

THE MANAGER'S WEEK · CHAPTER SEVEN

The Field Manual

Fifteen working pages, the diary, the counts, the note upward, the returned decision and the agreement, ready to carry into a week.

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Santa Anna, A. (2026). The Field Manual. In The Manager's Week (ch. 7). Luminous Prosperity Inc. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23989116
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Published by Luminous Prosperity Inc. for Haute Lumière. Author ORCID 0009-0008-3244-0306.

DOI 10.5281/zenodo.23989116 · this record's page: business.hautelumiere.life/library/the-managers-week/07-the-field-manual/

Please cite as: Santa Anna, A. (2026). The Field Manual. In The Manager's Week (ch. 7). Luminous Prosperity Inc. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23989116

Chapter Seven of The Manager's Week. The whole book, with every chapter, is at business.hautelumiere.life/library/the-managers-week (DOI https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23989102).

A NOTE BEFORE YOU READ

This work is offered for education and leadership development. It is not legal, financial, accounting, investment, medical or psychological advice; take the advice of a qualified professional who knows your circumstances. Companies and events are described from the public record as the author understands it; characterisations are the author's analysis. Examples are illustrative, and no particular outcome is promised to any reader.

ABSTRACT

Fifteen working pages, the diary, the counts, the note upward, the returned decision and the agreement, ready to carry into a week. The chapters of this book describe five practices as people doing them. This chapter holds the working pages: the diary, the counts, the question card, the one-page note, the lists and the agreements that the earlier chapters point to and do not print. Each page is meant to be photocopied, filled in by hand and kept in a folder that the convenor of Chapter 6 looks after. Nothing here needs software. The pages follow the order of the first ninety days, not the order of the chapters. Each opens with a line saying where it comes from and when it is used. Where a page gives a script, the words are a starting point; say them in your own voice. Where it gives a time, the time is a planning guide from practice, not a finding.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Field Manual

Fifteen working pages, the diary, the counts, the note upward, the returned decision and the agreement, ready to carry into a week.



The Field Manual

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How to use these pages

The chapters of this book describe five practices as people doing them.[36] This chapter holds the working pages: the diary, the counts, the question card, the one-page note, the lists and the agreements that the earlier chapters point to and do not print. Each page is meant to be photocopied, filled in by hand and kept in a folder that the convenor of Chapter 6 looks after. Nothing here needs software.

The pages follow the order of the first ninety days, not the order of the chapters. Each opens with a line saying where it comes from and when it is used. Where a page gives a script, the words are a starting point; say them in your own voice. Where it gives a time, the time is a planning guide from practice, not a finding.

Two rules govern the whole manual. Write down what happened, not what you wish had happened. A diary kept to look good, a span counted from the chart and a log tidied before it is read all teach the opposite of what the practice is for. And answer everything you collect: a note upward with no reply, a returned decision reversed, a log read and not discussed, each tells people their knowledge stops where it was written down.

What these pages do not contain is the design of any arrangement for sharing a gain: proportions, thresholds, timing or terms. Those belong to each organisation and the people it covers, and they are decided separately. The canon's book on management is plain about what pages like these cannot do on their own: "The tools without the inner work are shells." Use them as a way of seeing, not as a substitute for it.

1 · The week diary

From Chapter 1. Kept for one ordinary week in days one to ten, and again for one week at the end of each month.

Write each entry at the end of the block it describes, not at the end of the day. A block is a quarter of an hour, or one meeting, or one unplanned conversation. Record the conversations nobody booked as well as the ones in the calendar.

Week of:

My two or three written priorities this quarter:

DAY AND TIME	WHAT THE BLOCK ACTUALLY HELD	WHO ASKED FOR IT (ME · TEAM · MY MANAGER · PEER · OUTSIDE)	WHO ELSE COULD HAVE DONE IT	MOVED A PRIORITY? (YES / NO)

Reading it. Do not read it until Friday. A diary read on Tuesday changes Wednesday, and then the week is no longer ordinary.

2 · Reading the week back

From Chapter 1. Used on the Friday of each diary week, about an hour, with the convenor if you wish.

Count the blocks in each group and write the totals.

QUESTION	COUNT OF BLOCKS	WHAT IT SUGGESTS
Asked for by me		
Asked for by my team		
Asked for by my own manager		
Asked for by peers		
Asked for by people outside		
Could have been done by someone else		
…and that person would have learned from it		
Moved one of my written priorities		
Longest unbroken block spent on a priority (minutes)		

Then answer four questions underneath.

