



**BUILDING STRONGER MANAGERS**

# 5 Key Steps for Effective Support



# Introduction

Managers are the linchpin of any organisation, responsible for driving performance, fostering team cohesion, and achieving strategic goals. They navigate complex dynamics to ensure that their teams are productive and engaged, making their role crucial for organisational success. Despite this, more than half of people managers in South Africa do not receive proper skills training and support.

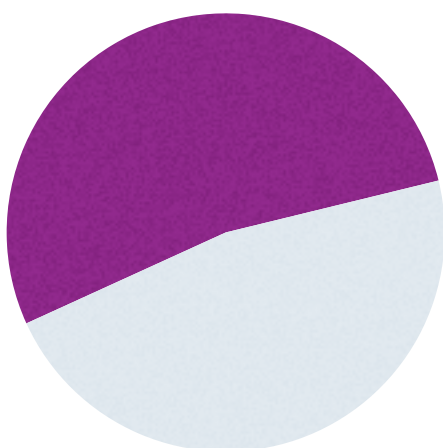
Yet, many managers face immense pressure, stuck between their teams and top leadership, they must balance organisational objectives with the diverse needs of their team members. This includes managing performance, resolving conflicts, and ensuring team well-being, all while meeting tight deadlines and high results-driven expectations.

Despite the critical nature of their role, many managers are promoted or inserted into their positions without adequate training. This lack of preparation leaves them ill-equipped to handle the challenges of managing people, leading to decreased effectiveness and increased stress.

To better understand the state of manager training and support in South Africa, we conducted a comprehensive survey among local managers for a snapshot of the status quo. The goal was to gather insights into their experiences, challenges, and the support they receive from their organisations. With over 100 respondents sharing details about the issues they face, it's clear that we have a management problem in South Africa due to the lack of training.

The findings from our survey highlight a significant issue: South African managers are often underprepared and inadequately trained. A whopping **53% of respondents said they felt they were not provided with enough training when they started managing people**. This lack of skills training can have far-reaching implications for organisational performance and employee satisfaction across the country.

## Were you provided enough training when you started managing people?



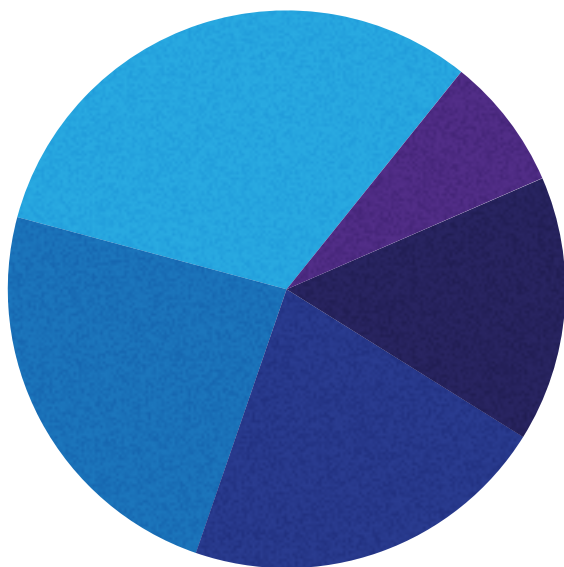
53% | No

47% | Yes

**Having managers who aren't equipped with the right skills can be highly detrimental to a business**, as they can erode employee morale and reduce productivity. Poor management often leads to high staff turnover, which incurs additional costs for recruiting and training new employees. Moreover, ineffective managers can stifle innovation and impede team collaboration, resulting in missed opportunities and subpar performance. Customer satisfaction may also suffer, as disengaged employees are less likely to provide excellent service. In the long run, the presence of bad managers can significantly hinder a company's growth and profitability, making it crucial for businesses to invest in strong leadership development and management training programmes.

Our survey group consisted of 31.6% of respondents who have been managers for over 10 years, 23.9% who have held the role for five to 10 years, and 21.4% who have been managers for three to five years. Additionally, 15.4% of the respondents are fairly new to the role, having been managers for one to two years, and 7.7% are new managers with less than a year of experience.

