



THE LEADERSHIP READINESS GAP

Are Managers Prepared to Lead Through the Next Era
of Workforce Transformation?

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The role of the manager will never be the same

Artificial intelligence is reshaping how work is performed. Organizational structures are evolving in response to economic uncertainty and shifting business priorities, and employees are looking to managers for guidance on career development, wellbeing and navigating change.

At the same time, leaders are expected to drive productivity, manage costs and deliver results in an increasingly complex operating environment.

The demands on managers today extend far beyond traditional people management. They are expected to lead AI adoption, navigate difficult conversations and manage restructures and workload pressures. They must also support employees as roles evolve, helping teams build the skills they'll need for the future.

To understand how prepared managers are for these challenges, CareerMinds surveyed HR professionals and people managers across a range of organizations and industries.

The research uncovers a striking leadership gap. Confidence in managers is high. But when respondents assess specific leadership challenges – such as AI adoption, organizational change and career development – confidence in managers' preparedness drops sharply.

The findings show the manager role is evolving faster than many organizations are preparing for, which also highlights a significant opportunity.

Managers sit at the center of workforce transformation. They shape how employees experience change. They influence how quickly new ways of working are adopted and whether organizations retain, develop and engage talent through periods of uncertainty. The organizations that thrive in the years ahead will be those that equip managers with the confidence, skills and support to turn change into progress.



Raymond Lee
PRESIDENT OF CAREERMINDS

Key Findings

1 Managers are confident – but not always prepared

While almost all HR professionals (97%) and people managers (98%) surveyed believe managers are ready¹ to lead through future challenges, fewer than half of people managers feel highly prepared across many of the specific leadership demands now shaping the workplace.

2 AI is creating new leadership responsibilities

AI may be improving productivity, but it is also creating significant management challenges. Just 39% of HR professionals and 35% of people managers surveyed say AI has made management much easier. Many report increased employee anxiety, changing workflows, new skills requirements and growing pressure to deliver results with fewer resources.

3 Difficult conversations are becoming part of the job

Managers are increasingly expected to navigate conversations about layoffs, AI anxiety, workload pressures, workplace tensions and career uncertainty. Yet while 97% of HR professionals surveyed believe training for these conversations is adequate², only 41% of people managers surveyed agree they have received sufficient support across all areas.

¹'Ready' refers to 'Very ready' and 'Somewhat ready' responses combined.

²'Adequate' refers to 'Very adequate' and 'Somewhat adequate' responses combined.

Key Findings Continued

4 Executives see a different reality

Across both surveys, C-suite respondents consistently report higher levels of readiness, support and preparedness than managers closer to frontline operations. This suggests organizations may be underestimating the scale of leadership challenges facing managers today.

6 Leadership readiness is already affecting business performance

Both HR professionals and people managers report tangible organizational consequences associated with gaps in leadership capability, including skills shortages, turnover risk, reduced engagement, lower productivity and slower decision-making. Leadership readiness is therefore a business performance issue rather than simply a learning and development concern.

5 The squeezed middle is real

Nearly 9 in 10 HR professionals (88%) and almost three quarters of people managers (72%) surveyed say managers regularly³ experience this tension, yet fewer than half of each group feel managers are strongly supported in navigating it.

³Regularly refers to 'Always' and 'Often' responses combined.

CHAPTER 1

The Leadership Readiness Gap

Today's managers are expected to do far more than oversee performance and ensure day-to-day operations run smoothly. They are now responsible for helping teams adapt to AI-driven change, supporting employees through uncertainty, navigating difficult workplace conversations, and preparing people for roles that may not yet exist.

The following chapter reveals that, while almost all HR professionals (97%) and people managers (98%) surveyed believe managers are ready to lead their teams through future challenges, there are significant gaps between overall confidence and how well-equipped managers are to meet the specific challenges they now face.

% of respondents who believe managers are ready to lead through future challenges

HR professionals

97%

People managers

98%



LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE 1

The Impact of AI

Few developments are reshaping the workplace faster than artificial intelligence. This shift is only expected to accelerate. According to the World Economic Forum, 86% of employers expect AI and information processing technologies to transform their business by 2030, making the ability to lead through technological change a critical management capability.⁴

Our previous [Workforce Resilience in the AI Era](#) study found that 64% of HR professionals believe AI will require employees to learn new skills or adapt to new tools, while 94% say employees need training to use AI effectively. AI is already reshaping workflows, job roles and the skills organizations need.

