

Time for a change?

A research report
into the professional
fulfilment experienced by
tomorrow's leaders

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“Many junior and middle managers ask for more leadership development, but don’t understand that the next step is not upwards, but outwards. They will have to start leading outwards, however uncomfortable it feels, before they can go upwards. They have to understand that they have a responsibility to their team to influence not only upwards but outwards too.”

Julia Middleton, founder and Chief Executive, Common Purpose
from her book *Beyond Authority: Leadership in a Changing World*

This survey was conducted online among 200 junior and middle managers aged over 25 from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors by an independent professional market researcher. Over two-thirds of those surveyed are in the 25-34 age group. The research builds on “SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING - Exploring the career traps and ambitions of young people,” a 2004 research report by Common Purpose.

Foreword

“The most successful and dynamic organisations whether they be private, public or not-for-profit, are those that truly seek out and listen to lateral thought and new ideas...”

As providers of leadership development programmes for people of all ages and backgrounds and across all sectors, we make a continual and determined effort to find out what truly makes people tick – and, conversely, what gradually dims creative essence and enthusiasm.

At Common Purpose, we see all too often that young managers full of ideas and enthusiasm feel thwarted in their efforts to make a real difference to their organisations and to society. This is disheartening and gradually undermines confidence.

And yet, we also meet many truly inspirational people of all ages whose enthusiasm and creativity is contagious and acts as a catalyst for others. In many ways, this is what our leadership development programmes are all about – reawakening the dormant life-force that can instill passion into all our working lives.

It's easy to talk about a commitment to encouraging young talent to blossom, but how many employers truly make - or allow - this to happen?

The motivation for this research was a desire to understand more about the opportunities and the barriers for emerging leaders, and what is required to really flourish in today's leadership roles. What are the career traps that limit young managers and keep them from fulfilling their potential as leaders of tomorrow?

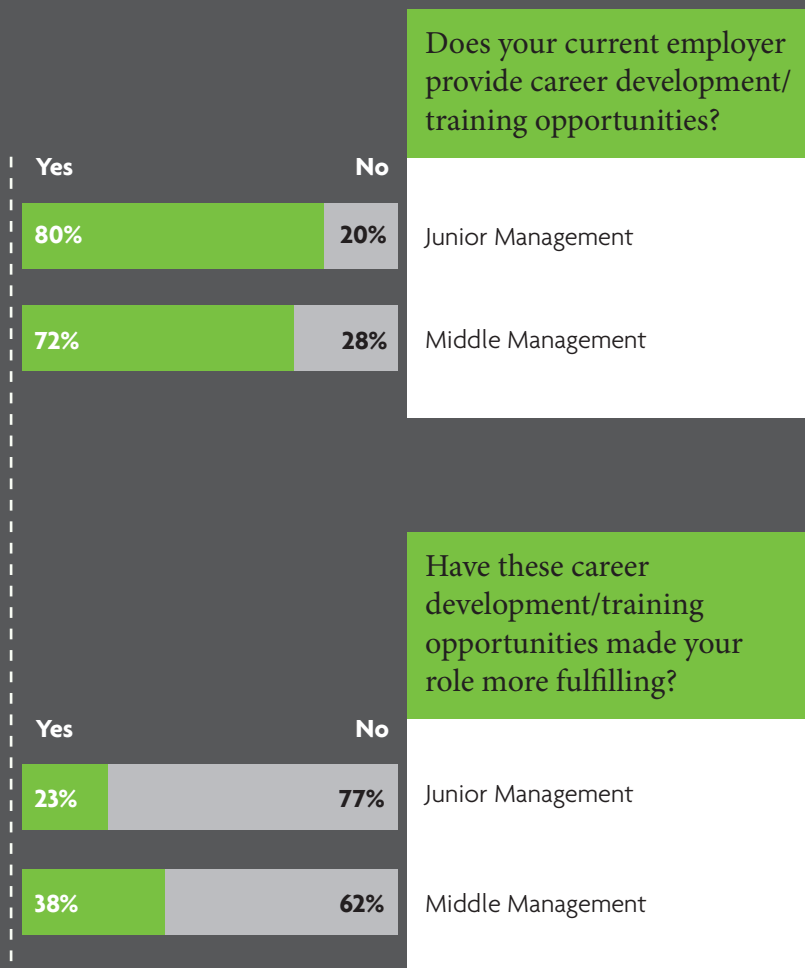
In our foundation research into young leaders, three years ago, we found that young people thirst for meaning in their lives, and are not fulfilled by their work. Unfortunately, not a lot has changed, though the world moves on apace.

