



Why micromanagement kills motivation

The importance of trust at work

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People don't just walk into a managerial role, they get there from years of experience, hard work and a proven ability to do their job well. So, when they're handed a new team to manage and are expected to delegate the responsibilities that they have spent years mastering, it can feel quite jarring. Will my team know how to do the work? Will they do it as well as me? What if they're doing it in a different way to me? Should I intervene?

Enter micromanagement, the trap no manager intends to fall into. Nobody wants to do their job badly - and no new manager sets out to take over someone else's role. But when you're used to having full control over your own work, it can be hard to change overnight. The standards and expectations that made you a high performer - and got you the job - don't just disappear. But micromanagement may be the quickest way to signal to your team: I don't trust you.



Micromanagement signals distrust

A 2025 survey found that 42% of people said that poor leadership makes them unhappy at work, and we already know that employees who are unhappy at work are demotivated, unengaged and more likely to leave.



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Micromanagement makes that worse, as it feels like constant oversight. Every decision is checked, every step is questioned. Instead of being trusted to do their job, an employee can feel like they're being watched, corrected, and second-guessed at every turn. In the best cases it is a frustrating bottle neck. In the worst, it undermines employee confidence and can actually make performance worse.

The solution is building trust, which our research has shown is a key facet of connection. Trust invites ownership, and when you have autonomy in your work you are more likely to do it well. Research found that trusted employees report better focus, higher productivity and greater overall satisfaction with work.

Undermining psychological safety – and performance

Psychological safety is making everyone feel safe to share ideas, ask for help and fail without fear of embarrassment, rejection, or punishment. It's the foundation that allows teams to innovate, collaborate effectively, and perform at their highest level. Research from Gallup states that by increasing the number of employees who feel their opinions count in the workplace, organizations could see a **27% reduction in turnover, a 40% reduction in safety incidents and a 12% increase in productivity.**

Psychological safety is built on trust, and that's the first thing a manager is breaking when they are micromanaging. Nobody can feel psychologically safe at work if their every move is being watched and managed by the person who is supposed to support them.



How micromanagement affects different behavioral profiles

Nobody likes micromanagement – but the impact it has on the team member will change depending on their profile.



(D) Direct

They need clarity on what results look like, but freedom on how it should be done. They want control and not structure. Micromanagement will frustrate them.



(I) Outgoing

Micromanagement makes high I individuals feel that they aren't doing a good job. By micromanaging, you're signalling that you don't trust them to deliver, which an outgoing profile may take personally, zapping their creativity and motivation to innovate.



(S) Methodical

Methodical profiles like structure and clarity, and are motivated by the security this brings. If you make them feel that they don't know what they're doing, you're disempowering them and will leave them feeling demotivated. A methodical profile needs clarity from their managers - once they have it, they will always deliver.



(C) Perfectionist

The Perfectionist profile is about expertise - to feel motivated they need to feel that they know everything about the project they're working on. They'll crave detailed conversations with their managers and clarity over deadlines and deliverables, but once they have this information it's important that their managers let them fly. Micromanagement will make them feel like they are being questione.

The top three ways to stop managers resorting to micromanagement

1 Understand your teams' strengths

Diversity in a team leads to better performance, and each member of your team will have different areas in which they thrive. By leaning into this, not only will your team deliver better results by working to their strengths, they'll be happier and more engaged at work.

2 Develop open communication

An open conversation is a quick way to shut down micromanagement and create a space where everyone on the team feels safe to raise their concerns - a core pillar in psychological safety. By understanding how everybody likes to communicate, receive feedback and praise, and process information, you're building trust and helping everyone feel safe to share.

3 Offer the right support

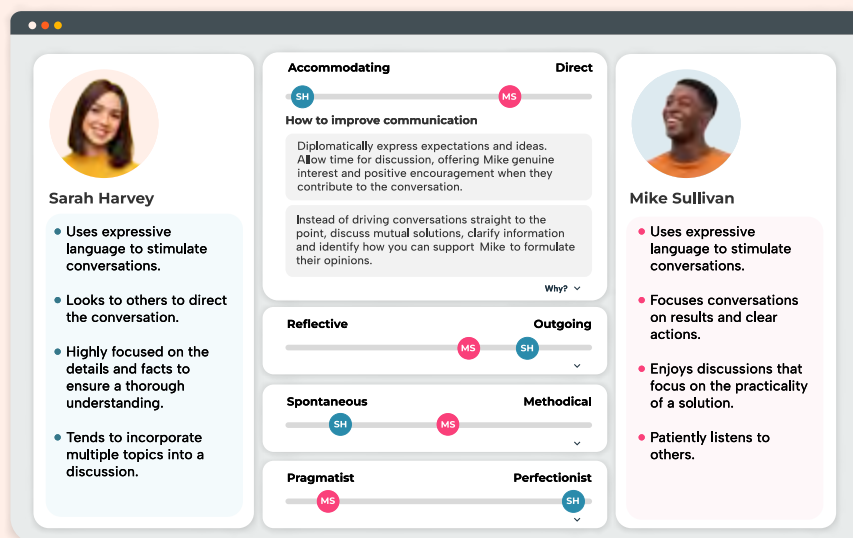
Whilst working to everyone's strengths, it is also important that you're there to support where people need it. By sharing behavioral insights built with people science, you're able to see where each team member requires support, and to provide it in the way it'll be best received.



