

Power to the Middle

Why Managers hold the keys to the future of work

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Middle managers have been a cost cutting opportunity in the last few years.

As work undergoes seismic changes , current organizational structures are simply not built to adapt to them.

Middle managers operate between senior managers/team leaders and frontline workers.

Many middle managers can excel at their roles but their bosses deny them that opportunity.

48 % of companies say they don't have the time for talent management.

Without training, trust and empowerment,
middle managers will remain underutilized.

What can be done to work in the 21 st century?

- **Rebundle jobs rather than eliminate them**
- **Actively recruit and retain workers**
- **Continuously coach and develop employees**
- **Use data to solve problems in a thoughtful way**
- **Work productivity with HR to find the best talent and improve performance**
- **Strive to connect work to the people instead of people to the work**

We define middle managers as at least one layer below senior management and one level removed from the front line.

How Middle managers spend their time?

May 2022 McKinsey report

- 28 % Individual contributions
- 27 % talent and people management
- 26 % strategy
- 19 % Administrative

Cutting middle managers and ignoring those who remain has a dire effect on turnover.

Many myopic managers cut headcount and slash training budgets.

Flexibility is the No 1 reason for Gen Z , rated higher than compensation. For millennials compensation was first followed by flexibility according to a recent Mck survey.

Younger employees want work that is energizing and meaningful.

What middle managers do is much more complex than frontline or senior managers.

The qualities needed for middle management are emotional intelligence, resilience, adaptability, technical skills, critical thinking, communication skills, being open to change, seeing the big picture and managing workers- full time and gig.

From 1950s into the 1980s, middle management was critical, with technology arrival in later decades that knowledge power of middle management has gone.

The rise of collaboration and communication tools cut the role and need for middle management.

Many of the new age fast growth, faster and flatter companies thought they don't need middle management.

Outstanding middle managers possess a mix of excellent operational skills and compassion at the individual level.

Its important to remember that just because technology can do something , doesn't mean *technology should do it.*

Privacy rules, full impact of technology must be studied.

A 2020 study by Gartner predicted that by 2024, technology will replace 69 % of the work that managers now perform.

McK great attrition and great attraction research April 2022

Top attrition reasons – compensation, career development and development, work expectations

Top attraction reasons – Workplace flexibility, meaning of work, support for health and well being

Only 12 % of employees agree that the organization does a good job of onboarding.

Employees are more data savvy at high performing companies.

3 major data myths

1. The only data that matters is financial data
2. Data always tells the truth
3. Data driven solutions don't need human input

Middle managers and HR have good relations in some cases and adversarial, suspicious relationship in some.

People leave bad bosses, after all, they don't
leave bad HR

Middle managers and HR clash in equity versus rules based fair assessment.

Often HR and middle managers make incorrect assumptions about each other.

Too many people view HR as a starting point of a paper trail to fire someone.

People don't like to be bad at their jobs.

Companies should encourage and celebrate cross department moves.

Ritz Carlton Hotels has a great philosophy captured in their motto-

“We are ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen.”

Post pandemic, work from anywhere, it has become clear to us that letting employees do whatever they want to do, wherever they want to do it, is a recipe for trouble.

The best managers recognize that physical workplaces can fill a massive social and emotional need.

Middle managers want authority, autonomy and discretion.

We see too many managers who want to hoard power rather than release it to others.