Young and talented leaders are less likely to stay with employers who stifle their ability to express themselves than at any other time in our history. The world is changing but this most recent survey suggests that organisations of all sectors are failing to respond to those changes when it comes to creating an environment in which young managers are truly free to manage and make change.

The most successful and dynamic organisations whether they be private, public or not-for-profit, are those that truly listen and seek out new ideas. Organisations must be open to dynamism and change to fire the passion of the people they depend on for future success – or they will wither and die.

Julia Middleton, CEO and founder of Common Purpose, October 2007

Key findings at-a-glance



- Over half of young managers feel unfulfilled in their current roles.
- Half of all junior and middle managers are either actively searching for or thinking about a new job.
- Half of young managers want clearer career development plans and a greater input into the decision-making that impacts on their role.
- Nearly all managers receive training, but only a third of young managers, across sectors, find that training rewarding in terms of job fulfilment.
- Training is perceived to enhance career prospects, but over two-thirds of young managers feel that it falls short of addressing wider aspirations and life goals.
- Over 40% of young managers feel that more access to peer-to-peer learning and external experiences would benefit them.

Unfulfilled and caught in a trap

The level of fulfillment experienced by young managers across sectors declines as they move through their thirties.

Most young managers feel relatively unfulfilled in their current roles. Overall, 53% of young managers were unable to describe feeling either “quite” or “very” fulfilled in their current careers.

A third of all respondents are not at all or just a little fulfilled in their current jobs.

Men feel more unfulfilled than women. Almost two-thirds of male young managers do not feel “quite” or “very” fulfilled in their current roles, whilst 40% of women feel the same way.

The level of dissatisfaction in job fulfillment peaks as managers across sectors approach their mid 30s, peaking in the 30-34 age group before dropping markedly from 35.

Time for a change?

Are junior and middle managers thinking about a career change due to dissatisfaction with their jobs?

Half of all junior and middle managers are either actively searching for or thinking about a new job.

The level of dissatisfaction is highest in the not-for-profit sector, where 75% of respondents are thinking about, or actively seeking, a change.

In the private sector, just over half of all respondents are considering a change of role, whilst in the public sector, 43% are either thinking about or actively seeking change.

Men are more likely than women to be thinking about or actively looking for a career change.

Where do we go from here?

How do young managers think their roles could be made more fulfilling?

Young managers want clearer career development plans. Almost half of all respondents cited this need, which was particularly prevalent among junior managers (55%).

Ongoing development is also a big issue as 42% of respondents feel that continued exposure to personal / professional development would make their roles more fulfilling.

A third of all respondents would prefer a closer fit between their organisation's and their personal values. Unsurprisingly, none of the managers working in the not-for-profit sector cited this as a factor.

Just over half (52%) of all respondents would like to be able to input more into decisions that impact on their role. This resonates with findings from Common Purpose's corresponding 2004 survey which found that 47% of young managers felt they didn't have enough career control.

Over a third of young managers felt that continued tailored personal / professional development would make their roles more fulfilling.

Twice as many men (22%) than women (11%) would like to "give something back to society" to enhance their job fulfilment, while a third of the men and a fifth of the women want to be able to operate more strategically.

The desire for more opportunities to input to decision making that directly impacts the individual's role and responsibility is felt most keenly by managers over 40. This is also felt more keenly by men (49%) than women (40%) and, perhaps unsurprisingly, this is more an issue for junior managers (52%) than middle ranking managers (44%).

The older respondents crave excitement. Continued exposure to new and exciting opportunities would appeal to 58% of managers over 40, whilst 47% of all male managers and 38% of women feel the same way.

A training shortfall

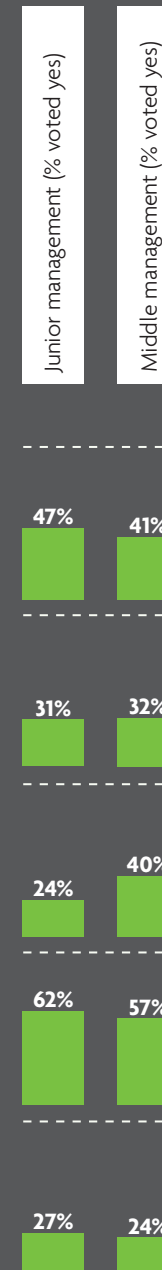
Nearly all organisations provide training and development for the young managers – but does it lead to job fulfilment?

