



# Cracking the code on manager impact

Closing the gap between  
perception and performance

## The manager performance gap

Why addressing it  
transforms business results

## 3 barriers that crush manager effectiveness

Organizational roadblocks  
that hold managers back

## The 5 activities that matter most

Data-driven priorities

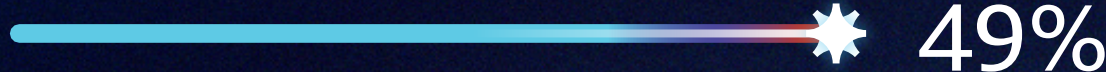
## Manager development playbook

Turning manager potential  
into performance

# The manager performance gap is **real—and costly**

% who believe their managers exceed expectations

Executives



Frontline employees



## Think your managers are excelling?

You're not alone. North Star Network research found that nearly half of C-suite leaders believe their managers are outperforming. The reality is far less optimistic.

Our survey revealed that just 20% of frontline employees agree their managers exceed expectations. Only 34% of managers rate themselves highly.

This gap isn't just a matter of differing perspectives. It's a red flag that could be silently eroding your culture, engagement, and bottom-line results.

## What you gain (when managers excel)

- Business success doubles: Companies are 2X more likely to report overall success.
- Engagement soars: Employees are 3X more likely to find purpose in their roles.
- Culture becomes a competitive advantage: Teams are 5X more likely to report a healthy workplace culture.

# The difference isn't talent — **it's strategy.**

Our research uncovers the three barriers holding managers back and the five high-impact activities that can transform them into performance multipliers.

## What you risk (when managers underperform)

- Strategic drift: Employees are 4X less likely to understand business goals.
- Employer brand erodes: Companies are 5X less likely to be seen as great places to work.
- Burnout surges: 83% employee burnout rate under ineffective managers

Are you ready to turn your managers into a driving force for success?



### **INSIDE:**

Exclusive research, practical insights, and real solutions

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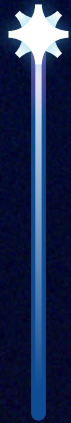
# The manager performance gap

## Why closing it transforms business results

Our latest research uncovers a striking insight that should grab every executive's attention: there's a significant perception gap in how manager performance is viewed across organizational levels. This disconnect presents both a challenge and a transformative opportunity to drive better business results.

*% who believe their managers exceed expectations*

49%



Executives

34%



Managers

20%



Frontline employees

42%



Successful companies\*

18%



Other companies

What makes this gap particularly striking is that even managers don't share the C-suite's optimism, suggesting deeper management challenges that quietly undermine business performance.

This perception gap goes beyond differing opinions – it has tangible business consequences. The data reveals that organizations reporting success are more than **twice as likely** to have managers who consistently exceed expectations compared to their peers.

*\*“Successful companies” include respondents who strongly agree their company is successful. All others are represented in “Other companies.”*

# The performance multiplier

When managers excel, their impact reverberates across the employee experience. According to [Gallup's ongoing meta-analysis](#) covering more than three million employees globally, managers account for 70% of the variance in team engagement, giving them an outsized influence on performance. North Star Network research findings reveal how this influence can create extraordinary results.

## Employee engagement soars

When managers excel, employees are three times more likely to regard their work as meaningful. This sense of purpose fuels innovation, improves customer experiences, and drives the kind of effort that distinguishes industry leaders.

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## Strategic execution accelerates

Effective managers deliver clear direction, making employees four times more likely to align with organizational strategy. This clarity ensures your vision gets executed rather than lost in translation.

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## Culture becomes a competitive advantage

Employees with strong managers are five times more likely to experience a positive workplace culture. This does more than foster satisfaction; it builds the trust and open communication that drive stronger teamwork and innovation.

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## Your employer brand gets a boost

Great leadership directly enhances your employer brand. Effective managers make employees five times more likely to view their organization as an outstanding workplace, giving you a competitive edge in the fight for top talent.

% strongly agreeing

My work has  
**meaningful impact**

*Managers meet or exceed expectations*

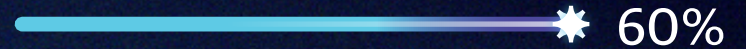
*Managers fail to meet expectations*



I understand my  
**company's vision**

*Managers meet or exceed expectations*

*Managers fail to meet expectations*



My company has a  
**healthy culture**

*Managers meet or exceed expectations*

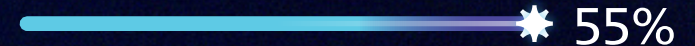
*Managers fail to meet expectations*



My company is a  
**great place to work**

*Managers meet or exceed expectations*

*Managers fail to meet expectations*



# Burnout rates fall

The impact on employee wellbeing is equally compelling. Burnout rates fall to 53% under effective managers, compared to 83% under poor ones. This 30-percentage-point drop translates into better retention, lower recruitment costs, and the preservation of critical institutional knowledge.

