A line manager is a person who directly manages other employees and operations of a business while reporting to a higher ranking manager. The line manager term is often used interchangeably with "direct manager."

Responsibilities

The line (or direct) manager plays an important role in the operation of many businesses. The individual is responsible for managing employees and resources in pursuit of achieving specific functional or organizational goals. Some of the responsibilities of the typical line manager include:

* Recruiting and hiring talent to fill team positions
* Providing training and support to new hires
* [Cross-training](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/cross-training-employees-2275317) employees to ensure job rotation and minimize assignment coverage gaps
* Providing coaching and [performance feedback](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/having-difficult-workplace-discussions-2275815)to all team members
* Communicating and ensuring understanding of functional or departmental goals
* Monitoring individual and team [metrics](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-are-business-metrics-2275174) and performance versus targets
* Identifying the need for corrective actions
* Ensuring quality standards for all processes
* Evaluating overall [team](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/tips-for-getting-started-with-new-team-2275822) and individual performance and delivering the performance reviews
* Engaging with other line managers across the organization
* Providing reports on productivity and other performance indicators to management

Importance

Based on the responsibility listing above, it is clear that the role of line manager plays an important part in the overall organizational performance. A good manager is actively involved with his/her team members providing support, offering encouragement and delivering positive and constructive feedback on a daily basis. Line Managers directly influence employee satisfaction and engagement, and as a result, organizational productivity and even [customer satisfaction](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/monitor-customer-satisfaction-2275994).

While senior management is involved in developing and approving a [firm's strategy](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/the-manager-s-guide-to-understanding-strategy-part-1-2276148), the hard work of implementing the strategy takes place at lower levels of the organization. Line Managers are critical cogs in ensuring that new programs are implemented in a timely and effective manner. They are well positioned to identify problems with the strategy execution programs and the input of the line manager is essential for organizational learning.

Talent development is a key priority for any organization, and line managers wield large control over the identification, development, and promotion of talented professionals on their teams. Often, the next generation of line managers emerges from these teams.

Challenges

There are a variety of stress points and challenges for a typical line manager. These include:

* Significant responsibility for overall operations, often with limited resources.
* Jobs that demand long hours
* A trend to increase the line manager's span of control. Instead of six to eight direct reports, line managers often have much larger teams. The larger the team, the more difficult it is to provide timely and effective coaching and development support
* The need to navigate frequent employee turnover. Many line managers are in perpetual hiring and training mode, making it difficult for them to implement operational improvements or increase performance versus productivity targets
* Constant pressure to minimize expenses and maximize output

Career Path

It is common for top performing line managers to either rise through the ranks of management or broaden their responsibility to encompass other areas of a firm's operations. The line manager's detailed knowledge of business processes and how the organization works make him/her an ideal candidate for broader [general management](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/understanding-the-role-and-scope-of-the-general-manager-2276095) roles.

Do Not Confuse Project and Line Manager

Some managers, like project managers, are responsible for directing the work of other employees but are not responsible for the administrative management of those individuals. They do not discipline the employee, promote/demote them, do salary adjustments, etc.

In a typical [matrix management](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/matrix-management-2276122) structure, the [project manager](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-is-project-management-2275690) gives work direction to the project team members regardless of what department or functional group they came from. The people who run those departments and groups, who manage all the individuals in them, are the line managers. Also, some individuals have "manager" in their title but don't actually manage anyone else. These individuals also are not line managers.

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