

2021 State of the Manager

Empowering leaders for a people-first future

GLINT

LinkedIn Learning



Key takeaways

What's inside: This report highlights the importance of managers — the critical link between an organization's strategy and execution. It covers how managers are doing, how their jobs are changing, and what organizations can do to tap into the transformational power of manager success.

Despite the all-consuming challenges of a global pandemic, *employee engagement among managers rose 5% in 2020*

But there's reason to worry: between Q1 and Q4 of 2020,

manager burnout increased 78%

Today's managers face important new priorities:

supporting well-being, remote and hybrid teams, and workplace learning

One priority stands out as a powerful force for good: **belonging**. Employees who felt a sense of belonging in 2020 were

5.2x more likely to be engaged



Content

Key takeaways	2
Introduction	4
Chapter 1	8
The power of the people-centric manager	
New insights show how managers can help more people love their jobs and do their best work — at scale.	
Chapter 2	22
Understanding obstacles and opportunities	
Managers are coping with blurred boundaries and new emotional demands.	
Chapter 3	41
Supporting the people-centric manager	
The right mix of feedback, learning, and empowerment accelerates managers' success.	
Acknowledgments	58
Methodologies	59

About the insights

This report combines insights from 3.4 million employee engagement surveys primarily conducted in 2020 on the **Glint Platform** with LinkedIn behavioral and survey data and expert interviews to deliver data-driven recommendations.

The people-first future is here

Opportunities abound for organizations to empower managers with humanity and purpose.

Through the long months of the coronavirus pandemic, managers have been challenged unlike ever before. They're stretching to achieve organizational goals and demonstrate compassion for their teams, all while coping with ongoing disruption in their own lives.

Difficult times have underscored the fact that employees are people — with families, communities, and home lives. To truly help people succeed, organizations need to understand employees in the context of their full lives. The only way to do that (at scale) is through managers who are present, engaged, and equipped to help each team member do their best work.

More than anything, the vast disruption of the pandemic has proven a positive catalyst for an important idea:
Organizations succeed when their people succeed.

When organizations are forced to quickly adapt, it's people who apply energy and creativity to blaze the new trail. And the most critical role for helping every person achieve their best work is clear — their manager.

Inspirational managers can think well beyond their to-do lists. They support the learning and growth necessary for people and organizations to succeed. They breathe life into their organization's culture. They make transformation possible and real.

The managers of tomorrow will look different from those of yesterday. Read on to understand the mindset and skills needed for managers to succeed.

4 priorities for the new world of work

#1

Start with well-being

2020's worldwide increase in distress and exhaustion was a shock to everyone. No one can do their best work when feeling physically or psychologically at risk. Managers need to ensure employees feel safe and supported.

92% *of employees say it's very or extremely important to have work conditions that keep them safe and healthy.*

#2

Make space for everyone to belong

An increased understanding of systemic bias and racism has put a new spotlight on belonging — a fundamental human need. Managers who help employees be themselves at work hold an important key to unlocking every person's unique ingenuity.

94% *of employees say it's very or extremely important for their manager to help team members feel that they belong.*



#3

Support remote and hybrid teams

The pandemic forced teams to find new ways to promote safety and get work done, as well as hire and recruit. Managers need the knowledge and tools to ensure that remote and hybrid teams can connect, communicate, and collaborate with or without sharing physical space.

94% *of employees are interested in an ongoing ability to work remotely at least some of the time.*

#4

Foster learning and growth

Organizations that invest in training for new skills will benefit from a more adaptable — and engaged — workforce. Learning enhances today's work and tomorrow's future while empowering people to embrace growth as a critical part of everyone's job.

91% *of employees say it's very or extremely important for their manager to encourage learning and experimentation.*

3-minute summary

How do you help managers succeed amid ongoing change?

The right type of support creates a foundation for thriving work culture.

Start with the basics

This report defines a *manager* as a person who oversees the work of others. The definition of an *effective manager* will vary across organizations, but one requirement is certain: Managers drive business outcomes by ensuring people work on the right priorities, aligned to their interests and strengths, and have the support to execute well.

Understand new challenges

- Business volatility amplifies the need for always-on collaboration.
 - The rise of flexible, asynchronous work and hybrid teams requires managers to be more nimble.
 - Burnout is soaring, and for managers, heavy workloads are the biggest driver.
 - Soft skills to support people's well-being are more important than ever.
-

Add people-centric thinking

People-centric managers put employees at the center of everything they do. Also known as people-driven or people-oriented managers, they embrace the power of understanding what matters most to attract, develop, and engage happy and successful people.

Unlock 3 keys to manager success

1. Learning and growth
2. Feedback
3. The power to act

Chapter 1

The power of the people-centric manager

New insights show how managers can help more people love their jobs and do their best work — at scale.



“If you lean into the needs of your people, you will be a better person and a better businessperson as a result.”



Josh Bersin,
Global HR industry analyst

A new view of the manager's potential

People-centric managers magnify the impact of their teams.

Management used to be about treating people like assets — to be counted and controlled. In the Industrial Revolution, organizations dictated rules and plans, and employees complied. But the new world of work dismantles the command-and-control mindset and replaces it with a far better approach: **people-centric thinking**.

People-centric thinking acknowledges that an individual's happiness and success at work can drive exponential business impact across their organization. Furthermore, an employee's relationship with their direct manager has a strong influence on their ability to do their best work. So it follows that with the right skills and tools, managers can profoundly amplify their impact on employee engagement and business results.



Employees who recommend their manager are:

2.3x more likely to be engaged

2x more likely to stay with the organization

2.3x more likely to have clarity about their company's strategy*

**compared to those who don't recommend their managers*

Employee engagement powers productivity

Successful managers activate employee commitment and energy.

There is power in helping people get to a place where they love what they do. Engaged employees are personally invested in their work; see a strong connection between their strengths and their role; and are more willing to contribute time and effort to business activities.