*\*Includes respondents who reported feeling burned out sometimes, frequently, or very frequently. Burnout was defined as “feeling overwhelmed, emotionally drained, negative about work, or unable to make an impact at work.”*

% of employees who feel burned out\*

83%



Managers fail to meet expectations

53%



Managers meet or exceed expectations

# Your biggest opportunity



What makes this data so promising? The most successful companies aren't winning because they've hired only naturally gifted managers. The path to better results involves removing barriers that hold managers back, creating supportive conditions, and offering development opportunities that enable them to thrive.

The perception gap reveals room for growth and improvement that can drive exceptional outcomes when manager efforts are directed toward what matters most.

**NEXT:**

What's preventing your managers from reaching their full potential? And how can you help them break through?

# 3 Barriers that crush manager effectiveness



## Organizational roadblocks that hold managers back

Managers are central to driving engagement and business results, yet significant obstacles often hold them back. Our research points to three primary challenges that demand executive attention to enable management success: overwhelming workloads, administrative burden, and inadequate preparation for leadership.

## **BARRIER 1**

## **OVERWHELMING WORKLOADS**

### Commonly cited manager challenges

The biggest challenge managers face is not a lack of skill or motivation but overwhelming workloads that prevent them from prioritizing high-value leadership activities. The data underscores this reality:\*

**32%**

Overwhelming workloads

**22%**

Competing responsibilities and conflicting priorities

**21%**

Monitoring staff workloads and resources

*\* Survey respondents could choose up to three answers from a list of fifteen choices.*

“ Executives have a broad perspective... [that] makes them essential in identifying and resolving structural workload issues before they lead to burnout ”

– Sara Anderson, senior performance consultant at Insperity

The burden of overwhelming workloads weighs heavily on managers and ripples through their teams. One-third of managers are stretched so thin by day-to-day tasks that they can't focus on the leadership their teams need. [Gallup research](#) reinforces this reality: when asked what changes their organizations made in 2023, 64% of managers reported an increase in employee responsibilities, 51% cited team restructuring, and 42% mentioned budget cuts. Managers are being asked to do more work with fewer resources and smaller teams.

Sara Anderson, senior performance consultant at Insperity, emphasizes that executives are uniquely positioned to address this challenge. “Executives have a broad perspective across departments to spot changing client demands, market conditions, and organizational shifts. This makes them essential in identifying and resolving structural workload issues before they lead to burnout,” Anderson explains.

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# Addressing workload challenges

To tackle this problem, Anderson recommends conducting a thorough workload assessment that focuses on these areas:

## **Comprehensive output inventory**

Managers should list and rank all their tasks, including decisions, reports, and deliverables based on three criteria: time required, potential for delegation, and business value. This process highlights where managers can shift their focus.

## **Meeting reality check**

Executives need to assess the number and necessity of meetings managers attend. Recurring meetings often consume manager capacity unnecessarily.

## **Span of control review**

Evaluate whether managers have a realistic number of direct reports, factoring in team dynamics and job complexity.



These assessments often reveal surprising insights. For example, Anderson recalls a director who discovered she spent almost no time on hiring decisions despite her department's high turnover rate. Instead, she was bogged down with administrative work that could have been delegated or eliminated.

# Signs of overload

Look for these red flags that signal managers are overwhelmed



Frequent cancellations of one-on-ones or personal commitments



Missing deadlines or declining quality of work



Significant performance differences between managers with similar responsibilities



No workload adjustments after business changes (e.g. growth, restructuring)



Managers dedicating more than 25% of their time to administrative work

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“ When managers feel discouraged from asking questions, they may waste time struggling to find answers ”

– Sara Anderson, senior performance consultant at Insperity

When structural issues are evident, Anderson advises starting with systemic solutions before adding headcount. “Seek efficiencies through process improvements, technology, or automation,” she suggests. “Only after exploring these options should you consider reorganizing or hiring more staff.”

