



How to Successfully Manage Your **Nursery Team**



Table of Contents.

What's inside the book.

| | | | |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Intro: Skills For Every Nursery Manager | 3 | Skill #5 - Organisation | 21 |
| | | Skill #6 - Adaptability | 24 |
| Skill #1 - Managing Individuals | 4 | Skill #7 - Conflict Resolution | 28 |
| Skill #2 - Communication | 8 | | |
| Skill #3 - Building Trust | 12 | Ask the Experts: Part 2 | 31 |
| | | Skill #8 - Perseverance | 34 |
| Ask the Experts: Part 1 | 15 | Skill #9 - Honesty | 37 |
| Skill #4 - Staff Development | 18 | | |



Skills For Every Nursery Manager

Ideas to improve the way you lead

Managing staff at a nursery can be far more challenging than many other sectors.

Finance, staffing, budgets, that's much the same for any sort of manager. But when you're in charge of a nursery, there's one thing in particular that's adding a whole lot more to your workload.

That is, you have to make sure that the highest level of care is delivered to the children you're entrusted with. Every single day. Not to mention your roles as cleaner, cook, handyman, counsellor and accountant.

If the children are your number one priority though, managing your staff should be number two. They are the ones who are doing the crucial work at your setting day in and out. They're the most valuable resource you have.

That's why we've put together this guide, full of ideas for you to improve the way you manage your practitioners.

We've featured nine skills that any successful nursery manager needs, why they matter, and what you can do to improve them.

We've also got some helpful examples along the way so that you can see these management skills in action.

On top of that, we've got features from Niki Buchan on the role of leadership in a nursery environment, as well as James from the Nursery Nook answering our questions about what makes a truly outstanding nursery manager.

So without further ado, it's time for Skill #1...



Skill #1 - Managing Individuals

It's a team game

What does it look like?

We've put this one first for a reason. It is the most important skill that any manager can have. Managing individuals is all about finding and managing every single one of your practitioner's strengths, and making sure they're getting a chance to use them.

To do this, you need to understand three things. Their strengths, what activates them, and how they learn best.

The best way to find out all of these is through observation. Spending time in the rooms with your

practitioners is the only way to get to know them better.

Strengthening weaknesses is an attractive idea, but it will not make them outstanding practitioners. The greatest managers let their practitioners' existing strengths influence how they run their nursery, rather than the other way around.

Why does it matter?

Across any industry, the biggest motivator for staff is rarely money and, to put it frankly, the nursery sector is not famed for its high staff wages.



No, what motivates people the most is recognition. In turn, the best way to get recognised is by working at the best of our abilities, doing a job that we enjoy, in a way that is beneficial to everyone.

This is also how you get the best out of your staff and create a truly special workforce.

You need to learn how staff like to learn in order to get the best out of them in their role, but you also need to learn how they best receive recognition in order to boost their morale. Perhaps it's directly from you, in front of all of their colleagues, or maybe from the parents themselves.

What's a good example?

From the outside, it might look like Angela is afraid of getting stuck in. She's always asking questions and doesn't really seem to be able to just get on with stuff

unless she understands it. She likes to read up on things and seems to learn best when she has the opportunity to really get into a topic.

Angela would be best supported by making sure that her manager gives her all the information on a new task. Give her areas that she is in charge of, perhaps things that require attention to detail, and she's likely to be engaged and successful.





Her manager also knows to give her stuff to read about new subjects, so that she can feel really comfortable with it. On the other hand, expecting her to simply dive into a new task and excel straight away would be unfair. It's not the way she works best.

And a not-so-good example?

A manager who misses Angela's obvious strength, her attention to detail and her analytical brain, might consider her lazy or unable to think on her feet.

Asking her to 'Just get stuck in' or 'Work it out for yourself' does not support her strengths, and is actually highlighting her weaknesses. Not only is this likely to be ineffective, but it will probably make her feel under appreciated and as though she is incapable of doing her job.

This can generate a wider feeling of dissatisfaction and a lack of support, which can be hugely damaging to staff morale.

OK, so how do I improve?

- Broadly speaking, people's learning style can be split into three areas. *Analysers*, *Doers* and *Watchers*.
- *Analysers* like to absorb everything and hate mistakes, but they have high attention to detail.
- *Doers* use mistakes as their material for learning. They like figuring things out for themselves.
- *Watchers* tend to get stuck with traditional ways of learning. Instead, they like to get out of the classroom and see others displaying the skill they're trying to learn.



