

**Building High-Performing Managers:**  
***How HR Leaders Can Reduce Turnover by 50% and Boost Team Performance***



# Executive Summary

Poor management costs your organisation in productivity, profitability, turnover, and even safety incidents. While individual managers must take responsibility for their performance, organisations often fail to provide proper selection processes, support structures, and cultural expectations that enable management excellence. This guide reveals how HR leaders can systematically develop great managers through objective selection methods, consistent support systems, and embedding effective management into your organisational culture. By implementing these evidence-based practices, you'll build a pipeline of high-performing managers who drive engagement, productivity and retention—with results visible within months, not years.

## Quick-Win Checklist:

01

Clearly define and communicate what “good management” looks like in your organisation

02

Implement job benchmarking for objective manager selection

03

Create structured support systems for newly appointed managers

04

Establish protected time for manager development using the 70-20-10 model

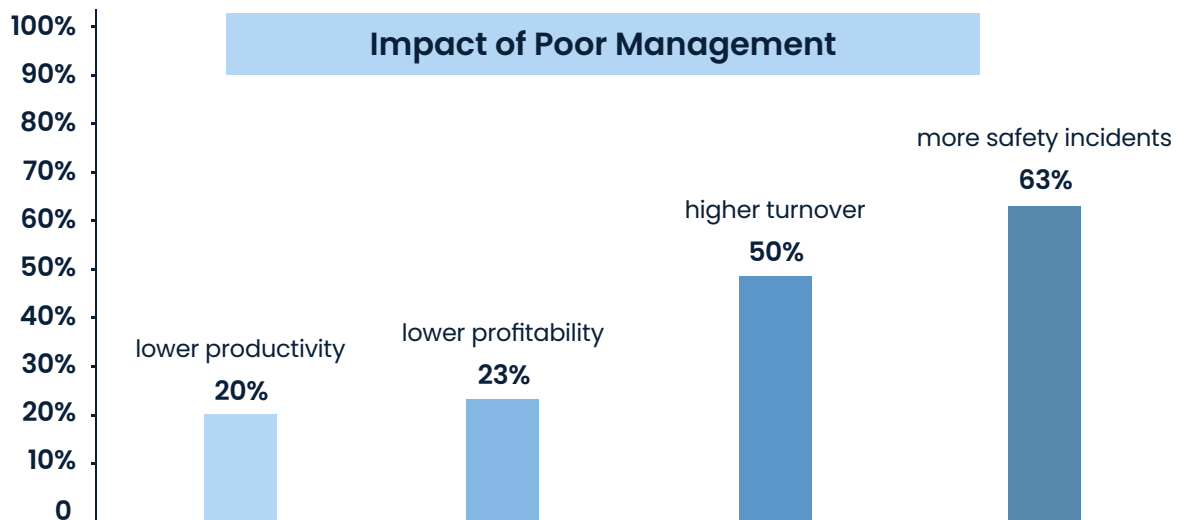
05

Measure management effectiveness through team engagement and turnover metrics



# Why Poor Management Hurts Performance

The impact of poor management extends far beyond day-to-day frustrations. Gallup's comprehensive study of 3.3 million employees across 180,000 business units quantifies the staggering cost to organisations:



Globally, this translates to approximately \$8.8 trillion in lost productivity annually—equivalent to 9% of global GDP. For your organisation, this means wasted potential, unrealised goals, and unnecessary costs that directly impact your bottom line.

**”** *Half of employees with bottom-quartile rated managers say work negatively impacts their mental health versus just 12% of those with top-quartile managers.*

Poor management also profoundly affects workplace wellbeing. According to CIPD research, 43% of respondents identified management style as the second biggest contributor to stress-related absence. This creates a damaging cycle where poor management leads to higher absenteeism, which increases pressure on remaining team members, further degrading performance.

