

## Versatile leadership: a remedy for low worker engagement

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Engaged employees are helping ramp up the business bottom line. According to Gallup's most recent State of the [Global Workplace Report](#), companies with engaged employees are enjoying a 21% increase in business profitability.

On local shores, 23% of Australia's employees are engaged in their work, putting them on par with the global average.

However, statistics still show that 67% of Australian employees are 'quietly quitting' and are not engaged in their work. This is costing the Australian economy [an estimated](#) \$2 billion, and is eroding the success of businesses. Studies carried out by the Queens School of Business and the Gallup Organisation found that disengaged workers have 37% higher absenteeism, 49% more accidents, and 60% more errors and defects.

"Significantly, Gallup's Global Workplace Report notes that 70% of team engagement is attributable to the manager. To address low engagement, we must address leadership," explains Hazel Stewart, MD of Innovate Learn, a Melbourne-based distributor of solutions from Wilson Learning Worldwide. "The development of leadership versatility can be a formidable remedy. According to Wilson Learning's research, versatile leadership translates into an increase in engagement and productivity, by as much as 56%,"

### What is a versatile leader?

"Versatile leadership is about more than being a good leader. It's about having a range of skills, qualities and approaches that can be adapted and adjusted in different situations, depending on the needs of the team or the organisation. A versatile leader knows how to motivate, inspire, delegate, collaborate, and make difficult decisions with finesse," says Hazel.

### 5 tips to build diverse leadership skills

1. **Learn to communicate more effectively with diverse stakeholders:** It's critical to support communication training with coaching that develops leaders' interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence and negotiation skills. This becomes important in managing change, as is the case when implementing new tools or technology, for example.
2. **Continuous learning to develop versatility of knowledge:** Coaching, development courses and mentoring are also extremely valuable. Considering the rapid rise of new technology in

industry— from robotics to automation – it’s critical that leaders stay up to date on the latest trends, developments, and best practices. Digital literacy and tech savvy are a must.

3. **Rotate and cross-collaborate to develop versatility of knowledge and experience:** Provide leaders with opportunities to work across different departments, projects or disciplines. This not only adds to their functional knowledge but also enables them to build relationships and acquire a broader set of skills and perspectives. This makes them much more dynamic in their leadership.
4. **Build the versatility of problem-solving skills:** Harvard Business School has found that [design thinking](#), paired with leadership skills, empowers teams to take ownership of each part of the innovation-building process and work together more effectively to share their diverse perspectives. Even something as simple as including the team leader in strategic meetings helps to build problem-solving capabilities.
5. **Foster a growth mindset that treats failure as a springboard for learning:** Individuals with a growth mindset embrace innovation and adapt more readily to change, making them very versatile team members. They also overcome adversity and challenge more easily.

“The goal is to create a more productive working environment, where leaders are empowered to help employees adapt and grow as their organisations scales up, adopt new technology and increase their global competitiveness. Businesses cannot afford to retain staff who aren’t sufficiently engaged with their work to make a difference to the bottom line,” concludes Hazel.

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