- There's a few good ways to find out what sort of learners your practitioners are, as well as what their strengths and weaknesses are. But the number one way is to observe them. Simply asking them to tell you their learning style or greatest strength is unlikely to give you the answer you want.
- A great question that does tend to yield some revealing answers is when you ask a member of staff what their best day at work was in the last three months. You'll find out a lot about what makes them tick.
- Stop looking for ways that your staff need to improve. Instead be on the lookout for ways in which they are already strong.





Skill #2 - Communication

Less talking, more listening

What does it look like?

Knowing each practitioner's strengths and how to use them best is useless if you don't know how to communicate with them.

People think communication is about how well you talk, but it's not. It's about how well you listen. If people don't feel like they're being heard, they're unlikely to respond very well to what you're saying, no matter how good it is.

As James from Nursery Nook points out in the first of our expert articles, communication is also about organisation, which we'll cover in [Skill #5](#). If you're not

organised, you're never going to have the right information to hand when you need it.

In the same way that you might approach child development, you need to find out what your practitioner's interests are and how they like to work, then deliver on it.

Why does it matter?

Nothing creates more division in a staffroom than last minute meetings and schedules or being kept in the dark about key developments. This is about honesty, which we'll cover in [Skill #9](#), but it's also about keeping everyone properly updated.



The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. Information is giving out; communication is getting through.

Sydney J. Harris



The division this can cause is obviously bad for staff morale and your environment

If people don't know what you have planned, then they are going to be directionless. If people are made to feel a part of the journey and understand their place within it, they are going to feel empowered and will be onboard with what you're doing.

What's a good example?

Nursery manager Sam has noticed that some of the staff have been slacking on some of their paperwork responsibilities recently. When she talks to them, they are unaware of the expectations and she realises that she's not entirely sure on how much they should be doing, or who is responsible for what.

Instead of improvising and coming up with a figure on top of her head, she asks them what they think is

reasonable, and what areas they find most time-consuming. She accepts her lack of communication with humility and promises to come back to them with a clearer plan based on their feedback.

And a not-so-good example?

In the same situation, it would be easy for Sam to be embarrassed and pluck some numbers from her head. She could either fall way short of what needs to be done and miss out on some key responsibilities, or she might leave staff with an excessive workload that is beyond their abilities, leaving them frustrated. Either way, it's going to be a problem and damage the trust her practitioners have in her.



OK, so how do I improve?

- Ask your staff to explain the beliefs of your setting. If they don't know, then you need to look again at how you're communicating with them, instead of blaming their poor memory.
- Don't just have general staff meetings. Many companies now use '1-on-1s'. They regularly schedule time with each staff member to find out how they are getting on. They can be crucial to understanding your staff, and an incredibly useful forum for giving your practitioners some feedback.





Skill #3 - Building Trust

The foundation of your nursery

What does it look like?

Trust is when your practitioners value your insight. They understand that you have their back, and are making decisions for the right reasons, not for selfish ones. Trust is also a key part of giving yourself the time and courage to make changes, as your staff will not be disheartened if they don't see positive change straight away.

This one is important. Trust is absolutely foundational to everything we mention here. Without it, the relationship you have with your staff will never truly be stable.

Why does it matter?

When you're leading any team, it's crucial that the people who you are leading have faith in what you're doing. This is especially true in a nursery setting where you need staff to trust your instincts on certain matters.

When your staff have trust in you it makes it easier to implement changes and they will have more faith that any temporary imbalances will be resolved. You'll have a team that works better together and you'll reduce bickering and discontent growing behind your back.



What's a good example?

Sam has uncovered a true rarity in the life of a nursery manager. A day with very little on her to-do list.

She decides to spend some time on the floor with the practitioners. She's changing nappies, working closely with the children, and getting stuck into the cleaning once all of the children have gone.

Not only does this give her a chance to show staff that she values their jobs and is happy to get stuck in too, but she is also able to have real contact with staff in the environment they're most comfortable in. This attitude can help her to build up the trust of her practitioners even further.

And a not-so-good example?

Let's imagine one of Sam's staff members, Lisa, has received a complaint from a parent. There is no safeguarding issue, it just seems to be a clash of personalities between the two people.

If Sam were to call Lisa into a meeting and explain that she is being disciplined and that she will be taken off as that child's key worker, then Lisa is going to have her trust completely eroded.

