

Investing in managers ups productivity

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Investing in management training is the best way to up productivity in the workplace and ensure business success.

Basic leadership skills are vastly underestimated in the workplace. "Many CEOs and company owners don't realise that their managers may be the most important cog in the machinery of success," says Jenny Carter, convenor of the New Manager short course at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB).

A Gallup poll surveying over one million Americans found that the biggest reason why people leave their jobs is due to a bad boss or direct supervisor. "People leave managers, not companies... In the end, turnover is mostly a manager issue," Gallup stated. It also revealed that poorly managed work groups were about 50% less productive and 44% less profitable than well-managed groups.

Aol estimates that bad bosses cost the US economy around \$360 million a year in lost productivity - saying their studies show 65% of people would take a new boss over a pay raise.

But many managers simply need a helping hand, says Carter. "Especially first-time managers are often thrust into the driver's seat with little or no coaching or training in managing and find themselves overwhelmed by the work at hand." She quotes the example of people highly skilled at what they do, like a doctor for instance, who is promoted to hospital management or an engineer suddenly finding himself in charge of a municipality. She says that there are simple and effective ways to intervene at the start that can set people up for successful career in leadership.

Lack of confidence in their own abilities, lack of trust in a team and the inability to motivate are key issues, but are fortunately easily addressed on The New Manager, says Carter who has for the past eight years immersed herself in the development of first-time managers at the UCT GSB.

"On the course, we find new ways of collaborating, of getting people to work together more efficiently. We also focus on how to delegate, how to let go and to get others to do the work that the managers previously had to do themselves." She says the course is hugely popular and many clients from across industries all over the African continent have been sending employees to do the course year after year.

The learning process is very interactive, with role plays and group work to help people think about their own work experiences. The course also helps to build networks. What the delegates learn from and with their peers is almost more valuable than what they learn from the facilitators," says Carter.

Kumeshene West, acting director of executive education at the UCT GSB adds, "We explore how to get someone to bring their whole heart and soul into the office instead of being someone who is just clocking in, doing a job." She says the course gives people the tools to become better managers. This is hugely beneficial especially in South Africa at the moment where she says many people and companies are under pressure.

"So we want to motivate people, we want to enhance their energy and get them to leave with a sense of enthusiasm and the knowledge that being a new manager is not scary but exciting."

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