1. Which hours were the job, and should stay exactly where they are?
2. Which recurring piece of work could go to a named person, with authority to decide?
3. Which hours did my own manager write, and would he choose them if he saw this page?

4. Where, next week, are two or three longer blocks for the work only my position can do?

Reading it. Expect most hours to have been asked for by other people. That is ordinary. The question is whether the hours that only your position can fill are among them. Show this page to your own manager, with his hours marked plainly and without complaint.

3 · The standing meetings

From Chapter 1. Used once in days eleven to thirty.

MEETING	HOW OFTEN, HOW LONG	WHO ATTENDS	LAST DECISION IT CHANGED, AND WHEN	WHAT WOULD BE LOST AT HALF THE FREQUENCY, WITH A NOTE BETWEEN	KEEP · HALVE · CHANGE · END

Watch for. A meeting that changes no decisions but holds two teams together. It is doing work; change its form, not its existence. Ask the people who attend before you end anything.

4 · The span count

From Chapter 2. Used in days one to ten for your own position, and in days twenty-one to fifty with each manager who reports to you.

Position:

Week of:

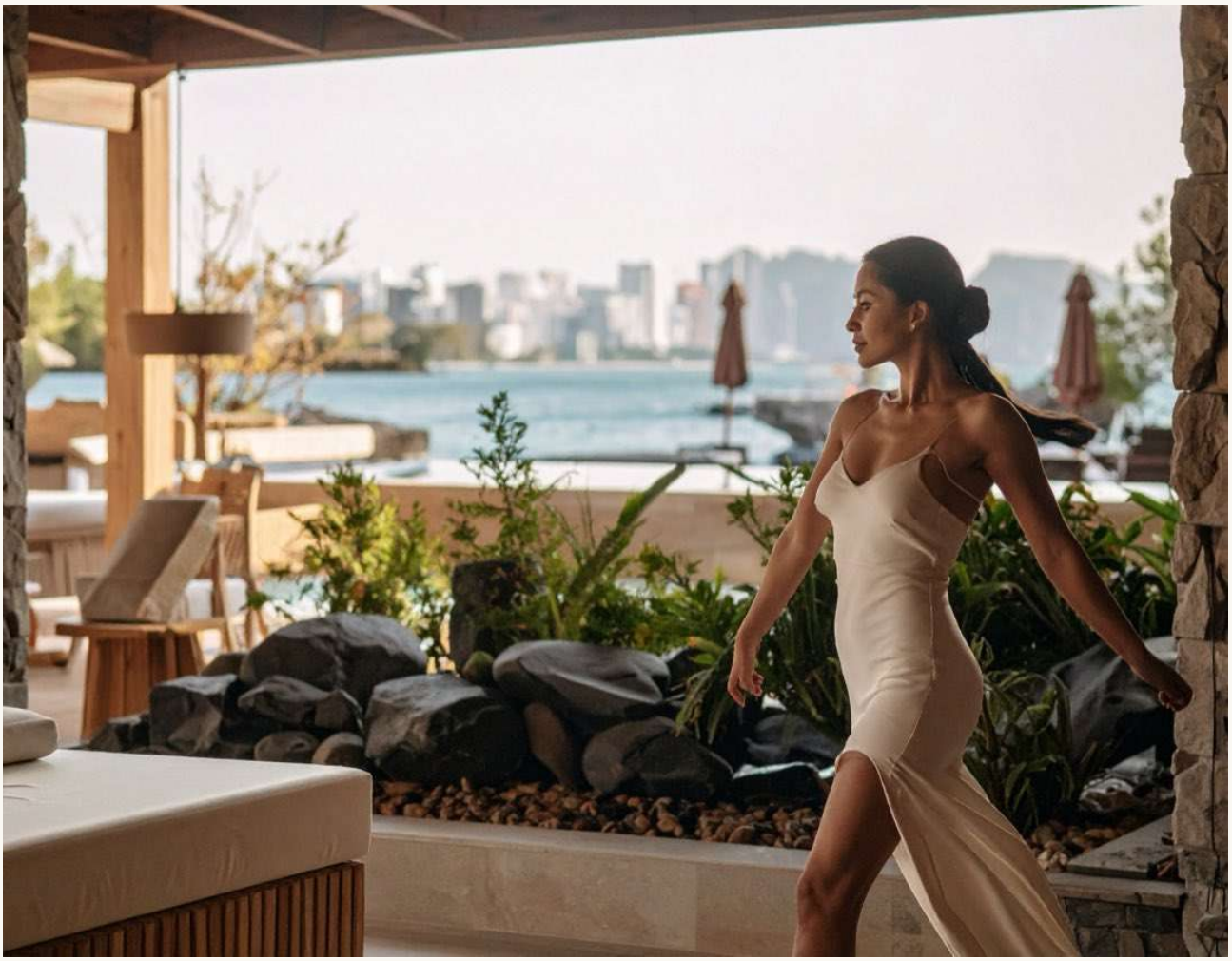
SPAN	HOW IT IS COUNTED	NUMBER
Formal span	Names on the chart who report to this position	
Daily span	Of those, how many are at work while you are, on an ordinary day	