Not only was she not given the chance to tell her side of the story, but the blame was entirely placed on her. This can erode wider team morale if it becomes known that Sam will always take the parent's side in the future. We'll cover this idea further in [Skill #7 - Conflict Resolution](#).



OK, so how do I improve?

- Get stuck in. There is nothing that encourages trust more than seeing a manager who is willing to change nappies, resolve problems on the floor and get stuck into some messy play.
- Make sure you stick to your plans. Not following through on plans or schemes that you've promised to staff is a sure-fire way to damage that precious trust.
- Skill #9 - Honesty, is also important to trust. That means when it's easy and when it's difficult to tell the truth. If your practitioners know that you've shared some uncomfortable truths, it'll give them more faith in everything you tell them.





2.0 Ask the Experts:

James at Nursery Nook talks about what it takes to be an outstanding manager.

What does effective staff leadership look like in the early years?

Having a leadership role means leading by good example, usually in terms of pedagogy. But it is important to understand how to distribute your leadership amongst the team. Every member of staff has a talent which exceeds another, so allow them to lead on those aspects and you'll get a more cohesive team approach which allows everyone to feel valued in their role.

How can managers better support their staff?

No-one goes into the early years for money. A supportive manager understands this and focuses their team on the core purpose, the children.

Understand the backgrounds of staff, where they come from, and their needs - but remind them of the impact they are having on the children they are caring for. At the same time, a hug or a shared cuppa every so often might be all a person needs to feel supported. Keep a pack of biscuits in your drawer at all times!



What's your number one tip when dealing with dissatisfied or unmotivated staff?

A team revolves around an ethos. Does this ethos align with what the team believes in? This is an excellent starting point for unmotivated staff who may be going through the motions to satisfy management. Talk to your team, discover what their views are and, if necessary, redesign your ethos to reflect what you all believe to be the best way to care for and educate the children.

What's the most important leadership skill for a nursery manager to have and why?

Communication. Hands down. Sharing your deadlines with staff and explaining your thinking is often something managers miss and it can have a negative effect on staff morale. Ask them how would they like to get information. Morning briefings? Notice boards? An email they can read on the bus in the morning?

Design a system which works for your team and stick to it so that everyone knows exactly what is happening, why and when.

What is the biggest mistake that nursery managers make when managing their staff?

You cannot be a leader disconnected from the world around you. You're a member of a team. You support them and they support you. Sometimes you have to make the tough decisions, but don't isolate yourself unnecessarily. If you don't feel like sitting in the staff room at lunch after an unpopular decision, spend one lunchtime away. But go back the next, otherwise you will regret it!



Contributor: James at Nursery Nook

Bio: James is a Reception teacher in a primary school, having previously held senior leadership roles in Early Years within schools for the last 7 years, including at a nursery. He is the author of The Nook Book, along with countless resources and templates for staff in the early years.

Website: nurserynook.co.uk/

Social media: @nurserynook





Skill #4 - Staff Development

Finding time for everyone to improve

What does it look like?

If you want to keep your best staff, you can't let them get stuck doing the same thing week in, week out. Many people enjoy what they're doing, but that doesn't mean they don't want to find ways to improve.

Giving training opportunities to everyone is important, while also making sure that you're identifying those who would benefit from it the most. And don't forget to consider those learning styles from Skill #1. Giving training and opportunities for staff development doesn't mean sending everyone on an expensive course.

Why does it matter?

Of course, training doesn't always come cheap. But as we've already seen, this doesn't have to be the case, and you can find ways to train your staff without sending them on an expensive course.

Even so, it is absolutely an investment worth making. Staff are your most valuable resource. Making sure that they are developing and improving is crucial to their morale, but it is also crucial to your reputation and the success of your nursery.



What's a good example?

Nursery manager Sam has seen that one of her practitioners, John, is eager to learn. The only difficulty is that John really doesn't work well on traditional courses, and has never been any good at exams. What's more, the nursery doesn't really have the money for fancy online courses either.

What Sam does know is that John is her star observer, and she wonders if he might learn well in this way too. So after talking to a local 'Outstanding' outdoor nursery, she takes John along for a day with her to look at how they do things. Not only was John able to take a lot of information and new ideas back to the setting, but he felt really inspired about his role at the nursery. A win-win.

And a not-so-good example?

