



COMMON EUROPE CONGRESS 2026

14 - 17 June
Lyon, France

The largest conference in Europe
for solutions around IBM Power (IBM i, AIX, Linux) & IBM Storage

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**Welcome to Lyon, France
and the 2026 Common Europe Congress**

**Bienvenue à Lyon, en France,
et au Congrès de Common Europe 2026**

Why the hell do you want to be in IT management?



Five years ago, I was an individual contributor. Now I am a Support Manager with a team of people throughout Europe.

Let me share with you my leadership journey.

Are you ready for that next step?

Mike Davison



I get to put my name up in big letters and it pleases my mum.

Spent 39 years in IT.

Management since Nov 2022 (3 ½ years)

Leader since I was a teenager.

My Journey



Back to 1987

Soaked up information

Trainee Operator -> Mainframe Systems programmer in 6 years

Sponsored to go to college – gained Higher Certificate in Computing

Took a break





Trained at the RAF College Cranwell
Management
Administration
Public Speaking
Leadership and command
14 years as an Officer in the Royal Air Force Reserve

Became a UK Mountain Leader
GJM, CFM



Avon – The learning years

Poor culture

“Not my job”

No sharing, no initiative, no teamwork

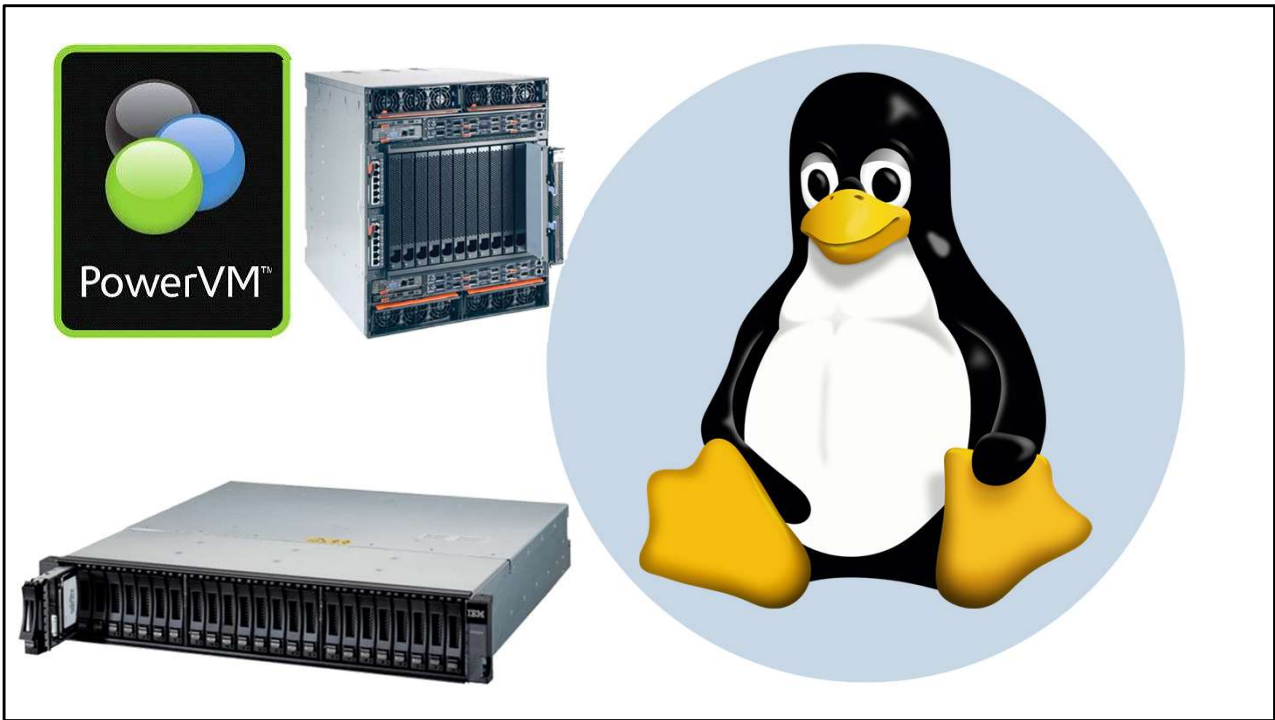
Everyone was nice, but one manager was toxic.

