AVION CONSULTING

EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Engagement Hit an 11-Year Low, and Managers Are the Real Story

The headline number gets the attention. The number underneath it, about managers specifically, is the one that actually explains what happened.

20%

Global employee engagement in 2025, its lowest level in over a decade, at an estimated 10 trillion dollar cost in lost productivity

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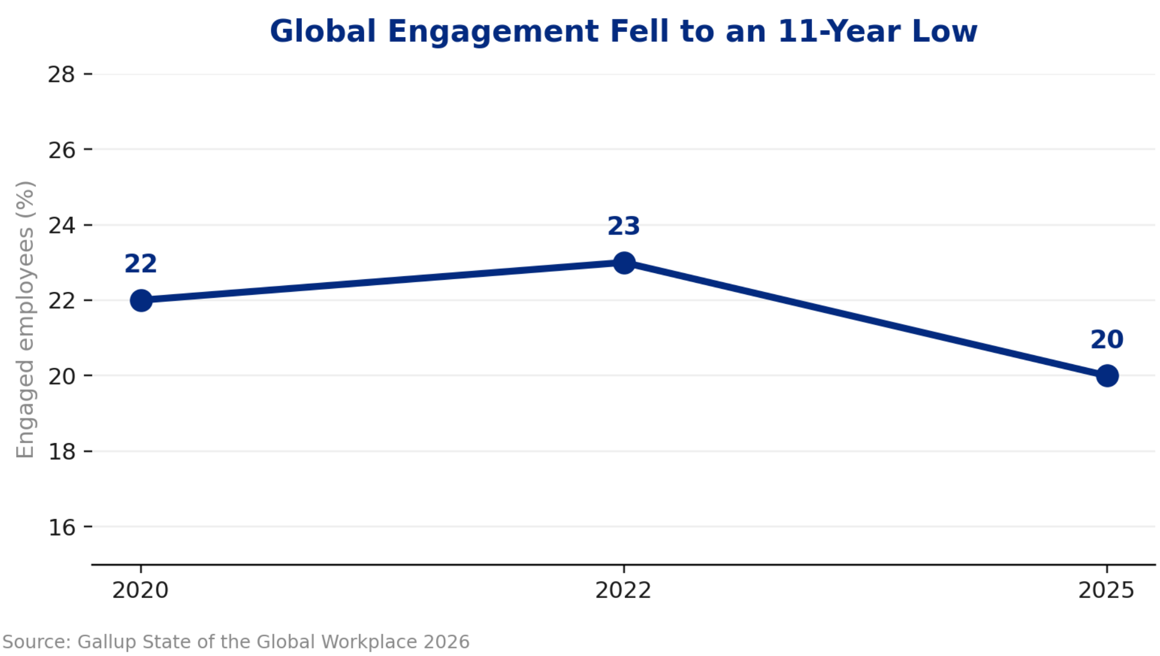
The Headline Number