Even if Sam did have enough money to train her staff in a more traditional way, it can still be problematic. What if Sam had sent John off on a 4-week course over the weekends? It might seem like she'd ticked the 'staff development' box but she would not be looking after his development in a way that is appropriate to him.

Many managers also think that staff should be so happy with the opportunity of free training, that they should be grateful and shouldn't be paid for their time. This is absolutely not the case. It's a sure fire way to turn what should be a positive into a negative. If you don't pay people for their time and make sure it is something they are motivated to do, then you are probably wasting your time and your money.



OK, so how do I improve?

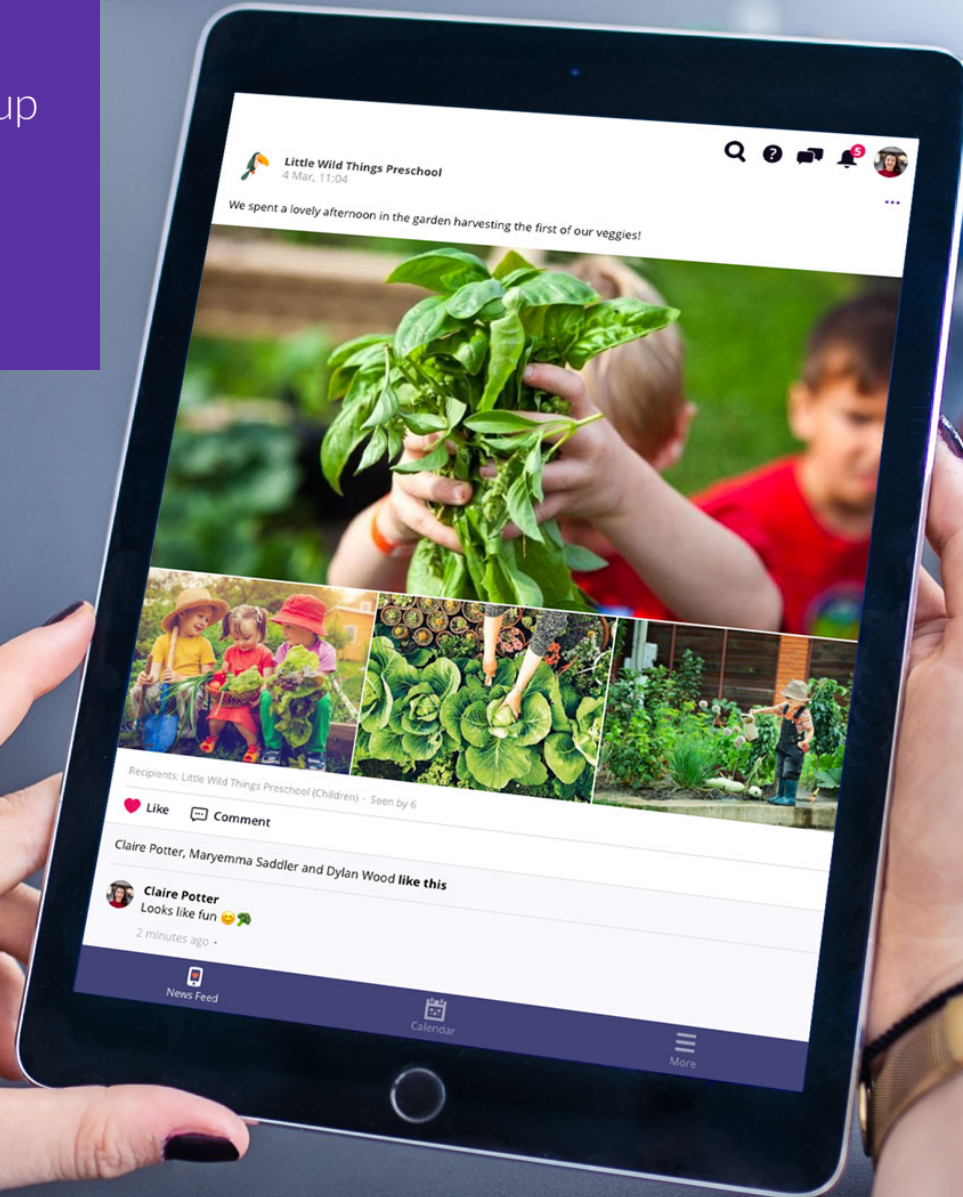
- If you are concerned about money, there are a number of grants for this to help with the cost of training. Check out Family's [Ultimate Guide to Childcare Business Grants](#) to find out more.
- Make sure you get staff onboard with the plan and pay them for their time. Otherwise, you can waste a lot of money on something that actually causes a rift.
- Give your staff credit for as much as you can. They are the ones implementing your plans, and make sure they know that. Tell them that positive parent feedback is because of the great work they do. The same goes for Ofsted. Poor managers constantly take credit for other people's good work. Great managers know that the credit will come without having to ask.