But while many organizations are focused on the opportunities AI presents, managers are often left leading the human side of that transformation. Our latest findings show they are also responsible for helping teams adapt to change, addressing employee concerns and navigating the uncertainty AI creates.

Among people managers surveyed, 39% say AI integration has improved efficiency and productivity within their teams.

However, AI's impact extends well beyond operational improvements.



In what ways has AI integration most significantly impacted your team, if at all?



⁴"The Future of Jobs Report 2025", World Economic Forum, January 2025

AI is not simply making work easier. It is fundamentally changing the role of managers.

Organizations often focus on AI's productivity benefits. Managers experience a different reality. They are also expected to address employee concerns, manage changing responsibilities and help teams adapt to new ways of working. This may help explain why relatively few respondents believe AI has made management significantly easier. Just 39% of HR professionals and 35% of people managers surveyed say AI has made the role of managers much easier.

35% Of people managers say AI has made their role much easier

For many organizations, AI appears to be creating new leadership responsibilities faster than it is removing existing ones.

Both surveys also reveal a range of workforce risks associated with AI implementation.

Collectively, these findings show that AI has already become a leadership issue rather than simply a technology one.

Top AI-related workforce risks

HR PROFESSIONALS

42% Having to rehire employees due to AI projects failing to deliver

41% Skills gaps slowing AI adoption

40% Reduced employee trust/morale

40% Lack of clarity creating uncertainty in teams

38% Hiring externally instead of developing internal talent

33% Reputational issues due to AI-related layoffs

PEOPLE MANAGERS

35% Hiring externally instead of developing internal talent

34% Reduced employee trust/morale

33% Lack of clarity creating uncertainty

33% Having to rehire employees due to AI projects failing to deliver

33% Skills gaps slowing AI adoption

28% Reputational issues due to AI-related layoffs

The readiness gap

Despite the scale of change AI is creating, relatively few respondents believe managers are highly prepared to lead AI adoption.

Around 3 in 5 HR professionals (59%) and people managers (62%) surveyed say managers are not very well prepared⁵ to lead AI adoption and use. Confidence is also low when it comes to AI agents. 56% of HR professionals and 65% of people managers surveyed say managers are not very well prepared to lead the integration of AI agents into the workplace.

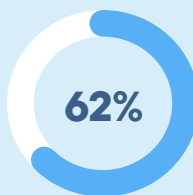


Managers not very well prepared for

AI ADOPTION AND USE



HR
professionals



People
managers

INTEGRATION OF AI AGENTS INTO THE WORKPLACE



HR
professionals



People
managers

⁵'Not very well prepared' refers to the reverse percentage of 'Very well prepared'.

The challenge is made worse by limited training. Just 43% of HR professionals surveyed believe the AI training managers receive is definitely sufficient. Meanwhile, 60% of people managers surveyed report they have not received extensive support or training⁶ around AI adoption, and 62% say this is the case when it comes to managing AI agents.

The emergence of AI agents presents a particularly significant challenge. Under half of HR professionals (48%) and people managers (45%) surveyed say they are very confident managers are equipped to manage teams that include AI tools or AI agents.

Meanwhile, just 42% of people managers surveyed see managing AI agents alongside human employees as a natural evolution of their role, and 28%⁷ either feel uneasy about the development, or don't wish to be responsible for managing agents.

42% Of people managers surveyed see managing AI agents alongside human employees as a natural evolution of their role

As organizations move towards increasingly blended human-AI workforces, these findings raise important questions about whether managers are receiving the support required to lead this transition effectively.

⁶Not received extensive support' refers to 'Some support/training', 'Minimal support/training' and 'No support/training at all' responses combined.

⁷It makes me uneasy' and 'I don't want to be responsible for it' responses combined.



AI leadership starts with change leadership

Organizational transformation of any kind will succeed when employees feel equipped, not abandoned. Managers need to be honest with their team about the hows and whys of what is changing, and to be clear about how AI tools will affect the day-to-day. Good leaders experiment alongside their teams, admit when something isn't working, and create space for questions without judgment. AI is new and overtaking the conversation, but in its simplest terms, it is all about change management.



