Organizations need to invest in manager development to spur growth, ethics & positive culture - Thomson Reuters

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Executive Summary

This article addresses the inadequacy of traditional corporate learning and development (L&D) programs for managers, arguing that a more personalized, continuous approach is required to support managers navigating dual producer and manager roles. The primary perspective is provided by Jamie Albers, Co-founder of Mento, a career coaching and mentorship platform, who contends that most companies invest insufficiently in manager development — often less than $500 per manager annually — and that generic, one-off training models fail to meet managers' evolving needs. The article presents an '80/20 coach/mentor modality' as an emerging solution, in which managers receive predominantly coaching (80%) and supplementary mentorship (20%), supported by a Mento-sourced satisfaction score of 9.4 out of 10 among participants. A Gartner statistic noting that nearly 60% of observed employee misconduct goes unreported is cited to underscore the link between manager development, psychological safety, and ethical organizational culture. The article concludes that investing in manager excellence produces multiplier effects across retention, culture, and organizational resilience.

Key Insights

1. Corporate managers occupy a dual 'squeeze layer' role as both individual contributors and people leaders, creating compounded pressure that traditional L&D programs inadequately address.
2. The article claims most companies invest less than $500 per manager annually in development, and that this investment is often misaligned with managers' actual, personalized needs.
3. An 80/20 coach/mentor modality — 80% coaching for problem-solving and self-awareness, 20% function-specific mentorship — is positioned as a more effective alternative to one-off training events, with psychological safety and ethical culture cited as downstream benefits.

Practical Takeaways

- Organizations investing in manager development programs may consider integrating ongoing, personalized coaching into day-to-day workflows rather than relying solely on periodic training events.
- The article links manager development directly to ethical culture outcomes, noting that psychological safety — often a product of strong manager behavior — is associated with higher rates of employee misconduct reporting.

Critical Analysis

The article's primary limitation is its source bias: the main authority cited is the co-founder of Mento, a commercial coaching platform with a direct commercial interest in promoting investment in coaching and mentorship services. The sole performance statistic (9.4/10 satisfaction score) is drawn from Mento's own internal research, with no independent replication, sample size disclosure, or methodology described. The Gartner misconduct statistic is cited without a specific study title, date, or context, limiting its verifiability. The causal chain connecting manager coaching to ethical culture and reduced misconduct is asserted rather than demonstrated. On the positive side, the article raises a genuinely documented organizational challenge — the under-investment in middle manager development — and the dual-role tension facing managers is a recognized phenomenon in management literature. The 80/20 framing is presented with some structural clarity, though it lacks empirical grounding beyond the vendor's own data.

Organizational Practice

The article describes organizations adopting personalized, continuous manager development programs in place of one-off training models, including structured coach/mentor relationships in which managers receive regular one-on-one coaching sessions focused on real-time challenges alongside targeted functional mentorship. It also describes HR-manager collaboration models in which HR leaders and active managers co-design development resources.

Strategic Implications

The article reflects a broader trend toward disaggregating generic L&D programs in favor of individualized, tech-enabled development journeys for managers. If the under-investment figure ($500/manager annually) is representative, it points to a structural gap between organizational expectations of managers and the resources allocated to support them. The linkage drawn between manager capability, psychological safety, and ethical reporting culture suggests that PMS frameworks may increasingly be evaluated not only on productivity metrics but on their downstream effects on organizational integrity and risk management.

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