Executives also play a role in communicating effectively to avoid exacerbating workload issues. Anderson points out, “When managers feel discouraged from asking questions, they may waste time struggling to find answers or make incorrect assumptions.”

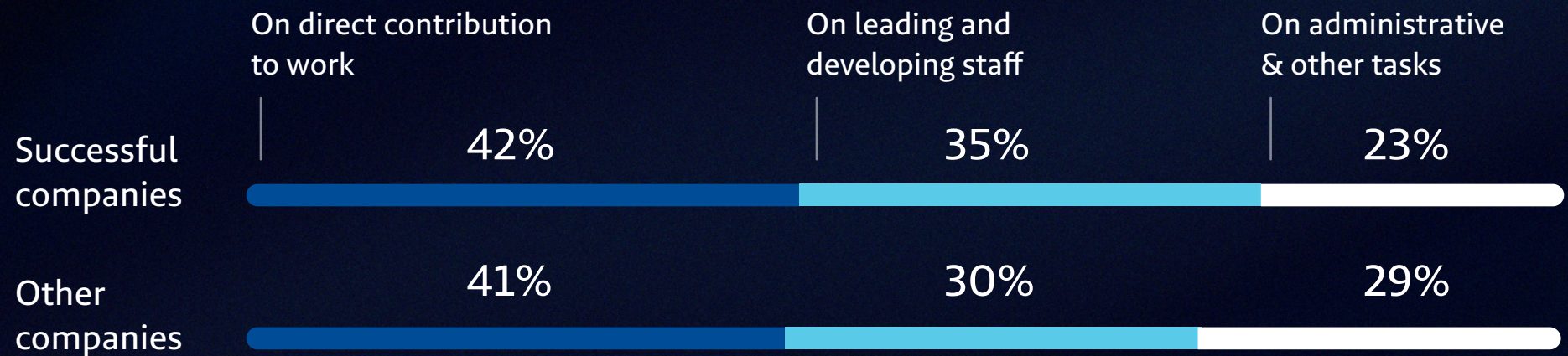
## BARRIER 2

## ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

While overwhelming workloads create broad challenges, excessive administrative tasks and other non-core activities stand out as a specific barrier. Manager time allocation patterns reveal critical differences between companies that are successful and those that are less successful.

The difference may seem small, but reducing administrative and other non-core tasks from roughly one and a half business days per week to one business day frees managers to focus more on leadership.

