

Press release

Contact: Isabel Box
Title: Senior Marketing & Communications Manager
Tel: +32 (0)2 302 25 51
Mobile: +32 (0)485 31 79 63
Email: ibox@deloitte.com

Belgian executives must reshape the role of managers to tackle their top human capital challenge of ‘stagility’

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As disruption accelerates, Belgian business and HR leaders are prioritising stagility - the ability to combine agility with stability - as a key factor for long-term success. This emerges from Deloitte’s 2025 Global Human Capital Trends report. Stagility ranks as the number one workforce priority in Belgium, closely followed by ‘redefining the role of the manager’ and ‘motivating at the unit of one’. What sets Belgium apart is that organisations aren’t just aware of what matters, they are taking action. Compared to global peers, they show smaller gaps between recognising priorities and addressing them. Yet much of this progress remains invisible. Deloitte therefore calls on Belgian leaders to share their stories, highlight the impact of their efforts and help position Belgium as a credible frontrunner in the future of work.

Highlights

- **Stagility tops the executive agenda:** 36% of Belgian executives rank stagility - the ability to combine agility with stability - as the most important workforce priority.
- **The manager’s role must evolve:** 34% of executives and 28% of workers say it is a top priority, yet most managers are stuck in operations instead of coaching and leading transformation.
- **Work is getting in the way of work:** 40% of Belgian employees rank workload and daily distractions as their number one work priority to tackle, highlighting the urgent need to reduce busywork and reclaim focus.
- **Motivation needs a personal approach:** For 34% of Belgian executives, individual motivation tops the workforce agenda.
- **Belgian organisations are leading quietly:** Companies in Belgium report smaller knowing-doing gaps than global peers, but their efforts often remain unseen. Deloitte therefore urges Belgian leaders to share their progress and help position Belgium as a global example in shaping the future of work.

Stagility is the number one workforce priority among Belgian executives

Stagility - the ability to create stability for workers while continuing to move at speed - is considered the most important trend for organisational success by Belgian executives. With 36% ranking it as their top priority, it is closely followed by other key workforce challenges such as ‘redefining the role of the manager’ (34%) and ‘motivating at the unit of one’ (34%). This strong endorsement reflects a growing recognition that long-term performance depends not just on agility or innovation, but also on the ability to provide employees with structure, security and support in the face of relentless change.

Belgian business and HR leaders agree that balancing agility with stability is crucial, yet progress remains difficult. Although 83% of executives see stagility as very important, only 47% report taking effective action, representing the highest ‘knowing vs doing’ gap we witness in Belgium. The urgency around stagility is further reinforced by the pace of workplace change.

“Where employees once faced one or two major disruptions per year, they now encounter as many as ten. As traditional sources of structure and stability fade, organisations must build new foundations that allow people to adapt and perform without burning out. Belgium’s rising absenteeism highlights the stakes. On any average working day in 2024, one in twelve workers (8,5%) was absent, due to illness¹. In 2024, longer-term absenteeism (between one month and one year) reached a peak of 3,56% which represents a steep increase by almost a third in two years’ time.² To stay resilient, organisations must rethink work design, combining speed with sustainability while supporting people through continuous transformation”, says Annelies Verbruggen, Organisation & Work Transformation leader at Deloitte.

Reshaping the role of the manager as new anchor amidst constant change

Amid growing demands on the workforce, the role of the manager is being re-evaluated. While managers remain essential to organisational success, their impact is often limited by outdated expectations and operational overload, leaving little room to focus on what truly drives value: coaching, developing, and inspiring their teams. Deloitte’s 2025 Gen Z & Millennial Survey reveals a striking perception gap. Over half of young Belgians believe managers should provide guidance and motivation, yet only a quarter experience this in practice. Globally, the picture is similar: managers spend just 13% of their time on people development.

Both executives (34%) and non-executives (28%) rank redefining the manager’s role among the top workforce priorities. Rather than phasing out the position, organisations must reshape it, empowering managers to drive performance, support growth and foster innovation. This evolution also strengthens stagility by anchoring transformation in people leadership.

However, turning this ambition into action is not without challenges. Executives cite external factors such as regulation (22%) as key barriers, while non-executives point to internal blockers like structure and leadership misalignment (25%). Whatever the cause, the message is consistent: to remain effective in a fast-changing, people-centric world, the role of the manager must be fundamentally reimaged.

“Redefining the manager’s role is not just a priority in itself, it’s a catalyst for progress across the board. When managers are empowered to focus on people leadership, it accelerates individual motivation, strengthens organisational stability and creates the conditions for real agility”, says Tom Verstraete, Human Capital AI leader at Deloitte.

40% of Belgian employees indicate work is getting in the way of work

Belgian executives and employees prioritize workforce challenges differently. While executives focus on leadership and personal motivation, non-executives are more concerned with day-to-day realities. 40% select “when work gets in the way of work” as their top concern, with stagility second (31%) and the role of managers third (28%).