A skilled manager is most attuned to a person's mental, emotional, and behavioral commitment to work. In the best-case scenario, managers and employees don't simply respond to what's happening in their organization. Instead they co-create an environment that brings out the best in employees. And that ongoing collaboration contributes to their organization's purpose and business results.



“An engaged employee is 45% more productive than a merely satisfied worker.”

*“The Pandemic Is Widening a Corporate Productivity Gap”
by Eric Garton and Michael Mankins, Harvard Business Review,
December 2020*

Having a people-centric manager is part of a great employee experience

Employee engagement is the end goal, and employee experience is the way to get there.

As organizations become more people-centric, they're rapidly adopting the lens of employee experience — using design thinking to understand and improve every aspect of an employee's work life. Effective managers contribute to a positive employee experience, and that's connected to positive business outcomes, such as employee retention and profitability.

Organizations that believe their employees are both strong performers and highly engaged see:

65% *higher profitability compared to their peers*

and are nearly

2x *as likely as their peers to frequently discuss employee engagement at management meetings*

Peak Performance: How Combining Employee Engagement and Performance Management Fuels Organizational Success, Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2019

Successful managers support belonging

Creative energy flows when everyone on the team feels safe and valued.

Employees are saying it loud and clear: They look to their managers to help them feel a sense of belonging at work. Belonging is a fundamental need, so much so that humans adapt their behavior to fit in — in much the same way we try to avoid physical pain.

When belonging is intentionally fostered in the workplace, employees feel accepted within a community that shares a sense of purpose and willingness to invest emotional energy. Managers cultivate belonging when they actively support and appreciate varying styles, perspectives, and ideas.

Employees who feel a sense of belonging are **5.2x** more likely to be engaged.*

**compared to those who don't feel a sense of belonging; previous Glint analysis has shown this number to be as high as 6x*

“It’s not about having the answers, but it is very much about the willingness to listen, the willingness to hear and understand, and to be engaged.”



Rosanna Durruthy,
LinkedIn Vice President of Global
Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

Managers spark new demand for learning

They hold keys to the future — preparing tomorrow's workforce.

Amid economic turbulence, a bright spot has emerged. Employees across industries and geographies have embraced learning as never before. From 2019 to 2020, LinkedIn Learning saw the number of learners more than double, and recorded a 45% growth in hours per learner.



People are proving hungry to acquire new knowledge and skills at the same time that organizations have recognized the benefits of reskilling, upskilling, and internal mobility as hallmarks of a competitive workforce. Another trend has become clear, too: Managers have an outside impact in inspiring their team members to embrace new knowledge, new skills, and career advancement. According to the **2021 Workplace Learning Report**, 84% of managers agree that learning can help close skills gaps on their teams, and 91% are supportive of helping their direct reports find new opportunities at their companies.

Employees who see good opportunities to learn and grow are **2.9x** more likely to be engaged.*

**compared to those who don't see good opportunities to learn and grow*



Managers drive culture and connection

A shared vision supports resilience and business results.

Many organizations around the globe are coping with employees who are mentally and emotionally exhausted.

Employees who recommend their manager are **2x** more likely to feel their company has a great culture.*

But a strong, resilient culture — shared values and beliefs that shape how work gets done — is a powerful energizer. Research compiled by [Deloitte](#) says organizations that proactively manage culture show 516% higher revenue growth over 10 years, 30% higher levels of innovation, and 40% higher retention.

According to [LinkedIn research](#), people would rather accept lower pay and forgo a desired title than deal with a bad work environment. Managers can be a pivotal factor here — an employee's positive view of culture goes hand in hand with high regard for their manager.

*compared to those who don't recommend their managers

Managers can take three important steps to define culture:

1. Walk the talk.

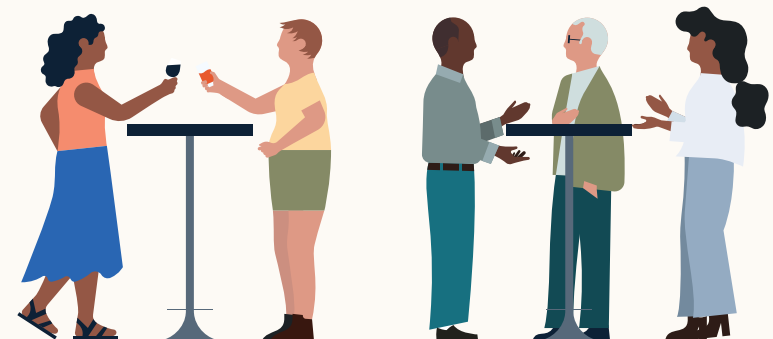
Demonstrate cultural values and norms, especially in challenging times.

2. Create culture stewards.

Ask team members to speak up when they see something that doesn't fit with the culture.

3. Celebrate successes.

Recognize those that demonstrate the cultural values and norms.



How managers deliver impact compared to senior leaders

They provide the greatest returns in employee growth and work-life balance.

Glint asked over 2,000 employees around the globe to report if they felt managers or senior leaders had a greater impact on specific aspects of employee experience. Across the board, managers outshone their senior counterparts, with the strongest contrast occurring in professional development and the ability to set boundaries between personal and work life.

Where managers matter:

Percentage point difference in managers' impact on specific aspects of employee experience versus senior leaders' impact on employee experience.

Developing professionally **+29** percentage points

Having balance between work and personal life **+28** percentage points

Successfully completing work projects **+27** percentage points

Being connected to the right people at work **+18** percentage points

Feeling a sense of belonging **+07** percentage points

Managing Compassionately

Jeff Weiner, executive chairman of LinkedIn, shares how he turned his past experiences into valuable lessons about the benefits of compassion to help people do their best work.

“Compassion is not conditional...If you can put yourself in their shoes, see the world through their lens, you’ll be amazed at the extent to which you can change the direction of that discussion.”



