding of success?

How I communicate

- What’s your communication style like?
- How have other people described it?
- What have you gotten feedback about in the past?
- How should others interpret what you do or say?
- Are there any aspects of communication that you are working on?

What do I do in the ideal world?

- What does your ideal schedule look like?
- What mission is most important to you?

Things I do that may annoy you or be misunderstood

- What are the causes of misunderstandings that you’ve had in the past?
- What are some things about your leadership or working style that other people criticize or misunderstand?
- What quirks or mannerisms might unintentionally annoy a different personality type?

What gains and loses my trust

- What are the qualities you value that inspire your trust?
- What triggers you?
- What makes you trust someone else?

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My strengths

- What do you love to do, and what are you good at?
- What can you help others with?

My growth areas

- What are your blind spots?
- What are you working on?
- What can others help you with?

My expectations of my direct reports

- What do you consider a stellar job for someone on your team?
- What do you consider a mediocre or bad job?
- What’s unique about your expectations that may differ from other managers?

Logistics

- What's the best way to give me information?
- How do you like to stay in sync with your reports or colleagues?
- What preferences do you have for one-on-one meetings?
- Would you prefer people to contact you via email, chat, or in-person?
- What’s your availability outside of working hours?

Giving and receiving feedback

- What is your philosophy around feedback?
- What can people expect in receiving feedback from you?
- How would you prefer to receive feedback from your peers?

For an example of a completed User Manual, I’ve included my own on the next 3 pages!

The Michael Girdley User Manual

This guide is for my partners and employees, to give some perspective on my working style. I want the people around me to succeed. I think a big part of that is making it easy to work with me.

How I view winning:

- Career happiness comes from doing things you love as much as possible.
- From that comes passion, which leads to great results.
- Finding a way to make sure you “tapdance to work/life” is my key to business.

How I communicate:

- My style is very short, kind and direct. Me on Twitter is me.
- I use a level of informality in business that is different for most.
- I’ll often tangent to anecdotes that are sometimes useful but can wander.
- If I’m not giving you the results you want, ask again. I probably just didn’t get it.

What do I do in the ideal world?

- I get to be in a “visionary” style role all the time.
- I prefer to offload all admin and “uncreative” tasks to others that love them.
- I like creative tasks. Anything repetitive I’ll automate, delegate, or procrastinate.
- I think of myself best as a leader and enabler of people.
- I find classical management a necessary evil. I won’t provide you with initiative.
- Real world impact matters to me most. Have no time for the impractical or theoretical.

Thing I do that may annoy you or be misunderstood:

- My lightheartedness can sometimes be misinterpreted as I am not serious.
- My explanation through story-telling can be unclear. Tell me to get on course.
- I default to coaching and ask “well, what do you think?” If you want direct, just ask.
- I like to riff on ideas for the fun of it. I may quickly forget and be on to the next idea.
- I am a bad multi-tasker with a weak memory. I have systems or I’ll forget important (but boring) things. If I forget something you tell me, it’s not malicious.
- A lot of the time a team will have to go back to the drawing board with an idea after they execute once. If I do the “I don’t know just make it great” thing then come back with a rough cut of the project for actual useful feedback.

How do I best process information?

- I best process information that's laid out for me visually (email/text works!)
- For big decisions, I like to take time (at least 1 night) to think or "sleep" on it.
- I'll make decisions using past experiences or patterns to solve a problem.
- Start with the high-level view (why, context) and then add detail later. Top down.
- As a natural contrarian, I view everything presented as false.
- If you want to change my mind, data and facts work best.

What gains and loses my trust:

- As I am extremely particular about the people I choose to keep close.
- I often start with a higher than normal level of trust for those close to me.
- That level of trust will increase with reps and time.
- I am fanatical about the highest of integrity, both real and perceived.

My strengths

- I (think) I know my strengths and weaknesses. I arrange life around them.
- I love to coach and help others.
- I'm fast to gain insights in complex situations, often things others don't see.
- I thrive in a crisis. I bring focus, creativity, action and calm.
- I use psychology to navigate situations for mutual good.
- I love creating new things.
- I will stay the course for decades or more.
- I have high standards for myself and others.
- I am constantly in growth mode.

My weaknesses

- I am often not able to exactly describe what I want until I see a first draft.
- I am not great at providing meaningful personal feedback. I'm working on it!
- I have trouble focusing on long, detailed work. Almost to the point of having ADHD.
- I am slow to have difficult conversations with people.
- I am prone to Shiny Object syndrome.
- I will avoid conflict and must force myself to do it.
- I can be stubborn when something conflicts with a deeply held belief.
- I am highly competitive. I sometimes play stupid games just to win.

My expectations of my direct reports

- Given my style, I need you to take initiative and somewhat self-manage.
- I'm happy to be told what you need me to do.
- You will be happiest with a clear understanding of your role. If you don't, let's talk.

continued on next page...

.My expectations of my direct reports (continued)

- I expect a high level of autonomy from direct reports. Just do it.
- I look at creating win-win for me and reports. If, at some point, your personal journey involves you moving on, let's talk. I'll support you.

Logistics

- I do regular 1:1 meetings from day 1 at the same time each week/weeks/month.
- For small things that need to be done immediately, I prefer to receive a text message.
- For bigger or non pressing tasks, send an email with exact instructions if possible.
- I am "online" 24/7 so a call/text/etc anytime never bothers me.
- On the other hand, I will respect your personal time, often saving it for work hours.

Giving and receiving feedback

- I will validate my opinion before providing feedback in a respectful, private manner.
- I invite your feedback. I want a culture of respectful feedback.
- Each year, my business coach interviews others for feedback I use to improve.

Questions? Comments?

Join the conversation on Twitter: [@girdley](https://twitter.com/girdley)

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