**”** *What's the cost of not investing in managers? HR's responsibility is to quantify that, giving hard facts and numbers around the cost of not doing so, whether that's about turnover, lost productivity, or morale within the organisation. Managers influence other people - if we're not investing in them, there is a ripple effect. The cost of not investing will also be seen in terms of skills - our competitors will be moving ahead while we're falling behind.*

Tricia Cunningham



# What Poor Management Looks Like

Before fixing management problems, you need to recognise them. The CIPD has identified seven clear signs of poor management that create toxic workplace environments:

01

**Micromanagement** - Undermining employees through excessive control and lack of trust

02

**Deprioritised management duties** - Providing late feedback, cancelling one-to-ones, being unresponsive

03

**Resistance to feedback** - Failing to acknowledge or act on constructive input

04

**Dismissive attitude** - Rejecting ideas rather than building on employee contributions

05

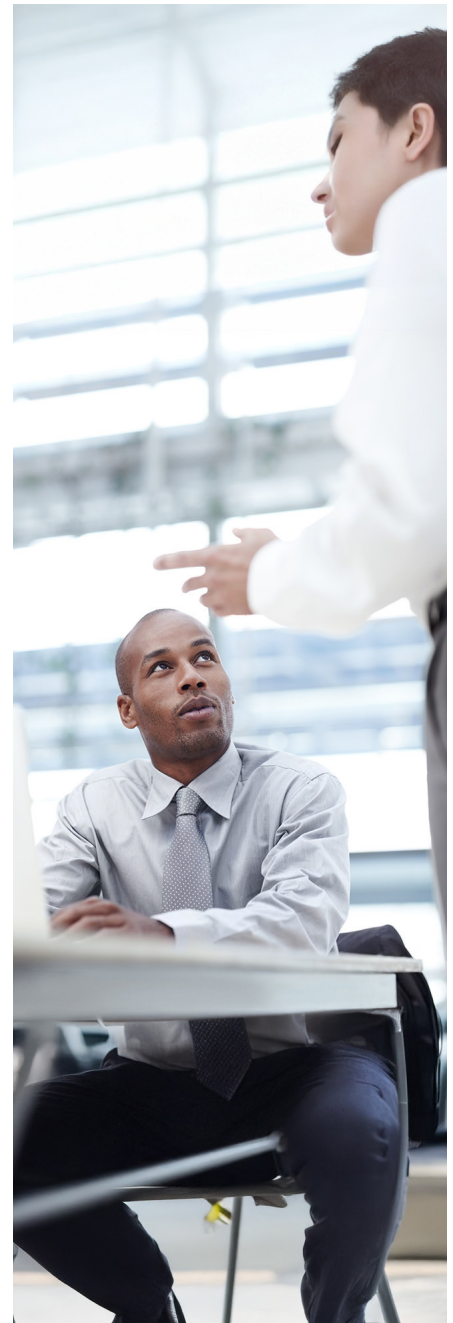
**Poor structure** - Demonstrating disorganisation and unwillingness to prepare properly

06

**Ineffective listening** - Failing to process or respond meaningfully to team communication

07

**Lack of support** - Leaving team members feeling powerless and unmotivated



These traits become particularly damaging when embedded in organisational culture. When poor management becomes normalised, even well-intentioned new managers adopt these behaviours by default, perpetuating the cycle.

”

*Organizations sometimes make the mistake of creating values with 10 or 12 statements that look fantastic on the reception wall or website. But if there are 8 or 10, how many will I remember? And if I don't remember them, they're not going to be reflected in my behaviors. We need to distill it down to core values that are instilled in all our meetings and referenced when having conversations with employees.*

Tricia Cunningham

## Case in point:

Allegro Technology reduced voluntary turnover from 18% to 9% in 9 months after implementing LEAP's Emerging Managers programme. "We stopped promoting technical experts without giving them management skills," says HR Director Laura Connolly. "Now our managers actually build engagement rather than draining it."