[Watch course](#)

3 tips from experts and practitioners about the power of people-centric managers



Tip #1

Make sure authentic leadership comes first.

Managers must learn to understand themselves — their strengths and their opportunities — before embarking on leading others. It also helps for managers to understand their purpose and that of their team, while seeing their leadership role as an integral part of their job — not an “add-on” responsibility to their day-to-day goals.

“Managers play a — if not THE — crucial role in shaping their team members’ employee experience. They exemplify and role model a company’s culture at every touch point along the employee journey.”



Annette Mahaffey,
Vice President of Talent & Culture,
Bureau Veritas, Paris, France

Tip #2

Help every manager support well-being.

This requires a shift from seeing the role of People & Culture as owning the people agenda to empowering every manager to be responsible for well-being and development of their team. Managers are in the best position to help employees find balance, support, and success.

“The number of occasions in 2020 where executive leadership talked and acted on wide-ranging topics like mental health, leadership succession, inclusion, and diversity far outweighed previous years.”



Nikhil Shahane,
VP Talent and Engagement,
TechnipFMC, Houston

Tip #3

Build diversity, inclusion, and belonging by encouraging senior leaders to expand their networks.

The more senior a leader becomes, the less contact they are likely to have with people in the lower ranks of their organization. Leaders who step outside of their bubbles will broaden their opportunities to form relationships with a wider range of people, opening up a more equitable path for stretch assignments and promotions.

“Don’t just have good intentions — think about your impact. Try to step back and understand how what people get to do is based on who they know.”



Linda Hill,
Harvard Business School Professor
and cofounder of Paradox Strategies, Greater Boston



Chapter 2

Understanding obstacles and opportunities

Managers are coping with blurred boundaries and new emotional demands.

“The biggest change for me during the pandemic was the added importance of emotional intelligence and adaptability. Being engaged with my workforce now means ensuring that we’re physically and mentally healthy — myself included.”



David Tan,
System Test Production Manager at Varian

A clearer view of trouble spots

COVID-19 exposed and accelerated conditions that hinder managers.

The pandemic and the public health response added a swirl of new dilemmas for almost every manager. Essential workers delivered true heroism as they developed new health and safety protocols. Many people grappled with collapsing business models, furloughs, layoffs, shutdowns, as well as unthinkably difficult illnesses and loss.

Those who adapted to managing newly remote, hybrid, and flexible teams during shelter in place shouldered the burden of caring for people's well-being amid isolation and the new overlap of personal and professional lives. The stress and struggles have been immense. But they've also been illuminating as they amplified challenges that aren't entirely new. Understanding the top pain points is the first step to reimagining the world of work with people at the center.



Some good news: engagement is growing

Even in difficult times, managers stay motivated, committed, and proud of their work.

You might think managers' engagement in their work would have suffered in 2020, but that's not the case. **Employee engagement among managers rose by 5% between 2019 and 2020**, mirroring a rise in employee engagement across all organizational roles and levels in the same time period. While there are several ways to explain this unlikely rise during a tumultuous year, likely factors include:

- Employees felt supported by their organizations when leaders took measures to keep them healthy, safe, focused, and well-informed amid drastic changes in their work environments.
- Many managers' work took on a new sense of purpose as they provided a critical link between the organization and their teams.
- During previous economic downturns, employees have felt grateful to keep the jobs they have.

Employee engagement in 2019 vs. 2020

Employee engagement among managers, by percentage of managers.

	2019	2020	% change
Individual contributors	73%	77%	+6%
Managers	75%	79%	+5%

Employee engagement by quarter 2020

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Individual contributors	75%	79%	77%	76%
Managers	78%	80%	79%	78%

Engagement peaked in Q2 during the early phase of the pandemic.



The bad news: burnout is rising

As the pandemic shifted from a sprint to a marathon, everyone felt the strain.

Here's just one data point that speaks to how managers have tackled the pandemic's toll: The number who watched the LinkedIn Learning course "Managing Stress for Positive Change" grew seven times from 2019 to 2020.

As the pandemic wore on, reaching for the positive became even harder. Workload is the most frequently cited woe associated with burnout (see next page), but there's also likely an underreported factor due to the prevalence of illness and loss: "There's an emotional burnout," says **Linda Hill**, Harvard Business professor. "There's a whole lot of coping with traumatic experiences."

The best that can come from this? Organizations taking new action to support well-being and mental health.

Burnout 2019 vs. 2020

Burnout index, by percentage of comments in employee survey comments that contain burnout signals.

	2019	2020	% change
Individual contributors	3.7%	4.8%	+30%
Managers	4.1%	5.3%	+29%

Burnout by quarter 2020

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Individual contributors	4.0%	4.3%	5.2%	5.3%
Managers	3.6%	4.3%	6.1%	6.4%

By the final quarter of 2020, manager burnout increased 78% compared to Q1.

Heavy workload and disconnection drive burnout

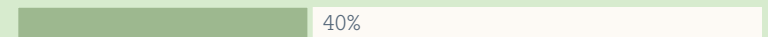
Distress signals often come from under an avalanche of demands.

The stress, anxiety, and loss of meaning associated with burnout show no signs of magically disappearing. Managers feel the weight of a wide range of expectations — and lack of connection and clarity only make it worse. For managers, “overwhelming workload” was the top precursor to burnout, with feelings of disconnection in second place. For individual contributors, that order was flipped — disconnection first, workload second.

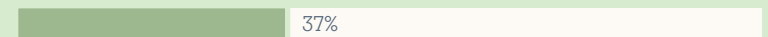
Precursors to manager burnout

Percentage of managers who self-reported experiencing a precursor to burnout.