Mark Saddic

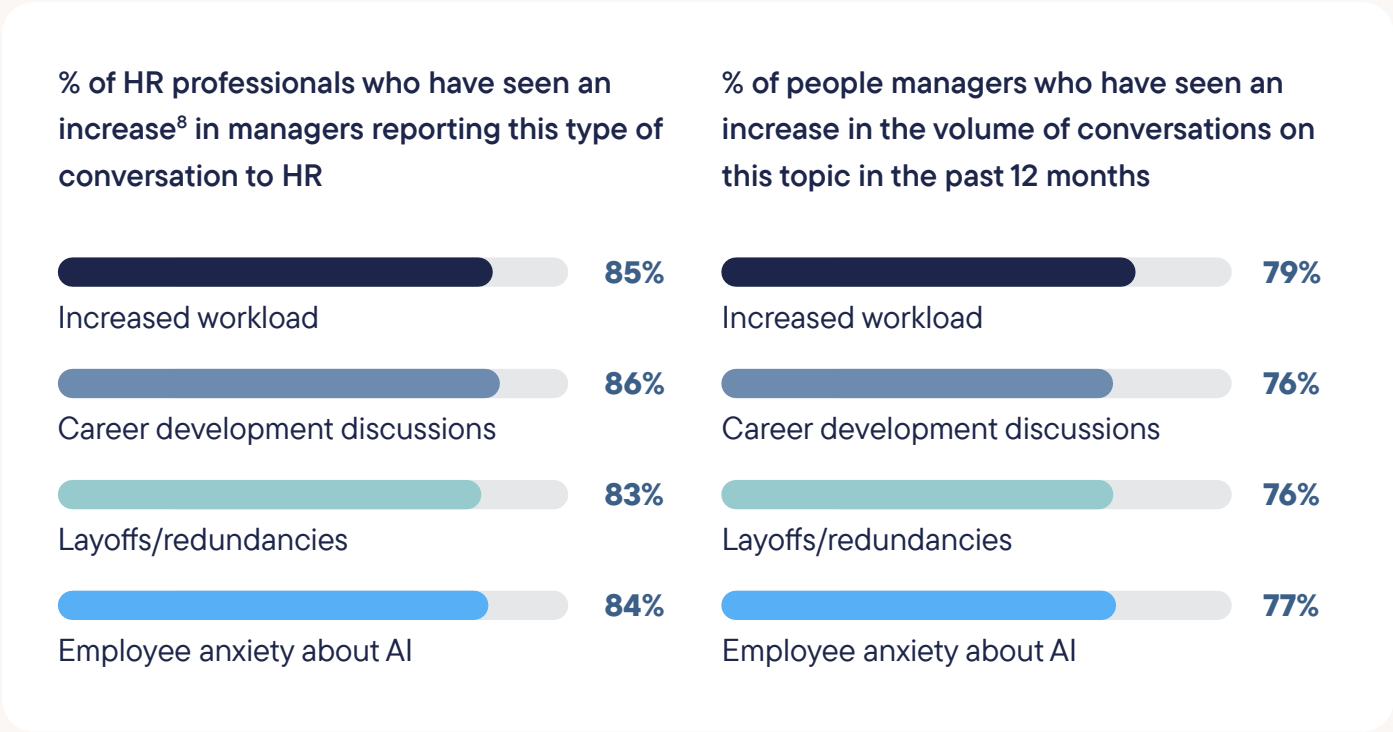
Senior Talent Solutions Partner,
Careerminds

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE 2

Having the Difficult Conversations

From layoffs and restructuring to AI anxiety, workload concerns and career uncertainty, managers are increasingly serving as the first point of contact for employees seeking reassurance, guidance and support.

The research shows the volume of these conversations has increased considerably over the past year, reflecting a broader period of workforce uncertainty.



Managers are handling more sensitive and emotionally charged conversations than ever before. At the same time, employees are facing growing uncertainty about the future. Yet many managers do not feel adequately supported. While 97% of HR professionals surveyed say

training provided to managers for handling these conversations is adequate, just 41% of people managers surveyed say they have received adequate training across all areas.



⁸'Increase' refers to 'Significant increase' and 'Slight increase' responses combined.



Expert Insight

Difficult conversations require continuous practice

Having complex and difficult conversations is a skillset that needs to be continuously practiced, adjusted, and grown. The challenge many managers come across is they only have hard conversations a handful of times per year, if that. Organizations need to think about training and support not as a one-off or situational resource (like annual performance conversation time, when there's often training focused on having difficult conversations), but as an ongoing need that requires practice. It's also important to think about whether your organization's culture actively supports or undermines psychological safety; if risk and failure are punished rather than learned from, the foundation of trust isn't strong enough to support difficult conversations.