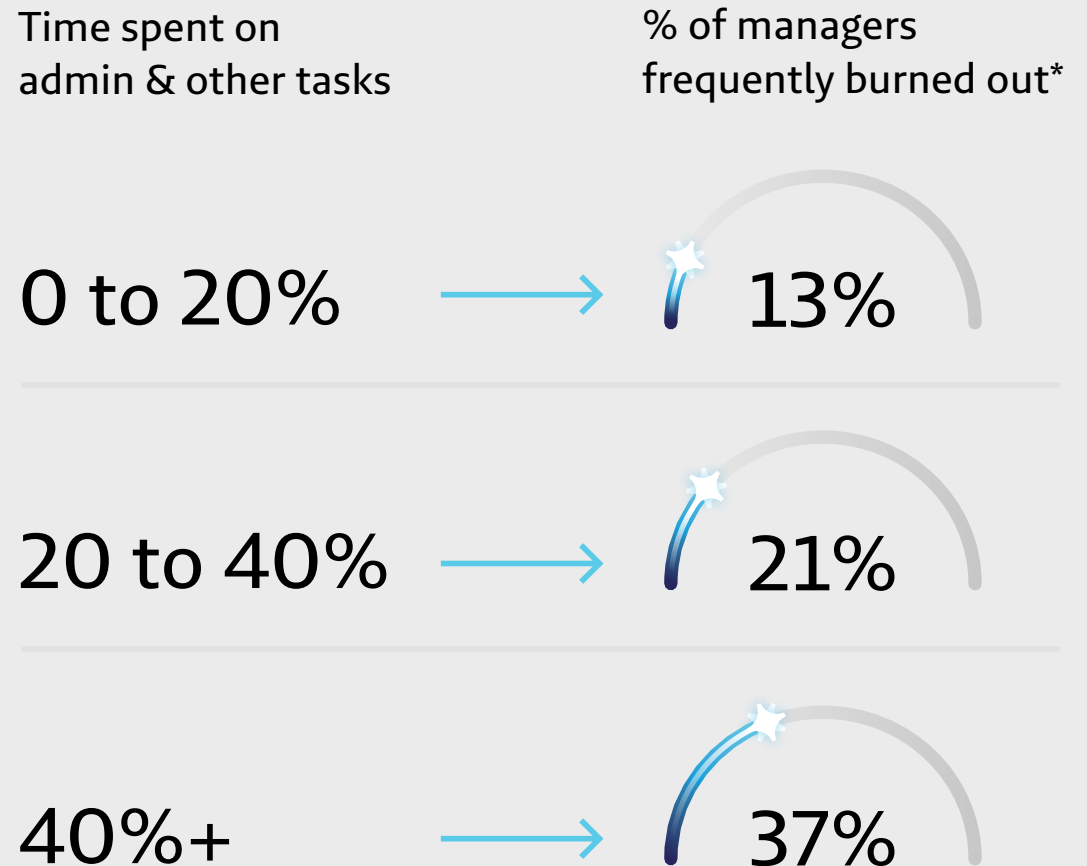
### Manager time allocation



## The burnout connection

Additional activities outside of leadership and direct work create a clear burnout threshold. When these tasks exceed 20% of a manager's time, burnout risk begins climbing steadily and escalates dramatically when they consume more than 40% of managers' time.

Excessive administrative tasks don't just affect efficiency; they undermine managers' wellbeing and ability to lead effectively.



*\*Includes respondents who reported feeling burned out frequently or very frequently. Burnout was defined as "feeling overwhelmed, emotionally drained, negative about work, or unable to make an impact at work."*

## **BARRIER 3**

## **INSUFFICIENT PREPARATION FOR MANAGING PEOPLE**

Leadership demands a complex set of skills, but many managers are not adequately equipped for the role. The data is telling.

**Only 51%**

of newer managers surveyed (those with <3 years' experience) feel completely prepared to lead others

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**73%**

of experienced managers surveyed feel completely prepared

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This preparation gap correlates directly with burnout—newer managers report burnout at higher rates (74%) than experienced managers (59%).

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Managers often step into leadership roles without adequate preparation, creating challenges across the organization. Those who lack leadership training struggle to set clear expectations, provide constructive feedback, and develop their teams, leading to disengagement and inconsistent performance.

The root issue often lies in promoting high-performing individual contributors into management roles without preparing them to lead people. Excellence in a job doesn't automatically translate into excellence in guiding others.

The good news is that companies can address this challenge with proven strategies. Leadership development programs, structured onboarding, and strong mentorship initiatives build the confidence and capabilities managers need to succeed. These investments pay off by improving team performance and reducing turnover. We'll explore effective development strategies in Section IV.



## Creating the conditions for manager success

These barriers highlight an important truth about manager effectiveness: it's not just about individual talent or effort. Success is deeply tied to organizational decisions. Companies that excel don't simply seek more from their managers; they design environments where leadership thrives.

**NEXT:**

How do you turn freed-up manager capacity into measurable business outcomes?

# 5 activities that matter most



## Data-driven priorities

While removing barriers is critical for manager success, executives also need to help focus managers' limited time and energy on activities that yield the greatest results. Our research highlights five key practices that survey respondents said drive significant business impact most. The priority order is based on the areas where the gap between employee expectations and manager performance is the greatest.

# Effectiveness of managers

*% very effective, as perceived by role*



## Communication

Enable communication between leadership and frontline employees

15% 35% 45%



## Development

Train and develop team members

16% 40% 49%



## Empowerment

Empower employees by removing obstacles and providing support

18% 31% 47%



## Recognition

Recognize and reward employees

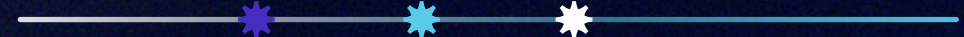
19% 37% 48%



## Culture

Promote good company culture

20% 35% 49%



Frontline employees Managers Executives

# Enable communication between leadership and frontline employees

- ✦ For businesses to succeed, managers must actively facilitate communication between leadership and frontline employees. This represents the area with the largest opportunity for improvement. Frontline employees rate managers lowest in this critical area, at just 15% (see graph on p.21). Managers at top-performing companies, however, are 2.4 times better at enabling communication between leadership and frontline employees.

Enabling communication between leadership and frontline employees

*% of managers very effective*

40%



Successful companies

17%



Other companies



## How to improve

Executives must ensure their managers have the tools and confidence to act as effective communication bridges. According to Dr. Jaime Goff, executive coach and leadership consultant, this involves creating systems and mechanisms that make upward and downward communication seamless.