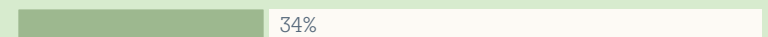
Overwhelming workload



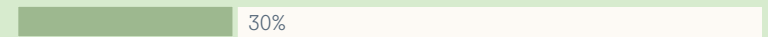
Feeling disconnected from colleagues



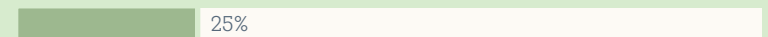
Conflict between home and work demands



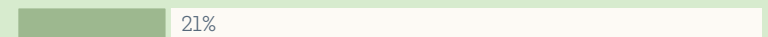
Unclear job responsibilities



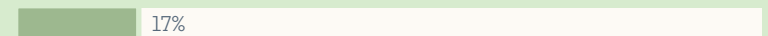
Little or no acknowledgment of good work



Little or no support from manager/peers



Little or no autonomy to make decisions



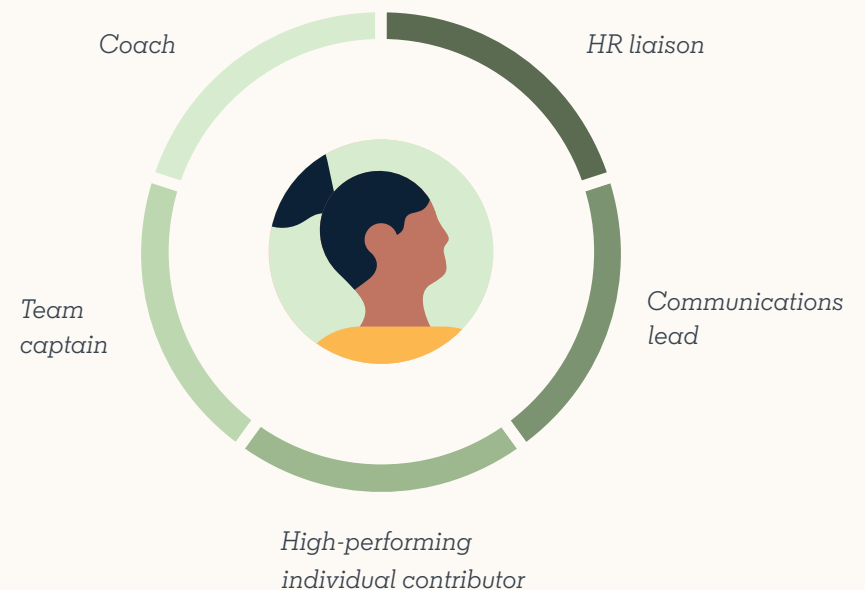
Managers' many roles invite stress

Even pre-pandemic, being a manager required a precarious balancing act.

It's clear how critical managers are. Yet they often have to battle a chronic identity crisis: Are they the coach? A player? Both at the same time?

A manager's typical competing priorities

An effective manager plays many roles that can vary across industries and cultures, but a few responsibilities are universal.



The good and bad of constant collaboration

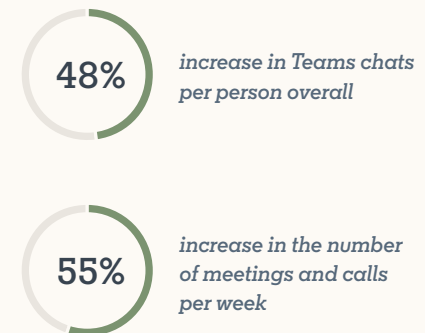
Meeting and messaging overload show the importance of boundaries.

Even five years ago, Rob Cross, Reb Rebele, and Adam Grant shared research in the [*Harvard Business Review*](#) on collaboration deluge, estimating that average workers spend 80% of their time in meetings, in chats and conversations, and responding to emails. The cost can be especially high for managers as they are buried by requests for input or advice, access to resources, or face time in meetings.

The challenges of the pandemic and the overnight shift to remote work highlighted the benefits of collaboration tools, but also underscored that guardrails are helpful. People need to maintain focus time for deep concentration and the personal time that's critical for well-being.

Collaboration skyrocketed amid pandemic challenges

Data reflects an increase in Microsoft Teams chats and meeting activity between February and August 2020.



Source: "A pulse on employees' wellbeing, six months into the pandemic."

The flip side of flexibility

Guardrails are especially important for after-hours work.

Flexible work arrangements show great potential for employees and organizations, but managers have an added burden: figuring out what flexibility means for each of their team members.

Even before the pandemic, Joey Hubbard, chief training officer at Thrive Global, called attention to people who sleep with their phones to be available “to whomever may buzz them or call them throughout the night.” The result? Too many people are losing sleep. Organizations need to help managers set effective boundaries between work and life responsibilities, and serve as role models for their teams.

More messages intrude on after-hours time

Data reflects an increase in Microsoft Teams after-hours chat volume between February and August 2020.

69% *more Teams chats per person after hours*

2x *share of Teams users sending after-hours chats*

Source: “A pulse on employees’ wellbeing, six months into the pandemic.”



The path to easing workloads evades organizations' grasp

Empowerment is the answer, but achieving it requires three t's.

When the pandemic forced many workers into a virtual world, organizations struggled to maintain control over work they literally couldn't see. Some tried to exert greater oversight, resulting in more command-and-control mentalities and disempowered managers and teams. Managers who lack autonomy in their work struggle with what to prioritize and what to delegate to their teams. The antidote — empowering managers — requires three *t*'s: **trust, transparency, and time**.

The first two *t*'s benefit from the third — precious work hours to build alignment and clarity. Of course, business turbulence only adds to the shortage of this finite commodity. Here's one thing to work on: Reduce your organization's number of large, long meetings to make more time for smaller team meetings and one-on-one conversations.

32%

of organizations saw a drop in their empowerment score as the pandemic spread between March 1 and mid-May 2020.



Soft skills demand attention

The need to communicate and adapt is here to stay.

