



THE ADECCO GROUP



# Disconnected Leaders and Employees

Why Career  
Development  
Expectations are  
Not Being Met  
and How to  
Bridge the Gap

**Resetting Normal:**  
Defining a New Era of Work

It is one of the great ironies of the world of work.

Both business leaders and the people they lead know the best way of addressing the global skills shortage is through re-/upskilling and a formal internal talent mobility strategy. This allows organizations to use existing talent to fill some of the most pressing workforce gaps before going out into the open talent market.

However, even though everyone agrees that internal mobility is key, recent research has shown that leaders and the people they lead have radically different perspectives about whether progress is being achieved.

In early 2021, an online survey reached 14,800 white collar workers between the ages of 18 and 60, spread across 25 countries. The respondents all had desk-based jobs, worked at least 20 hours a week and were required to work remotely during the pandemic.

New data from *Resetting Normal: Defining a New Era of Work*, a ground-breaking global survey from The Adecco Group, shows that senior leaders believe they are doing a good job of providing resources for career and skills development. However, the people they lead are just as certain they are not getting the opportunities they need to learn and grow into new roles.

It would not be an understatement to say that employees have high expectations around career development. However, it's equally true that their current employers are not doing enough to meet those expectations.

# A limitless appetite for career development that is not being satisfied

Thinking about how the last 12 months may have affected your attitudes towards work, how far would you agree or disagree with the following (NET Agree)



Q30. Thinking about how the last 12 months may have affected your attitudes towards work, how far would you agree or disagree with the following? (NET Agree) Base: All respondents (14,800) [Detailed country bases in appendix]



**Just 37%** of non-managers believe their company is **effectively investing in developing their skills.**

The survey showed clearly that 42 percent of respondents are concerned about not having relevant skills that will make them desirable in the new world of work, and 70 percent want their organizations to have a clear talent and development strategy to give them the skills that will help them fill future roles.

That suggests that the global workforce is ready, willing and highly motivated to learn and grow. Unfortunately, many organizations are squandering that willingness and energy.

In our survey, we found that senior business leaders generally believe they are doing a good job at having a clear strategy to train workers in things like digital skills (80 percent), investing in the skills of their workers (78 percent) and providing regular skills assessments and re-/upskilling development plans (78 percent).

If that were all true, then it would be a remarkable success story. But further down the organizational hierarchy, a much different view has

manifested. In short, managers and non-managers alike are much less positive in their assessment of skills and career development efforts.

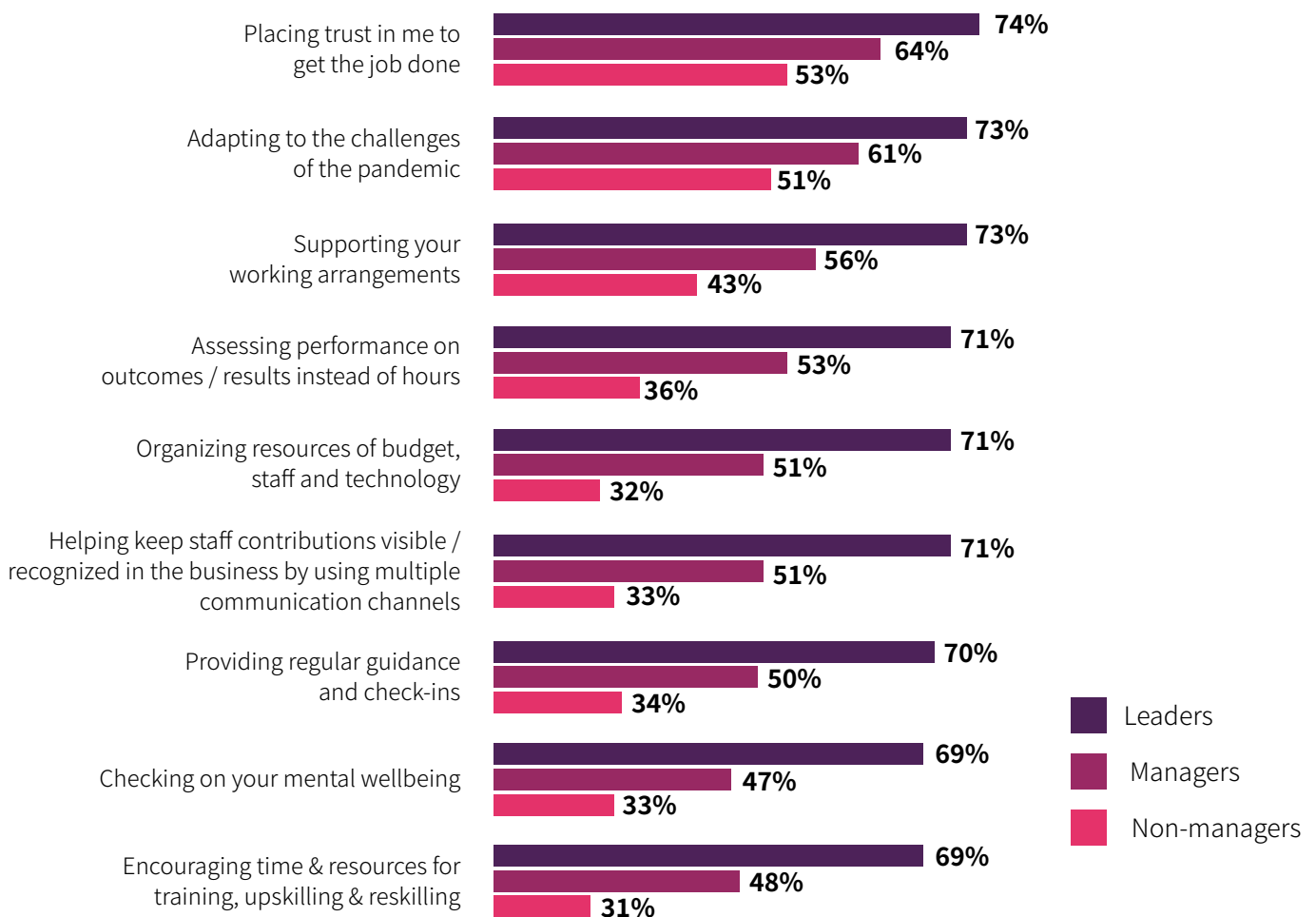
Only 64 percent of managers and 46 percent of non-managers believe there is a clear strategy to train workers in digital skills. Just over half of managers and only one-third of non-managers believe their organizations are making sufficient investments in skills development and providing regular skills assessments and development plans.

