

# Getting Comfortable With Peer-to-Peer Management

Managing your peers presents some unique challenges. It can be awkward to delegate tasks and deadlines when you lack the authority to demand results, and can strain relationships with colleagues who are used to seeing you in an equal or subordinate role.

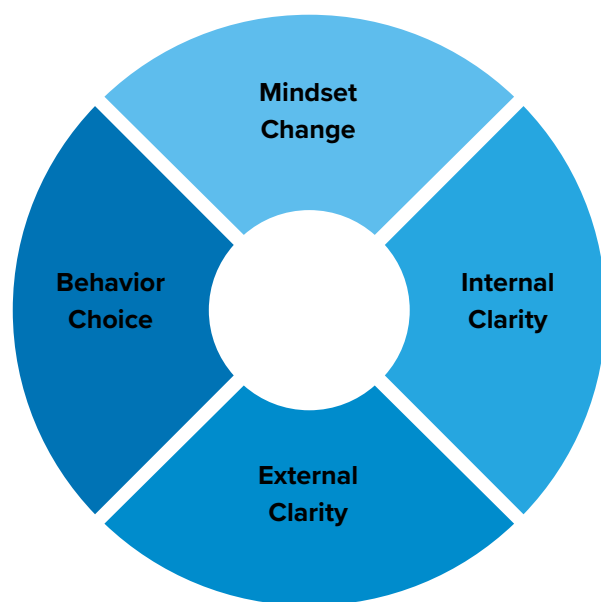
At a recent GovLoop [online training](#), we spoke with Alex Tremble, Founder, Speaker, Executive Coach and Advisor at GPS Leadership Solutions, about avoiding the pitfalls to make peer management an effective and positive experience for all.

*Peer-to-peer management is when you are responsible for leading someone who doesn't report directly to you.*

## The 4 Cs of Connection

Management essentially requires connecting with others, according to Tremble, and those relationships are even more important in the absence of official oversight. Luckily, those connections are largely under your control. Tremble suggested following the 4 Cs.

### 4C Connection Model™



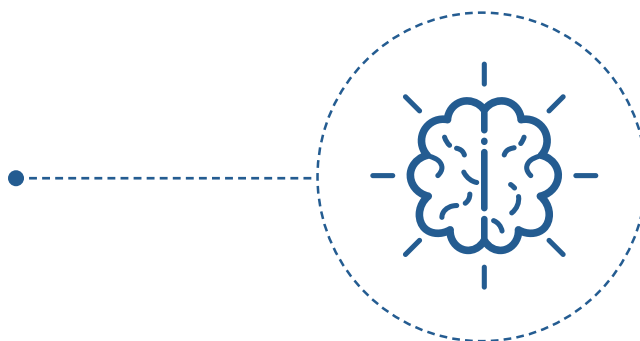
## First-Hand Experience



Tremble's approach to peer management comes from long experience. "When I was really young in my career, I oversaw all the executive leadership development programs for [Department of] Interior, as well as three governmentwide leadership development programs. I had a team that I managed of peers from different agencies all across the government, who I was responsible for leading to make things happen, even though none of them reported to me. I had no supervisory authority. I had to find ways for each of them to understand that to help me and help us [was] in [their] best interest, and we're going to make this as fun and easy as possible," he said.

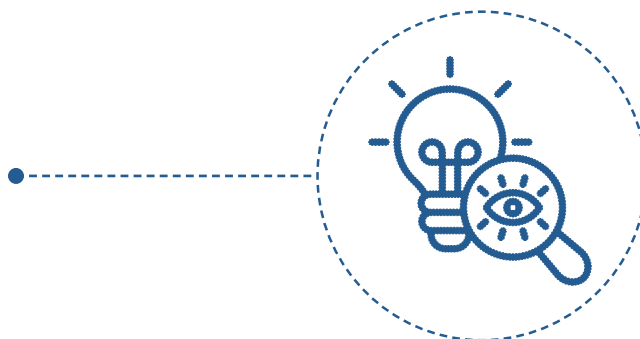
## Mindset change

“The mindset is always the first thing to focus on. You’re there to accomplish a mission together. Is it your job to have all the answers? No. Your job is to pool the ideas and strategies and timelines and perspectives from your group. Your job is to help them,” Tremble said.