Supporting the well-being and emotional strength of teams requires profoundly human ways of working. Some managers naturally possess the ability to understand and inspire other people. But most face an ongoing learning curve as they adapt to ever-changing circumstances.

The pandemic sped up attention to the entirety of people's professional and personal circumstances. "Leaders have learned how to be more responsive and more caring and more empathetic this past year — by necessity," says global HR analyst [Josh Bersin](#).

Top 5 skills for the new world of work

When [LinkedIn Learning](#) asked L&D pros to identify the most important current skills, four of the top five related to human strengths.

- #1 Resilience and adaptability**
- #2 Technology skills/digital fluency**
- #3 Communication across remote or distributed teams**
- #4 Emotional intelligence**
- #5 Cross-functional collaboration**

Learning trends reveal opportunities — and provide hope

Managers pursued new knowledge to help with pandemic challenges.

The number of managers using LinkedIn Learning grew by 102% from 2019 to 2020, with a 49% increase in learning hours per manager. While the most popular topics demonstrate the new pain points and skills needed to successfully steer teams through difficult times, the explosion of learning represents an optimistic signal: focused, supported, and growing people are happier and more successful in good times and bad.

Top 5 trending courses for managers in 2020



[Time Management: Working from Home](#)



[Remote Work Foundations](#)



[Tips for Working Remotely](#)



[Communicating about Culturally Sensitive Issues](#)



[Thriving @ Work: Leveraging the Connection Between Well-being and Productivity](#)

Methodology: LinkedIn Learning courses that grew the most in terms of number of manager learners from 2019 to 2020.

Course topics varied around the globe

Regional snapshot illustrates North America's reckoning with systemic racism.

The whole world watched as protests erupted in the US following the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Black Lives Matter movement gained international momentum. When it came to learning, it made sense that people in the US made the biggest push to self-educate in response to what was happening in their own country. North America's top three courses all touched on inclusion, bias, and cultural sensitivity.



Top 3 most uniquely popular courses for managers by region in 2020

North America

1. [Skills for Inclusive Conversations](#)
2. [Confronting Bias: Thriving Across Our Differences](#)
3. [Communicating About Culturally Sensitive Issues](#)

Asia Pacific

1. [Leadership Stories: 5-Minute Lessons in Leading People](#)
2. [Guy Kawasaki on Turning Life Wisdom into Business Success](#)
3. [Humble Leadership: The Power of Relationships, Openness, and Trust](#)

Europe, Middle East, and Africa

1. [Quick-wittedness: Never Again Speechless](#)
2. [Thinking as a Leader](#)
3. [Selling to Executives](#)

Methodology: We looked at the top 100 courses watched on LinkedIn Learning by managers in each region during 2020. We then compared the popularity of these courses among managers to their popularity among all learners, to identify the courses where managers most "over-index." The courses highlighted here are the courses that managers are more likely to watch than the average learner.

*“Learning is a form of self-care.
The happiest people in the world
are the ones who are the most
engaged and curious.”*



Crystal Lim-Lange,
CEO of Forest Wolf and author of *Deep Human*

Developing Your Emotional Intelligence

Gemma Leigh Roberts, organizational psychologist and executive coach, explains how emotional intelligence helps you become more self-aware, so you can build strong and collaborative relationships.

“Reflection is a key part of understanding your emotions and understanding your emotional intelligence. A top tip is to practice this reflection frequently after facing a challenging situation. It’s this reflection time that will help you build your emotional intelligence in the future.”



[Watch course](#)

3 tips from experts and practitioners to overcome obstacles



Tip #1

Coach managers to have meaningful conversations.

Employees who have one-on-one time with their managers get more guidance on prioritization and clarity on strategy and goals. Ultimately, this can help with work-life balance as well as supporting growth, career development, and well-being.

“Amid escalations, project updates, and endless emails, it’s not always top of mind to check in on how someone is doing. But I’ve seen how important one-on-one conversations can be. You can assume a lot about how someone is doing without knowing they might need support or feedback in a way you didn’t think about.”



Archana Ramesh,
Head of Glint People Science
Asia Pacific, Singapore

Tip #2

Give managers an off-ramp.

What happens when a people manager realizes they're in the wrong role? Organizations that prioritize their people and foster psychological safety find humane ways for people to pivot to different roles.

“2020 provided clarity for many people managers on whether they’re in the right job. Organizations can respect those realizations by normalizing an off-ramp for people managers. It’s not always about building manager capability. Sometimes it’s about helping managers find new roles that don’t include people management.”



Stacia Sherman Garr,
Cofounder and principal analyst, RedThread Research,
Redwood City, California

Tip #3

Help everyone be aware of how our roles can affect our perceptions.

Newly promoted managers benefit from supporters who can see and encourage their new identities as they reset relationships with peers and senior leaders. Likewise, seasoned managers can sometimes lose touch with their previous identities as individual contributors. Coaching can help ensure that managers don't lose that all-important empathy.

“It’s normal for humans that we tend to take on the identity that has been given to us. The key is to be able to remember or imagine what it’s like to wear other shoes.”



Shreya Sarkar-Barney,
Founder and CEO, Human Capital Growth,
San Francisco Bay Area

Chapter 3

Supporting the people-centric manager

The right mix of feedback, learning, and empowerment accelerates managers' success.



*“People need to feel they’re growing.
If they’re not learning, you’re going
to lose them.”*



David Perring,
Director of Research, Fosway Group

Unlocking managers' potential

What if every team had an inspiring and effective leader?

Enough about challenges. Let's talk about opportunities. Organizations that shift from bemoaning overburdened, underqualified managers to supporting every manager's true potential can spark tremendous energy. The surprise is how simple it can be to make that shift. A few key areas of support can help you and your managers build a flourishing organizational culture.

Because much of tomorrow's work will look vastly different from today's, managers must be prepared to drive constant agility — and ensure that humanity, inclusion, and upskilling are embedded in every decision. Managers will lead the charge to give employees greater ownership over their own growth and success. Those who inspire every team member to bring their best self to work will deliver richer cultures, higher engagement, more creativity, and better business results.