How can you stop micromanagement?

Not only does micromanagement erode trust – it can be the reason for a lack of it in the first place. People tend to micromanage when they don't trust the abilities of their team, or feel out of their comfort zone. Both of which need rectifying for a high-performing manager-team relationship.

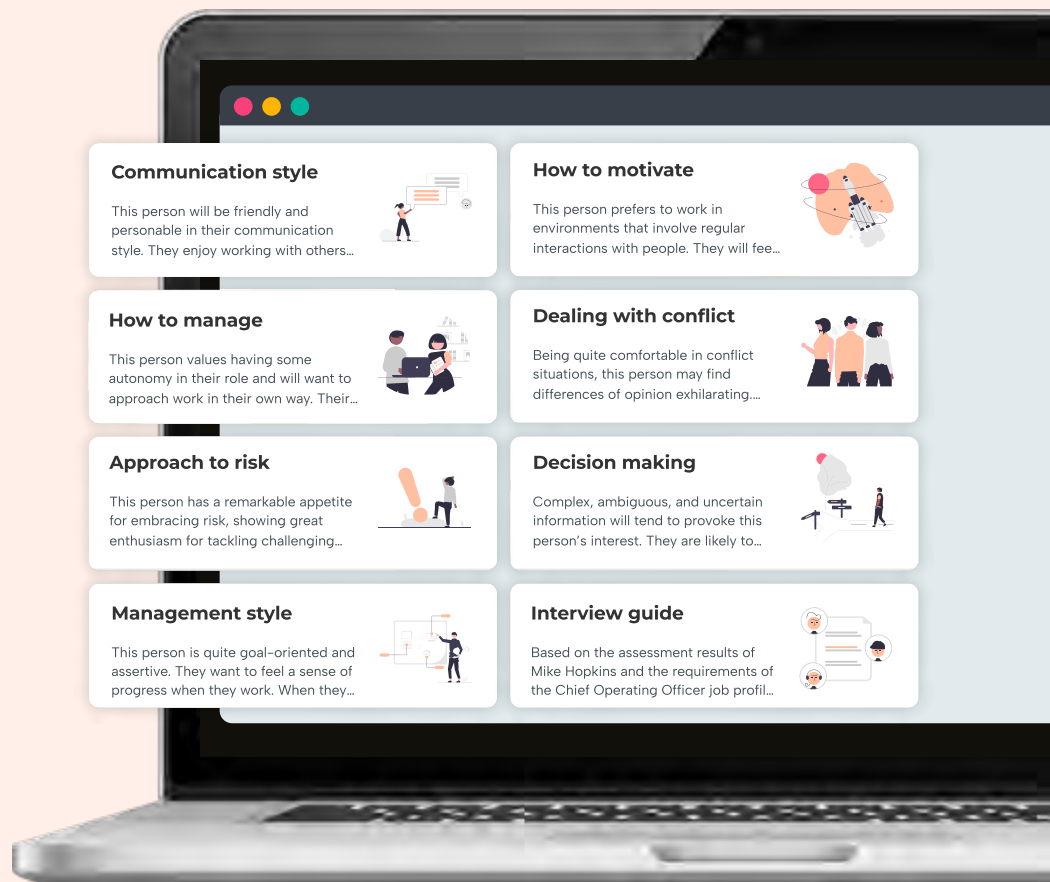
But gaining trust takes time and can feel slow with a new team of people you don't know, or when you're in a new managerial position. You need to build that base of trust within your team, get to know their strengths and weaknesses, and learn that you can count on them to get the job done. When they feel comfortable coming to you for extra support they will naturally let you into their workflow, allowing you to problem solve in a more natural way. It doesn't happen overnight, but when you use people science, you can get there faster.



Our advice? Map out your teams' strengths, how they like to work, and how best to motivate them as a manager. You can easily do this using Thom AI, the Colleague feature, or Team view in Connect. Based on individual profiles, you can use tips and guidance written by psychologists to make sure your team are happy, confident and engaged at work, taking away any fear that is fuelling the urge to micromanage.

How Thomas can help

Connection is the backbone to a high-performing team, and with Connect in Thomas CXI, you can measure, manage and improve it within your teams. When you create a profile, you're using our world-class people science to measure how you like to behave at work, which covers everything from how you like to communicate and manage, to how to best motivate you and deliver feedback. With these insights at your fingertips, you can make more confident judgements about your team capability, what might be potential roadblocks, and how you can support them fully – without micromanaging their work.



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