Great learning environment

Tape libraries

Backup and disaster recovery specialist

Mirco manager left me unconfident, keeping my head down.



BGL – The struggle

Poor culture

A few good people

Every man for himself

Toxic people

People protecting their little area of expertise and knowledge, not willing to share.

Fortra
has a
great
culture



Fortra
Great culture
Open and honest
Supportive
Nice people

MORE ON THIS LATER.

The Challenges



Humans are complex



Challenges I have faced.

Managing a fully remote team; Germany, Switzerland and UK.

Redundancies.

Deaths (Mother, Father-in-law)

Medical issues (Back pain, gastrointestinal issues, seasonal colds)

Kids (Family/work balance)

Money (I am not being paid enough)

Promotion (Why haven't I been promoted?)

Servant Leadership



Do not go into management unless you want to help people navigate through life and their career.

If you prefer to not deal with people, do not go into leadership – you will hate it.

If you have empathy and a desire to build up others, it is for you.

Your start point



Offer to step up

Show initiative.

Document where none exists.

Suggest processes where none exists.

Educate yourself by showing continuous curiosity.

Every day is a learning day

Show up on time, be present – turn your cameras on.

It's about getting yourself and your name seen.

The old “who’s that”

Doing the bear minimum will not get you promoted.

Be ready
Deliver
Lead
Communicate



Be ready – Act and work at the next level now.

Deliver consistently – This builds trust through reliability.

Lead without a title – Influencing before you have authority.

Communicate your impact - Making your value visible, put your name to your work.

Relationships Strategic Success Solve



Build key relationships – Connecting with the right people – Who is that?
Think Strategically – Seeing beyond your role.
Make others successful – Helping your boss and the team win.
Solve big problems – Tackle challenges others avoid.

**How to lead
when you
are not in
charge.**



Empower and support others.



Empower and Support others – through mentoring, sharing knowledge or lending a hand with their tasks.

Exude Ethics.



Exude ethics – be perceived as someone with a strong work ethic.

Always maintain a high standard of yourself and your work.

Dot those i's and cross those t's.

Do what is right, even when no-one is looking.

Call out poor behaviour.

Be a Lifelong Learner.



Be a lifelong learner – Stay curious always.

Personal Professional Development – Always.

In Technology, you must keep moving forwards.

Find time, make time, invest in yourself.

Be a Change Maker.



Be a change maker – Identify opportunities for improvement and act on them.

Use your initiative.

Bring your boss a solution.

Make suggestions on improvements in processes or activities.

Communicate.

Upwards

Downwards

Sideways

Always



Communicate – Share your ideas in a clear, concise and respectful manner to foster collaboration and trust.

Be Accountable.



Show accountability – Own up to your mistakes and focus on how to rectify them.

Blaming others or diverting away from yourself is weak behaviour.

Acknowledging a mistake and working on rectification or how you can learn from it shows good character.

Solve Hard Problems.



Solve hard problems – Focus on solutions rather than procrastinating.

Be the one who puts their hand up for new technology or activities.

**When you
are ready**



Promotion Plan and Portfolio



Write a promotion plan and work on it.

Write a promotion portfolio

Promotion or job application portfolio

What have you achieved in the last few years?

What personal Professional Development have you done (on your own?)