It's time for better nursery management software

See how easy it is to use Famly by signing up for a free demo today:

family.co/demo





Skill #5 - Organisation

Getting everything in order

What does it look like?

Time is the enemy of so many nursery managers. When it comes to staffing, you might know what you need to do but simply feel unable to give it the time.

This is organisation. If you can find a way to organise your time successfully, then you're more likely to find time for the things that matter. You're also far less likely to let important things slip. That means fewer last-minute notes or alterations for your practitioners, both of which can easily damage your relationship with them.

Why does it matter?

We've already mentioned it, but one of the pet hates of any member of staff is when they feel like everything is constantly being organised at the last minute. It almost always feels like your time simply isn't being respected as a practitioner if you're not given warning in advance about meetings, shifts, or special training days.

Meetings and training days should be a positive thing for staff. These opportunities for communication and development should be a central part of engaging with your practitioners, but poor organisation and late notice can quickly turn them into a negative.



What's a good example?

Sam knew that she was going to have a busy day. She was low on staff members and she knew there were going to be interruptions.

So instead of sticking to her usual schedule, where she booked a few hours off in the afternoon to focus on admin, she split her workday up into 15-minute chunks.

Not only did this allow her to stay on top of the ongoing interruptions, but she managed to get things done in between. So instead of sending out an email apologising to her staff because the rotas wouldn't be ready, she got them out in plenty of time.

And a not-so-good example?

We don't really want to over-complicate this one. You work in a nursery, not a barracks, so of course things

are going to come up unexpectedly and certain situations will need to be organised last minute.

But would you want to have your schedule messaged to you late on a Sunday? How about hearing about key changes through the grapevine rather than through the proper channels? What about waiting weeks and weeks for some time off to be approved? The more organised you are, the more you can treat your practitioners' time with respect, and the more they'll thank you for it.





OK, so how do I improve?

- Have you considered hiring an administrator to free up more of your time? If this isn't possible, perhaps there's someone in your team already who has the right ability and desire to take some of your most time-consuming tasks off your hands.
- Try planning your day in 15-minute blocks. A solid chunk of uninterrupted time is a pipe-dream in a nursery, but with 15-minute tasks you can achieve things before the next interruption comes.
- Try to find time every week to shut off your laptop, put down your phone and be in the room with staff. Make this absolutely non-negotiable. You cannot manage staff properly without observing them regularly, and this is one thing that is far too easy to let slip. Don't let it.





Skill #6 - Adaptability

Prepared for change

What does it look like?

The concept of adaptability is not easy to pin down. But in general, it's about your ability to react to change and move forward, rather than just keep things the way they've always been.

As a nursery manager, the chances are you're already pretty adaptable. Wearing many different hats, being constantly available, being ready to deal with unplanned challenges, they all show your adaptability. But to be one of the best staff managers you also have to be prepared to adapt to the big changes that come along too.

Why does it matter?

Things are constantly changing in the nursery sector, now more than ever. Whether it's 30 hours, the schoolification of early years, or the increased use of technology, if you aren't able to adapt you'll be left behind.

But why does this matter to your staff? Because the very best practitioners will want to work for a nursery that is modern. Being stuck in old habits is not very inspiring for ambitious young practitioners - it tells them that you are not open to feedback, and they may end up feeling demotivated. It can end up turning aspirational, excited practitioners into ones who are simply dialling it in.



In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.

Eric Hoffer



What's a good example?

Judie, a room leader, read a lot about in the moment planning and went to talk to Sam and ask whether it might be something they'd consider trying at the nursery.

Seeing the potential in the plan, Sam asked her to bring back more material and, once she was prepared, to try implementing it in her room.

It was a success and led to a massive reduction in paperwork and an improvement in engagement. Sam decided to go ahead and implement it across the whole setting. All because Sam was willing to adapt, they noticed a massive reduction in paperwork and an increase in both staff and child engagement. It also inspired Judie and gave her a huge motivational boost.