Not all busywork is avoidable, but when left unchecked, it becomes a barrier to productivity. A study by Prottime among Flemish workers found that employees lose an average of three hours per week in non-essential meetings.³ For one in eight, the number is eight hours or more. Reducing this busywork requires a new mindset. Slack should be seen not as idle time, but as vital capacity that lets people focus, absorb change and solve problems. DPG Media illustrates the approach, by planning only 80% of staff capacity and reserving 20% for the unexpected, it boosts resilience and lowers stress when priorities shift.

34% of Belgian executives see individual motivation as the top workforce priority

Understanding what drives people - and acting on it - is emerging as a powerful lever for motivation, engagement and performance. As organisations move away from one-size-fits-all strategies, more leaders are embracing personalised approaches. For 34% of Belgian executives, this is the number one workforce priority. Yet despite this recognition, many struggle to follow through: while 72% consider it critically important, only 49% say their organisation is taking concrete action, and just 13% are leading in optimising and innovating.

¹ <https://press.securex.be/vorig-jaar-was-1-werknemer-op-12-ziek-op-gemiddelde-werkdag>

² <https://peoplesphere.be/nl/de-absenteismecrisis-in-belgie-zet-zich-voort-vorig-jaar-was-1-werknemer-op-12-ziek-op-gemiddelde-werkdag/>

³ <https://www.protime.eu/nl-be/nieuws/protime-onderzoek-helft-van-de-vlamingen-ergert-zich-meestal-tot-altijd-aan-vergaderingen-op>

The workforce sees the disconnect. According to the 2025 European Workforce Study, only 33% of Belgian employees feel they receive a fair share of company profits, and just 37% believe promotions go to the right people.⁴ These perceptions of unfairness erode trust and motivation, two elements essential to long-term performance.

Both executives (29%) and non-executives (22%) point to internal blockers such as structural rigidity, poor leadership alignment and outdated practices. Managers have a crucial role to play in closing this gap. By tapping into individual goals, giving tailored feedback and creating space for growth, they can turn motivation into measurable impact.

Belgium leads in tackling human capital challenges, but visibility is limited

Belgian organisations are ahead of the curve when it comes to turning awareness into action. In Belgium, the average gap between knowing that an issue is of critical importance and expanding efforts to tackle it is 23% compared to the global average of 35%. While many organisations worldwide remain stuck in a cycle of reflection, Belgian companies are already optimising, innovating, and scaling their efforts across key human capital priorities. This proactive mindset allows them to thrive in today's fast-paced, constantly evolving world of work.

Yet despite this progress, few examples are visible to the outside world. Many Belgian organisations appear to underreport their efforts. At the same time, progress is slowed by challenges that lie beyond company walls. Whereas global leaders often point to internal blockers, Belgian executives cite external barriers such as regulation and stakeholder demands. These findings highlight the need for stronger collaboration between business, government, and institutions.

Make progress visible: a call for Belgian leaders to share their story

Belgian companies are advancing faster than their global peers on key workforce priorities. They recognise what matters and are taking concrete action across areas such as stagility, personalised motivation and the evolving role of the manager. Yet despite this progress, their stories remain largely untold. To build a clearer picture of what transformation looks like in practice, business and HR leaders in Belgium are invited to share how they are making progress. What initiatives have they implemented, what outcomes are they seeing, and what lessons could inspire others? Increased visibility will help shape the broader conversation on the future of work and position Belgium as a credible example for others to follow.

"Belgian organisations are not short on action, but their impact often goes unnoticed," says Yves Van Durme, Human Capital Partner at Deloitte. "To lead by example, progress must be made visible. That does not mean having perfect solutions. It means being transparent about what is working, where challenges remain and how organisations are moving forward. That kind of openness builds trust and sets the standard for meaningful, lasting change."

About the survey

Deloitte's 2025 Global Human Capital Trends survey gathered insights from over 14,000 business and HR leaders across 95 countries. The Belgian companion report draws on responses from **242 business and HR leaders and employees across various industries in Belgium**. The Belgian sample aligns closely with the global dataset, and differences in results **cannot be attributed to sample composition**, ensuring comparability.

The research focused on three core questions:

- How important are key human capital trends to your organisation's success?
- Where is your organisation on its journey to address these trends?
- What are the main barriers to making progress?

⁴ <https://europeanworkforcestudy.com/>

The report explores **eight key trends**, including:

- Stagility – balancing organisational agility with stability for workers
- When work gets in the way of work – removing bureaucracy to unlock personal growth
- Employee value proposition – adapting offerings for a human-tech world
- Experience gap – addressing the disappearance of informal learning
- *Why Tech* – managing the evolving relationship between people and technology
- Motivating at the unit of one – customising work to individual drivers
- Engineering performance – using data to capture value and build trust
- Role of managers – empowering managers to lead change and enable performance

For more information or to download the full report, visit: www.deloitte.com/be/humancapitaltrends

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