SPAN	HOW IT IS COUNTED	NUMBER
Working span	Different people who brought you something needing a decision or a conversation this week	
Unheld span	People you are responsible for with no working contact in the last month	
Off-chart relationships	Contractors, people on dotted lines, informal leads, peers whose work is the other half of yours	

Gulick's three questions. Answer each in a sentence.

- How different are the kinds of work the people in this span do?
- How much of the week is actually available for them, once everything else is met?
- How far apart are they, in place and in hours?

Reading it. If the unheld span is above a handful, write the names, and beside each one the name of the person who in practice holds them now, if anyone does. Those names are usually the informal leaders. If the working span is much larger than the formal span, people are reaching past someone to get to you, and the next question is why.



5 · The arithmetic, for one conversation

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5 · The arithmetic, for one conversation

From Chapter 2, after Graicunas (1933). Used only to show a director why load grows faster than headcount.

For a manager with *n* direct reports, Graicunas counted the possible relationships as:

> *n × (2 to the power n, halved, + n − 1)*

DIRECT REPORTS	RELATIONSHIPS (GRAICUNAS)
2	6
3	18
4	44
5	100

DIRECT REPORTS	RELATIONSHIPS (GRAICUNAS)
6	222

What it does not tell you. The right span for any position. Most possible groups never form, and nobody holds these numbers consciously. Its use is to make one point: a team that works closely together asks more of its manager than its headcount suggests.

6 · Reshaping a span

From Chapter 2. Used in days twenty-one to fifty, once the counts are done.

Tick the pattern the count shows, then write the proposal in three sentences.

PATTERN	ANSWER	WHOSE DECISION
The span is too wide for the work	Another manager, or a split	Your own manager
Relationships are held by the wrong person	Move them	Often yours
Informal leaders are already doing the work	Name the groups they hold; give protected time and the decisions they already take	Yours, with your manager's agreement

For each new group.

GROUP LEAD	PEOPLE IN THE GROUP	PROTECTED TIME PER WEEK	DECISIONS THE LEAD NOW TAKES	WHO HOLDS THE NEWEST PERSON

Before you propose it. Ask each person who will lead a group, privately, what they will stop doing to make the time. Ask the people inside the old structure who works well with whom. Do not split a pair who have held a shift together for years without asking them first.

7 · The question card and the sorting

From Chapter 3. Used every time a significant decision is carried down, from day thirty-one.

Carry it down first, in person. Say four things in your own words: what was decided; why; what you think of it; what you do not yet know.

Then ask the card. Write it once and ask it the same way each time:

> *What do you know about this that the people who decided it might not?*

Sort what you hear. Put each answer in one column while you listen or straight afterwards.

FORECAST (WHAT WILL HAPPEN)	PREFERENCE (WHAT I WOULD HAVE DONE INSTEAD)	GRIEVANCE (WHAT THIS HAS COST US BEFORE)

Forecasts go up as evidence. Preferences are noted and honoured in the room. Grievances are separated into their forecast, which goes up, and their history, which is a conversation for another day.

8 · The note upward

From Chapter 3. Sent within a week of carrying a decision down.

To:

Decision:

Carried to the team on:

1 · What the team understood and accepts.

2 · What it will cost them, said plainly.

3 · What they know that the decision may not have accounted for. Give enough detail that someone designing the change could act on it, and name the people who saw it, with their permission.

I am asking for one thing: a reply.

Mistakes to watch for. Sending it by email without the conversation first. Carrying the grief up instead of the forecasts. Asking for a reversal. Writing it in the language of the slides. Stopping after one unanswered note: send it for three weeks, then take the unanswered notes to your own manager as the subject of a conversation.

9 · The escalation list

From Chapter 4. Kept for one ordinary week in days one to ten, on the same page as the diary if you wish, and again for a week at the end of days forty-one to seventy.

