

Conscious unbossing – 52% of Gen-Z professionals don't want to be middle managers

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Over half of Gen-Z professionals don't want to take on a middle management role in their career.

While 36% expect they will have to at some point in their career, despite not wanting to – a further 16% are adamant they'll avoid middle management altogether.

Earlier this year, major US corporations such as Meta and Citigroup announced job cuts of which middle management roles made up around 30% – leading to the period being tipped as the 'great unbossing'. ([Source](#))

Now, new research from leading talent solutions firm [Robert Walters](#) reveals a growing disillusion with mid-level management roles amongst younger professionals in the UK.

Preferred route to progression

The Robert Walters poll found that 72% of Gen-Z would actually opt for an individual route to advance their career – one which focuses on personal growth and skills accumulation over taking on a management role (28%).

Lucy Bisset, Director of Robert Walters North comments: "Gen-Z are known for their entrepreneurial mindset – preferring to bring their 'whole self' to projects and spend time cultivating their own brand and approach, rather than spending time managing others.

"However, this reluctance to take on middle management roles could spell trouble for employers later

down the line.”

Generational differences

Unanimously, three-fifths (63%) of professionals point to older generations valuing middle management roles considerably more than their younger colleagues.

With only a fifth thinking it is equally valued across professionals of different ages.

Lucy notes: “More senior professionals have usually committed years to one company, working their way through more traditional levels of management and as such have developed a greater respect for mid-level managers. Younger professionals, having entered the workforce in a largely remote or hybrid capacity with a huge focus on digital capabilities are less inclined towards complete company loyalty.”

Management stretched thin

When asked about the main deterrents to taking on middle management roles, 69% of Gen-Z professionals stated they were too high stress, low reward. Other factors mentioned were limited decision-making power (18%) & reduced personal growth (11%).

A recent survey by [Capterra](#) found that 75% of middle managers admitted to feeling overwhelmed, stressed and burnt out.

Lucy comments: “Those new to middle management experience a steep step-up in workload, further expectations to be ‘always available’ to those they manage, as well continuing pressure to hit their own targets – it’s clear how these roles can prove overwhelming and deter many from taking on the extra responsibility.”

Is the future is team-based?

Only 14% of Gen-Z professionals think the traditional hierarchical structure is still fit-for-purpose. Whilst over double the amount (30%) would opt for a flat, team-based structure if given the choice.

Lucy adds: “Many younger professionals are less interested in ‘climbing the company ladder’ but it isn’t just them – an increasing amount of professionals of all ages feel as though multiple layers of management creates an ‘us vs. them’ attitude between the main ‘do-ers’ and ‘delegators’ of an organisation.”

Middle management reframed

Despite this, mid-level management roles remain vital, with 89% of employers stating that middle managers play a crucial role in their organisation.

Lucy concludes: “It’s clear mid-level management remains a lynchpin of any organisation, and to keep these roles filled employers need to innovate their strategies to make them more attractive – from providing more autonomy, to regular workload assessments and clear upskilling opportunities.

“Embracing an ‘unbossed culture’ could be key in transforming the role from just being seen as an ‘unnecessary layer’ of management to a ‘facilitator’ who empowers their teams to take their own initiative.

“Employers should prioritise middle management now to avoid significant talent gaps in the near future.”