

GALLUP®

Improving Employee Retention: A Guide to Upskilling Frontline Managers



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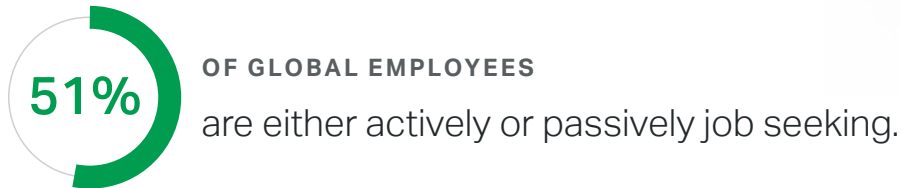
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One in Two Employees Are Job Hunting

The majority of the world's employees are quiet quitting — they're waiting for their organization to give them a compelling reason to do more than just show up for work.

And don't think that your employees will hang out indefinitely while they wait for you to engage.



Of all the reasons people give for leaving an employer, reasons related to engagement and culture are by far the most prominent (40%).

Your Managers Are the Key to Retention

The good news is that there's action you can take immediately to slow down turnover and engage your best people. And it starts with your frontline managers.

GALLUP HAS FOUND THAT

70%

of the variance in team engagement is determined *solely by the manager*. Your managers are the difference between success and struggle.

Engagement is employees' involvement and enthusiasm in their work and the workplace overall. Engaged employees produce better business outcomes than their non-engaged counterparts.

↓ Lower absenteeism

↓ Lower turnover

↑ Higher productivity

↑ Higher customer engagement

↑ Higher profitability

How Frontline Managers Can Create Successful Teams (That Stay)

Employees need more than just frivolous perks or wage incentives to invest in their work and achieve higher levels of performance. Managers must provide key elements that pave the way for engagement. The key drivers of engagement are purpose, development, ongoing conversations, a focus on strengths and a caring manager.

Here are some practical ways that managers can drive engagement on their team:

1 Connect company purpose to individual and team action.

Only four in 10 U.S. employees strongly agree that the mission or purpose of their company makes them feel their job is important. Managers should show employees how their work fits into the big picture and help their team understand the why behind what they're asked to do.

2 Coach the team in a way that allows for genuine candor.

Continual improvement can only happen through honest conversation. Employees feeling like they can't or shouldn't speak up helps to fuel a phenomenon like quiet quitting. Managers can foster an environment of psychological safety through their reactions (not being punitive or vindictive) and their actions (asking questions that lower defenses and encourage honesty).

3 Have one meaningful conversation per week with each team member.

Communication is essential for development and helps employees feel more connected to their team and company. A meaningful conversation doesn't have to be only about work — managers should ask questions that encourage employees to talk freely about themselves and share their wants, needs and concerns.

4 Focus on each team member's strengths.

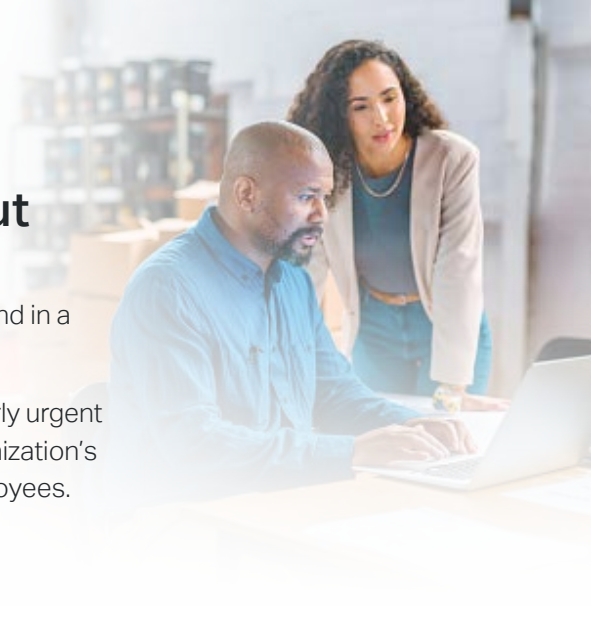
Exceptional managers are curious about their employees' innate motivations because they are the key to high performance. Does your employee enjoy meeting new people? Mastering new skills? Working in the background? Managers can motivate their team by reframing projects and roles in a way that is uniquely compelling for each employee.

5 Recognize and reward excellence.

Only three in 10 U.S. employees strongly agree that in the last seven days they have received recognition or praise for doing good work. When recognition is done right, it drives higher performance and sets expectations for excellence. Identifying and celebrating success can turn a demoralized team into a proud one.

6 Care about employees as real people.

Only about one in four U.S. employees feel strongly that their organization cares about their wellbeing. Great managers think about their employees beyond the workplace, knowing that life affects work performance. Knowing and genuinely caring about what's going on in employees' lives lets employees know that they're valued beyond what they do when they're at work.