## What Good Management Looks Like

Google's Project Oxygen research provides the definitive framework for management excellence. Their data-driven approach identified ten behaviours that differentiate great managers:

Behaviour	How LEAP's Programmes Build It
1. Be a good coach	Teaches conversational frameworks that help managers ask powerful questions rather than giving answers
2. Empower your team, don't micromanage	Develops confidence in delegation through guided practice and peer accountability
3. Create inclusive environments showing concern for success and wellbeing	Builds emotional intelligence skills and provides practical wellbeing conversation tools
4. Be productive and results-oriented	Instils time management disciplines and outcome-focused goal-setting methodologies
5. Be a good communicator and listener	Enhances active listening skills through structured practice and feedback
6. Support career development and discuss performance	Equips managers with career conversation frameworks and feedback models
7. Have a clear vision and strategy for the team	Teaches strategic thinking techniques and how to translate company goals into team objectives
8. Possess key technical skills to advise the team	Identifies knowledge gaps and creates personalised development plans
9. Collaborate across the organisation	Builds cross-functional relationship skills and network development strategies
10. Be a strong decision maker	Develops decision-making frameworks and confidence through case studies and peer reviews

These behaviours aren't just nice-to-haves—they're the foundation of organisational success. Teams led by managers who exhibit these traits consistently outperform their peers in productivity, engagement, and retention metrics.

”

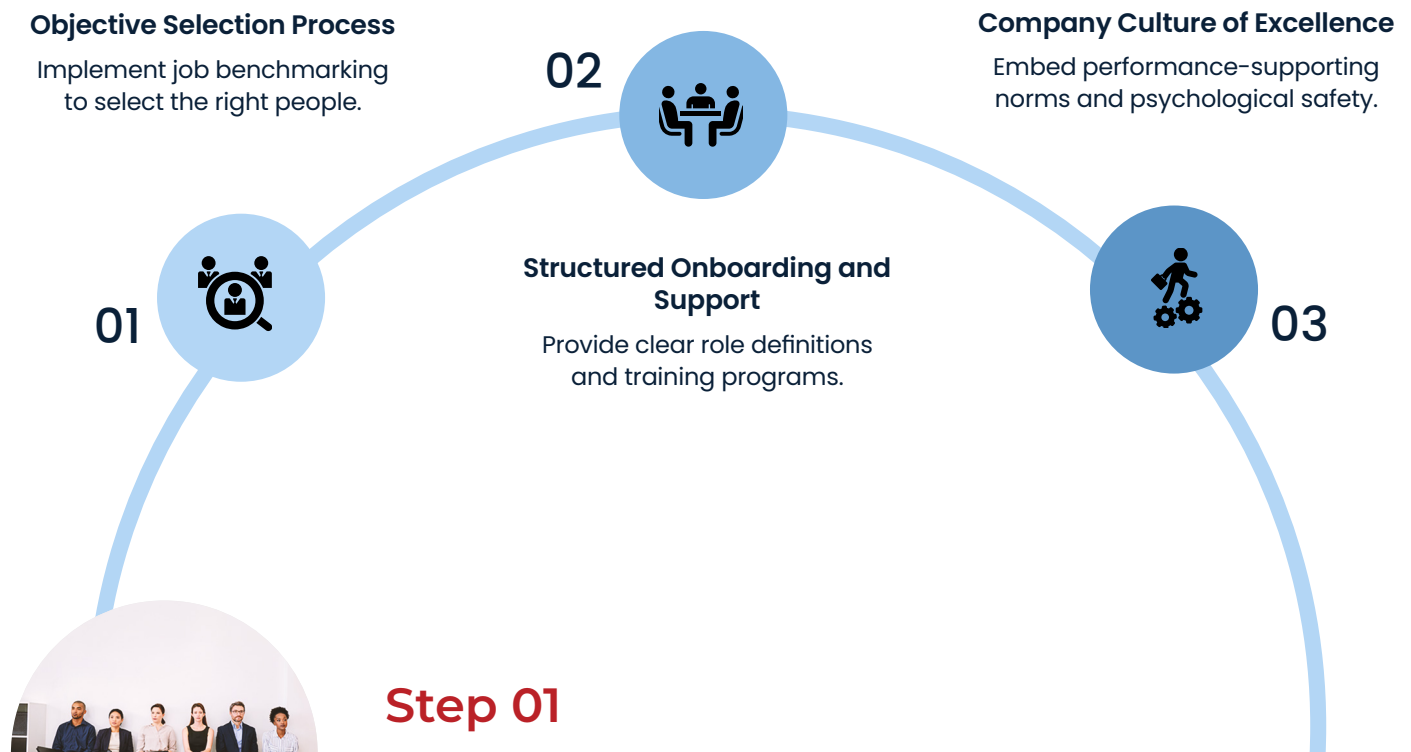
**Julie Carroll**

Learning and Development  
Manager, Supermacs

*People skills and the ability to talk to each other is probably at the top of our agenda. We can absolutely utilize technology in as many ways as we possibly can to make the life of our managers and teams easier, more engaging, and more enjoyable. But there isn't anything that's ever going to replace that ability to talk to your customer or your employee like they're your family member.*

