

HRD

THE ONLY INDEPENDENT STRATEGIC HR PUBLICATION

the **HRD**DIRECTOR

APRIL 2023 | ISSUE 222

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STARTUP

“IF YOU'RE COMING IN WITH THE
MINDSET OF: "I'M ONLY GOING TO
DO HR," IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK
IN A STARTUP ENVIRONMENT”

KERRY YOUNG
CHIEF PEOPLE OFFICER
VITRIFI & ALLPOINTS FIBRE





ARTICLE BY JODIE HARRISON, INSIGHTS CONSULTANT - INPULSE

THE SQUEEZED

LINE MANAGERS ARE STRESSED, STRETCHED, UNDERRATED AND AN OFTEN-OVERLOOKED SECRET WEAPON IN ENGAGEMENT. CREATING A THRIVING TEAM CULTURE, WHERE PRODUCTIVITY AND MOTIVATION ARE HIGH AND THERE'S A STRONG SENSE OF COMMITMENT, REQUIRES LINE MANAGERS THAT CAN CAST INSPIRING VISION AT LOCAL LEVEL AND GIVE SUPPORT ALONG THE JOURNEY.

Great management involves running the business in an efficient and reliable way that facilitates the best possible outcomes. Those whose focus remains on the more traditional, transactional elements of the role - planning tasks, distributing workload and giving feedback - are being left behind and are becoming out of touch with the reality of the new ways of working. Today, managers are required to take a people-centric approach, prioritise relational factors and empower their teams to perform at their best, on top of ensuring the smooth running of day-to-day business operations. Understanding the needs and wants of individual team members and having the ability to flex to suit different styles requires strong interpersonal skills, high emotional intelligence and a well-developed sense of self-awareness, to assess how people's behaviours influence those around them.

The quest to evolve sees many businesses now developing and investing in their management team. But line managers are already spread too thin and people in this role are twice as likely to feel that they have an unmanageable workload, compared with both senior leaders and team members. Unsurprisingly, this means that stress levels, caused by an unachievable workload, are 50 percent higher for this group. Line managers are being squeezed from both sides: Senior leaders are placing more demands on managers to

cascade information, share the big picture with those on the ground and serve as local leaders to guide their teams in the right direction. At the same time, employee needs and expectations are only increasing, with managers being required to support their team's wellbeing, coach them through challenges and encouraging their personal development.

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Interestingly, while managers are overwhelmingly the most stressed group, they are also the most committed and these conflicting emotions mean that while managers are struggling to carry out their work and support their teams, their desire to do a good job and be part of their organisation's success remains intact. The starting point to reclaim and redefine the line manager role must be acknowledgement of the pressure they are

under. Recognising and appreciating the efforts goes a long way towards alleviating negativity, as these acts of acknowledgement demonstrate to people that their concerns are being heard and there is a commitment to taking meaningful action.

It's clear that expectations of line managers themselves have also evolved and, in practice, this looks like people carrying out the role in different ways, with varying degrees of efficacy. Therefore, a review of these expectations is timely, to refine focus and clearly communicate to line managers to discuss requirements when setting new expectations, to give all parties clarity and confidence in the relationship. This will empower line managers to take ownership of their responsibilities and build trust, that the output will more likely meet the required standard. Shifting the focus of the line manager role and creating a people-centric culture to optimise performance needs support from senior leaders, to role model the cultural shift to line managers by encouraging camaraderie and making space in their day for 'human' moments, where the main purpose is to connect with others and build relationships by removing barriers and focusing on reciprocity.

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