The Manager Squeeze: More Responsibility, Less Support

Managers today face increasing pressure as expectations continue to grow while resources and support often do not. Known as the "manager squeeze," this challenge requires managers to balance multiple roles, including coach, mentor, problem solver, and change leader, while leading larger teams and navigating constant change.

Factors such as flatter organizations, hybrid work, and rising employee expectations have intensified these demands. As a result, many managers experience higher stress, longer hours, and less time for strategic leadership, often becoming reactive rather than proactive.

The effects extend beyond managers themselves. Overwhelmed managers may struggle to provide consistent communication, coaching, and recognition, which can negatively affect employee engagement, productivity, and retention. Organizations are also seeing increased manager turnover as leaders seek less demanding roles.

Several leadership development strategies can help managers navigate the manager squeeze and lead more effectively:

- **Coaching Skills**: Teach managers how to ask powerful questions, provide feedback, and support employee growth rather than solving every problem themselves.
- **Communication and Difficult Conversations**: Equip managers to handle performance discussions, conflict resolution, and change communication with confidence.
- **Prioritization and Time Management Development**: Help managers distinguish between urgent and important work, delegate effectively, and manage competing demands.
- **People Leadership**: Focus on employee engagement, motivation, recognition, inclusion, and psychological safety to strengthen team performance.
- **Change Leadership**: Prepare managers to lead teams through organizational change, uncertainty, and evolving business priorities.
- **Peer Learning and Manager Communities**: Create opportunities for managers to share challenges, best practices, and solutions with colleagues facing similar situations.
- **Mentoring and Executive Coaching**: Pair managers with experienced leaders or professional coaches who can provide guidance and support.
- **Emotional Intelligence Development**: Strengthen self-awareness, empathy, resilience, and relationship management skills that are essential for modern leadership.
- **Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Skills**: Build confidence in analyzing situations, making informed decisions, and addressing complex workplace issues.

Key takeaway: The most effective leadership development programs focus not only on leadership knowledge but also on practical skills that help managers lead people, manage change, and balance growing responsibilities with limited time and resources. Supporting managers is a business necessity. When managers thrive, teams perform better, adapt to change more effectively, and contribute to long-term organizational success.