# Communicating upward to leadership



# Communicating downward to teams



## Share the “why”

Provide managers with the reasoning behind decisions to help them get their teams on board.



## Supply quality resources

Offer tools like email templates, FAQs, or slide decks to simplify and standardize communication for rollout across teams.



## Make messages stick

Train managers to use storytelling to make organizational changes relatable and actionable. A healthcare manager might say, “This policy change impacts how we care for patients like the one we had last week.”

## THE PAYOFF

Companies with strong communication practices experience better alignment, faster decision-making, and greater engagement across all levels.

# Train and develop team members

- ★ Development reveals a significant performance gap that represents a key opportunity. Managers at successful companies are almost twice as good at training and developing team members. Yet only 16% of frontline employees rate their managers as very effective in this area (see graph on p.21).

## Training and developing team members

*% of managers very effective*

44%



Successful companies

24%



Other companies



## How to improve

Effective development goes beyond formal training to include ongoing coaching, skill-building, and meaningful feedback conversations. Among these, actionable feedback serves as the foundation that makes all other development efforts more effective. Ongoing [Gallup research](#) shows giving weekly feedback is directly tied to higher engagement, but many managers struggle to do it well.

According to the [2024 Workforce Trends Report](#) by Leapsome, 71% of managers believe they offer constructive feedback, while only 37% of employees agree. This gap underscores the need to equip managers with the skills to deliver feedback that resonates.

Amy Cunningham, organizational effectiveness expert and partner at Republic Capital Group, sheds light on this divide. “Many managers aim to be nice, avoiding hard truths,” she says. “Great managers focus on being kind by offering honest, actionable feedback that truly helps employees grow.”

# Bridging the feedback gap

1

Be specific



Vague praise like “great job” provides little guidance. Point out what was done well (or wasn’t), why it mattered, and the impact it had. Clear, detailed feedback helps people grow and know where to focus.

2

Skip the sandwich method



Wrapping criticism between empty compliments confuses more than it helps. “I’ve had leaders tell me they used this method, and the person walked out thinking they were getting promoted,” says Cunningham. Respectful and direct feedback provides clarity and builds trust.

# 3 Keep it conversational

Frequent conversations are far more effective than yearly reviews. Talk about goals, challenges, and what support they need on a bi-weekly or monthly basis. These discussions foster trust and accountability.

# 4 Take the lead

When leaders model giving and receiving honest feedback, they inspire a culture of openness and growth.

## THE PAYOFF

Employees who get meaningful feedback become more capable, engaged, and likely to stay with the organization.

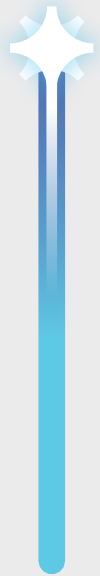
# Empower employees by removing obstacles and providing support

- ★ Most managers struggle to effectively empower their teams, with only 18% of employees rating their managers as very effective in this area (see graph on p.21). However, managers at top-performing companies are 2.6 times more successful at empowering their teams compared to their peers, reflecting substantial room for improvement for other organizations.

Empowering employees by removing obstacles and providing support

*% of managers very effective*

41%



Successful companies

16%



Other companies



## How to improve

According to leadership expert Cunningham, empowerment isn't about leaving employees to figure it all out alone. "That's under-managing. True empowerment balances autonomy with structured support, ensuring teams have clarity and resources to succeed," she explains.

# Strategies that work



## **Define success clearly**

Define goals, timelines, and quality standards. Share written summaries to reinforce shared understanding.



## **Promote gradual autonomy**

Gradually scale autonomy by giving newer employees closer guidance and reducing oversight as their confidence grows. Be flexible where possible, and make people feel safe to try new methods, learn from mistakes, and iterate.



## Delegate smartly

Delegate intentionally by aligning tasks with personal career aspirations and team needs, using assignments for both deliverables and growth.



## Remove roadblocks

Address processes, approvals, or resource constraints that slow progress, making it easier for teams to deliver results.

### THE PAYOFF

Empowered employees drive innovation and efficiency while managers are free to focus on strategic priorities.

## **PRIORITY 4**

## **RECOGNITION**

# Recognize and reward employees

- ★ Recognition is a key driver of employee performance and satisfaction. Managers at high-performing organizations are more than twice as effective at acknowledging achievements compared to their peers, demonstrating the impact of consistent recognition on driving success.