And a not-so-good example?

It's not hard to see what could have happened here. After coming to Sam with the idea, Judie could easily have got no more than a 'Good idea, we'll think about it later'.

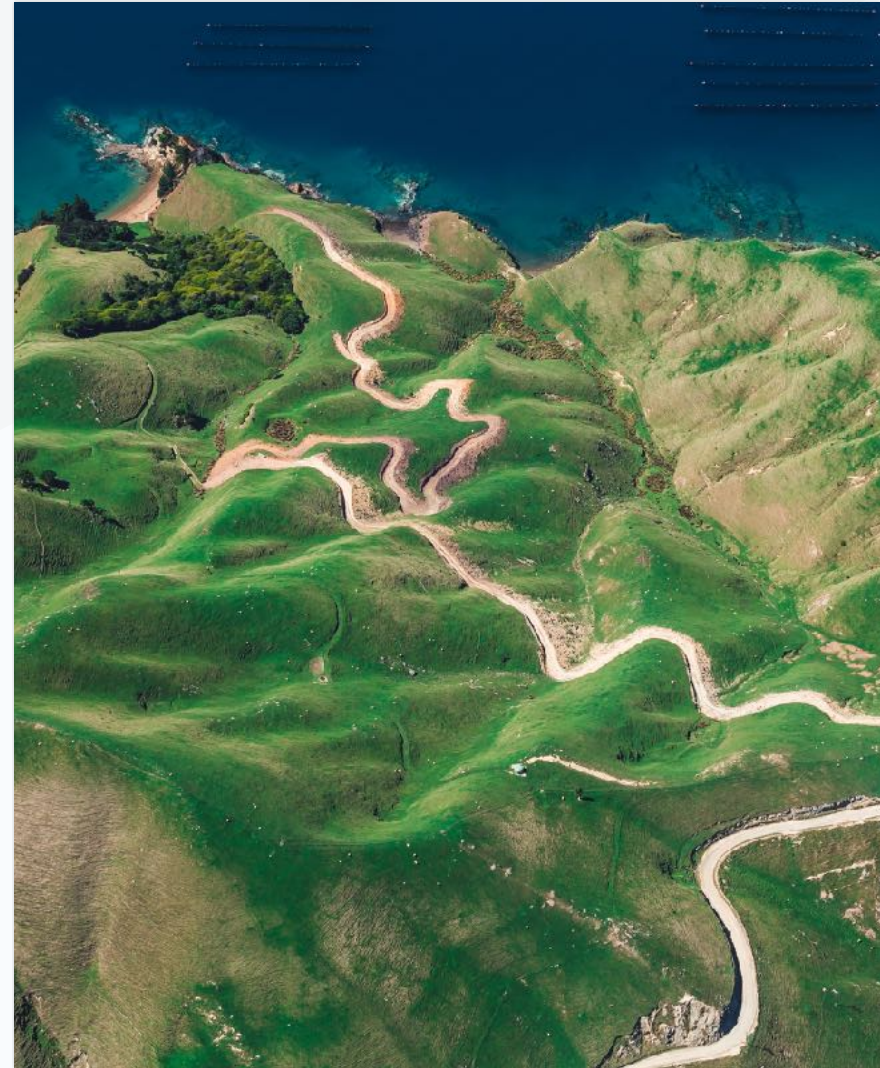
By failing to put anything in place to actually move the idea forward, Sam may as well have just shot the idea down.

By discouraging these sorts of ideas, Sam is not only damaging employee morale, but she might also be missing out on a change that could make a real difference to her setting.



OK, so how do I improve?

- Think back to the last time you were approached with an idea from a member of staff. How seriously did you consider it? What might feel like a bad idea at the time may actually reveal a lack of adaptability on your behalf when you reflect on all the instances together.
- Read more. If you want to be open to more ideas, let yourself be exposed to ideas more often. Read industry news, follow outstanding settings on social media, or find inspirational Facebook groups to join.
- Never feel like you get ideas from your staff? Try actively encouraging them. Organise visits to other settings or to conferences, and talk to them about what they saw that was worth trying. Creating an environment in which ideas are encouraged is the first step in becoming more adaptable yourself.





Skill #7 - Conflict Resolution

Planning for the inevitable

What does it look like?