## How long have you managed a team for?



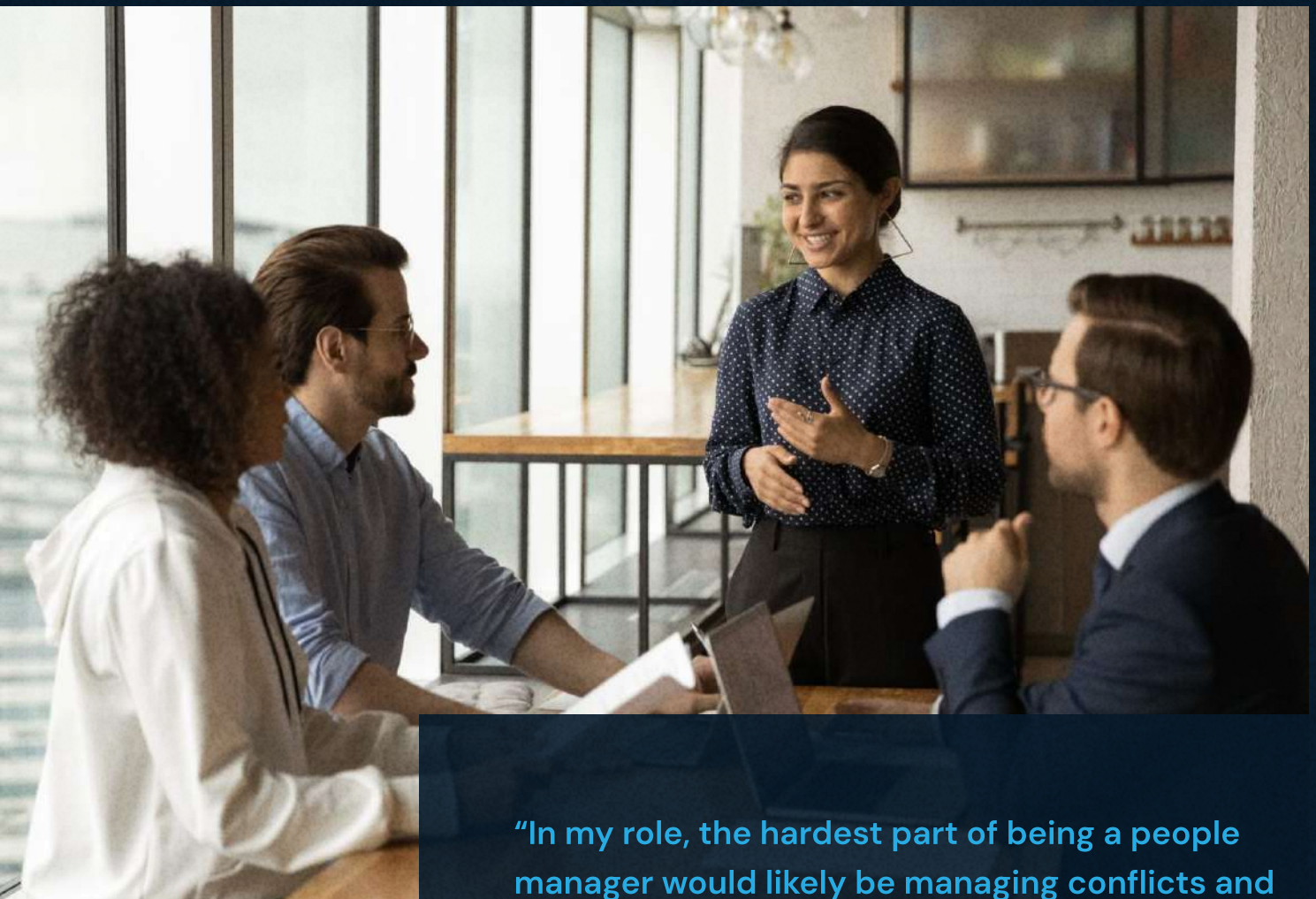
- 31.6% | I'm a new manager
- 7.7% | 1 - 2 years
- 21.4% | 3 - 5 years
- 23.9% | 5 - 10 years
- 31.6% | Greater than 10 years



# The most difficult part of managing people

One of the toughest aspects of managing people is balancing individual needs with organisational goals.

Managers reported that understanding each team member's strengths and motivations while navigating conflicting priorities and personalities is particularly challenging.



**"In my role, the hardest part of being a people manager would likely be managing conflicts and difficult conversations. It can be challenging to navigate interpersonal issues and disagreements while maintaining a positive and productive work environment."**

# People managers share what skills would help them improve

The survey revealed that managers recognise the need to develop specific skills to enhance their effectiveness. Key areas for improvement include:



## Communication

Clear, empathetic, and effective communication.



## Emotional Intelligence

Managing emotions and understanding others.



## Coaching and Mentoring

Empowering team members to reach their potential.



## Adaptability

Being flexible and responsive to change.



## Decision-Making

Making timely and effective decisions.