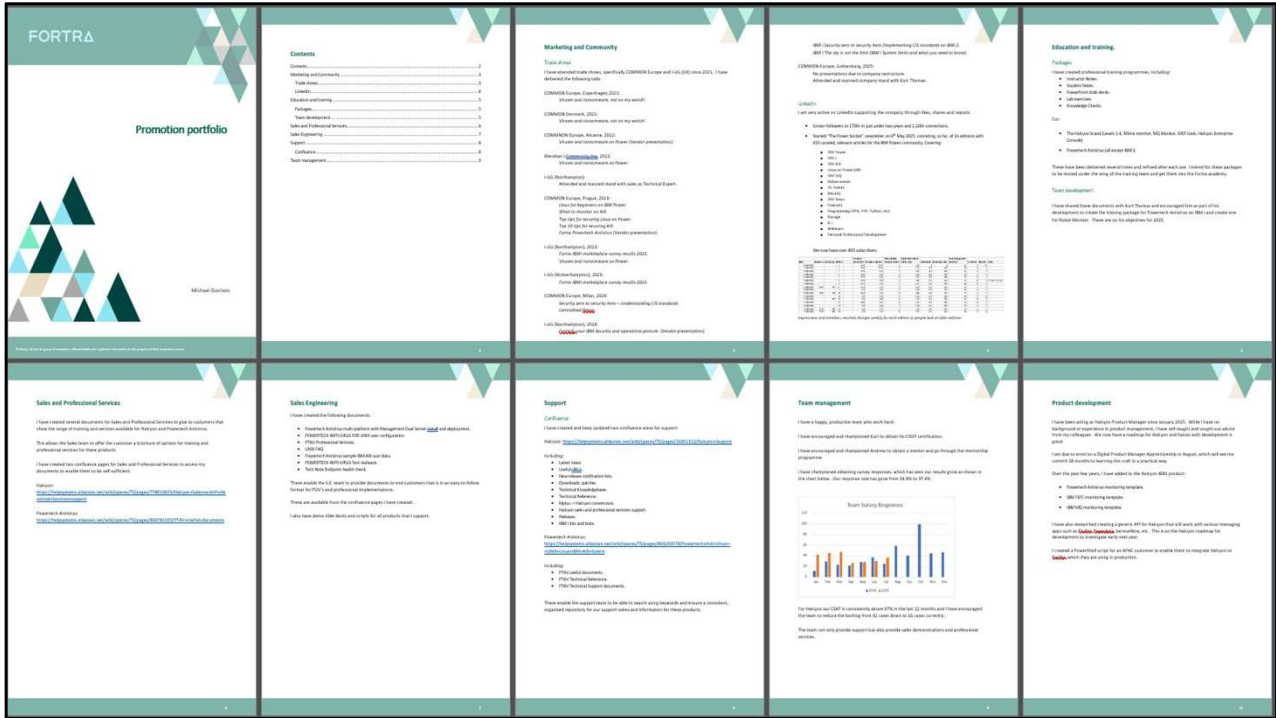
Where have you gone above and beyond?

How have you supported others?

How have you contributed to the team's success?

Where have you used your initiative?

Document your wins, training and development.



This is what my promotion portfolio looked like from Team Lead to Support Manager.

Your Toolbox



Transition



When you become a leader, you must transition from being responsible for the job to being responsible for the people who are responsible for the job.

Stop being the Analyst at the Manager+ level.

I took pride in being a hands-on manager.

I thought of myself the SME, and I would get my hands dirty on every project while I also had a team working with me.

I took the ability of working on a project personally as a requirement of the job and an expectation from the team.

Until I realized I didn't need to.

At that point I also realized I was being the bottle neck for delivery. Not everything needed my touch.

There will come a moment where your team will deliver 80% of what you delivered. You need to know when that moment comes.

From that point the focus should be just to fill the gaps or bring them up to 100%+ of what you would do. With some coaching, they will likely hit that 100% or go beyond.

Your focus at a manager level should be to:

- create delivery
- create accountability
- create consistency
- create trust
- create elevation for your team

You can't do this if you spend most of your time buried case work or daily tasks. Leave them to the team when you know they outgrow your delivery expectation; else you'll keep spinning your wheels.