Employees who find their manager inspirational are:

2x *more likely to feel optimistic about their own happiness at work in 2021**

**compared to those who do not find their managers inspirational*



The big picture: 3 innovations make it easier to support managers

Systems thinking and technology can boost effectiveness at scale.

Helping people succeed is a powerful purpose. And business prosperity increasingly depends on attracting, engaging, and retaining talented people. Three innovations are coming together to help organizations and leaders think and act more broadly in support of managers.

These tools and tactics help leaders use systems thinking to understand how different parts of the employee experience affect the whole organization — and where best to invest energy to drive positive change.

Insights and analytics about the manager experience

Employee feedback combined with workplace collaboration pattern data (including advanced techniques such as network analysis) is helping organizations reimagine the manager experience.

Technology as a coach

Artificial intelligence is poised to support the things that humans are best at, guiding people to the mindsets and habits that help build connections, practice empathy, and do our best work.

Learning and growth in the flow of work

Personalized training served up at the right time and place is adding power, ease, and efficiency to build skills and perspective for tomorrow's economy.

Understand what motivates managers

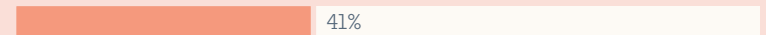
They prize the right kind of work and the power to make decisions.

Managers do their best work when they: 1) are given engaging tasks that are the right fit for their skills, and 2) feel trusted to make decisions. Both factors support a sense of autonomy — a person’s ability to act on their own values and interests. It’s particularly powerful when organizations connect that sense of autonomy with a larger purpose, helping employees feel part of a valuable big picture.

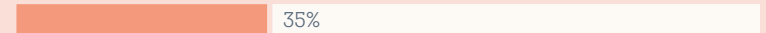
What motivates managers to do their best work?

Percentage of managers who rated the importance of the following factors regarding their work needs:

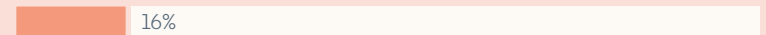
Doing challenging work that matches my skills



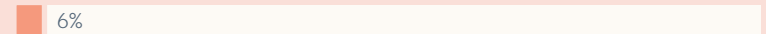
Feeling trusted to make work-related decisions



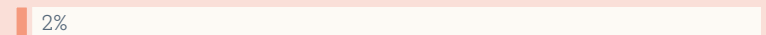
Building positive relationships with colleagues



Being publicly recognized for my work



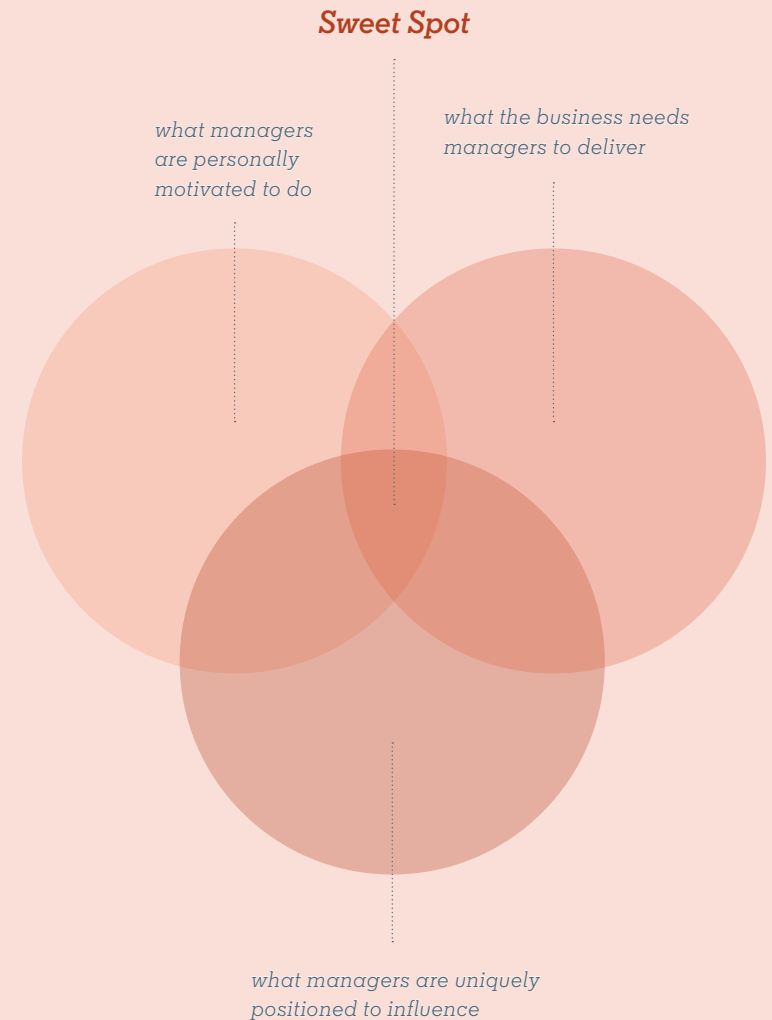
None of the above



The manager's sweet spot

Success sits at the crossroads of personal passion, business needs, and influence.

Call it a sweet spot, impact zone, or whatever makes most sense to you. A manager's best chance for success is found at the center of three overlapping aspects of work life.



3 ways to help managers find their sweet spot

Support managers with:

1. *feedback*
2. *learning and growth*
3. *power to act*

1. Support managers with feedback

The most transformative insights come from multiple directions.

Managers need developmental feedback to stay self-aware and act on opportunities to learn and grow. By definition, managers are employees who have additional responsibilities — and additional power. With that (real or perceived) power, a feedback imbalance forms around them. Peers, coworkers, and especially direct reports start to think twice before providing candid input.