# Building Great Managers: A Practical 3-Step Roadmap

Developing effective managers requires systematic effort across three key areas. Each builds upon the others to create a sustainable management development ecosystem:



## Step 01

### Implement Objective Selection of Management Candidates

The hardest worker doesn't necessarily make the best manager. Too often, organisations promote technical stars into management without assessing their potential to lead others effectively.

Job benchmarking provides an objective framework for selecting management candidates by:

- Identifying key accountabilities beyond technical skills
- Defining behaviours and competencies required for the specific role
- Creating assessment tools that map candidates against role requirements
- Minimising unconscious bias in selection decisions

#### Starter Questions:

01

What criteria do you currently use to select managers?

02

How do you assess management potential beyond technical expertise?

03

What percentage of your selection process is objective versus subjective?



## Step 02

# Establish Consistent Support for New Managers

Many organisations promote employees to management positions with minimal preparation or ongoing support—the equivalent of “sink or swim.” This approach virtually guarantees poor management practices will emerge.

Effective support systems include:

- Clear role expectations and accountability measures
- Regular structured feedback and performance reviews
- Protected time for management activities
- Professional development opportunities focused on management skills
- Peer support networks and mentoring relationships

New managers need clarity about both what needs to be done and how it should be done. They require space to develop their own management style while learning established best practices.

”

*There are so many times we hear managers say ‘I was just landed in the role and told you’re flying it. You know what you’re doing.’ Maybe it’s somebody who grew up in the organisation, or was newly appointed with a lot of effort on selection, but we don’t think about what happens when they are promoted. How do we help them assimilate properly and thrive?*

Tricia Cunningham

### Starter Questions:

01

What formal support do your new managers receive in their first 90 days?

02

How do you measure management effectiveness beyond team results?

03

Where do your managers currently learn management skills?





## Step 03

# Develop Management-Enabling Cultural Norms

Even well-selected and supported managers will struggle in organisations with cultures that undermine good management. Assess and improve your cultural norms around:

- Meeting management effectiveness
- Feedback delivery (both positive and constructive)
- Handling difficult conversations
- Performance reviews and objective setting
- Decision-making processes
- Cross-functional collaboration

Create an environment with appropriate levels of psychological safety balanced with performance accountability. This “learning zone” enables managers to develop without fear while maintaining appropriate standards.

”

*The whole people management skills aspect is even more important now because in this working from home model or hybrid model, you don't have these water cooler moments that you used to have in a five-day week situation. You don't have the informal chats in the canteen. The ability to have meaningful conversations whenever people are in the office becomes even more important, and the ability to communicate awkward things in an online situation is hugely important.*

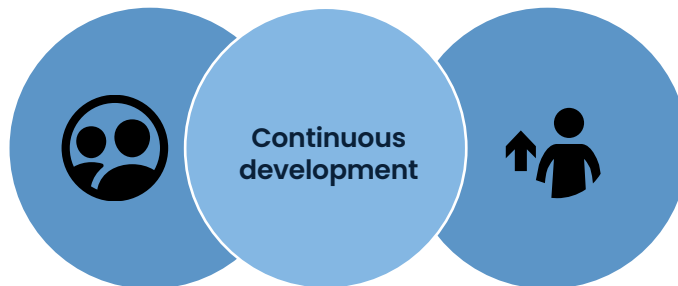
**Coleman Collins**

Founder, Collins & McNicholas

## The Power of Synergy in Management Excellence

### Psychological Safety

Trust and openness in communication



### Accountability

Taking ownership of actions

### Starter Questions:

01

What management behaviours does your culture currently reward?