DAY AND TIME	WHAT WAS BROUGHT TO ME	WHO BROUGHT IT	HOW IT ARRIVED (IN PERSON · MESSAGE · MEETING)	T OR A

T means technical: the knowledge exists, and the decision is genuinely mine, by role or because only I hold the knowledge. *A* means the team has the knowledge and lacks the authority, the limit or the confidence.

Reading it. Group the *A*s into kinds. Most lists fall into three or four. The kinds are what you return. Then look for the *A*s you have been keeping because you enjoy answering them; there are usually one or two. For the *T*s that recur, write the answers on a shared page with the date and give it to the team to correct.



10 · Returning a class of decision

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10 · Returning a class of decision

From Chapter 4. Used once for each kind of decision returned, from day forty-one, at a meeting with the people who will hold it.

The class of decision:

Say four things, in this order, every time.

1. *This decision is now yours.*

2. *The limit is …, and outside it is …* (a number or a rule, set close to what you would have approved anyway).
3. *When a case is unclear, ask …* (usually not you).
4. *A reasonable decision made inside the limit will be backed by me, including when it turns out to be wrong.*

For the newest people. Write a narrower limit, or the smaller form of the decision: being asked what they would do before being told.

The weekly review (twenty to thirty minutes).

HARD CASE	DECISION MADE	WOULD I HAVE DECIDED DIFFERENTLY?	WHAT IT TELLS US ABOUT THE LIMIT	CHANGE TO THE LIMIT, IF ANY

Rules. Never reverse a returned decision that can stand. Ask what a case teaches about the limit, never who got it wrong. Widen the limit at each review while it holds. Tell your own manager which classes you have returned, so that he does not undo the design from above.

11 · The development ledger

From Chapter 5. Kept from day forty-one and read every quarter.

PERSON	JOINED THE TEAM	STRETCH PIECES OF WORK GIVEN THIS QUARTER	DECISIONS THEY NOW HOLD	CONVERSATION ABOUT WHAT THEY WANT NEXT (DATE)	MOVED TO A LARGER ROLE (DATE, WHERE)

Reading it. Look at the third column across the whole team. If the stretch pieces have gone to the same few people, write down why, honestly. Treat a move to a larger role elsewhere in the organisation as a credit, not a loss.

12 · The fortnight away

From Chapter 5. Prepared three weeks before a period of leave, and read on return.

Three weeks before. Write the handover in draft and show it to the team, blank lines and all.

PIECE OF WORK	WHO HOLDS IT WHILE I AM AWAY	WHAT THEY MAY DECIDE ALONE	WHAT NEEDS SOMEONE ELSE, AND WHO	HOURS TOGETHER BEFORE I GO

The one reason to ring me:

The log, kept by the team while I am away. One line for every decision that would normally have come to me.

DATE	DECISION	WHO MADE IT	WHY

On return. Read the log in full. Take the decisions you would have made differently to the next review. Reverse nothing that can stand. File the log beside the history in the measurement folder, and keep it again each time you are away.

Mistakes to watch for. Reading email. Choosing the holder of the hardest piece of work by who is already strongest. Reversing the first decision in the log.

13 · The measurement agreement

From Chapter 5. The history it reads is copied and dated before day eleven; the conversation is held in days sixty-one to ninety.

Who is in the room. The person who holds the records (finance or human resources). The manager. Someone who speaks for the people whose work is measured. The person who will do the calculation and, if that person reports to one of the others, someone who will check it.

The questions, in order.

1. What, in plain words, is changing in how this team is managed?
2. If it works, what would change in records the organisation already keeps?
3. What do those records show over the fixed history of one to two years? What does an ordinary period look like?
4. What second measure travels with each, and would move if the first improved for the wrong reason?
5. What could move the numbers for reasons nobody here controls, and how will each be allowed for?
6. Who calculates, and who checks?
7. How, and how often, is the result shown to the team, in the same form the organisation sees it?

The pairs.

MEASURE	RECORD IT COMES FROM	TRAVELS WITH	RECORD IT COMES FROM
Regretted departures	Payroll and exit records	Quality of the team's work	
Internal moves and promotions out of the team	Personnel system	How the people promoted did in their new roles	
Time for a new joiner to lead work unsupervised	Dates of first unsupervised work	Errors in the first year	
Decisions made below the manager	The decision log (page 12)	Decisions later reversed, and their cost	

The one-page agreement. Fill it in together and sign it before anything changes, or, if it has begun, from today.

What is changing
Measures and their records
Second measures and their records
History used, and the ordinary range it shows
Things nobody controls, and how each is allowed for
Who calculates; who checks
How and how often the result is shown, and to whom
What happens if a record or system changes
Date agreed
Signed

Reading the figures. Plot each against the ordinary range of the history. Treat a point as news only when it falls outside the range or when several in a row move the same way. One quiet quarter is not yet a gain.

