



Level *up.*

Five skills you need to lead high-performing teams in the “next normal”.

First line of *defense*.

Frontline managers continue to be an organization's first line of defense against growing employee burnout and attrition. They are the single-biggest influence on employee experience, productivity, and well-being.

At the same time, in the rapidly changing, tech-enabled world, we're asking employees to do different types of work, to learn faster and adapt more often and more quickly. This demands more of employees and their managers. The combined shifts in customer requirements, workplace conditions, and employee needs are so complex, managers cannot rely just on traditional leadership skills to address them.

Our research indicates that managers who invest in building a new set of leadership skills — ones that promote performance, job satisfaction, resilience, and stress management — are more effective and successful in today's dynamic workplace.



Front-line managers are critical to business success and drive.

BetterUp Labs, a team of Ph.D. behavioral scientists at BetterUp dedicated to research on human thriving at work, conducted research on over 4,000 BetterUp members to understand what skills managers most need in 2021 and beyond.³ Drawing on our data from new and experienced managers, their direct reports, and their supervisors, we've identified five critical individual skills managers will need in order to improve their own performance while also addressing the complex needs of their teams.

¹ Harvard Business Review - Frontline Managers: Are they given the leadership tools to succeed? (2014)

² Gallup - Only 1 in 10 people possess the talent to manage (April, 2015)

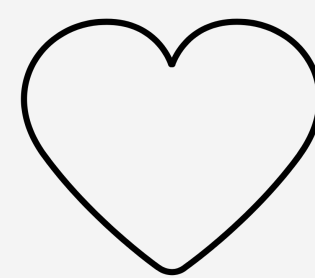
³ BetterUp Labs - Based on BetterUp member data (2021)

The new *core skills.*



FOCUS

The top contributor to success, driving job performance and productivity.



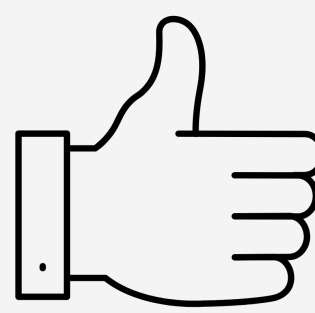
SELF-COMPASSION

The extent to which we treat ourselves with kindness and empathetic understanding.



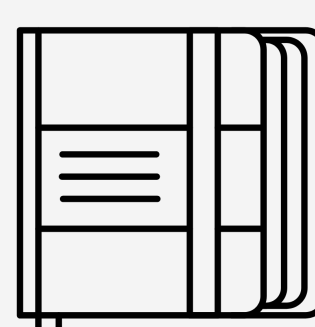
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

How we build and maintain meaningful leadership and social relationships with our co-workers.



ALIGNMENT

The bridge between your organization's strategy and how you execute day-to-day to achieve goals.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

How we pragmatically think through how to achieve our future goals.

Increasing
focus.

1

In today's connected workplace, we all struggle with focus at times. Yet when people hone their focus as a skill, it's the top contributor to success, driving job performance and productivity. Our BetterUp member research indicates that people with high focus levels are also more likely to have outsized goal attainment relative to their peers.

Studies show it takes approximately 23 minutes to regain focus on a task after being distracted.⁴ With the average employee losing more than two hours a day to interruptions,⁵ managers who effectively tap into, model, and support focus can create more space to work on critical initiatives.

Focus also helps managers more intimately understand employees' individual needs, which directly impacts feelings of belonging and engagement for the entire team.

Direct reports of highly-focused managers have 8% *higher focus* than their peers with less focused managers.⁶

Why this matters.

Scheduling "deep work" time can help minimize daily distractions to allow us to focus on things that truly matter. As pioneered by Georgetown professor Cal Newport, deep work is "activity performed in a state of distraction-free concentration that pushes your cognitive capabilities to their limit." Creating this heads down time is proven to help busy leaders focus on what's needed to drive meaningful and sustained impact for their organization and team and reduce the drain of busy work.

Block your calendar

Schedule a set amount of time for deep work every day.

Choose a theme

Assign specific tasks or projects to each deep work session.

Create structure

Turn off device notifications or switch rooms. Set a reliable routine.

Tips to *build* a deep work routine.

⁴ Gloria Mark, UC Irvine -The cost of interrupted work (2008)

⁵ Business Insider - The perils of multitasking (2012)

⁶ BetterUp Labs - Based on BetterUp member data (2021)

Cultivating
self-compassion.



Self-compassion is the extent to which we treat ourselves with kindness and empathetic understanding. When managers have compassion toward themselves, they're more resilient in the face of complex challenges and setbacks. Resilience is a key skill, that if modeled correctly by managers, can also drive positive employee outcomes — every one-point boost in resilience is associated with 36% lower employee burnout.⁷

Self-compassion can also help us be more self-aware when it comes to criticism — an essential trait for being an inclusive leader. Imperfection is human, and by accepting it, managers can better identify with themselves, and in turn, help support every individual team member with their needs, too.

People high in self-compassion are 26% more likely to have *favorable reports of stress* and 18% more likely to be *highly resilient*.⁸

Get a boost.

Practicing mindfulness is proven to build more awareness around negative experiences, emotions, or thoughts in ways that promote self-compassion without rumination.⁹ Start by reflecting on negative beliefs you hold about yourself and then write them down. By externalizing these thoughts, you can redirect negative thoughts to more neutral or positive thinking. Mindfulness exercises like this can help managers extend more empathy for themselves and their team members.

Know your triggers

When negative self-beliefs arise, ask yourself where they originate.

Explore your emotions

Work to build awareness of judgmental or negative thoughts.

Care for yourself

How would you support a friend in this situation? Apply that same care inward.

Tips to *promote* self-compassion.