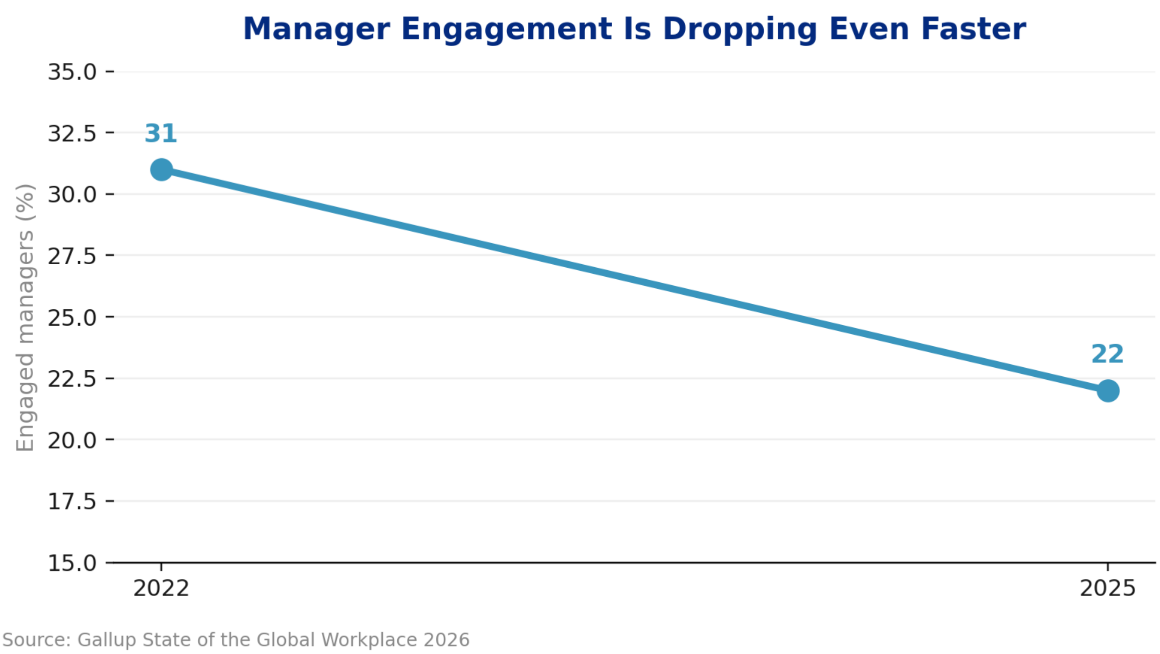
Global employee engagement fell to 20 percent in 2025, its lowest level since 2020, according to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace research. Gallup estimates the cost of disengagement at roughly 10 trillion dollars in lost productivity worldwide. That number gets cited constantly, usually as evidence that employees have quietly checked out.



Global employee engagement over recent years.

The Number That Actually Explains It

The more useful number sits one level down. Manager engagement specifically dropped from 31 percent in 2022 to 22 percent in 2025, a faster decline than the workforce overall. Managers set the tone for the teams beneath them, which means a disengaged manager layer does not stay contained to that layer. It compounds downward. Best practice organizations hold manager engagement near four times the global average, which is the clearest evidence that this is a solvable, structural gap rather than an inevitable trend.



Manager engagement has fallen faster than the workforce average.

The Numbers at a Glance

Metric	Figure	Source
Global employee engagement, 2025	20%, an 11-year low	Gallup State of the Global Workplace 2026
Estimated global cost of disengagement	$10 trillion	Gallup State of the Global Workplace 2026
Manager engagement, 2022	31%	Gallup State of the Global Workplace 2026
Manager engagement, 2025	22%	Gallup State of the Global Workplace 2026
Manager engagement at best-practice organizations	~4x the global average	Gallup State of the Global Workplace 2026

Why This Gets Missed in Most Engagement Strategies

Most engagement strategies are built around the general employee population: pulse surveys, recognition programs, wellness benefits. Very few are built specifically around the manager population as a distinct group with distinct drivers of disengagement. That is a design gap, not an oversight born of indifference. Managers are treated as the delivery mechanism for engagement initiatives rather than as a population that needs its own.

Two Different Jobs to Do

For the CEO

If engagement scores are declining across the organization, resist the instinct to launch a broad workforce initiative before checking the manager-specific numbers first. A disengaged manager layer will absorb almost any investment aimed at the broader workforce without much to show for it.

For the CHRO

Build a manager-specific engagement strategy, measured separately from the general workforce metric. The four times gap between best-practice organizations and the global average is the clearest evidence available that this is fixable with the right investment, not a permanent condition of modern work.

The Real Lever

The organizations closing this gap are not running more engagement surveys. They are treating manager enablement, support, and workload as a distinct strategic priority, on the logic that an organization cannot out-program its way past a demoralized layer of people managers sitting between leadership and the frontline.

References

1. Gallup, "State of the Global Workplace 2026."