

On-site
Blue-collar
Essential
Deskless
Frontline





Jungle Skipper



Frontierland Manager



Movie Theatre Manager



Great Movie Ride Cast

JD Dillon

Chief Learning Architect | Founder | Technologist | Frontline Enablement Champion



Brambles

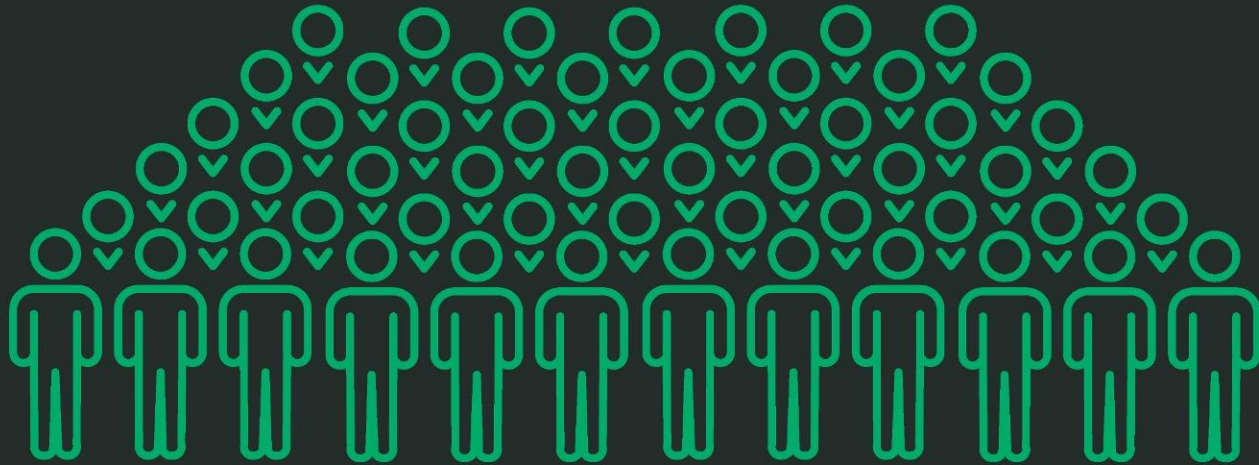
Axonify




**Frontline
work is
different.**



80% of the global workforce
is on the **frontline.**

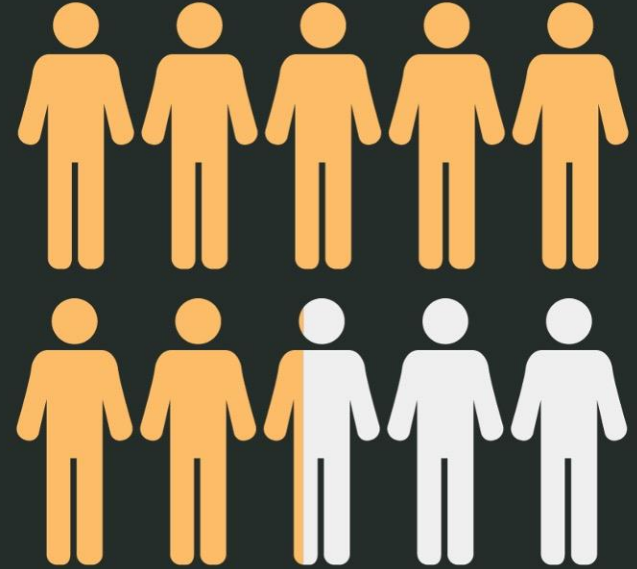




**32% of frontline
workers want to quit.**



**40% of retail
associates are
scared to go to work.**



**73% of hospitality
workers are
battling chronic stress.**



35%
say lack of
training makes
their job harder



46%
feel burned out
on a daily basis



39%
feel heard by
their organization



Frontline **work** is
different.

Frontline **support** must
be different too.



LEARN GEEK

The Frontline Enablement Playbook

frontlineplaybook.com



Five key insights

- Define the frontline **persona**
- Prioritize frontline **needs**
- Design for frontline **moments**
- Empower frontline **managers**
- Foster frontline **champions**





Define the frontline

PERSONA

Before we can effectively enable frontline employees, we must first understand their everyday reality - challenges, opportunities and **how the job gets done.**





Structured

Operations focus
Scheduled shifts
Managed to the minute



Directed

Assigned tasks
Limited autonomy
Require permission



Mobile

Rarely at desks
On the go
Varying tech access



Diverse

Unique backgrounds
Varying skills
Distinct motivations



Limited

Defined roles
Compliance requirements
High-risk work



Prioritize frontline

NEEDS

Before we can effectively enable frontline employees, **we must listen**, understand their needs and determine where we can add the most value to their experience.

