

# Working with Claire

I first wrote a version of this document in 2010, when I was managing the global online sales and operations team at Google. I shared the draft with my executive assistant at the time, Maeve, a thoughtful Irish woman with a keen eye. I figured she'd have some sharp observations on what it was like to work with me. She read it and frowned. "You forgot the most important thing!" she said. "What? Did I leave out an important meeting?" "No," she said, "you forgot to mention that you like good craic!" It took me a moment to realize that she meant I like to have a laugh at work. ("Craic" is Irish for having a good time.)

She was right. I spend a lot of my waking hours at work, and I think those hours should be fun. I've included that note at the bottom of every version of the "Working with Claire" document since, and it really sets the tone for my working relationships. It was a good reminder that sharing what gets you up in the morning on a personal level can be as important as the mechanics of working together.

Writing this document is a good exercise in self-awareness. Feel free to use a similar structure or make it your own.

## Working with Claire: An unauthorized guide

First of all, I'm really excited to be working with each of you and your teams.

### Operating approach

#### **Biweekly or weekly 1:1s**

- We'll try to keep the times consistent so you can plan. I'm a big fan of a joint 1:1 document to track our agendas, actions, goals, and updates.

#### **Weekly team meetings, as appropriate**

- I view these as both update and decision-making/work-review forums. I expect people to be prepared and to participate, even though we'll have to manage video conferences and time zones.

#### **Quarterly planning sessions**

- It's my hope that we can make these happen with strong pre-work and good follow-up afterward with our teams and partners (internal or external).
- It's possible that we'll have some separate business review-type meetings, and we can work hard to keep work manageable between these and planning sessions. Stay tuned.

- Speaking of 1:1s: We'll do a career session at some point in our first few months to talk about your history, why you've made the choices you've made, what your ambitions are for the future, etc. These help me know where you are in terms of your personal development interests and ambitions with respect to longer-term plans.
- Personal goals: I believe in the two of us reviewing the top 3–5 personal goals you have each quarter or so. These are the things that you personally spend your time on, not your team plans, which I know you also spend time on. We can discuss them each quarter, then create a plan for how we can make sure you get the time, space, and support to accomplish what you need to accomplish. I do these every 3–6 months and will share mine with everyone.

### **Your teams**

- Please add me to emails or documents that might be helpful for me to see as a way to understand the team and day-to-day work. As work is ongoing or a team member does a great job on something, forward it or link to it in our 1:1 doc. I like to see work in progress, and I'm happy to meet with folks who have done great work so they can walk me through it, at your discretion.

Finally, I look forward to personally meeting everyone on your team. Let's make sure I've done that over the next few months.

## **Management style**

### **Collaborative**

- I'm very collaborative, which means I like to discuss decisions and options and whiteboard big stuff in a group. I will rarely get stuck in one position or opinion, but the downside is that you won't always get a quick judgment out of me – I need to talk it through and see some ideas, data, and options. Due to this bias, I can sometimes be slow to decide, so if you need a decision quickly, make sure I know it.

### **Hands-off**

- I'm not a micromanager, and I won't sweat your details unless I think things are off track. If I do, I'll tell you my concern, and we can work together to make sure I understand and plan how to communicate better or right the situation. That said, when I'm new to a project or team, I often get into the work alongside people so I can be a better leader. I will get involved in details and be more hands-on early in a new initiative, so just be warned about that. That way, I will know how to help if you need me later.
- I expect you are making decisions a lot without me. If you come to me, I'll usually put it back on you with "What do you want to do?" or "What should you do?" and help you decide. That said, if there is a big

decision brewing, I'd love to know about it, and I'm always here to talk it out. I like to know what's going on with you and your team.

### **Accountable and organized**

- I take action items really seriously, and I expect you to know what yours are and when they are due, and to get them done. I don't like chasing them, but I do notice when things slip. It's fine to renegotiate deadlines, but I'll be annoyed if it's the day after the deadline.
- I dislike being caught last-minute with people working hard on something that we could have gotten ahead of. Please help anticipate big work efforts, and let's get in front of them together. Similarly, I want us to be ruthless in our priorities while we are resource-constrained. I need you all sane... and me too.

### **Data-driven...**

- I like data and dashboards so that there is one (ideally) objective way to measure progress and results, but I dislike being bogged down in data and torturing the numbers. Let's review consistent information on what really matters. The goal is to use data to get insights, but not to lull ourselves into thinking that we know what's going on or to try to find answers that might involve going with our gut.
- I also like to agree on how we do things as a group, which we can then agree to change or make exceptions to, instead of everyone inventing their own processes and frameworks.
- If we're discussing something and you know of or can imagine data that would be useful to our decision, bring it up. (See the next point: Sometimes I go into intuitive mode when I should be analyzing first.)