## Recognizing and rewarding employees

*% of managers very effective*

43%



Successful  
companies

21%



Other  
companies



## How to improve

Linda Villalobos, HR consultant at Insperity, says even well-meaning managers will struggle with recognition and rewards without the right systems and executive support.

# Building effective recognition systems



## Expand impact

Equip managers with tools to reach a broad cross-section of employees regularly, plus ways to reward exceptional work. Make sure remote workers get the same recognition opportunities as office employees.



## Be clear about purpose

Train managers to distinguish between celebrating immediate achievements versus promoting long-term cultural values. These demand different approaches.



## Model from the top

Set the example with visible executive participation. Leaders actively engaging in recognition signal its importance to the broader culture.



## Leverage proven programs

North Star Network's Total Rewards research shows top performers use non-cash recognition, like gift cards and experiences, strategically. Check out the [report](#) for guidance on maximizing their impact.

## THE PAYOFF

Consistent, meaningful recognition strengthens morale, motivates teams, and improves retention.

## PRIORITY 5

## CULTURE

# Promote a good company culture



Building and maintaining a healthy culture is the foundation of sustainable organizational success. Managers at successful companies are more than twice as effective at promoting healthy cultures, yet only 20% of frontline employees believe their managers excel in this area (see graph on p.21).

## Promoting a good company culture

*% of managers very effective*

43%



Successful  
companies

21%



Other  
companies



## How to improve

Culture reflects the cumulative impact of daily behaviors, decisions, and interactions. The best managers create environments where employees feel valued and eager to contribute.

# Key culture-building behaviors



## Set the example

Model core values. Demonstrate collaboration, respect, and accountability to set a positive tone.

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## Handle issues early

Address problems or conflicts swiftly to prevent a negative domino effect.

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## Foster psychological safety

Encourage open discussions, questions, and the freedom to take calculated risks without fear of punishment.

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## Foster inclusion

Ensure everyone's voice is heard and respected, enhancing both team collaboration and idea generation.

### **THE PAYOFF**

A healthy culture elevates engagement, reduces turnover, and optimizes team performance. For managers, it means smoother operations and more cohesive, productive teams.

# The compound effect



When managers have the bandwidth to devote to these five high-impact practices, something powerful happens. These activities reinforce each other and create what we call the manager multiplier effect.

Employees who feel recognized go the extra mile when you need them most. Those who get meaningful feedback know exactly how to improve. Empowered employees become your best source of innovative solutions and great customer experiences. Clear communication creates alignment that speeds up execution. And intentional culture-building creates the foundation for sustained high performance.

Companies that get this right are building lasting competitive advantages through their people. Your managers can become this strategic asset, but only if you give them the time, support, and tools they need to excel at what matters most.

**NEXT:**

How do you transform these insights into lasting change?

# Manager development playbook



## Turning potential into performance

Our research reveals five strategic investment priorities that consistently enable manager success. This section outlines how targeted support can address the real-world challenges managers face, equipping them to lead with confidence and drive results.

## Priority manager support needs

*% indicated as top 3 most helpful for preparing managers to lead people\**

	Frontline employees	Managers	Executives
Leadership development programs	26%	38%	30%
Training for job-specific skills	32%	33%	25%
Team-building activities to improve collaboration skills	24%	29%	31%
Coaching or mentorship opportunities	30%	24%	27%
Feedback or performance evaluation tools	21%	22%	27%
Stronger connection with a peer team with the organization	22%	24%	18%
Resources for stress management and productivity	23%	19%	22%
Access to advance technology to enhance performance	11%	20%	26%

*\*Lighter shading indicates the most frequently selected support needs.*

## **PRIORITY 1**

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

“ While formal training and coaching build essential foundations, the most powerful growth happens when managers apply new skills on the job ”

– Devon Moran, performance specialist at Insperity

Leadership development is a top priority for managers, with 38% ranking it as one of their most critical needs. However, only 26% of frontline employees share this view, perhaps because they don't fully understand the unique challenges managers face. Even so, leadership development emerges as the most vital support need for managers.

Effective programs close the preparedness gap we discussed earlier, turning managers into confident leaders who deliver measurable outcomes. The key is designing programs that move beyond theory and focus on building real-world capabilities.

## A structured development model

Devon Moran, a performance specialist at Insperity, recommends building development around the 70-20-10 learning model. This approach emphasizes practical application to ensure transformative growth.