Yet honest feedback is most helpful in managers' development. So what's the solution? It's helpful to open up multiple channels — not only performance reviews, but also employee engagement pulse surveys, feedback in the flow of work, and 360-degree developmental feedback, delivering insights from above (a manager), the side (peers), and below (direct reports).

95% of people think they're self-aware, but only **10% to 15%** of us actually are.

"Working with People Who Aren't Self-Aware"
by Tasha Eurich, *Harvard Business Review*, October 2018

2. Support managers with learning and growth

Managers thrive with opportunities to stretch and master new skills.

To fully realize the benefits of manager learning, one thing is especially helpful: Keep in close touch with what managers want to learn. **Alyson DeMaso**, CEO of Raising Beauty, said it well in LinkedIn's **2021 Workplace Learning Report**, "Spend as much time understanding the needs of your learners as you do understanding the needs of the business, and you're going to have a breakthrough program where everyone is engaged."

Managers who feel they have room to learn and grow in their role are:

3.4x more likely to be engaged

3.2x more likely to say they will probably be with their company in two year's time*

**compared to those who don't feel they have room to learn and grow*

3. Support managers with the power to act

Build on the three t's by adding the 4 c's.

The pandemic made it crystal clear: When the world changes in a single day, micromanagement is a curse. Earlier, the report discussed the importance of trust, transparency, and investments of time (particularly for one-on-one conversations) as all-important factors to empower managers to think and act wisely, ultimately supporting more productive teams.

One more set of alliterative steps can guide senior leaders as they work to empower managers:

- **Collaborate** with managers to help prioritize their work.
- **Clear** roadblocks for them.
- **Connect** managers with others to help them build their networks.
- **Communicate** frequently to make any necessary adjustments.

And a final tip: Share employee engagement data and insights with managers, and encourage them to take action. This approach supports manager empowerment and team engagement.

Managers who feel empowered to make decisions at work are 3x more likely to be engaged.*

*compared to those who don't feel empowered

The virtuous circle of feedback, learning, and action

Supported managers have a ripple effect on employee experience and culture.

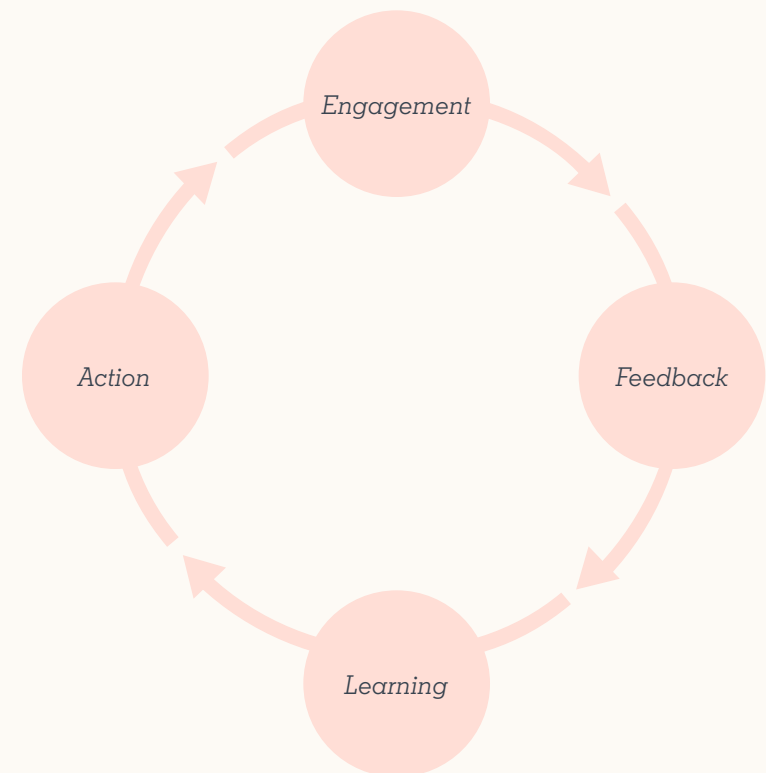
It's worth noting that the one-two-three punch of feedback, learning, and action can deliver a virtuous circle of positive energy across an entire organization. It starts with all-important trust that leads to candid feedback about growth and learning opportunities. Employees at all levels who feel their feedback is heard and see that it's acted upon are more likely to be engaged with an organization and its purpose. They're also more likely to keep giving feedback, which allows both individuals and organizations to strive for constant improvement.

Employees who believe action will be taken on feedback are:

2.5x more likely to be happy working at their company

2.3x more likely to believe they'll be at their company in two years*

*compared to those who don't believe action will be taken



Why Trust Matters

Rachel Botsman, a trust fellow at Oxford University, reveals the powerful ways trust shapes our personal and professional lives — enabling us to cope with uncertainty, take risks, and be vulnerable with others.

“The superpower of earning trust, the superpower of rebuilding trust, is vulnerability. When you show some weakness or some honesty around an emotion or a feeling, and the other person catches it and does the same, you create and cause the vulnerability loop.”



[Watch course](#)

3 tips from experts and practitioners to support people-centric managers



Tip #1

Trust managers to tell it like it is.

Transparent communication is the glue that holds organizations together when challenges and opportunities tug in multiple directions. Organizations that provide managers with complete information and empower them to share it with their teams are also helping employees pivot faster to shape a rapidly evolving world.

“Trusted employees are productive employees. Organizations wedded to command-and-control comfort zones will invariably constrain their agility.”



Matt Roddan,
Director, Glint People Science, New York

Tip #2

Make learning customizable.

Provide practical guidance, resources, and critical learning solutions to your managers. Make these tools relevant for local context, and embedded in manager onboarding and L&D programs.

“We are developing programs to enhance our leadership capabilities (skills and knowledge) expected in people leadership roles. Our learning management system is supporting managers by providing 1) solutions per competency to be developed or enhanced; 2) continuous learning — access when and where needed; 3) autonomy in learning; 4) the ability to trigger some content for their team members.”



