



## Strengthen your managers' relationships through in-house managers' networks

Managers – like everyone else – need peer communities in which they can see themselves reflected, gain support and develop their practices in interaction with others. This is crucial to their well-being and performance.

A managers' network can serve as a confidential space for mutual support and advice, knowledge sharing and reflection – and create the feeling of being in something together.

This guide has been developed for HR professionals who want to build a stronger platform for sustainable management in organisations. It provides insights on what you need to be aware of if you want to establish in-house managers' networks.

**There are three important things to consider when establishing new managers' networks**



1. Framework



2. Facilitation and culture



3. Topics and methods



# 1. Framework

When establishing an in-house managers' network, HR needs to have the foundation in place from the beginning. This is what you can do:

## 1. Before starting up, consider the following:

- **Purpose:** Why are we establishing a managers' network?
- **Participants:** Who will participate and on what basis?
- **Ground rules:** How do we want to interact? (e.g. confidentiality, opportunity to speak, meeting culture)
- **Structure:** How often do we meet and how?
- **Topics:** What kinds of topics are relevant?
- **Expectations:** What are we committing to? (e.g. active participation, case contribution)

## 2. A managers' network is different from a management team

You should therefore consider the following:

- **Allow a longer time perspective**  
Good networks need time to create security and depth. For example, plan 6-8 meetings over the course of one year.
- **Free the network from operational and decision pressures**  
Be clear to both participants and top management: The network is not meant for reporting or management tasks – it is a space for development. This freedom is a prerequisite for open dialogue and shared learning.
- **Evaluation**  
Evaluate after 6-12 months in relation to process and content.



# 2. Facilitation and the safe space

## How to build community and security in the network

A well-functioning managers' network is based on security and a strong sense of community where participants feel safe to be open, share experiences and challenge each other constructively. The role of the facilitator is central. The facilitator must ensure programme variety, promote meaningful conversations and make room for both professional and informal interaction.

## Consider which facilitator fits your organisation best:

- HR – if it is new and requires a safe environment.
- External consultant – if new inspiration, neutrality or methodological professionalism is needed.
- Participants with rolling facilitation – if the group is more mature and self-motivated. This drives ownership and learning.

The facilitator can introduce the below feedback model, which can be used in the managers' network for evaluation after each meeting, but which is also relevant for managers to use in their everyday work.



### What works well?

What might be useful for you to do more of?



### What can be improved?

What might you benefit from doing less of or doing differently the next time?

It may be relevant to introduce focus on feedback early on in order to create a solid foundation for a positive and respectful feedback culture where learning and development become common practice.





### 3. Topics and methods: What should the network focus on?

Managers' networks create the greatest value when they link the managers' specific challenges to reflection and learning. Give the network access to relevant topics and methods that strengthen direction, well-being and collaboration.

#### **Make room for current topics:**

Let the managers bring up topics themselves. This could be hybrid management, generational management, ethical dilemmas, geopolitical issues, etc.

We recommend that you, HR, distribute a short questionnaire to the managers before your first network meeting to better understand what the managers find relevant.

#### **On start-up, we recommend that the network discusses:**

Topics that strengthen leadership and well-being.

- **Well-being and a well-balanced leadership role**  
Use the materials from 'The manager's oxygen mask' before a network meeting to foster a constructive dialogue on what challenges leaders face – and what helps them cope.
- **As a manager, how can you prevent 'the loneliness of leadership'?**  
Use the materials from 'The manager's relationships' before network meetings as a starting point for discussing how to create healthy relations, promote mental security and prevent conflict.

#### **The role of HR and next steps**

HR plays a key role in establishing sustainable and meaningful managers' networks. Not by taking control, but perhaps by facilitating and supporting the process. HR does not have to do it all, but you could be the ones that make it possible.

If you, as HR consultants, do not take on the role of facilitator, it is still important that you explain your role to the managers. Your first and foremost role is to be a

- **Catalyst** – who sets the network in motion and creates direction and energy around its purpose.
- **Culture carrier and ambassador** – who makes the value of networks visible in the organisation while protecting the space against operational disruption.
- **Supporter and sounding board** – who ensures that a strong framework is set, offers tools and helps adjust form and content on a continuous basis.



#### **For HR and the organisation:**

If you want to know more about how HR can build and strengthen managers' networks and collaboration in management teams, then reach out to Danica to learn about your options.

Because you as  
a manager also  
**deserve a life  
in balance.**