### **But intuitive?!**

- I'm also intuitive about people, products, and decisions, which means that I'm happy to handle situations when I don't have a lot of facts or data. You're thinking, "Uh-oh, she's going to jump to conclusions," but I've worked hard in my career not to do that. Ultimately, I think I have a good gut instinct, but I'm not wedded to it. Your job is to get my sense of something and then argue it out with me. I love a good fight to a better outcome.
- I use my intuition a lot with respect to talent management, and I've been told I'm good at reading people. Again, I work hard not to judge or jump to conclusions, but I will put forward hypotheses about your team members. Your job is to make sure I really know the people.
- I always like to know what's going on personally with people so I can see the whole picture. I am a believer that we are whole selves, not "work selves" and "home selves," and it will help me get to know you and your team better if I know context. If something difficult is going

on with someone on your team, I'd love to know and be there to support you or them.

### **Strategic**

- I try to think about where things will end up and the straightest line to get there, but I'm pretty flexible along the way. If there is swirl, I usually think to myself, "What's the big lever here? What problem are we trying to solve? Why do we need to solve it? When do we need to solve it? What information do we need and when will we get it?" I expect you to do the same. Every day, I try to ask myself, "What's the most important thing I can do?" and do that above all else. But sometimes I get buried under email and fail.
- By the way, I am often overly generous with my time and I say yes too often. If you see this, please flag it to me. Although I love meeting with people, I sometimes don't spend enough time on the strategic stuff because I am working on other things. Help keep me honest.

### **User-oriented**

- I put this last because I think of my key leverage as being more about scale than about individual customer work, but I'm always interested in sales status, customer issues, customer stories, and meetings with users, especially when I'm traveling.

## **Communication**

### **1:1s**

- Use 1:1s for items better discussed verbally and topics that can wait for our weekly check-in. Email takes a ton of time, so use it wisely.
- If we don't have a 1:1 for a while, feel free to email me or reach out.

### **Email**

- I read fast, but I have slight carpal tunnel in my left arm. I don't love writing super long emails, nor do I think they're very productive, although watch me break this rule on occasion!
- I will read every email I get in a day, but I don't always respond—just know that I have read it. I will only respond if you ask me something directly or if I have a question. Assume I did read the email within 18 hours. If you think I owe you a response, please resend the email or ask me about it. I won't be offended.
- I love FYI emails. Send me something you saw, a customer anecdote, an article, some data, or something someone on your team did. If you write "FYI" in the subject or in the forward, I'll know it's for my information but does not require a response or urgent reading. I'll do the same for you. FYI = no response required.
- If you add me to a team email celebrating something that I somehow

missed, I'll know that's the signal for me to weigh in, usually with "Yay!" Go ahead and add me to things like this, but don't overuse it, or in my experience people will start to think it's meaningless.

### **Chat**

- If something is important, timely, or super short, feel free to ping me any time, even when my status is set to away.
- Short questions on chat are fine, but I might be inconsistent in my response times since I am often in meetings.
- If it's a long topic and not time-sensitive, maybe just wait for our 1:1.

Overall, I like more communication rather than less, and I like to know what's going on with you and your team, as that helps me do a better job for you. I don't view that as micromanagement, but if you feel like I am too much in the weeds, please tell me.

Finally, I don't believe I will create a lot of email volume, and I'll be the first to recommend that we do a quick in-person sync to resolve something instead of having a long email exchange. Or, better yet, you can be the first to recommend it, and I'll be the second.

I also like plans that are documented. I don't care if it's slides or docs or spreadsheets, but I expect detailed work has been done when needed. If you have work in progress, I'd love to be included early and often in development, but I'll generally only weigh in when asked or on final review, even if I have draft access.

## **More about working with me**

### **Feedback**

- I like it. I like to give it and I like to receive it, particularly when it's constructive. We're in this to get better together. We'll have an official review session every quarter, but I'll try to be timely when I observe or hear something I think you should know about. Please do the same for me. I also like to know how and what your team is feeling and thinking, and I will do skip-levels, office hours, etc. Remember, whatever I hear or see, I have your back and I'll tell you when I'm concerned. Anyone who vents to me about you is going to get my help to tell you directly.

### **Management and people**

- I care a lot about you, your people, and everyone's development. Please make sure that we're touching base about your team and constantly building our skills as individuals and as teams, and that I know when there are superstars and challenges so that we can help people together.

**Results**

- Let's get good ones and know we did. Measure, measure, measure.

**Humor**

- Finally, I like a good laugh and to have fun with the people I work with.

Hope this was helpful, and again, I look forward to working together. You are all welcome to add to this document and make it a little more "authorized"!

# Working with Me Template

## **My role**

Describe your role and goals.

## **About me**

Describe your personality, communication preferences, and boundaries.

## **Operating approach**

Include how you like to work, your day-to-day cadence (including 1:1s, other recurring staff meetings, and your operating cadence), what to loop you in on, longer-term strategic and planning cadence, and how you keep a pulse on your team and meet with them.

## **Management style**

Add a few bullet points that summarize how you manage people. Are you collaborative, hands-on, or hands-off? Explain how you make decisions and give and receive feedback, context you like to get, and any principles or North Stars you reference.

## **Supporting you and your team**

Set expectations around how you'll discuss individuals' careers, development, and goals together, as well as check in on progress. Also, indicate how you'd like to be included on teams' work, including materials and forums.