Jen Allen

Senior Talent Solutions Partner,
CareerMinds

This is one of the most striking disconnects in the research and suggests organizations may be underestimating the support managers need to navigate increasingly complex workplace discussions.

The findings also point to the broader challenge of skills erosion. As AI automates more routine work, human skills such as communication, coaching, empathy and the ability to navigate difficult conversations will become more valuable. Rather than relying on one-off training, organizations should consider how they build these capabilities continuously through leadership development, executive coaching and opportunities to practice them in real-world situations.

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE 3

Supporting an Evolving Workforce

Perhaps the greatest challenge facing managers today is helping employees prepare for a future that remains uncertain.

This reflects broader employer concerns. The World Economic Forum identifies skills gaps as one of the biggest barriers to business transformation, with most employers (85%) planning significant investment in upskilling over the next five years.

The findings reveal significant preparedness gaps across a range of workforce-related leadership responsibilities.



% of HR professionals who say managers are not very well prepared to lead through this challenge



% of people managers who say they do not feel very well prepared to lead through this challenge



The issue is particularly clear when it comes to future workforce planning and career development.

Only 36% of HR professionals surveyed strongly agree that managers understand the skills their teams will need in the next two to three years. Among people managers themselves, this falls to 33%.

Similarly, just 42% of HR professionals surveyed and 38% of people managers strongly agree managers surveyed have enough clarity on how roles are evolving to guide career development discussions.

36% Of people managers surveyed strongly agree they understand the skills their teams will need in the next 2-3 years.

At a time when career development conversations are increasing and organizations are under pressure to retain critical talent, these findings show many managers may be trying to help employees navigate change without having sufficient visibility of where that transformation is leading.

CHAPTER 2

Executives Overestimate Leadership Readiness

Across both HR professionals and people managers surveyed, C-suite respondents consistently report higher levels of preparedness, support and readiness than managers closer to day-to-day workforce realities.

The implication is significant. The leadership readiness gap may not simply be a capability issue. It may also be a visibility issue.

Executives often see the investments being made to support managers. They are less likely to see the day-to-day challenges managers face when leading through uncertainty, AI adoption and workforce change. This creates a perception gap in which leaders may believe managers are more prepared and supported than managers themselves believe they are.

A different view from the top

One of the clearest examples appears in perceptions of overall leadership readiness.

Both groups are observing the same organizations, yet their experiences of leadership readiness appear markedly different.

One possible reason is the broader tendency for leadership challenges to become less visible as they move further away from frontline teams.

% who say managers are very ready to lead through future challenges

HR PROFESSIONALS SURVEY

C-suite

70%

Senior & middle HR managers

54%

PEOPLE MANAGERS SURVEY

C-suite

66%

Senior & middle HR managers

42%

AI confidence increases at the top

Executives are consistently more positive about AI’s impact on management than those working closest to implementation.

Gallup has also found that leaders are adopting AI almost twice as frequently as individual contributors, suggesting senior leaders may experience AI differently from those responsible for implementing it day-to-day.⁹

Among HR professionals, 58% of C-suite respondents say AI has made the role of managers much easier, while just 38% of senior and middle HR managers agree.

Similarly, within the people manager survey, 55% of C-suite executives surveyed say AI has made their role much easier, compared with just 33% of senior and middle people managers.

This difference likely reflects the fact that executives are more likely to see AI’s strategic benefits, while managers are more likely to experience its practical implications and the human impact of implementation.

The Training Disconnect

Across multiple measures, executives are more likely to believe managers are receiving the preparation they need.

Perceptions of training and support	C-suite	Senior & Middle Managers
HR PROFESSIONALS		
AI training definitely sufficient	61%	40%
Very adequate training for difficult conversations	65%	49%
PEOPLE MANAGERS		
Extensive training on organizational change and restructuring	47%	30%
Extensive training on career development for evolving roles	51%	37%
Very adequate training for difficult conversations	61%	38%

Whether this reflects differences in access to training, differences in awareness, or differences in expectations, the result is the same: managers appear less confident in the support available to them than organizational leaders assume.

⁹“Frequent Use of AI in the Workplace Continued to Rise in Q4”, Gallup, January 2026

Support looks different from the frontline

Among people managers, 56% of executive respondents say they feel very supported, while just 31% of senior and middle people managers agree.

