

New research: The top five traits of good (and bad) managers

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A group of five diverse people (three men and two women) are smiling and giving thumbs up. They are wearing casual business attire. The image is slightly blurred, focusing on the gesture.

Discover who and what is driving the delivery of a better managed Britain, day in and day out. Plus, these CMI community shoutouts are guaranteed to put a smile on your face

When CMI's CEO Ann Francke OBE recently appeared on the Working It podcast, hosted by the FT's Isabel Berwick, talk turned inevitably to the subject of good leadership. Ann said it's "worth billions to the economy. The impact is enormous."

Indeed, quality management can make a huge difference to everything from achieving business objectives to talent retention and working environments. It can make people more productive, better organised and more engaged. In the context of a rapidly changing economic and social tides, such traits can make the difference between sailing and sinking.

The wrong approach can be just as impactful. Bad management can erode people's job satisfaction and motivation, and even drive them out of the door. CMI's Better Managed Britain report, a groundbreaking look into the state of management and leadership around the country, found that 50% of employees with ineffective managers are planning to leave their role within the next 12 months.

THE TOP FIVE QUALITIES OF AN INEFFECTIVE LEADER

ACCORDING TO THE UK WORKFORCE



From CMI's Better Management report (2023). Learn more [here](#)

But what does good management look like?

Bring to mind your favourite manager. What was it that made them so great? Were they kind? Knowledgeable? Supportive?

CMI's landmark research in partnership with YouGov surveyed more than 1000 managers around the UK and calculated the top five qualities that together define good management. They are: effective communication, showing empathy and understanding, making fair and unbiased decisions, the ability to delegate effectively and supporting and encouraging growth & development.

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communication



empathy



decision making



delegation



development

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Monika, Jerry and Hannah – take a bow

Of course, management isn't merely a list of traits. It's about the people who put those qualities into action. Good management lives in their skills, personalities, deeds and the extra mile they go to help shape the lives of the people on their teams.

We never tire of stories of inspirational leaders, so we asked the CMI community to share stories of the managers they've had who have sparked, supported and shaped their working lives...

Amy Lea described how she's still guided by the influence of one particular manager from the very early days of her career. Having returned from travelling, Amy had taken a part-time role for a company that helped people back into work. For her, that largely meant typing up CVs and making tea. But one of the managers there insisted she take an introductory course with the Open University. "I hadn't gone to college or uni, so this was totally alien to me," Amy recalls. "But he seemed invested in me and believed I could do it, so I went for it!"

The course Amy took – in psychology – has shaped everything ever since. Having gone on to become an employment coach, she is now a manager in mental healthcare.

My former office manager Hannah has set an unbelievable precedent of what and who a manager should be. She gave me the space to develop my own self-management, but was

always there to offer a helping hand should I need it. This has been fundamental in growing my confidence and trusting my instinct to make correct and rewarding decisions.

Kate Walker, Chartered Apprentice, in-office administrator at the office for Mark Jenkinson, MP for Workington

Paul Holbrook recalled a similarly supportive early experience, asserting that his first manager, **Jerry Shewell**, was the best he ever had. Paul explained that, after he joined Credit Suisse as a graduate, Jerry “gave me enough space to explore and enough support to make sure I didn’t fail”.

Give a shout out to your favourite manager

CMI is amplifying the impact that good management can make. Tell us the impact it’s had on you

And it’s not all about the past. When Ajaya Sankar wrote that the best managers “blend people-centred leadership with business acumen”, listing qualities such as “communication”, “empowerment”, “support”, “agility” and “collaboration”, it prompted Dianna E to respond: “You have just described my current manager to a T. By far the best I’ve ever had!” **Monika Braglewicz**, take a bow.

Other tributes were just as touching. Taken together, they suggest that the best managers are empathetic and caring, as well as supportive. They want you to succeed. And they can have a major impact even if you’re not with them for long. Emma Bell-Davies’ only worked for one of her best managers for about six months. But “they put me first,” she wrote.

“They were always concerned about how I was as a person, they cared and genuinely wanted me to succeed and be successful... That meant so much to me. It made me feel more valued than I had with any other manager I’ve had.”

<https://www.managers.org.uk/knowledge-and-insights/listicle/the-top-five-traits-of-good-and-bad-managers/>

Questions to discuss:

- According to Ann Francke, how significant is good leadership to the economy?
- What are some of the positive effects of quality management on a business and its employees?
- What are some of the negative impacts of bad management on employees?
- What statistic from CMI’s Better Managed Britain report highlights the urgency of addressing poor management?