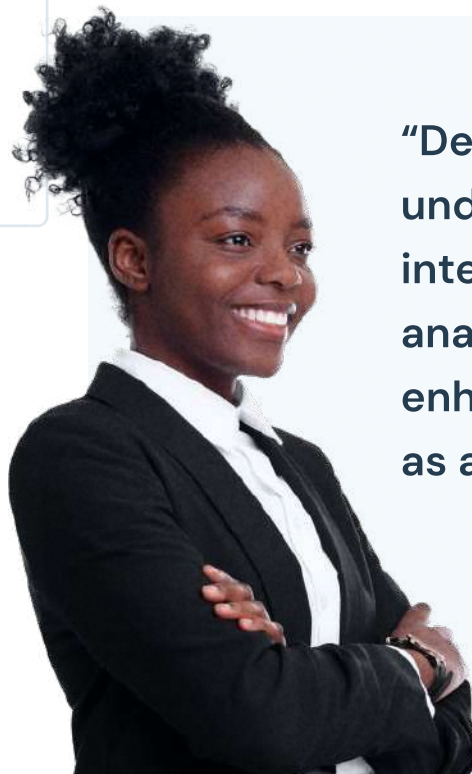
## Conflict Resolution

Handling disputes constructively.



## Empowerment and Delegation

Encouraging team autonomy and accountability.



“Developing a deeper understanding of emotional intelligence and honing my analytical thinking would enhance my effectiveness as a people manager,”

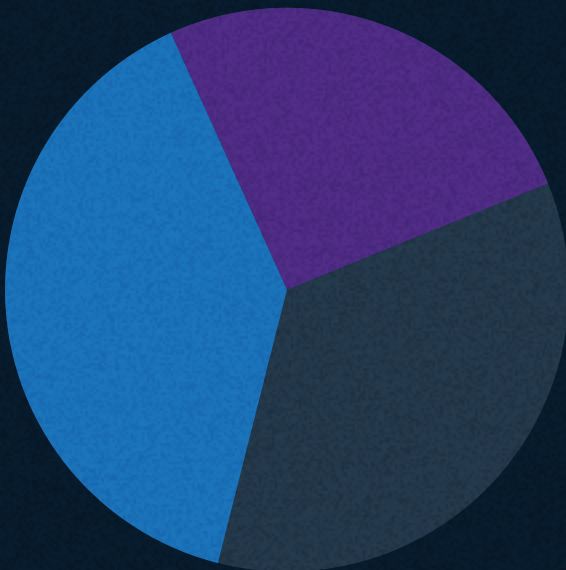
# Hybrid work environment

The shift to hybrid work environments since the COVID-19 outbreak has introduced new challenges for managers. Our survey found that while some managers felt adequately prepared, a significant number of 64.9% of our respondents did not receive sufficient training to manage remote teams effectively. This lack of preparation can hinder communication, team cohesion, and overall productivity.



## How has your current business addressed the hybrid work environment in terms of upskilling its managers to effectively manage in the new environment?