14 · The ninety days on one page

From Chapter 6.

DAYS	PRACTICE	WHO	TIME IT TAKES	WHAT IT PRODUCES	EARLY SIGN IT IS GOING WRONG
1–10	Read: the diary, the escalation list, the span count, the decisions that			A first-guess page on where capacity goes	

DAYS	PRACTICE	WHO	TIME IT TAKES	WHAT IT PRODUCES	EARLY SIGN IT IS GOING WRONG
	waited; fix a dated copy of the history (pages 1, 4, 9)	Manager; convenor; records partner	About an hour a day for a week		People asking what the new initiative is called
11–30	Change the week: tell the team, protect blocks, hand one piece of work on, review standing meetings; show the reading to your own manager (pages 2, 3)	Manager	Two hours to read; one meeting	Longer blocks used for the work only the position can do	Protected blocks filled again within a fortnight
21–50	Reshape the span, your own and each manager's (pages 4 to 6)	Manager; each manager below	An hour per count	A structure that matches the week; a named holder for each newest person	People saying yes to leading a group too quickly
31–60	Carry knowledge up (pages 7, 8)	Manager; each manager below	An hour per decision	Notes upward, replies, a design that changed	Notes unanswered
41–70	Return the work (pages 9, 10)	Manager; each manager below	One meeting per class; a weekly review	Classes of decision held by the team	The *As* in a returned class do not fall
61–90	Measure and test (pages 11 to 13)	Records partner leads; manager; team; calculator	Two meetings of 90 minutes; a week away	A signed agreement; a decision log	Someone in the room goes quiet; email read during leave

15 · The day-ninety review and the first Monday

From Chapter 6. A meeting of the manager and the convenor, about two hours.

Bring the first-guess page, both diary weeks, the span counts, the notes upward and their replies, the escalation lists, the development ledger, the log of the week away and the signed agreement. Ask, in order:

1. Where was the first guess right, and where was it wrong?
2. How much of the week now goes on the work only the position can do?
3. Which spans changed, and who now holds the newest people?
4. Which decisions from above changed because a note carried something up in time?
5. Which classes of decision now sit with the team, and how did the first ones hold?
6. What did the team do during the week away?
7. Which of the managers below have begun to change their own weeks, and which have not?

8. Which practice is not yet real, and what would make it real?

What not to conclude. That capacity has changed (ninety days show whether practices are kept). That one quiet quarter of departures is a gain. That a smooth week away proves anything on its own.

For anyone who wants to begin with less, on the first Monday.

- Keep a diary of today, with one mark beside each entry: who asked for it.
- Write down every question brought to you today, and mark whether the person could have answered it if they had known they were allowed to.
- Find one block of two hours next week for the work only your position can do, write one word in it, and tell the people who would otherwise fill it when you will be reachable instead.

The weeks your managers keep

A manager's week is mostly written by other people. Read back, it shows where an organisation's capacity goes, and how much of it could be given back.

Luminous Prosperity Inc. takes this work into organisations as a gainshare. The flow is opened from the inside, with the people who already hold what the firm knows. The gain is counted from records the firm already keeps, against a measure both sides sign before anyone knows the answer, and the house is paid as a share of what is found: between thirty and ten per cent of it.

The field manual carries one manager through one week. Reading the weeks of a whole layer of managers, and counting what returning the work is worth, is done in the building. That begins with a conversation.

REQUEST A CONVERSATION

References

1. Sources for this chapter: The sources behind these pages are given in full in the notes to Chapters 1 to 5: Mintzberg (1971, 1973), Tengblad (2006), Bandiera and colleagues (2020), Perlow (1999) and Kotter (1982) for pages 1 to 3; Graicunas (1933), Gulick (1937), Meier and Bohte (2000, 2003), McCutcheon and colleagues (2009) and Meyer and colleagues (2011) for pages 4 to 6; Floyd and Wooldridge (1994), Huy (2002) and Anicich and Hirsh (2017) for pages 7 and 8; Heifetz (1994), Wageman (2001), Hackman (2002) and Hackman and Wageman (2005) for pages 9 and 10; Project Oxygen, Lazear, Shaw and Stanton (2015) and Hoffman and Tadelis (2021) for pages 11 to 13; Santa Anna, A. *Empowerment-Driven Management*, "The Manager's Inner Landscape". The Luminous Developmental Canon; The times given are planning guides from practice, not findings of a study.

The Field Manual

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