02

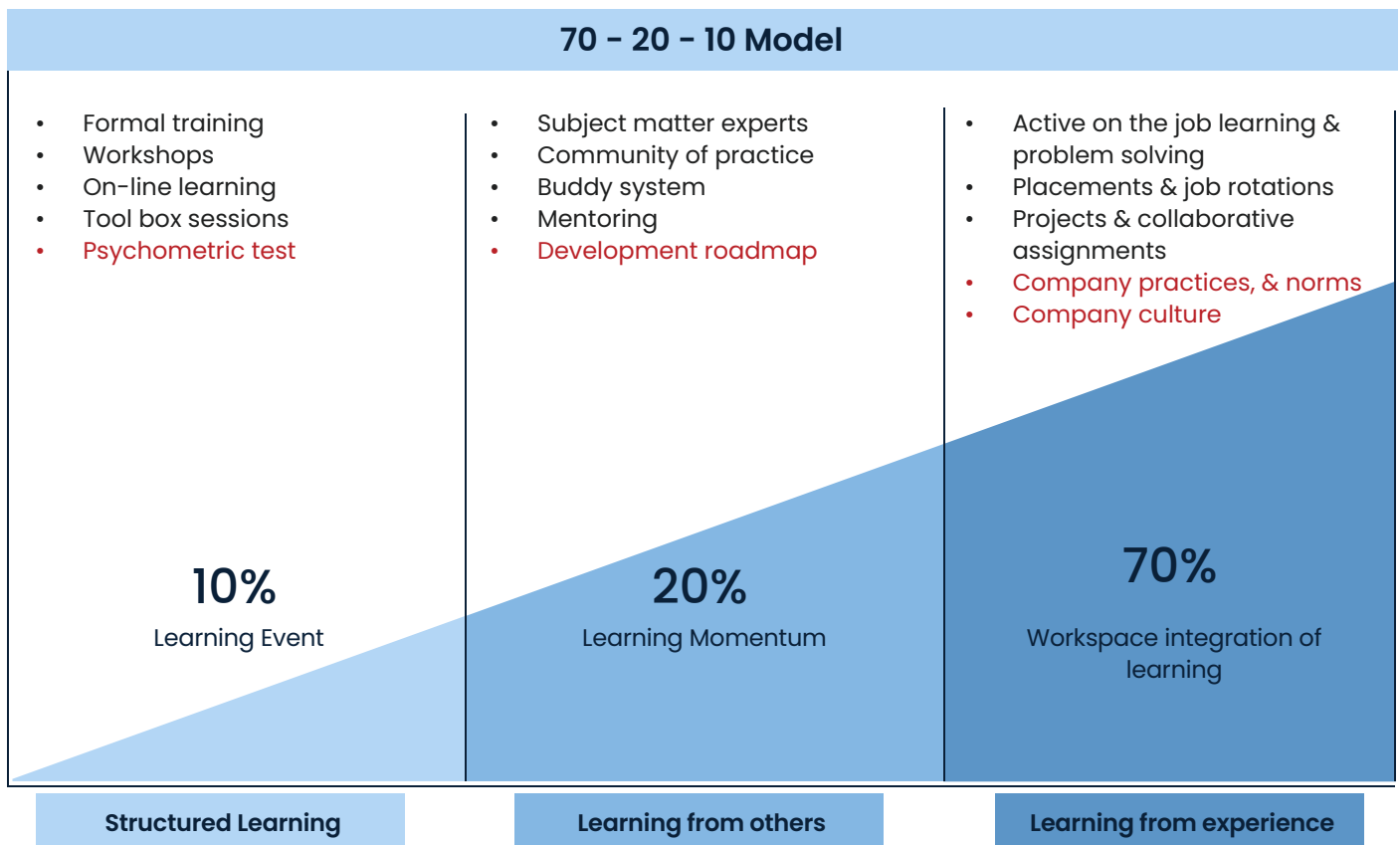
How comfortable are managers giving direct feedback?

03

What happens when managers admit they don't know something?

# Building Great Managers: A Practical 3-Step Roadmap

Improving management capability across your organisation requires commitment and perseverance. The 70-20-10 learning model provides an effective framework for management development:



This model recognises that management skills develop primarily through application and reflection, not just formal training. Your development programme should balance all three elements to maximise effectiveness.