Three quarters of young managers receive training, but only a third of managers, across sectors, find that training rewarding in terms of job fulfilment.

The private, public and not-for-profit sectors provide equal training opportunities, and are broadly equal when it comes to the success – or lack of it – in providing training which is inspiring to managers.

Unfortunately over half of all respondents (57%) claim that training helps them progress in their career within their organisation, but only 27% claim the training/development addresses their wider aspirations and life goals.

Just over a third of young managers (36%) claim the training/development increases their confidence and personal impact.



What would make training more fulfilling?

More access to external experiences and peer learning

More access to diverse people / new people outside of my sector / profession

More strategic development

More specific development of professional skills

An opportunity to benchmark myself against professionals in other sectors

Real skills required

If training is falling short of its *raison d'être* - what would make it more fulfilling?

Young managers yearn for more specific professional skills-based training. Well over half the respondents cited the need for more specific development of professional skills. This need is particularly keenly felt by junior and middle managers (60%).

A third of respondents want increased access to diverse people and new people outside their own sector while a similar percentage feel that more strategic development would make their roles more fulfilling. Again, this is particularly noticeable among junior and middle managers (50%). It is also felt by men (45%) more than women (22%).

Overall, 44% of respondents feel that more access to peer-to-peer learning and external experiences would benefit them. This is felt more or less equally by all levels of seniority of managers, but more keenly by younger people (53% of under 25s).

Over a third of 30-34 year olds are looking for a closer fit between their organisation and their personal values. Over half the same age group are looking for a clearer development path and more opportunities to input to decision-making that directly impacts their role and responsibility.

Time for some DIY?

Are young managers taking matters into their own hands?

Three quarters of respondents have considered ways to make their jobs more fulfilling and only 16% claim their employer has helped them.

Only a third feel they have had the support of their employer once they have investigated training/development opportunities themselves. Common Purpose's 2004 survey found that 34% of young managers stated that their employers do not help them and 33% left companies after completing graduate training schemes.

Unfortunately nearly 1 in 3 (27%) young managers don't know how to find out about training and development opportunities that will make their jobs and their lives more fulfilling.

Escaping the trap

Tips for employees

- Put yourself forward for new projects, and suggest innovative ways of taking your organisation forward.
- Take on leadership roles outside your organisation.
- Connect with your peers in other sectors and consider ways that you can share knowledge and experience of management in your sectors. Work together to identify learning and development opportunities which you could offer each other.
- Broaden your network inside your organisation. This will help you to spot new opportunities to learn and develop.
- Let your employer know that you are keen to be challenged and developed by new and diverse experiences.

Tips for employers

- Consider leadership development that will provide experiences to help your emerging leaders develop in their role as well as in their broader life.
- Encourage employees to take up leadership roles outside of work, and be supportive of endeavours that will allow them to enrich their life.
- Actively promote and facilitate them developing networks with their peers in other sectors and industries
- Provide opportunities for emerging leaders to work on cross-organisational projects that will provide them with new experiences and development opportunities.
- Be receptive to their ideas for how they would like to learn and develop.

About Common Purpose

Inspiring leaders around the world to make positive change happen. An independent, not-for-profit, international leadership development organisation.

What is Common Purpose?

Since 1989, Common Purpose has been helping people in leadership and decision-making positions to be more effective: in their own organisations, in the community and in society as a whole.

We run a variety of programmes for leaders of all ages, backgrounds and sectors, in order to provide them with the inspiration, the knowledge and the connections and they need to make real change happen.

Over 120,000 leaders have participated in Common Purpose programmes. We run more than 70 programmes in 70 locations around the world, operating throughout the UK and in Hungary, South Africa, Sweden, The Netherlands, Ireland, France and Germany. Common Purpose is developing programmes in Ghana, India, and Turkey.

Common Purpose believes that...

- the problems that most need solving cross boundaries
- the way to solve them is to do the same
- that leaders are most effective when they broaden their horizons and their networks real change doesn't just happen: leaders need to make it happen.

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