

# Managers' 12 toughest problems — and our best advice for each of them

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Tags: [Articles](#), [Manager Survey](#)

We asked our users: “What’s your biggest current work-related challenge?” More than 200 of you replied with issues spanning some 40 different areas, from those facing unfair pay and toxic work environments to those wanting to boost their influence and reputations.

Here are the 12 challenges reported most frequently, plus our best resources to help with each. And don’t worry if yours isn’t listed here — we’ll use your input to guide our future resources.

## 1. Managing my time.

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This most common challenge often plays out as having too much to do and too little time, interruptions, or your calendar being eaten up by meetings. And what gets sacrificed? Your work/life balance, your availability to your team, and strategic improvements that could happen with a little more time to think.

For help **devising a time management system** and **determining what work is most important**, check out:

## 2. Keeping my team motivated and engaged.

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Some of you reported individual direct reports or entire teams whose excitement for the work comes and goes — or seems lost forever. Some of you chalked it up to people’s roles being monotonous or short on growth opportunities. Many of you were stumped about team members who were negative or there just to collect a paycheck, worried that the apathy could spread. Not on your watch!

For our best tactics for **motivating people** and **helping team members engage more fully with goals**, plus a question guide for **running the kind of 1-on-1s that prevent motivation and engagement problems** in the first place, check out:

## 3. Getting my team to be accountable and take ownership.

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Missing deadlines, leaving early (every day), cutting corners, complaining without offering solutions, and not proactively reaching out for help — these are just a few of the ways you reported that team members fail to take responsibility for their work. What can you do to turn things around? More than you might think.

For our best tips on **increasing your team's sense of accountability** and **giving feedback so direct reports understand where they stand and where they need to go**, check out:

## 4. Dealing with change and uncertainty.

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No matter the sort of change or lack of clarity you encounter, many of you experience a real battle to get buy-in and keep morale from plummeting.

For our best advice on **introducing change to your team** and **navigating times when the path forward isn't so clear**, check out:

- [How to communicate change to your team](#)
- [8 ways to better manage ambiguity and uncertainty](#)

## 5. Coaching and developing others.

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Many of you pointed out that's it not always a lack of motivation (No. 2) or lack of accountability (No. 3) that's holding your team back. Often, it's the need to build direct reports' skills — both for their current roles and for the future (which, conveniently, will likely make them happier, more motivated, and more productive today).

For our best advice on **coaching and supporting direct reports** for today and **helping them grow** for the future, check out:

## 6. Lack of communication and support from upper-level management.

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Many of you feel you aren't getting enough from above — not enough information, feedback, or the help you need to do your job well.

For our best advice on **framing conversations with your boss** and **when and how to be more proactive with your boss**, check out:

## 7. Hiring and onboarding to build capacity.

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Hiring is a process — an arduous one prone to costly, time-consuming missteps. And many of you pointed out that even after hiring someone, it takes tremendous time and effort to get them performing.

For guidance on **each step of the hiring process**, as well as **interview question suggestions** and **advice for effective onboarding** of new hires, check out:

## 8. Poor relationships with managers of other teams.

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Several of you reported poor communication and a lack of help from peer managers — the people who are supposed to be driving toward the same organizational goals as you. Even more annoying, others reported peers bossing them around.

For our best advice on **fostering and improving peer relationships** and **convincing peers to work with you**, check out:

- [4 ways to strengthen your peer network \(and become a more effective manager\)](#)
- [17 ways to persuade](#)

## 9. Balancing my individual work with my management duties.

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Nearly everyone who manages people has to juggle multiple roles. And many of you struggle with having competing obligations and feeling like you're not spending enough time on one role or another.

For our best advice on **balancing individual work with management responsibilities**, being wise about **not trying to do everything**, plus **growing in your role as a leader**, check out:

## 10. Managing remote teams.

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Those of you leading people spread across offices and time zones pointed to the challenge of getting everyone communicating and working as one team. And it's not just about getting things done. Several of you reported remote workers feeling isolated and detached.

For advice on **managing remote team members** and **improving remote team communication and culture**, check out:

## 11. Teamwork and trust.

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Some of you reported having direct reports who mistrust you and hesitate to come to you, even when they run into trouble. Others noted the mistrust was between team members — squashing internal team communication and collaboration. Bottom line: Without trust, it's impossible to work well as a team.

For our best tips and tactics on **fostering team trust** and **improving team communication**, check out:

## 12. Managing conflict between others.

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You reported witnessing disputes between direct reports or dealing with angry, bitter colleagues. Beyond being an uncomfortable distraction, many of you feared these conflicts would spread negativity to the entire team or department. Others wondered how to address such issues with courage and confidence.

For our best tips on **approaching and responding to conflicts**, check out:

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