31%

Of senior and middle people managers surveyed feel very supported

Managers are widely recognized as operating under increasing pressure. If organizations believe managers are receiving more support than managers themselves perceive, important opportunities for intervention may be missed.

This misalignment creates a dangerous cycle. Managers continue to absorb rising pressure without the support they need, while senior leaders assume existing programs are sufficient. Over time, that can affect both people outcomes and business performance, from manager burnout, lower engagement and weaker trust to slower AI adoption, poorer execution and greater retention risk.



Expert Insight

Leaders can't lead the change they can no longer see

As evidenced from the data above, senior leaders are usually further along the change adoption curve than the next level down, who are further along than their direct reports, and so on and so forth. It's a safe assumption to say that those who make the decisions are bought into what's changing. Integrating AI into the workplace is a massive change that impacts things like how employees do their jobs, work together, and use technology. On top of the large-scale change, AI is ever-evolving, thus creating constant instability in the change itself. It's critical for leaders to reflect on and understand their own change adoption journey so they can put themselves back in the place of uncertainty and meet their teams where they are. This will allow them to better understand and address gaps before their teams are left behind or actively fighting the change.



Jen Allen

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CareerMinds

CHAPTER 3

The Squeezed Middle

Managers are navigating constant organizational change. At the same time, they are caught between business demands and employee expectations. This tension has become a defining characteristic of modern management.

These pressures are emerging at a time when many organizations are rethinking traditional management structures. Companies including Citigroup, Meta and Amazon have sought to reduce management layers and increase manager-to-employee ratios in recent years, reflecting a broader trend towards flatter organizational structures.

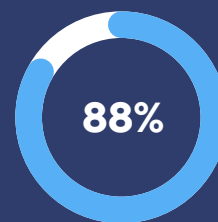
According to HR professionals surveyed, 88% say managers within their organization regularly experience tension due to being caught between the demands of leadership and the expectations of their teams.

Meanwhile, people managers themselves report a similar experience, with almost three quarters (72%) surveyed saying they regularly feel caught between leadership expectations and team needs.

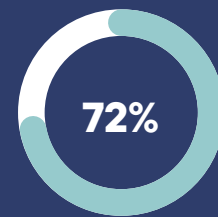
Both groups recognize that managers are under constant pressure.

However, further findings reveal a concerning lack of support.

Managers surveyed regularly experiencing tension between leadership demands and team expectations



HR professionals



People managers

In fact, just 46% of HR professionals surveyed believe managers are very well supported when managing tension between leadership demands and team expectations.

Among people managers themselves, this falls to just 31%.

31%

Of people managers surveyed say they feel very supported in managing tension between leadership expectations and team needs.

Many organizations recognize the challenge but may not yet have developed sufficient support structures to help managers navigate it effectively.

The result is a growing risk that managers themselves become overwhelmed by the demands placed on them.



Expert Insight

Clarity creates confident leaders

Organizations can create a clear line of sight by establishing transparent communication channels that cascade strategic priorities from leadership to managers. This starts with defining boundaries around decision-making authority, so managers know where their autonomy begins and ends. It is also helpful to conduct regular structured touchpoints to help align expectations in real time. Equipping managers with frameworks for navigating and discussing competing demands, rather than leaving them to improvise, gives them confidence to lead without constantly second-guessing organizational priorities. Third, organizations should translate broad business goals into concrete, actionable objectives at the team level, reducing ambiguity.



Mark Saddic

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Empower managers, don't just expect more from them

First things first: evaluate the level of autonomy your managers actually have. Do your managers have decision-making authority? What metrics are they rewarded on: quantity or quality? What about behavior expectations? Or is their performance just about meeting targets on budget and on time? Until managers are empowered and trusted to lead their own teams, they will continue to be trapped in the squeezed middle. Once managers are embedded into strategy-setting and decision-making, they can better connect the work their teams are doing to meet those goals. Managers are in the perfect position to refine strategy and create realistic organizational or team goals because they're closer to the delivery. Figure out how to leverage them to help bridge the gap!



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CHAPTER 4

The Multigenerational Management Challenge

For many organizations, leading a multigenerational workforce is becoming one of management's biggest challenges. For the first time in history, five generations are working side by side, bringing different expectations around communication, flexibility, career development, technology and workplace culture. The World Economic Forum argues that helping these generations work together effectively will be critical to building future-ready organizations.¹⁰

These changing workforce dynamics are creating new leadership demands. Managers are expected to adapt their leadership style to meet the needs of employees at very different career stages, while balancing different attitudes towards work, learning and technology.