It would lovely if everything was always rosy. But being a nursery manager is part leader and part referee (not to mention the million other parts).

Conflict between children, between staff and from parents is just part of the job, but to be a talented staff manager you have to have the tools to deal with conflict properly.

A lot of this comes from your existing relationship with staff. Trust. Honesty. Strong communication. It all helps when you're resolving a conflict.

A starting point is to stop being concerned about conflict. It's just part of what happens when people

work together, and it can even bring about important change by bringing underlying problems to the surface.

Why does it matter?

Conflict is an inevitable part of any workplace. But you need to be prepared to resolve it quickly. It will distract from the things that matter and could lower staff morale.

Conflicts that go unresolved can easily fester and cause more problems. They can damage staff relationships and contribute massively to the dreaded rumour mill.



What's a good example?

Sam has found out that there's some bad blood between John and Angela. It comes down to the fact that John thinks Angela isn't pulling her weight with some of the less pleasant tasks, and Angela thinks this is completely unfair.

Sam sits them both down and gets them to talk about exactly what the issue is for them. Then, they talk about the kind of tasks that John and Angela consider are the 'less pleasant' tasks and it turns out they actually have quite a different opinion on this.

After working out the differences, not only has Sam taken steps to resolve the conflict, but she's worked out that Angela and John actually have a very different theory of 'unpleasant'. Now she can delegate roles

accordingly, meaning both of them get to do less of the stuff they don't want to.

And a not-so-good example?

Well, maybe Sam got pretty busy. After letting the problem go on too long, by the time she tried to talk to John about it he was absolutely livid with Angela. Angela still had no idea why he was so angry and starts getting defensive.

Even sitting them down in a room now was going to be pretty fiery and so Sam told them both to cut it out and make sure they both pitched in.

As you can imagine, this sent the problem deeper under the surface and left her with two unhappy practitioners.



OK, so how do I improve?

- Respect. Respect. Respect. It doesn't matter what you do, tensions will be high. If you aggravate this by failing to show both sides the respect they deserve, you can end up in serious trouble.
- Listen before you talk. You need to understand the problems that are going on and the underlying issues that could be causing them before you jump in with an answer. It could be more complex than it looks.
- Agree on the problem. This might sound obvious, but it's not always as clear as you think, and this plays a crucial role in getting the conflict resolved. Defining what the issue actually is can often be most of the work.





2.0 Ask the Experts:

Niki Buchan explains to us what leadership really means in the early years.

Leaders in the early years need to be courageous. Your role is complex and you will meet opposition from owners, families, regulating authorities, and practitioners.

This is where you need to have the strength and courage to stay with your judgement on what is best for the children in your care. Sharing the facts, benefits and research will often support your decisions when you encounter opposition.

All practitioners need and want to feel included in decision making. Nobody likes to be told what to do without even having their voice heard!

For example, developing a vision that includes a move to nature-based practice may require you to move outside your own comfort zone and to explore the options with the best outcomes for the children in your care.

A good leader needs to show humility towards practitioners and families too. Accepting praise as well as criticism or seeking relevant professional development after identifying a gap in your own skills will model a valuable characteristic. Let's say a practitioner has advanced knowledge or an interest in nature-based practice. By supporting the practitioner in leading the changes you're demonstrating an appreciation of a skill that you may not have.



Contributor: Niki Buchan

Bio: Niki is an Educational Consultant with 'Natural Learning Early Childhood Consultancy' and 'Real World Learning', providing professional development, consultancy and training to Educators in the Early Childhood sector internationally. Niki is also the author of the book '[A Practical Guide to Nature Based Practice](#)'.

Website: naturalllearning.net.au/

Facebook: [Niki Buchan Natural Learning](#)





Skill #8 - Perseverance

Never gonna give you up

What does it look like?

Perseverance is about looking failure in the face and trying again. It's an invaluable skill for a manager, especially if you feel like you're faced with some serious staffing obstacles. Maybe you don't have the budget you'd like for training, or for more qualified staff. Perhaps it is taking you time to develop certain skills that you know are important. Or maybe you simply feel as though you have staff who are resistant to change.

Either way, having the confidence to persevere when it feels like you're only making baby steps, and having the resilience to keep going in the face of failure is

crucial to building staff trust and getting them on board with your vision.

Why does it matter?

Put simply, if you're the type of person who is going to give up on something easily it's unlikely that your ideas are ever going to succeed.