Do this right if you want to elevate your role and the team's role.

People

Process

Technology



People Process Technology – in that order

Empathy

Resilience

Ability to lead through change

Inspiring
Coaching
Mentoring
Motivating



You are responsible for Inspiring, Coaching, Mentoring and Motivating your team to produce their very best work.

1:1



One-to-ones aren't for fixing problems.
They're for preventing them.

Here's why they matter:

↳ They build trust.

People thrive when they feel seen.

↳ They help growth.

Regular chats uncover aspirations and challenges.

↳ They stop small issues from growing.

Problems caught early are easier to fix.

↳ They create loyalty.

Feeling supported builds connection.

↳ One-to-ones don't have to be formal.

But they need to happen.

Good leaders don't wait for problems.

They show up before cracks appear.

Are you having one-to-ones with your team?

Or waiting for things to go wrong?

Team Meetings



Daily standup: For me and my team it works out as Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday.

I get eyes on the team, a quick update and mostly we talk nonsense for 10 minutes and then have a quick round table update of our plans for the day and the rest of the week.

Monthly Social hour: We play an online escape room for an hour, and it has been amazing for team morale.

I used to put effort into doing quizzes and competitions, but some people did not enjoy it as much as others.

End of year: I got budget to allow people to buy themselves a lunch on the company and we had an extended online party, with some different games, music and chat.

Listen
Empower
Align
Develop
Engage
Recognise



Listen

DO: Listen to understand – Trust starts when people feel heard.

DO NOT: Jump to conclusions or advice before hearing the whole story.

Empower

DO: Trust people and give them real ownership and decision-making authority.

DO NOT: Undermine confidence by second-guessing or taking over their work.

Align

DO: make sure every person feels seen and valued in the team’s vision.

DO NOT: Let people feel left out or unsure of where they fit.

Develop

DO: prioritise team learning, mentoring and growth opportunities.

DO NOT: Expect people to “just figure it out” on their own without support.

Engage

DO: Invite every voice – people open up when they know they matter.

DO NOT: Make decisions alone or let anyone feel invisible.

Recognise

DO: Notice and appreciate the effort, people deserve to be seen and valued.

DO NOT: Overlook the quiet wins or take anyone's hard work for granted.

Goal Reality Options Will



Goal

Get clear on what they actually want to achieve before diving in. “What are you trying to achieve?”

Reality

Understand where they are now, without judgement. “What’s happening right now?”

Options

Explore possibilities together. Resist solving it for them. “What could you try?”

Will

Turn insight into commitment. Make it specific. “What will you do next?”

Advising v Coaching

You own the solution

They own the solution

Solves today's problem

Builds tomorrow's capability

“Here’s what I’d do…”

“What do you think?”