“The gap between what senior leaders think they are doing in skills and career development, and what their employees think, has become too big to ignore,” said Izabella Khazagerova, LHH SVP and Global Head of Talent Mobility and Future of Work Solutions. “It suggests that organizations either underinvest or invest in wrong initiatives. The result is too many barriers that keep people from taking charge of their careers and learning.”

# Managers can't encourage career development because they aren't getting career development

Non-management take a much less favorable view of managerial performance across a range of leadership tenets

% Who say their manager has met or exceeded their expectations in the following (NET Met or exceeded expectations)



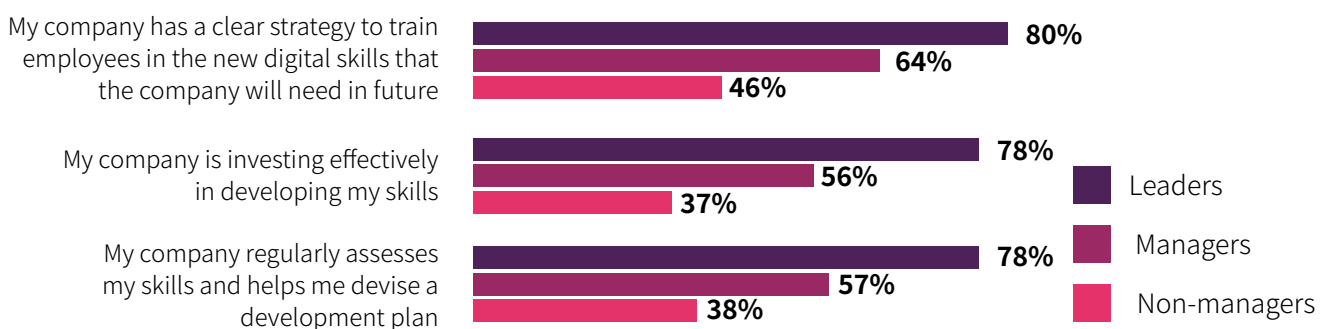
Q8. Thinking about how your manager / employer has performed in the following areas in the last 12 months, to what extent, if at all, have they met your expectations? Base: All respondents (14,800), Leaders (1,427), Managers (6,978), Non-managers (6,171)

One of the most interesting findings of our survey was the extent to which managers – those critically important frontline people leaders – are not encouraging skills or career development in the people who report to them. The survey found only 36 percent of non-manager respondents get regular career guidance from their managers, and only 31 percent said they are being encouraged to undertake training or re-/upskilling.