Ana Bidaud,
Global Employee Engagement Manager, SGS,
Lisbon, Portugal

Tip #3

Equip managers with survey insights.

Managers need tools to understand what's happening within the workforce, especially during long periods of uncertainty, so they can respond with appropriate relevant actions, such as training or communications.

“Paysafe has used surveys regularly throughout the COVID crisis to understand the pulse of our employees, their well-being, concerns, and issues... It enables open dialogue and builds trust. The results are lower attrition, higher engagement and productivity, and the highest employee engagement scores in four years.”



Nicholas Walker,
CHRO, Paysafe Group, London

Conclusion

Parting thoughts

A growth mindset helps managers — and organizations, too.

Possibly no one is bearing more of the brunt of the huge shifts in the workplace than managers. But many managers have turned a negative into an overwhelming positive, jumping on the opportunity to learn and grow.

Organizations need to do the same. How will you help your organization reimagine the world of work? A few thoughts can help. First, start by putting people at the center of every decision. Next, break down the silos that can get in the way of holistic people strategies.

Finally, don't let audacious goals or overwrought planning overwhelm your ability to act. Start your journey with one small step — it can open the door to courage and creativity. Now is the perfect time to help more people achieve happiness and success.

Acknowledgments

This report was informed by contributions from people around the world, to whom we owe our sincere thanks, including:

[Giacomo Austin](#), Paysafe Group

[Josh Bersin](#), Global HR industry Analyst

[Ana Bidaud](#), SGS

[Ramon Cibrian](#), Varian

[Alyson DeMaso](#), Raising Beauty

[Rosanna Durruthy](#), LinkedIn Vice President of Global Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging

[Lori Heffelfinger](#), The Heffelfinger Company

[Linda Hill](#), Harvard Business School

[Crystal Lim-Lange](#), Forest Wolf

[Annette Mahaffey](#), Bureau Veritas

[David Perring](#), Fosway Group

[Archana Ramesh](#), Glint People Science

[Shreya Sarkar-Barney](#), Human Capital Growth

[Matt Roddan](#), Glint People Science

[Nikhil Shahane](#), TechnipFMC

[Stacia Sherman Garr](#), RedThread Research

[David Tan](#), Varian

[Yunuen Trejo Bautista](#), Varian

[Nicholas Walker](#), Paysafe Group

Research and Insights

[Eric Knudsen](#)

[Sophie Smith](#)

Creative

[Andrew DeBenedictis](#)

[Kevin Frank](#)

[Kaelin McGill](#)

[Adriana Ngau](#)

[John Yi](#)

Editorial and Thought Leadership

[Anne McSilver](#)

[Ellen Gomes](#)

[Jaime Gonzales](#)

[Kris Kitto](#)

[Ia Ko](#)

[Amanda Van Nuys \(LinkedIn Learning\)](#)

Methodologies

Surveys

The insights in this report were derived from multiple sources, including a sample of 15 million data points collected through the Glint People Success Platform over the course of 2020, and data collected through several surveys of LinkedIn members between September and December 2020. Glint platform data points were submitted through employee surveys at over 500 companies, covering a range of aspects of the employee experience. The synthesis and analysis of this data was performed in January 2021. The surveys of LinkedIn members were administered to a total of 12,246 members and covered a range of employee experience topics, including burnout symptoms, manager relationships, and employee expectations.

Percent favorable data

Percent favorable data points (e.g., 45% feel that...) were produced by taking individual Glint survey responses (on a five-point scale) and converting them to favorability ratings as follows:

Numeric Survey Response	Favorability Rating
1	Unfavorable
2	Unfavorable
3	Neutral
4	Favorable
5	Favorable

The percent favorable score was calculated as the percentage of all responses for a given survey item (e.g., *How happy are you working at your company?*) that were labeled Favorable (i.e., 4 or 5 numeric rating). For time-bound data points (e.g., manager engagement by quarter), the subsample was constrained to the time window of interest (Q1 = Jan–Mar, Q2 = Apr–Jun, Q3 = Jul–Sep, Q4 = Oct–Dec).

For surveys administered to LinkedIn members, the same percent favorable methodology applies. The percentages reported represent the percent of members who submitted a response consisting of a “top-two” value (4 or 5 on a 5-pt scale).

Multiplier data

Multiplier data points (e.g., “2x more likely...”) were calculated by comparing the rate of favorability on one item based on favorability on a second item. For example, if 50% of respondents who were favorable on Item 1 were also favorable on Item 2, and only 25% of those *unfavorable* on Item 1 were favorable on Item 2, the resulting multiplier was 2x ($50\% \div 25\% = 2x$).

LinkedIn Workplace Learning Report

We surveyed 1,260 L&D Professionals and 814 Learners in November 2020 in English, French, and German. The full list of countries we surveyed include: US, UK, India, Canada, Australia, Germany, Singapore, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, France, Sweden, Belgium, Finland, Hong Kong, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Iceland, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Austria, and Switzerland. We also surveyed 3,080 people managers in English who self-identified as having direct reports globally in November and December 2020.

LinkedIn Learning Data

We looked at the aggregated data of learners, whose learning accounts are connected to their LinkedIn profiles, to identify those whose seniority levels indicate that they were full-time managers during the time period being analyzed.

Take on the future with Glint and LinkedIn

When moving toward a people-first future, ask yourself:

- What kind of culture do I want to build?
- What will it take to empower every manager to be their best?
- How can I meet my objectives innovatively?
- What do people need or want to learn?
- How can I offer the right experience and opportunities for managers and the organization at large?

Collaboration across HR teams is the key to people-first strategies — and people are your greatest asset.

[Request a Glint demo](#)

[Request a LinkedIn Learning demo](#)



GLINT™

LinkedIn Learning