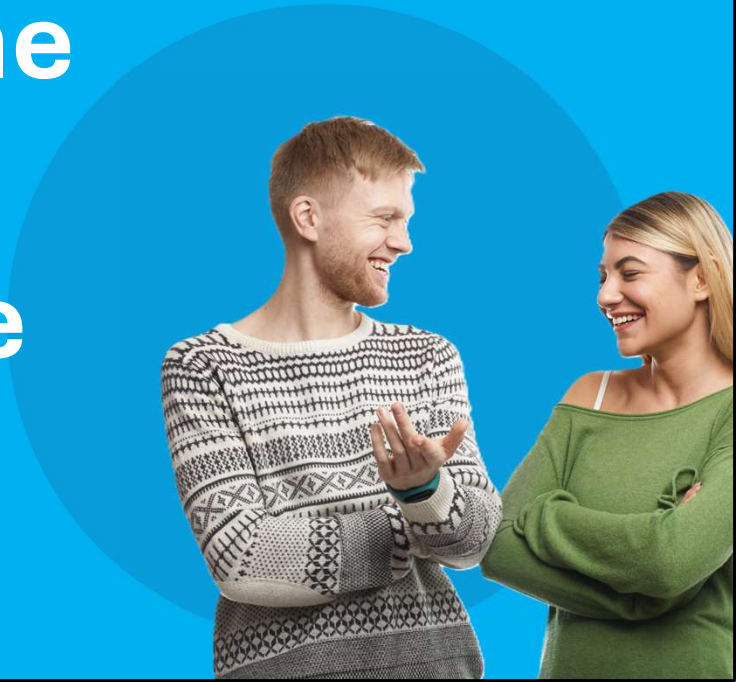
You walk away satisfied

They walk away energised

Creates dependency

Creates confidence

What's the real challenge for you here?



Questions that do the work

**What have
you already
tried?**



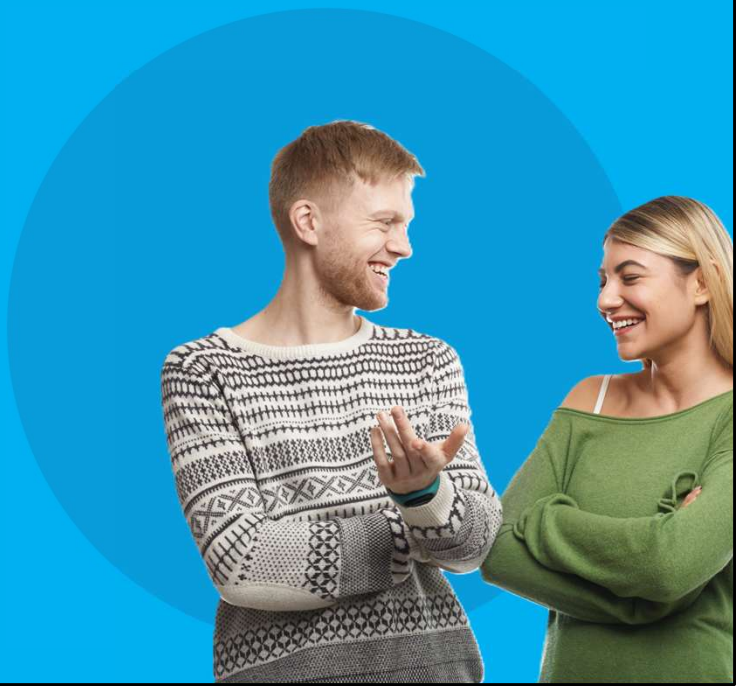
**What would
you do if you
knew you
couldn't
fail?**



**What is one
small step
you could
take this
week?**



**What
support
would be
helpful?**



Company Culture



Culture



Culture is not:

Free pizza
Gym on site
After work drinks
Yearly engagement surveys

Culture is:

Fair play
Open communication
Positive Leadership
Opportunities for growth

Culture reflects leadership.
Diversity and Inclusion drives innovation and success.
Culture drives performance.

Phrases we hear in an environment with good culture.

**It's okay, we
can learn from
this...**

**I don't know,
but let's find
out...**

**Can I help you
with that?**



**I am here if you
need me.**

**Whoops! That's
my fault...**



Great idea!
Let's do it!



**I trust your
judgement.**

**What
do
you
think?**



**Awesome
work!**



I am listening.

Final thoughts



Some thoughts from the military:

A new broom should not sweep clean.

You have two eyes, two ears and one mouth, use them in that proportion.

Suggest, Request, Demand, in that order.

Praise in public, discipline in private.

Command is a lonely place – ensure you have support from above and aside.

Your team are not your friends.

Train hard, fight easy.

Never volunteer for anything – is a slackers statement.

Know your people, know your job and know yourself.

Be the leader you always wanted as an individual-contributor

What did you learn that you will use?

Anything important you hoped to see from this presentation?

Credits

Images: luis_molinero on Magnific

Slide inspiration: Becky Ray

Insights: Pinterest

Coaching: Amy Gibson

