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# The Surprising Finding's of Google's 'Project Oxygen' study into Management

**What Was Project Oxygen?**

In 2008, Google launched **Project Oxygen** to answer a deceptively simple question: Do managers really matter? When internal research revealed that great managers did drive team ***performance, engagement, and retention***, Google's People Innovation Lab (PiLab) set out to discover what actually makes a great manager. After rigorous analysis, Project Oxygen identified 10 key leadership behaviors that distinguished Google's most effective managers.

**The 10 Key Behaviors of Great Managers at Google**

**1. Is a Good Coach -** "Coaching unlocks potential. Telling reinforces dependence."

The #1 trait of great managers wasn't technical brilliance—it was coaching. Great leaders ask more than they tell. They listen, challenge, encourage, and create space for others to grow.

**2. Empowers the Team and Does Not Micromanage -** "Trust isn't earned after performance; it's what allows performance."

Coaching leaders focus on autonomy and trust. They give clear intent, then let people figure out the how. They believe in their team's resourcefulness.

**3. Creates an Inclusive Team Environment, Showing Concern for Success and Well-being -** "Belonging fuels brilliance."

Purpose-driven leaders know **psychological safety** is the bedrock of performance. They care about the whole person, not just the job title.

**4. Is Productive and Results-Oriented -** "Coaching is not soft—it's smart."

This isn't about being nice over being effective. Coaching leaders clarify priorities, hold people accountable, and keep teams moving toward meaningful goals.

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**5. Is a Good Communicator—Listens and Shares Information -** "Leadership starts with listening."

Great leaders listen deeply. They also share information transparently, creating clarity and alignment.

**6. Supports Career Development and Discusses Performance -** "Every conversation is a chance to invest in someone's future."

Coaching leaders make space for growth conversations—not just feedback, but forward-looking dialogue about aspirations and development.

**7. Has a Clear Vision and Strategy for the Team -** "Purpose lights the path."

Clarity of vision helps people understand how their work contributes to something bigger. A coaching leader ties individual growth to collective impact.

**8. Has Key Technical Skills to Help Advise the Team -** "Credibility matters—but humility matters more."

Technical expertise helps—but it's used to guide, not control. Coaching leaders share knowledge in service of others' growth.

**9. Collaborates Across Google -** "Purpose-driven leaders think beyond silos." They break down barriers, build bridges, and co-create across boundaries—seeing the system, not just the function.

**10. Is a Strong Decision Maker -** "Coaching is not indecisiveness—it's inclusive clarity."

Great leaders make decisions, but not in isolation. They involve others, gather input, and explain rationale, helping teams learn how to decide, not just what to do.