

Accidental Managers on the Rise – two thirds are ill-equipped to do the job

1 year ago



A recent poll of 2,000 white-collar professionals, conducted in April 2024, shows that the number of ‘accidental’ managers is increasing.

Findings from a [Robert Walters](#) poll show:

- Over two thirds of managers (66%) in the UK have had no formal training.
- Over a fifth of current managers admit to feeling like they were ‘quietly promoted’ to manage other people. Quiet promotions are where an employer gives an employee an increase in responsibility without formal acknowledgement, a pay increase or title change.
- 35% of managers stated that they have had to repeatedly* request formal training – with almost half (47%) stating that the key driver for this was feeling ‘overwhelmed’ or ‘underequipped’ to handle the role (*requested more than once).
- 60% of managers are yet to ‘speak up’ to their leaders about their desire to have formal training – with a quarter (23%) feeling conscious that this would put doubts in their employers mind about their ability.
- 71% have not had any ‘additional’ training on ED&I – outside of what is offered to all employees on a general level.
- 40% of managers reportedly have a ‘weak’ relationship with HR – with an overwhelming 71% only engaging with them when they have employee-related issues or concerns.

Gerrit Bouckaert, CEO of global recruitment consultancy Robert Walters, said:

“Whilst there has no doubt been a long history of people being promoted to management without formal

training – this trend certainly seems more pronounced as of late.

“There could be a number of reasons for this, but at the forefront is that workplaces haven’t truly caught-up to the needs of a post-pandemic, hybrid-workforce.

“Modern day managers need to cope with remote management, a greater focus on mental health, and the emergence of Gen Z’s in the workplace – how do you train someone to handle all of that?

“In the past a manager’s primary role was to keep employees motivated and productive – in today’s world they are required to drive the culture & inclusion in the team, lead on digital adoption, possess an innate ability to know if a member of their team is struggling mentally and also be the bearer of bad news – be it delayed promotions, or muted pay rises.

“New research is even emerging that today’s managers are at risk of ‘empathy burnout’ – whereby too much is being asked of them from an emotional perspective.

Companies Must Do More

Gerrit adds: “That being said, whilst the requirements from managers have evolved drastically and at rapid pace – it is simply not good enough that professionals have to ‘repeatedly’ request formal training.

“If you are to promote anyone then considerations should be given to whether a) they are equipped to be a manager b) what needs to be given to set them up for success.

“Not giving managers any formal training is setting them up for failure – ultimately causing the company to lose out as employee turnover rises and business productivity decreases.

“Managers are one of the primary reasons your employees will stay or leave an organisation – companies need to do everything they can in the way of training and support to ensure that their managers are the absolute best to work with and for.”

A one size fits all approach cannot be applied to training

Gerrit continues: “Companies must remember that management is a very individual process, and we all have our own style and approach to this. For example, some professionals have a natural transition into management – such as a team player – whereas others, who are equally capable of being a manager, may require more support.

“It would be amiss of me to say that a standardised management training programme will fix the problem – not everyone is the same, and nor should we encourage that. Whilst theoretical training is important – people finding their own authentic style is far more crucial. In fact, mirroring behaviours can be a route to a toxic workplace culture – the ‘old boys club’ a prime example of this.

One thing that is vital but often overlooked is ‘transition’ coaching or mentoring – preparing a professional over a period of time to genuinely be able to ‘step into’ a management position.”