- 25.6% | No Preparation
- 39.3 | Somewhat
- 35% | Prepared me well

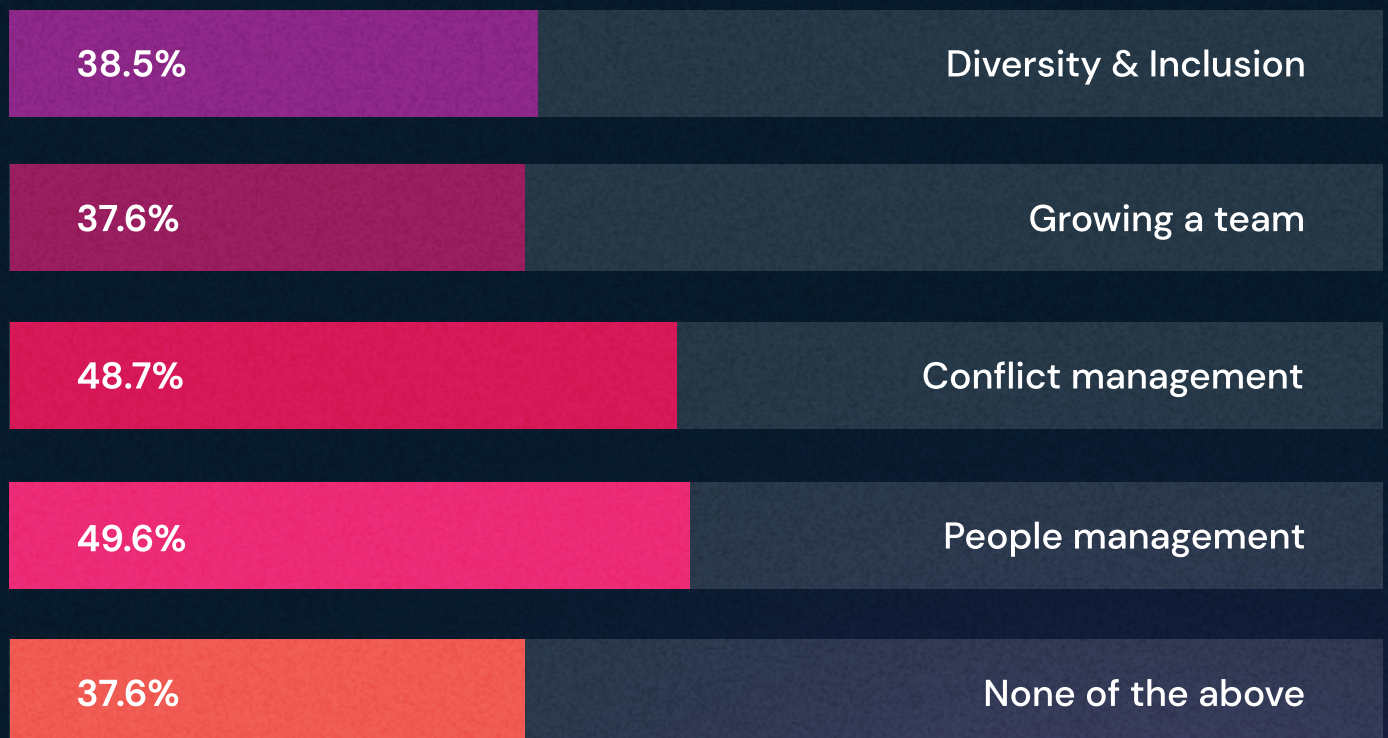


# Skills Training

When asked about the skills training they received, many managers indicated a lack of comprehensive development programmes. Diversity and inclusion, growing a team, conflict management and people management skills are vital for new and current managers. Yet through our survey, it was revealed that only a small amount of respondents reported receiving training in all of these areas. However, on the other hand, 37.6% of respondents said they'd received none of the above training.

This is especially worrying in South Africa, considering the deep socio-economic issues and the diversity within the country. Without skills training in these areas, specifically diversity and inclusion, where only 38.5% of respondents said they'd received training, managers in local organisations are not being properly prepared to deal with the unique challenges of being a people manager.

## Have you received any of the skill training below since becoming a manager?



# What are the biggest challenges managers face?

One of the most significant challenges managers face today is navigating the rapidly changing landscape of work, driven by technological advancements, globalisation, shifting demographics, and evolving employee expectations.

This dynamic environment presents several key challenges:

## Remote Work and Distributed Teams

The widespread adoption of remote work, accelerated by global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, has introduced new complexities for managers in terms of communication, collaboration, team cohesion, and performance management across geographically dispersed teams.

## Talent Management and Skill Development

In a rapidly evolving job market, managers face the challenge of attracting, retaining, and developing top talent with the skills and competencies needed to thrive in an increasingly digital and interconnected world. This includes addressing skills gaps, fostering a culture of continuous learning, and providing opportunities for career growth and development.

## Change Management

Constant technological advancements, organisational restructuring, and market disruptions require managers to effectively lead their teams through periods of change and uncertainty. This involves communicating a compelling vision, managing resistance, and supporting employees through transitions.

## Work-Life Balance and Well-being

Managers are increasingly tasked with supporting their team members' well-being and mental health, as work-life boundaries blur and burnout becomes a prevalent issue. Balancing productivity goals with the need for flexibility and support for work-life balance is a significant challenge.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Building and leading diverse and inclusive teams is a priority for many organisations, but it comes with its own set of challenges. Managers must navigate issues related to unconscious bias, cultural differences, and systemic barriers to ensure that all team members feel valued, respected, and included.

## Leadership Agility and Adaptability

The pace of change requires managers to be agile and adaptable in their leadership approach, quickly responding to new challenges, opportunities, and market dynamics while maintaining stability and focus for their teams.





The findings of our survey indicate that many South African managers are struggling due to insufficient training and mentorship. To address these issues, we recommend the following solutions:

## 1 Enhanced Training Programmes

Organisations should invest in comprehensive training programmes that cover essential management skills, including communication, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution.

## 2 Support Systems

Establish robust support systems for managers, such as mentorship programmes, peer networks, and regular check-ins with senior leaders.

## 3 Continuous Learning

Encourage a culture of continuous learning where managers regularly update their skills and knowledge through relevant skills training and courses.

## 4 Focus on Hybrid Management

Provide specific training for managing hybrid and remote teams, ensuring managers are equipped to handle the unique challenges of this work environment.

## 5 Feedback Mechanisms

Implement feedback mechanisms to understand the ongoing needs of managers and adapt training programmes accordingly.

By addressing these areas, organisations can better support their managers, leading to improved team performance, higher employee satisfaction, and overall organisational success. The role of a manager is pivotal, and with the right training and support, they can navigate the complexities of their role more effectively.