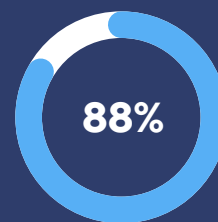
Organizations recognize this shift.

However, just 35% of people managers surveyed feel very well prepared to lead teams through generational differences and multigenerational dynamics.

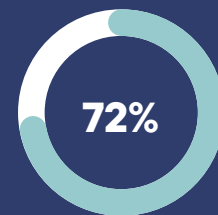
35%

Of people managers surveyed feel very well prepared to lead multigenerational teams

Managing multi-generational teams is becoming more challenging for managers¹¹

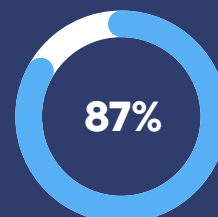


HR professionals

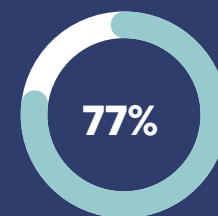


People managers

Increase in conversations about working with intergenerational teams



HR professionals



People managers

¹⁰"Tomorrow's workforce changed yesterday – now what for businesses that want to be future-ready?", World Economic Forum, January 2025

¹¹'Agree' refers to 'Strongly agree' and 'Somewhat agree' responses combined.

AI is not affecting all generations equally

AI integration is one of the defining challenges facing today's managers. But not every generation is experiencing it in the same way. For example, 41% of millennial people managers surveyed say AI has made their role much easier. However, this falls to just 18% of gen X people managers.

AI HAS MADE MY ROLE MUCH EASIER

41% Millennials

18% Gen X

The difference highlights that AI's benefits may not be experienced uniformly across the workforce.

This finding is consistent with wider research on workplace AI adoption. McKinsey research¹² found that employees aged 35–44 are among the most confident users of generative AI, with 62% reporting extensive familiarity with the technology and 90% saying they are comfortable using it at work. Greater familiarity and confidence may help explain why Millennial managers are more likely to report positive experiences of AI in their day-to-day roles.



For some managers, AI may be helping streamline existing responsibilities and increase efficiency.

For others, particularly those later in their careers, AI may be creating uncertainty around skills, career progression and future opportunities. As AI becomes more embedded within workplaces, organizations must recognize that different groups may require different types of support.

¹²"Superagency in the Workplace: Empowering People to Unlock AI's Full Potential", McKinsey, January 2025

Millennials feel the squeeze most acutely

The strongest generational divide emerges when examining the pressures managers experience in their role.

Managers are caught between organizational demands and employee expectations. However, not all managers appear to experience this pressure equally.

Among millennial people managers surveyed, 77% say they regularly feel caught between leadership expectations and team needs.

Among gen X managers, this falls to 59%.

77% Of millennial people managers surveyed regularly feel caught between leadership expectations and team needs.

This finding may reflect where different generations sit within organizational structures. Many Millennials now occupy the middle-management positions most exposed to competing pressures from above and below. They are often responsible for implementing strategic change while simultaneously supporting employees through its impact.

As a result, they are likely experiencing the leadership squeeze more intensely than other generations.

Organizations seeking to strengthen leadership capability should pay particular attention to the experiences of this group.



Expert Insight

Leadership development cannot be one-size-fits-all

A first-time manager and a mid-career leader experiencing their fourth restructure need fundamentally different support.

Organizations should start by asking managers what they need and build programs around those answers. That might mean traditional learning interventions, or it could mean mentoring, peer learning, or on-demand digital tools for those juggling packed schedules.

This matters because managers are already stretched and feeling neglected. When development feels disconnected from their reality, it gets ignored. But when it feels relevant and personalized, it builds both capability and confidence. This is what the squeezed middle desperately requires.



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CHAPTER 5

Leadership Readiness is Already Affecting Business Performance

Leadership readiness is often viewed as a learning and development issue. It is typically discussed in the context of training, coaching and succession planning. However, the findings suggest the consequences of leadership readiness gaps extend well beyond learning and development.

When managers are not fully equipped to lead through change, the effects can be felt across the organization.

Leadership capability gaps are not abstract or future-facing risks. They are already affecting the areas organizations rely on to execute strategy, retain talent and adapt to change.