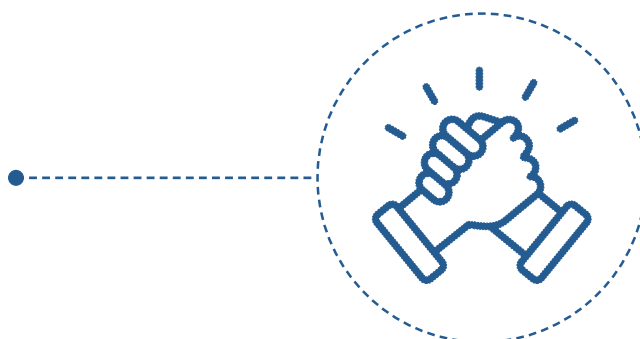
## Internal clarity

As you approach your management task, “it’s not about them just yet. It’s about you. You need to understand what type of leader you want to be,” Tremble explained. “What are your goals? What are the outcomes you want from this project? You need to truly focus on understanding yourself.”



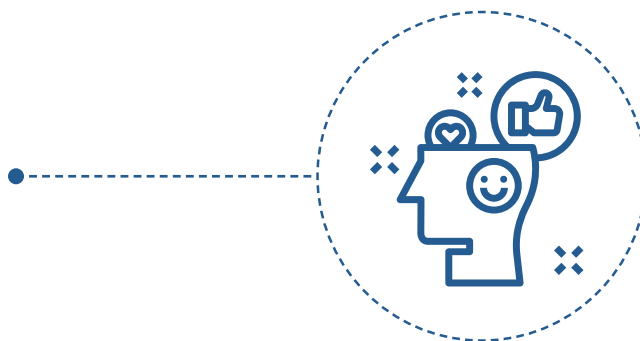
## External clarity

“Spend time getting to know ... people and understand what their needs and wants are,” Tremble said. Some colleagues may be hoping for promotion, so manage them with an eye toward giving them experience to advance. Others may have simultaneous deadlines — so offer to adapt your timeline to ease their burden. “See if there’s any way that you can support them in reaching their goals as you’re working together.”



## Behavior choice

When it’s time to act, use what you’ve learned about yourself and your team to guide them. “Sometimes it’s appropriate to mentor a peer, or to engage in a coaching relationship with that person,” Tremble said. “You figure out what to say and do to make sure [you’re] influencing their behavior as best as possible. Keep in mind the paradox of peer leadership, which is really a fact of life — you can’t make anyone do anything. They have to choose... Show them that working together is in their best interest.”



### 3 Key Challenges

(and how to overcome them)

Among the most common challenges for peer managers, three stand out.

#### 1. Holding colleagues accountable

If you're lucky, understanding and advancing your team members' goals will be enough to motivate them, but that's not always the case.

Try to stay positive. If someone is late with a report, ask them when it can be completed. Have them give you the date and time. That way, they can't say you gave them an unrealistic deadline, and you've demonstrated trust. "Wherever possible, have them set their own boundaries," Tremble said. Emphasize how their performance is affecting the rest of the project.

But if the carrot doesn't work, you may need the stick, he added. Then it's time to go to the person who's ultimately responsible for the project and explain what happened and who's holding things up. Provide documentation.

#### 2. Managing peers who are also friends

As you advance through government, there's always a chance you'll end up working for or supervising a friend. This situation calls for strong, clear boundaries — and that means both of you must state explicitly what's OK and what isn't. "We're going to have a good time, and we're also going to respect each other," Tremble said. Let people know they can push back. And then accept their input when they do.

#### 3. When team members are older or more skilled

This is where it helps to remember that you don't need to know everything. "Be confident in your incompetence," Tremble said. "Show your humility. I'm comfortable with the fact that I don't know a lot."

Encourage more experienced members of the team to voice their ideas, and sometimes go with those ideas, even if they're not the same as yours. "Just be open. If it allows them the opportunity to shine, then do it. Your job is to make the people you work with look good."

Click [here](#) to view the session on demand