Your Frontline Managers Are Burning Out

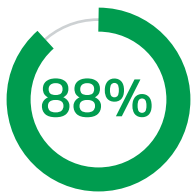
Managers report more burnout than the people they manage, Gallup has found in a recent 2023 study.

Having stressed and burned-out managers is never good, but it's a particularly urgent problem right now. Amid the current massive labor market changes, an organization's culture and employment brand matter more than ever in attracting star employees.

Gallup has found that factors leading to burnout can include:

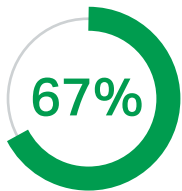
- unfair treatment at work
- unmanageable workload
- lack of role clarity
- lack of communication and support from one's manager
- unreasonable time pressure

When employees feel burned out at work, they are:



MORE LIKELY

to be watching for or actively **seeking a new job**



LESS LIKELY

to say their **mental health is excellent**



AS LIKELY

to say their job has had a somewhat or extremely **negative impact on their mental health**



ON AVERAGE,

burned out employees miss **4.5 more days** due to poor mental health.

How Leaders Can Support Their Frontline Managers

We've addressed some of the practical ways that managers can begin to drive engagement on their team. So, how can leaders empower their managers to start employing these new practices?

Just like the employees they oversee, managers need the support of the people above them to get the most out of their team.

Here are some ways that leaders can support their frontline managers:

1 Train them on how to have meaningful conversations.

Intentional conversations build trust with employees. Leaders should show their managers how to have intentional and effective conversations that foster accountability and openness. Leaders should also help managers conceptualize their role as a coach, not a boss. This allows them to focus on developing their team rather than delegating and micromanaging.

2 Give them feedback in the moment.

Don't wait for yearly or quarterly performance reviews to give your managers feedback on their performance. Giving immediate feedback helps managers know what and how to improve. When leaders give meaningful, focused feedback, it creates a culture in which mistakes and miscues can be easily acknowledged, expectations are clear and development is ongoing.

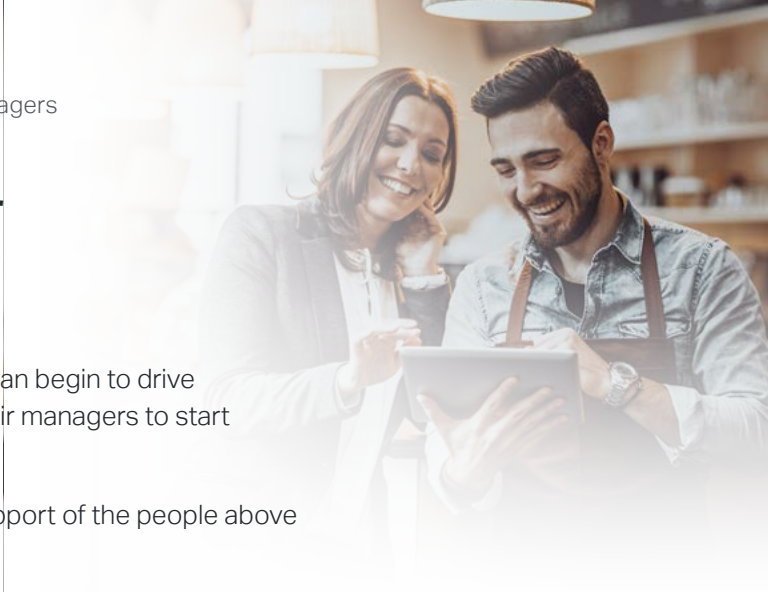
3 Develop them through their strengths.

When managers and employees can do what they do best every day, they thrive in their roles. Leaders should help managers develop their strengths into dependable, repeatable tools they can use as they lead their team. There are no shared "top leadership strengths"—each manager leads in their own unique way and should work to hone their management style accordingly.

4 Focus on the manager experience — from onboarding to exit.

Managers are the heart of your organization — and how they feel about your company greatly influences how everyone else feels about it. Leaders should ensure that managers experience their organization's purpose, brand and culture at every stage of the employee life cycle.

Engaged employees find satisfaction in their job — but it's up to your managers to engage them. When leadership prioritizes and invests in manager development, it makes it easier for employees to become (and stay) engaged.



Get Even More Frontline Manager Development

Don't stop here. Ensure your managers have everything they need to engage their team and prevent turnover. Gallup has studied the best managers for decades to help create better managers, thriving teams and thriving organizations.

Explore our [leadership and management development resources](#), including in-person and virtual classes, configured learning, and webinars.

Give your managers and teams the tools they need to develop their inherent talents with [CliftonStrengths for Teams and Managers](#).

[Partner with us](#) to create a managers' development plan tailored for your organization.



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