

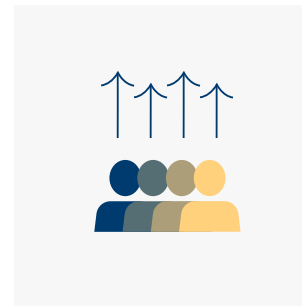
Managers Feel More Pressure Than Ever. How Can We Ease the Squeeze?



Trends over the last year underscore that mid-level managers are feeling more pressure and “squeeze” than ever before. Our recent Global Trends in Employee Engagement report reveals that, compared to 2019, managers’ engagement levels appear to be faltering, whereas other job levels are showing healthier engagement levels. Staffing and talent concerns remain key areas for distress, putting added pressure on managers to cover the gap, as well as balance top-down demands and the worries and needs of their teams. The result? Managers who feel underappreciated and underpaid, struggling to sustain productivity, and suffering from a lack of readiness and responsiveness in the changing environment.

Organizations can help address these pressures by re-examining and updating HR and talent processes around recruiting and onboarding, career development and recognition, rebalancing manager role expectations and helping them to develop skills to meet these expectations. But these efforts will take time to put in place and have an

impact. In the immediate term, organizations can shift the expectations placed on managers in ways that have been shown to reduce the stress managers feel and help them through these times.



Here are a few things organizations can do to ease the squeeze on managers.

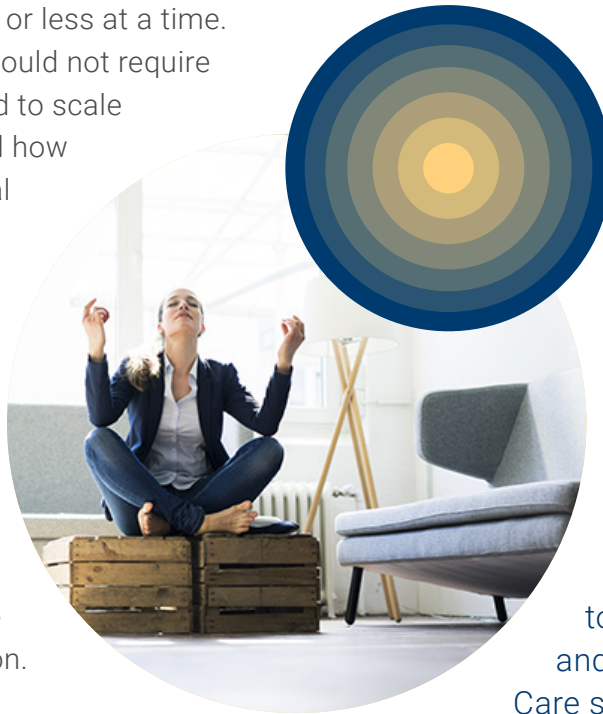
Emphasize team leadership:

Overcome the tyranny of accountability by reframing a leader’s success. Managers need to be supported in redefining their role, moving from the feeling that they alone are accountable for delivering on business goals to reimagining their role as an orchestrator of team success. It is about the efficiency, productivity and performance of the team as much as it is about the efforts of its leader. And team success is what managers should be recognized and rewarded for.



Manage energy:

Ensure your managers replenish their energy by paying attention to their mental and physical well-being. Understand that people can only concentrate on complex tasks for an average of 90 minutes or less at a time. Effective management should not require superpowers and we need to scale back expectations around how much physical and mental energy managers can commit to their role. Breaks, respites and investments in physical well-being are not indulgences or nice-to-haves to preserving the value a manager can bring to his or her team and, more broadly, to the organization. Set realistic expectations and be sure to actively promote the wide range of tools and techniques available to support energy management and good mental and physical health.



in the day with direct reports. Encouraging managers to take time to more fully appreciate what they have, and to “give themselves a break” when they stumble or fall short, leads to less cynicism, greater sense of belonging, enhanced self-esteem, increased sense of self-control, and lessened feelings of anxiety and stress.

Now is the time to take action to support, energize and invigorate your managers and reduce the burden and pressure they may be feeling to create happier, healthier and more engaged leaders, a critical ingredient when looking to build a fully engaged and activated workforce.

Care should be taken not to pile more on managers’ plates, but rather to ensure the day-to-day experience of managers and their teams is aligned with your desired organizational culture and can help them deliver on the strategy and vision of the business.

Encourage self-compassion:

Recent studies conducted during the pandemic have shown that practicing self-compassion can reduce burnout. One study showed that spending a minute or so each day reflecting on a time when the manager forgave himself or herself for a mistake in the past resulted in more frequent demonstrations of caring leadership when the manager interacted later

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