



DIVE BRIEF

Managers are burning out and likely to quit. Here's how to reverse that.

To enhance their effectiveness, organizations must prioritize managers' well-being and help them build resilience, according to a meQuilibrium report.

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Due to the pivotal role of managers in workforce well-being and performance, their well-being has taken a relatively large hit since the pandemic, a report from workplace analytics platform meQuilibrium said. jeffbergen via Getty Images

Managers are the “keystones of organizational success,” but the leadership they provide is in danger, according to a Sept. 26 report from workforce data analytics platform meQuilibrium.

Compared to non-managers, managers are 36% more likely to say they're feeling burned out and 24% more likely to consider quitting their job in the next six months, meQ's data found — so organizations must prioritize manager well-being, meQ emphasized.

Managers walk a tightrope between balancing the needs of their team members with meeting organizational goals, often under pressure and with limited resources, the report explained.

“Despite – or perhaps due to – their pivotal role in workforce well-being and performance, manager well-being has taken a relatively large hit than that of individuals since the pandemic,” meQ wrote.

The four best practices researchers recommended include:

- Prioritize manager self-care, such as mandatory “disconnect” policies;
- Provide easy access to acute mental health resources;
- Create an environment where discussing mental health is destigmatized and modeled at the most senior levels; and
- Promote physical wellness, which is inextricably linked to mental well-being.

The report also outlined the key characteristics of good managers vs. bad managers.

For example, strong managers boost psychological safety – where employees feel comfortable taking risks and sharing ideas – by as much as 42%, according to meQ’s data.

Strong managers also “provide the frontline defense against workplace incivility and positively influence productivity, engagement, and workforce well-being,” meQ stated in a press release.

On the other hand, “poor management can lead to decreased employee motivation, higher turnover rates, and diminished mental well-being” among team members, meQ said.

Evidence across the board that managers are struggling

A September report from Top Workplaces confirmed that

managers – facing increased pressure from juggling workloads and managing larger teams – are struggling.

For instance, managers handling a team of 10 could be responsible for scheduling 260 meetings per year if expected to hold two one-on-one meetings per employee per month and two career discussion per year, according to the report.

Given these stressors, it's no surprise a June report from Perceptyx found that well-being among managers is “dangerously low.”

Squeezed between the needs of direct reports and demands from senior leaders, managers consistently scored lower than executives or individual contributors on work-life balance, reasonable workload and manageable stress levels, Perceptyx found.

Also of concern, manager stress – especially with untrained first-time managers – is filtering down to their direct reports, research released last year from a leadership solutions company showed.

About 40% of U.S. workers feel “stress or anxiety about going to work” because they have a first-time manager who seems unprepared to take on a leadership role, according to the company's report.

The best managers were rated twice as favorably as new managers for reducing conflict, running productive meetings and making decisions, the research found.