

Why business leaders must empower managers to get the very best from their teams - HR Magazine

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Executive Summary

This article addresses the widespread phenomenon of undertrained managers in UK organisations, arguing that insufficient investment in management and leadership development is a primary driver of underperformance at both the team and organisational level. The author's central argument is that business leaders bear responsibility for equipping managers with the skills necessary to lead effectively, rather than assuming functional expertise translates into management capability. The key evidence presented is a 2023 Chartered Management Institute statistic indicating that 82% of individuals entering management roles have received no formal management or leadership training — a group the article labels 'accidental managers.' The article contends that this training deficit undermines employee engagement, team productivity, and broader business recovery in the post-Covid economic environment. The implied conclusion is that closing this training gap would enable managers to develop emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and adaptive communication styles, ultimately producing more effective leaders and stronger organisational outcomes.

Key Insights

1. 82% of new managers in the UK reportedly enter their roles without any formal management or leadership training, according to 2023 CMI data.
2. Functional expertise is commonly used as a basis for promotion into management, but does not inherently confer the interpersonal, emotional, or strategic skills required for effective leadership.
3. The article draws a distinction between 'managers' (associated with micromanagement and task oversight) and 'leaders' (associated with culture-setting, inspiration, and behavioural modelling).

Practical Takeaways

- Organisations that treat management training as optional risk compounding performance deficits across entire teams, not just at the individual manager level.
- Emotional intelligence and self-awareness are framed as trainable competencies that meaningfully affect manager-employee relationships and team outcomes.

Critical Analysis

Strengths: The article anchors its argument in a specific, cited statistic from a credible professional body (CMI), which provides a concrete empirical reference point. The 'accidental manager' concept is a

recognised and widely discussed phenomenon in management literature, lending the argument credibility. Limitations: The article is entirely opinion-driven beyond the single statistic cited, with no original research, case studies, or comparative data presented. Causal claims — such as the assertion that training gaps directly cause team underperformance — are asserted rather than demonstrated. The article does not engage with counterarguments or acknowledge structural, systemic, or resource-based constraints that may prevent organisations from investing in manager training. Bias: The tone is prescriptive and advocacy-oriented, suggesting the author has a normative agenda around management development. The article does not name its author or disclose any affiliations that might explain this framing. The piece is published in HR Magazine, which has an editorial audience predisposed to valuing HR and L&D investment, potentially amplifying confirmation bias.

Organizational Practice

The article describes a common UK organisational practice of promoting high-performing individual contributors into management roles based on functional expertise, without accompanying formal management or leadership training. This results in managers operating without structured frameworks for people management, delegation, or adaptive leadership.

Strategic Implications

The article's findings point to a structural gap in UK talent pipelines where management capability development lags behind promotion velocity. This has potential downstream implications for performance management systems, as undertrained managers may lack the skills to conduct effective performance conversations, set meaningful goals, or differentiate performance across their teams. The framing of emotional intelligence and self-awareness as critical managerial competencies aligns with a broader trend in PMS design toward behaviourally anchored evaluation criteria.

Validation Status: passed