Perhaps most importantly, failing to persevere is also failing to recognise the faults in your plan. Being ready and available to persevere with your plan is also a way of saying that you're ready to improve it and work on it too.



What's a good example?

Let's say Sam decides to introduce the 1-on-1 idea that we talked about earlier. That is, she'll be sitting down with each of her staff alone to hear about how they're getting on and give them the opportunity for questions.

She made it clear that this was a new idea, and it might take some time to get it right, and it was lucky she did.

The original plan to do this once every two weeks was far too optimistic. Overrun with too many appointments, Sam was rushing each meeting and they were pretty ineffective. She explained to her staff that she was going to switch to doing the 1-on-1s once every two months instead so that she could dedicate more time to them.

Because of the explanation, the staff understood and were excited about getting some more of Sam's time.

In the end, the idea was much more effective and Sam also earned her staff's trust by following through with her promise to spend more time with them.

And a not-so-good example?

Imagine if Sam had just given up, thinking that the idea was simply going to consume too much of her time? Having the patience to persevere meant that the idea succeeded.

By giving up, Sam would have lost the chance to do something that was going to make a big difference to her practitioners and their development. But that wasn't all.

By giving up on a plan that was about giving the practitioners more feedback, and failing to communicate that she was still working on it, she eroded some precious trust and left her staff feeling frustrated.



OK, so how do I improve?

- Be careful not to confuse perseverance with repetition. Repeating the same thing over and over if it's not working is obviously not going to work. Make sure that you're looking back and reviewing why things didn't work to make sure that they will the next time you try.
- You can think of training your perseverance just like you might train a muscle. With practice. Start off small, trying to add something to your personal work routine that is positive, such as avoiding social media or unnecessary email. You're not going to get there every day, but training perseverance on a personal level is a great start.





Skill #9 - Honesty

The not-so-secret way to build trust

What does it look like?

To some degree, this goes hand in hand with [Skill #3 - Building Trust](#). Honesty means sharing news when things are going well. It means sharing news when you're in a rough patch too. And it also means being honest and open about how you spend your time. It's all part of making people feel involved and engaged with what you're trying to do at your setting.

This is also about owning up to mistakes when you make them. This can help to foster a sense of accountability in your staff, which is crucial to running a good setting.

Why does it matter?

Honesty about your mistakes can help to create an environment where people are more willing to share theirs. If you can communicate that you're always looking to improve as a manager, then perhaps your staff are more likely to feel like they have room for improvement too.

It also helps them to buy into the vision, and it helps them to feel a part of it. This is crucial to keeping your best staff at the setting as well as getting all staff to be more committed. They're no longer out for themselves, but consider themselves a part of the wider team.



*The greatest danger for most of us
is not that our aim is too high and
we miss it, but that it is too low
and we reach it."*

Michelangelo



What's a good example?

Sam's found herself in a difficult position. She'd talked about getting funding for more staff training in a meeting some time ago. It hadn't been a big announcement, but she'd definitely mentioned it.

Well, the funding has fallen through. It would be quite easy for her to just leave it and hope that everyone had forgotten. But instead, she chooses to bring it up at the next meeting, explaining why they didn't get it and how she's planning to apply again. She also explains some ideas she's had about doing more informal training in the meantime and asks if anyone has any thoughts.

Being honest about it made a real difference. Anyone that did remember was being given an update, and it forced her to come up with an alternative plan that was at least partly satisfying to staff. It also improved

trust, because she'd given them all the facts even when she didn't 'need' to.

And a not-so-good example?

Consider what could have happened if Sam had chosen the alternative option and the question had come up from one of her staff. She would have had to think on her feet to give them an alternative option. Even worse, she might have lied. This is much more likely to have left staff disgruntled and upset about missing out on the opportunity.

What's more, with all the cards on the table staff know why they failed to get the funding and the rumour mill will have no fuel. Her staff might be disappointed, but this disappointment won't turn into blame.



OK, so how do I improve?

- Could you share more with your team? It could be more about the business or about some changes that might be happening soon. Jump in to fill the void of information before things that are untrue start getting said behind your back
- Practice telling staff things that might be a little uncomfortable. Humility is important, and if you really believe in honesty and transparency from your staff, you have to start modelling this behaviour from the top.



It's time for better nursery management software

See how easy it is to use Famly by signing up for a free demo today:

family.co/demo