*We try to keep training sessions as short as we can without being too short, so managers aren't organizing time away from the store for multiple days. The area manager and top-down structure is really important too. Managers can get very bogged down in day-to-day challenges and sometimes allow their own development or their teams' development to take a back seat. It's up to the learning and development team and area managers to work together with store managers to keep the focus for their own benefit and their teams.*

**Julie Carroll**

# Sustaining Your Management Development Programme

To sustain momentum in your management development initiatives:

01

Start with visible “quick wins” that demonstrate value

02

Secure senior leadership commitment and participation

03

Measure and communicate progress regularly

04

Recognise and reward management excellence

05

Build management development into performance expectations

”

*We need to begin asking what are the obstacles to effective performance right across the organization? What business disciplines or cultural norms have crept in that prevent managers from succeeding? Many of these are not explicit but implicit, having a negative impact - like the reluctance to give feedback, avoiding difficult conversations, poor problem-solving skills, poor decision-making, or not embracing performance management.*

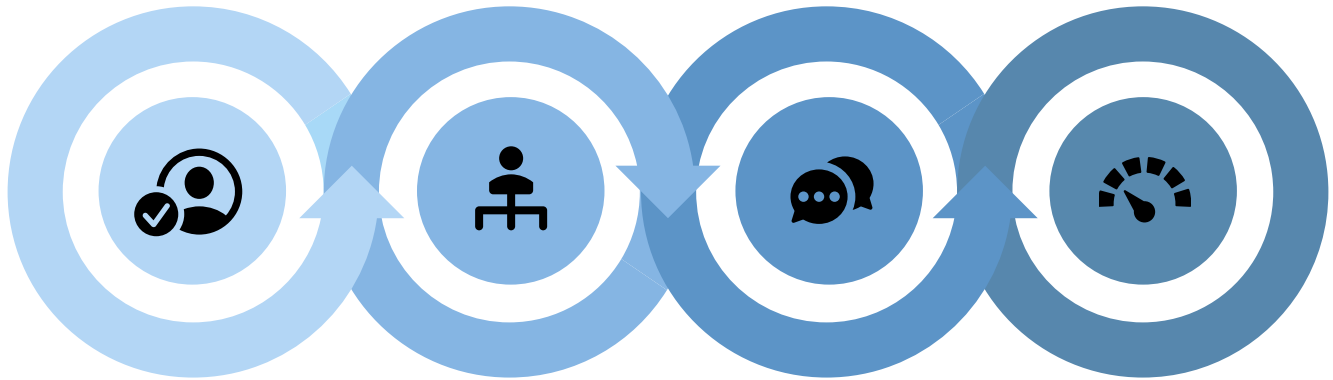
Tricia Cunningham

Remember that consistency matters more than perfection. Small, sustained improvements in management capability compound over time to create significant organisational impact.



# Your Next Steps

Building high-performing managers isn't an overnight process, but with systematic effort, you can significantly improve management quality across your organisation within months. The key is to start with clear intentions and maintain consistent focus.



## Encourage Psychological Safety

Foster trust and accountability

## Reinforce Core Values

Align behaviour with Organizational values

## Normalize Feedback

Establish a culture of open communication

## Address Poor Performance

Constructively handle performance issues

”

*If HR is going to truly influence management development, they need to be at the table and be key decision makers. HR professionals must champion selection processes, drive cultural change, and quantify the business impact of poor management.*

Coleman Collins

LEAP Leadership helps HR leaders implement these evidence-based practices through:

- Objective job benchmarking systems
- Manager development programmes tailored to your organisation
- Cultural assessment and enhancement strategies
- Measurement frameworks that demonstrate ROI to your executive team





## Book Your Free 30-Minute Manager Health-Check

Discover how your organisation compares to best practices and identify your highest-impact improvement opportunities through a complimentary 30-minute Manager Health-Check consultation.

In this focused session, we'll:

- Assess your current management development approach
- Identify your biggest opportunities for improvement
- Provide immediate actionable recommendations
- Discuss potential next steps (with no obligation)

[Click to Book Time](#)



SCAN ME



[john@leapleadership.ie](mailto:john@leapleadership.ie)



+353 091 755 73



[www.leapleadership.ie](http://www.leapleadership.ie)