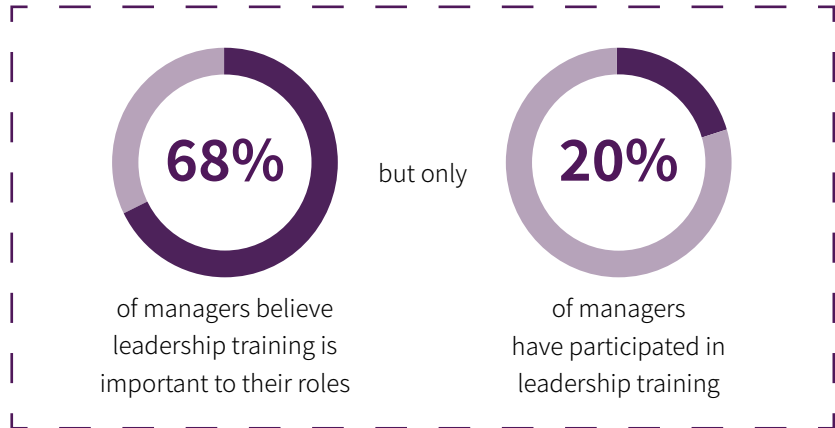
Given that meaningful career conversations are considered table stakes for people leaders these days, that is a startling result. However, drilling deeper into this phenomenon we find out that senior leaders and managers are not encouraging their people to undertake re-/upskilling or development because they aren't making time for those learning activities.

## Importance of skills and career development may be a belief among leadership, but it is not a reality felt throughout the business

% Who say their company is doing the following (NET Agree)



Q7. Thinking about how well-equipped you currently are for work, how far would you agree or disagree with the following? (NET Agree) Q19. How far would you agree or disagree with the following statements about the future of work after the pandemic? (NET Agree) Base: Leaders (1,427), Managers (6,978), Non-managers (6,171)



A solid 68 percent of managers believe that leadership upskilling is important for their roles. However, only 22 percent have participated in this kind of training. A similar gap exists for senior leaders: 78 percent believe that coaching is important but only 31 percent have done, or are currently involved in, leadership training of any kind.

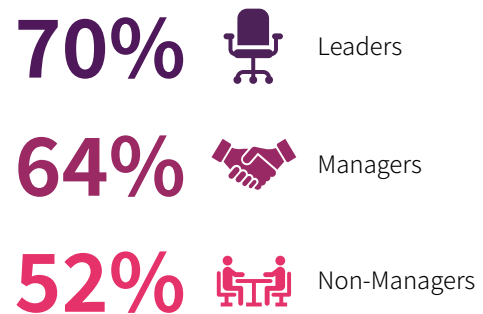
Overall, it is becoming increasingly clear that frontline managers are simply not getting the kind of support they need to embrace learning and development themselves, and then encourage the same in the people they are leading. For example, almost half of manager respondents said they are struggling to support the career development of their staffs.



Since companies are not taking steps to upskill them, 60% of workers are taking it upon themselves to do new courses and qualifications



Say they have already taken / are taking / are considering taking a new course / qualification / other professional development



Q33. Have you done or considered doing any of the following in response to the changes in working life over the last 12 months? (NET Already done / doing / considering) Base: All respondents (14,800), Leaders (1,427), Managers (6,978), Non-managers (6,171)

“It’s simply not enough for senior leaders to mouth the words around skills and career development,” said IZABELLA KHAZAGEROVA. “They need to lead by example and become career stewards and coaches.

They must also be willing to review existing HR processes and tools to create opportunities to promote and redeploy internal talent in ways that connect with an individual’s career aspirations.”



# What you can do to address the disconnect: Three best practices for engaging employees in setting career goals

## 1 Ensure everybody has regular, meaningful career conversations.



Broad discussions about current and future roles must take place between employees and managers, senior leaders, career sponsors or mentors and, if possible, external career coaches. There should be a system in place so that if any one conversation fails, the employee knows where to turn next for career support and guidance. You may want to leverage existing HR processes like performance reviews to create opportunities for these conversations. This is about making it clear to managers that it is part of their job to help everyone get the most of their careers.

## 2 Make it easier to hire internally than externally.



Paradoxically, we tend to know more about the skills and career aspirations of external talent than existing employees. The result is that many organizations would rather hire externally than look for someone within. The introduction of mobility tools or an internal talent exchange can remove some of the barriers that discourage internal mobility.

## 3 Set up the aspiration to build the culture of life-long learning and internal mobility.



Given the disconnect that exists between leaders and employees on career and skilling support, it is very important to communicate a long-term vision for career and skill development. This vision needs to offer a clear picture of your organization's current and future skill needs, along with expectations that employees need to take charge of their own careers and put in the work to define their career aspirations. Career and skill development can only be successful if everyone is doing their part.



# Summary

Companies will always need to look outside their own workforces to find particular people with special skillsets. But that challenge can be managed much more effectively if there has been an effort to find the hidden value that exists within existing employees and investing in their development. That is the win-win strategy for addressing the skills gap, maintaining a robust internal talent pipeline, and helping employees achieve their full potential.



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CAREERS



**reach**  
POTENTIAL



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INSIGHT



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SKILLS