⁷ American Medical Association - Burnout isn't due to resiliency deficit. It's a system issue. (July, 2020)

⁸ BetterUp Labs - Based on BetterUp member data (2021)

⁹ Positive Psychology - What is mindful self-compassion? (October, 2020)

Building
relationships.



Relationship building is how we build and maintain meaningful leadership and social relationships with our co-workers. Our member research shows that when managers play a central role in facilitating open communication, employees can build the healthy relationships that drive belonging. When successful, relationship building in the workplace has a direct impact on employee performance with highly inclusive teams outperforming their less inclusive peers by 27%.¹⁰

Teams with high relationship building skills are *20% more likely* to have high levels of engagement.¹¹

Every
manager
is *unique*.

Our ability to effectively build relationships is shaped by a complex set of inner and outer factors, from beliefs we carry about ourselves and others to the degree of safety or acceptance in an organization. Personalized, 1:1 coaching is proven to help managers boost their relationship building skills because it can address the unique needs and challenges of each individual.

BetterUp uses science, content, and technology to help managers learn how to foster strong interpersonal relationships, cultivate psychological safety, and create a climate of trust and inclusivity. New managers who used BetterUp coaching grew their relationship building skills 1.5x in 3-4 months.

Practice vulnerability

Acknowledge your feelings and practice sharing them with your team.

Strengthen communication

Frequent and transparent communication keeps today's dispersed teams connected.

Grow together

Direct reports say they have 15% higher social connection when their manager is skilled in building relationships.

Tips to *build* relationships.

¹⁰ Deloitte - A new recipe to improve business performance (May, 2013)

¹¹ BetterUp Labs - Based on BetterUp member data (2021)

Aligning *strategy*
and execution.

4

Alignment is the bridge between your organization's strategy and how you execute day-to-day to achieve its goals. But in today's hybrid work environment of distributed teams, a manager's inability to align their team's work and provide clarity can negatively impact employee engagement and performance. Sixty-one percent of workers say their organizations fail to bridge the gap between establishing a strategy and actually taking action to implement it day to day.¹²

When managers align individual efforts and processes to create clarity and a shared vision and purpose, they create a cohesive, driven, and wellguided team equipped to achieve organizational goals. Several studies found that employees who feel directly aligned with their company's purpose are 3X less likely to look for a new job and have increased performance.¹³

When a leader is highly skilled in alignment, direct reports rate them as *more competent* and having *better decision-making skills*.¹⁴

Listen well.

Alignment is rooted in clear understanding and effective communication. Start by understanding the inputs from across your entire team rather than taking a top-down approach, which can miss important information, create a sense of exclusion, and negatively impact team performance and business outcomes. Instead, by seeking out feedback, perspectives, and recommendations from all your people, you enhance your organization's ability to sense, innovate, and adapt.

Make shared goals

Move away from individual goals as a marker for success.

Foster open communication

Your entire team should help shape the vision.

Open door policy

Solicit feedback and advice regularly from every direct report.

Tips to *promote* team alignment.

¹² The Economist - Why good strategies fail (2013)

¹³ Josh Bersin - 5 things to consider in a red hot job market (March, 2021)

¹⁴ BetterUp Labs - Based on BetterUp member data (2021)

Strategic planning.

5

Strategic planning is how we pragmatically think through how to achieve our future goals. By envisioning desired future states and resolving how to turn those desires into reality, we can enhance personal meaning and motivation. Strategic planning is an important skill to managers because it creates a shared roadmap to the future for all team members, helps anticipate blockers, and develops contingencies. Although planning has taken on a new shape since the pandemic began, direct reports say that managers with high strategic-planning skills result in them feeling lower stress and higher focus in their own work.

Leaders high in strategic planning have direct reports who say their teams can handle *change and be agile* — 14x greater than teams without a leader with this skill.¹⁵

Agility training.

1:1 coaching is one of the most effective ways for managers to build resilience and adaptability needed to plan in today's new work environment. BetterUp members report that, on average, their strategic planning skills improve 228% in just 3-4 months with the help of sciencebacked and personalized approaches from their coaches.

Plan realistically

Don't just set goals, understand obstacles that may arise along the way.

Write the future

Daily journaling can help improve focus needed for strategic planning.

Be adaptive

BetterUp managers say coaching gives them the skills needed to easily pivot when conditions change.

Tips to *strengthen* strategic planning.

Partner with BetterUp.

BetterUp partners with the world's leading enterprise companies to drive the deep and lasting change in mindsets, behaviors, and skills needed to foster a culture of inclusion and belonging. Combining the science, coaching, and leading-edge technology, companies can now address pervasively rooted challenges with a personalized, high-touch, and scalable approach.

Science backed approach.

Our evidence-based methodology and program design incorporates insights, techniques, and activities from the latest scientific research. BetterUp's approach is informed by the experts on our Science Board, including Quinetta Roberson, a leading researcher on diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace, and Robin Ely, founder of the Harvard Business School Gender Initiative.

Coaching for all.

Because it meets every individual where they are and provides a safe place for exploration, coaching is particularly well suited for engaging sensitive issues surrounding diversity and inclusion. All BetterUp coaches are equipped to further coach on the topic of Diversity & Inclusion with the completion of a new 12-week certificate course: Coaching for Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging. Specialist and group coaching focus on creating a greater sense of belonging for members, teams, and organizations by having constructive conversations and taking action to further diversity, inclusion, and belonging.



Leading edge technology.

BetterUp's platform builds focus and accountability through personal goal tracking, handpicked resources mapped with those goals, and nudges to keep users on track and notify them of other learning opportunities. We are committed to mitigating bias in our product research, design, and development. We include a review of the language we use and ensure the demographics of our research samples reflect the increasing diversity of our Member population.

Build an inclusive culture where everyone feels like they belong.

[Schedule a demo](#)