

IS THERE STILL VALUE IN THE ***ROLE OF MANAGERS?***



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*Do we still need managers, and if so,
how should they spend their time?*

For a role under distinct pressure, unlocking value won't come with eliminating the role or ignoring the need for change. **There's a third path: reinvention.** As organizations reinvent managers to focus on what matters most—developing people, redesigning work and reallocating resources to drive human performance in the age of AI, and catalyzing agility and strategic problem-solving—AI can help.

The key capability needed for tomorrow's middle managers: Judgment

In an era in which the technical and functional work can increasingly be performed by AI, and in which work is increasingly fluid and complex, the most important skill managers will likely need is the art of judgment—or the ability to make difficult decisions where there are no cut-and-dry answers or when the information available is insufficient. Judgment is the ability to understand organizational history, culture, and context and use human capabilities like empathy and imagination to guide discretion and to improvise rather than simply apply rules.

The role of the manager is inevitably changing. The decision before us is: How do we best reinvent the role to help organizations and workers embrace the pace and change and thrive? It starts with recognizing the importance of the three fundamental capabilities: Develop, coach, motivate, and nurture people. Redesign work, reallocate resources, and optimize human and machine interactions to drive human performance in the age of AI. Enable agility, strategic problem-solving, and organizational reinvention. The term “manager” isn't what's important here—what's important is ensuring that these core capabilities are embedded in the organization's DNA and that the organization is helping people excel at them.

Namibian Readiness Gap

According to the Deloitte 2025 HC Trends survey, results indicates that many organisations are falling behind in preparing managers for the changing demands of the AI-driven workplace. While the role of managers is shifting toward developing people, redesigning work, and exercising strong judgment, only 10.53% of organisations are leading in this transformation. In contrast, 7.89% have not started, and 18.42% are only considering it, showing that a majority are not yet actively building the capabilities needed—such as empathy, agility, and strategic decision-making—that will define successful leadership in the future. This gap underscores an urgent need for action to align managerial roles with the demands of human-machine collaboration and continuous change.

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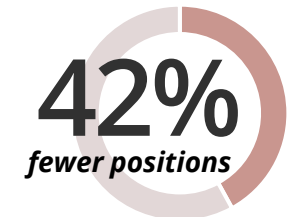
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WHAT THE DATA SHOWS



don't feel prepared to manage people, this same percentage of managers say the organization is not providing tech to help them manage people



US middle-management positions were being advertised at the end of 2024 than they did in the spring of 2022



time is eaten up on fire drills or administrative work

IS THERE STILL VALUE IN THE **ROLE OF MANAGERS?**

FOCUS ON BUILDING THREE CRITICAL CAPABILITIES FOR MANAGERS:

ACTIONS

1. Ability to develop, coach, motivate, and nurture people

- Use AI to help managers gain real-time performance insights
- Require training, development, and accreditation of managerial coaching and development skills
- Create opportunities to practice having difficult conversations



Intel managers use AI to help guide them in providing development opportunities and feedback to their workers. Having a built-in AI coach can help managers get insights about the team that they're managing and the activities that they've taken on.

IN PRACTICE

2. Ability to redesign work, reallocate resources, and optimize human and machine interactions

- Use AI to help support managers in optimizing work for AI and human collaboration
- Create a safe environment for AI and other work redesign experimentation
- Provide education, training, and development on AI



NASA used commercially available AI software to reinvent the design process for specialized one-off parts, with workers collaborating with AI to produce complex structure designs in just hours rather than months.

3. Ability to serve as a catalyst for agility, strategic problem solving, and reinvention

- Focus on drawing better connections among managers within your organization
- Empower decision making and how to push decision rights
- Develop managers' judgement skills in strategic decision making and problem solving



Klick Health's machine-learning technology, "Genome," analyzes every project at every stage in the firm, suggesting rewarding more responsibility to people who have demonstrated consistent competency and success.

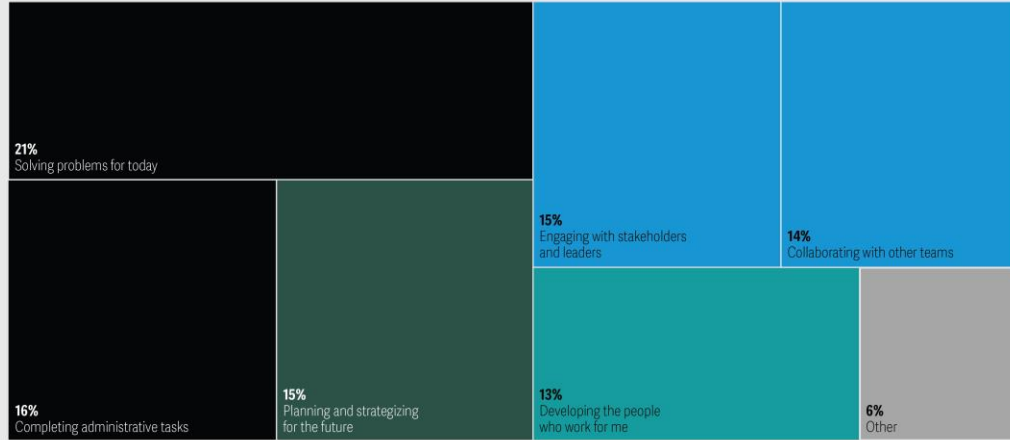


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It's no wonder that managers are often overwhelmed, frustrated, and burned out—one research study suggests that they're the most depressed and stressed category of worker.¹⁰ Case in point: 40% of managers said their mental health declined when they took on a managerial or leadership role. And 72% of workers in Japan don't even want a management position,¹¹ what was once the highly sought-after path toward upward mobility has lost its appeal for many around the world.

Yet most managers feel their organizations are doing very little to support them. Our research shows that organizations recognize the importance of better supporting managers and reinventing their role but are struggling to make progress (figure 2). According to our *2025 Global Human Capital Trends* survey (see Methodology), 36% of managers felt they were not sufficiently prepared for the people-manager parts of their role and 36% do not believe their organization has implemented technology solutions to help them perform these roles.