**10%**

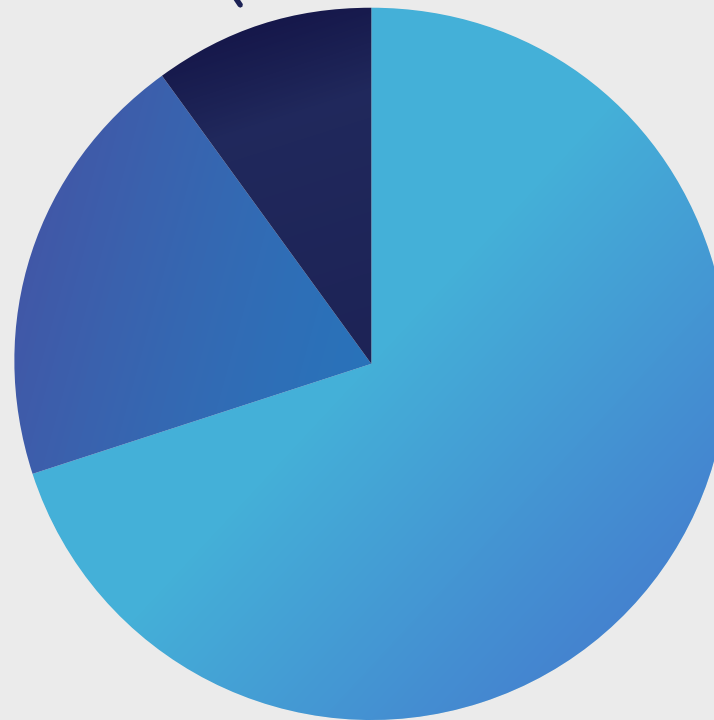
### Formal training

Structured sessions, including workshops, online courses, and certifications provide foundational knowledge.

**20%**

### Coaching and mentoring

Development is supplemented by executive coaching, peer mentoring, and collaborative problem-solving.



**70%**

### Experiential learning

Managers learn on the job through stretch assignments, leading key projects, and solving real-time challenges.

## Priority 1: Leadership development programs

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Both group leadership training and personalized development can be built around this framework. For instance, if a manager needs to get better at difficult conversations, they might take a conflict resolution course (10%), get coaching from a mentor (20%), and then start leading more high-stakes conversations with their team (70%). This approach builds confidence step by step through hands-on experience.

The best programs also integrate feedback into daily workflows through regular supervisor check-ins, post-project debriefs, and quarterly reviews, making growth an ongoing process.

### Setting managers up for success from day one

The first 30 days are pivotal for setting new managers on a path to success. Dr. Jaime Goff underscores the value of a structured “new leader jumpstart” meeting during this critical period, explaining that “technical skills can come later, but getting team culture right from the start is foundational to long-term success.”

These jumpstart sessions cover four key areas designed to foster alignment and build trust:

#### **Build personal connections**

Managers share their career journeys, leadership philosophies, and core values. Meanwhile, team members outline their roles, motivations, and working preferences.

#### **Establish team agreements**

The team collaborates on defining communication norms, decision-making processes, and feedback expectations.

#### **Clarify roles and priorities**

Managers articulate their vision and work alongside the team to refine roles and set immediate goals.

#### **Define success together**

The team collaborates on setting clear metrics for success and identifying support needs.

These sessions can be led by learning and development staff or managers can run them using a simple facilitation guide.

## PRIORITY 2

## JOB-SPECIFIC TRAINING

Job-specific training is a shared priority for frontline employees and managers, though executives place less emphasis on it. This difference may stem from those on the ground understanding that technical skills are just as essential as leadership abilities, whereas executives might assume these skills are already well-established.

This type of training equips managers to lead confidently while addressing the unique demands of their industry. For instance, manufacturing managers might focus on workflow optimization, while sales managers may refine CRM proficiency. Tailored training ensures managers can both lead effectively and contribute technical expertise to problem-solving.

### Training for job-specific skills

*% indicated as top 3 most helpful for preparing managers to lead people*

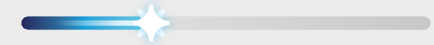
Frontline employees

32%



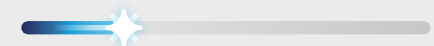
Managers

33%



Executives

25%



## PRIORITY 3

## TEAM-BUILDING ACTIVITIES

Executives and managers tend to prioritize team-building slightly more than frontline employees.

