Three Strategies to Ensure Managers Succeed in the Hybrid World

Organizations must focus on equipping people managers, who are the stewards of sustainable performance, with the right skillsets to ensure they and their teams succeed in the hybrid world, according to Gartner, Inc. To achieve this, Gartner recommends organizations pursue three tactics to ensure managers are prepared to lead their teams in this setting.

According to a Gartner survey of 75 HR leaders in January 2021, 84% of respondents said it was more important for managers to develop soft skills, such as navigating difficult conversations, in a hybrid setting. "Organizations must invest in resources to support managers and equip them with the skills they need for this new way of managing," said Caitlin Duffy, research director in the Gartner HR practice.

Gartner research found that employees whose managers drive sustainable performance—high individual performance, while contributing positively to others' performance without compromising their health—are 17% more productive and 1.7 times more likely to stay at their organization than other employees.

The three tactics to ensure managers are prepared to lead their teams in a hybrid setting include:

Equip Teams for Resilience

The shift to hybrid work has meant that teams are more geographically dispersed. To help managers foster resilience and collaboration among their teams, organizations must invest in tools and technologies that facilitate intentional collaboration—both synchronously and asynchronously.

Organizations can support stronger intentional collaboration by empowering employees to develop new collaboration habits that work for them in today's environment, providing equal access to multiple worksite options, and calibrating virtual team norms with HR.

"HR leaders should also empower managers with the flexibility to reprioritize resources as circumstances change, ensure key outcomes are visible to direct reports and realign performance management goals with business priorities," Duffy said. "Gartner research shows managers who can effectively reprioritize resources and goals are 27% more likely to sustain their team's workforce health."

Invest in Human-Centric Managers

To support employees, HR leaders must help managers develop the skills they need to navigate difficult conversations that foster team cohesion, inclusion and psychological safety. This entails teaching managers to not only develop the skills to navigate vulnerable conversations with their direct reports, but also tailoring their approach to different employees to develop a deep understanding of their behaviors in context.

In addition, organizations must not overlook the well-being of managers. The January 2021 Gartner survey of 75 HR leaders finds that 68% of HR leaders believe managers are overwhelmed. Yet, only 14% of organizations have redefined the manager role to reduce their responsibilities.

"Employers need to make space for well-being in managers' workloads by helping managers radically prioritize and giving them permission to focus on it," said Duffy. "When employers support employees –

in this case, managers—with all aspects of their health during turbulent times, not only do they have better lives, but they perform at a higher level."

Pivot to Measuring Performance by Impact

With the onset of the pandemic, many organizations struggled to measure the productivity of their workforce in the newly remote setting. As a result, Gartner research showed more than one in four organizations reported investing in new technology to passively monitor their employees in 2020.

To create a high-performing workforce, organizations should foster a culture where employees feel seen, not surveilled. Specifically, to implement employee monitoring practices effectively, HR leaders should do the following:

1. Articulate a clear objective for monitoring employees, and help leaders and managers develop a common understanding of when to use it.

2. Choose metrics to measure the quality and impact of employees' work. Organizations should use metrics for employees' benefit, such as to gain context about their experiences and to identify work frictions.

3. Explain the purpose behind tracking, including how it is intended to benefit them.