The findings position leadership readiness as a critical organizational resilience issue. This comes at a time when many organizations are struggling to close skills gaps while retaining critical talent. As technological change accelerates and workforce needs evolve, managers are increasingly responsible for developing skills internally, supporting career mobility and maintaining employee engagement. Leadership readiness therefore has implications not only for performance today, but for future workforce capability.

% of HR professionals surveyed



% of people managers surveyed



For many organizations, addressing these challenges will require more than expanding training programs. Building internal coaching capability by equipping HR professionals and people managers with accredited coaching skills can help organizations embed development into everyday management conversations, creating support that is continuous rather than event-driven.



Expert Insight

Measure behavior, not just insight

Organizations have been struggling to measure the impact of leadership development from the beginning of time; however, it becomes exponentially easier to do if you take the time upfront to define your success measures. Is it knowledge gain, behavior change, or business impact?

The most telling indicator is behavior change, for example, are managers leading differently six months later? Organizations should set clear baselines before any program begins, making it possible to draw a credible line between leadership investment and business results. Without that, development remains a cost rather than a strategy. Real measurement means connecting development to business outcomes.



Mark Saddic

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Adaptable leaders build resilient workforces

If you don't have adaptable leaders then you don't have an adaptable workforce. Full stop. We are in an era of constant micro- and macro-change and if your leaders don't fully understand their own relationship with change then they will not be able to effectively lead their teams through any kind of disruption. Workforce readiness was once rooted in an employee's ability to perform their job well and move up (or over) when the need was there or the time was right, which made a leader's job pretty black and white in that respect. It's no longer that simple, and without a leader's ability to set the tone for adaptability and resilience, their teams will disengage, thus putting your entire workforce at risk.



Jen Allen

Senior Talent Solutions Partner,
CareerMinds

CONCLUSION

Building the Leaders of the Future

Managers sit at the center of workforce transformation. They shape how employees experience change. They also influence how successfully organizations adopt new technologies, develop talent and retain their people.

In many respects, managers have become the critical link between organizational ambition and workforce reality.

The organizations best positioned for the future will be those that recognize this shift and invest accordingly.

1 Equip managers for the realities of modern leadership

Leadership development should reflect the challenges managers actually face today – from AI adoption and organizational change to career coaching and difficult conversations – not the responsibilities managers held a decade ago. Organizations should also consider how they build coaching capability throughout the business, enabling HR leaders and managers to support development, resilience and career growth as part of everyday leadership.

2 Close the visibility gap

Organizations should create mechanisms to better understand the manager experience and ensure leadership decisions are informed by frontline realities as well as strategic priorities.

3 Move beyond one-size-fits-all development

Different generations of managers experience leadership challenges differently. Future leadership programs should be flexible enough to reflect varying experiences, career stages and support needs.

4 Support managers through change, not just after it

Managers are often expected to lead transformation while simultaneously adapting to it themselves. Coaching, mentoring and structured leadership development can help managers build confidence before capability gaps begin affecting performance. For senior leaders navigating complex organizational change, executive coaching can also provide the space to strengthen decision-making, communication and leadership during periods of uncertainty.

5 Treat leadership readiness as a strategic business priority

Leadership readiness should be viewed not simply as a learning and development metric, but as a driver of retention, workforce capability, engagement and organizational resilience.



Shawna Simcik

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF TALENT SOLUTIONS,
CAREERMINDS

Looking ahead

The future of work will continue to be shaped by technological disruption, changing workforce expectations and ongoing organizational transformation.

Managers will remain at the center of these changes. The question for organizations is no longer whether managers will be asked to lead through uncertainty. They already are.

The question is whether organizations are giving them the skills, support and confidence to succeed.

Those that do will be better positioned to adapt, compete and grow in the years ahead. For many organizations, that will mean moving beyond traditional management training and investing in continuous leadership development, coaching and practical capability-building that equips leaders to navigate change with confidence.

Because in an era defined by change, leadership readiness is no longer a nice-to-have. It is a competitive advantage.

Methodology

Careerminds partnered with Censuswide to survey 595 US HR professionals (age 25-65) and 547 US people managers (25-65) who look after teams/people day to day. Respondents were required to work in organizations with 500-10,000+ employees. The data was collected between 05.15.2026 – 05.26.2026.

Sample breakdown



The data was weighted towards senior and middle managers to reflect the general population and previous studies.



Careerminds is a leading global workforce solutions partner, delivering services across 100+ countries and 80+ languages. From workforce design to talent development and career transition, we make sure individuals and companies thrive through change.

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