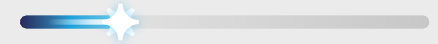
Strong, cohesive teams not only boost performance and morale but also lighten the load for managers. That's because effective team-building fosters trust, strengthens collaboration, and enhances communication within teams. And strong team dynamics free managers to focus on strategic goals.

### Team-building activities to improve collaboration skills

*% indicated as top 3 most helpful for preparing managers to lead people*

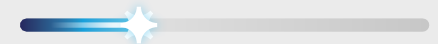
Frontline employees

24%



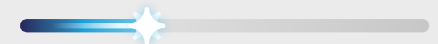
Managers

29%



Executives

31%



## PRIORITY 4

## COACHING AND MENTORSHIP

Interestingly, managers rank coaching and mentorship lower than frontline employees and executives. This may reflect hesitation to admit they need help or feeling too busy to invest in long-term development.

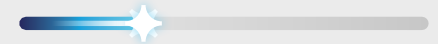
Yet, mentorship and professional coaching offer invaluable support. Coaches can help managers resolve conflicts and enhance decision-making, while peer mentors provide a trusted space to tackle leadership challenges. These relationships are particularly beneficial for newer managers as they work through early hurdles.

### Coaching or mentorship opportunities

*% indicated as top 3 most helpful for preparing managers to lead people*

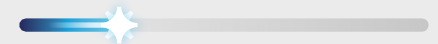
Frontline employees

30%



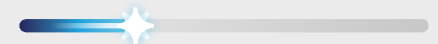
Managers

24%



Executives

27%



## PRIORITY 5

# FEEDBACK AND PERFORMANCE EVALUATION TOOLS

There's broad agreement on the value of feedback tools, with executives, managers, and frontline employees showing similar levels of interest. These tools make performance conversations, annual reviews, and recognition more straightforward and effective.

Well-designed feedback systems help build managers' confidence in addressing both recognition and areas for improvement.

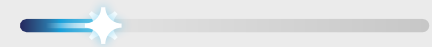
Consistently applying these systems ensures that performance management is both approachable and meaningful.

### Feedback or performance evaluation tools

*% indicated as top 3 most helpful for preparing managers to lead people*

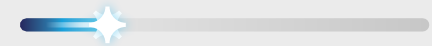
Frontline employees

21%



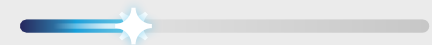
Managers

22%



Executives

27%



## GETTING STARTED

Start by identifying which of these five priorities would make the biggest difference for your managers. Test one initiative with a small group first, using their feedback to refine it before rolling it out organization-wide.

# The bottom line

The data shows a disparity between executive and frontline views of management, highlighting deeper systemic problems. While executives believe their managers are thriving, this optimism often conceals the lack of proper support managers need to succeed.

The issue isn't managerial talent but how organizations are structured. When managers are overloaded with administrative tasks, underprepared for leadership, and stretched across conflicting priorities, even highly capable individuals struggle to deliver results.

Organizations that address these obstacles by streamlining workloads, investing in leadership development, and focusing on high-value priorities like communication and recognition can create a measurable competitive advantage.



## The choice is clear.

Maintain the status quo, limited by misaligned perceptions, or build systems that empower management excellence. **The path forward is evident, and the time to act is now.**

# Appendix:

## Research methodology

### Study overview

Insperty conducted a comprehensive study to explore manager effectiveness and its impact on business performance. The research was designed to identify the perception gap between organizational levels and uncover strategies for optimizing manager impact on talent and business outcomes. Unless otherwise noted, all statistics and findings presented in this report are sourced from this study.

### Survey approach

The online survey of 1,000 U.S.-based employees was conducted in January 2025 by Provoke Insights. A quota sampling methodology ensured balanced representation across four key employee groups: frontline employees (300), managers with direct reports (300), executives (200), and human resources professionals (200). Statistical differences between these groups were tested at a 95% confidence level, with a margin of error of  $\pm 3.10\%$ . The sample included representation across major industries and companies of various sizes (minimum 25 employees).

### Study limitations

As with all survey research, findings reflect self-reported perceptions and experiences. While the study provides valuable insights into management effectiveness across organizational levels, results should be interpreted within the context of respondent perspectives rather than objective performance measures.



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The Insperity North Star Network (NSN) is a thought leadership initiative empowering business leaders to build better workplaces and navigate the future with confidence. Backed by proprietary research and expert insights, NSN delivers practical solutions focused on people and culture, helping leaders meet today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities.



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