

New manager training is the key to long-term business success

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Despite overwhelming evidence that poor leadership seriously damages organisations' performance and profitability, many companies are not investing enough - or early enough - in their new managers, research shows.

A recent study by the Performance Solutions Group (PSG), an American consulting firm working internationally with Fortune 500 companies, not-for-profit organisations and small- to medium-sized companies, shows that shoddy leadership and management skills lead to major, though sometimes subtle problems in organisations, which in turn impact heavily on morale and productivity.

According to the research, just 38% of employees think their leaders have a sincere interest in their well-being, 47% think their leaders are trustworthy, and 42% think their leaders inspire and engage them. 61% question whether their leaders deal effectively with poor performance, and only 42% think senior management encourages development of talent.

Jenny Carter, Course Director of the New Managers Programme at the UCT Graduate School of Business, believes that this development of talent is a particularly thorny issue, as it applies to the long-term impact of leaders as well.

According to Carter, companies would alleviate numerous long-term problems if they invested in their new managers, since many of the leadership habits learnt early on will remain throughout their careers.

"It is about the value new managers continue to bring to the workplace long-term," she says. "Not investing in them is quite blatantly an error of business judgement.

"This research shows the importance of proper leadership and management development at an early stage in a career," she adds. "These leaders [in the study] picked up bad leadership skills along the way and it shows. This is the kind of situation that proves business writer Marcus Buckingham's statement that 'people join firms but leave managers'."

Carter believes it is short-sighted not to recognise the importance of investing in new managers, as they form an integral part of an organisation and will often go on to become middle managers or even CEOs.

"Investing in new managers leads to sustainable efficient leadership," she says.

The GSB New Managers' programme is aimed at entry-level managers and people who have been in a management position for a long time and want to make further progress in their careers.

Alumni have described it as an empowering and transformational experience owing to its strong focus on personal mastery and a collaborative management process. Spanning the entire range of core business skills, and systematically developing the insights and leadership skills needed to manage and motivate the workforce, the NMP syllabus is increasingly being recognised as a 'starter-pack' for managers.

"Most people coming into a management role for the first time don't know what to do. They are paralysed with apprehension. Their knees buckle under added responsibility. Fear of failure haunts their every decision. They feel isolated and cornered; caught between the heavy demands of business and the needs of their worker friends.

"It's a hard shift to make, the change from getting results alone and motivating a team to achieve results. For some, this shift

takes a long time. And this can cause flow problems for companies, no matter their size," says Carter.

But by showing them their authentic leadership potential, she says, as well as empowering new leaders with fundamental business knowledge (finance, value stream management, operations, marketing, strategy and innovation), this transition from individual worker to team manager can be made much smoother.

"The programme strives to develop managers effectively so that they can take up their strategic role within an organisation, successfully," Carter says.

The course runs from 27 May to 8 June with applications closing end of April.

For more information visit www.gsb.uct.ac.za/newmanagers or contact Iona Gutuza on 021 406 1368.

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