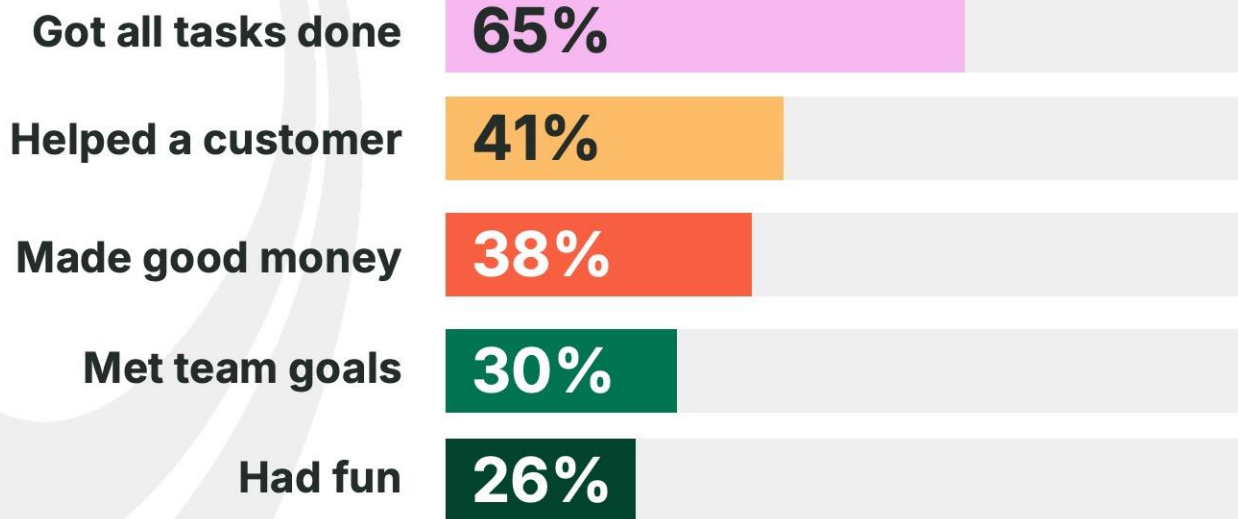


A young woman with long, dark, wavy hair is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is wearing a light-colored, textured sweater. The background is a wooden slat wall with several pairs of sneakers displayed on shelves. The lighting is warm and focused on her.

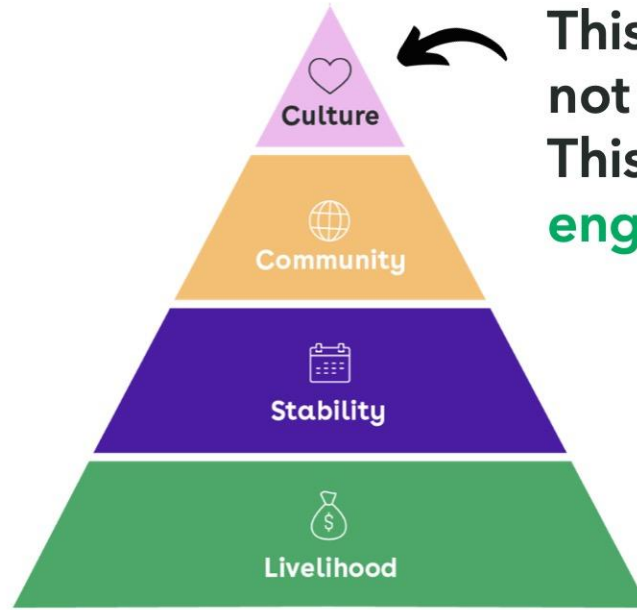
What makes a shift **great?**



Top 5 indicators of a great day at work



The frontline worker **hierarchy of needs**



This is the end goal,
not the starting point.
This is **employee
engagement achieved.**



The frontline worker **hierarchy of needs**

What breaks it down

- Lack of communication from head office
- Too much focus before below needs are met
- Lack of employee community
- Manager burnout
- Absenteeism
- Inconsistent hours/scheduling issues
- Lack of training/upskilling
- No scheduling tools
- Low wages
- Lack of benefits/perks



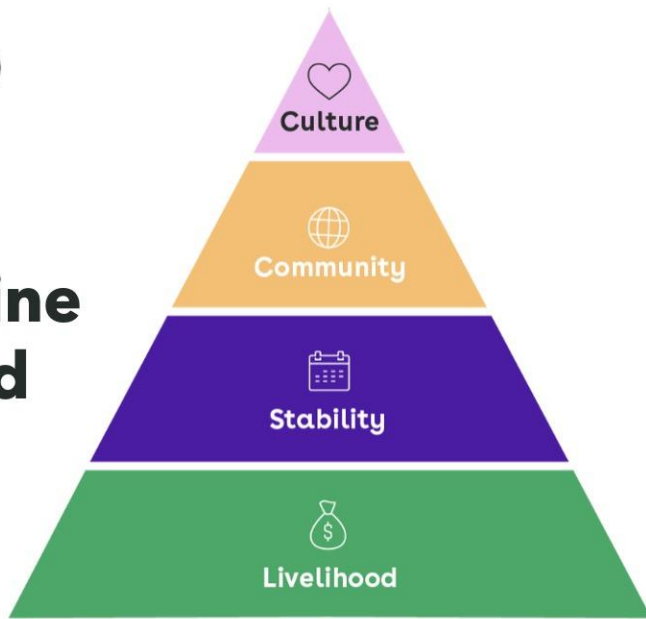
What builds it up

- Strong brand vision and values
- Strong communication
- A sense of camaraderie/investment
- Empathetic leadership
- Recognition
- Consistent hours and income
- Upskilling/employee development
- Feedback tools
- A livable wage
- Benefits/perks



The frontline worker **hierarchy of needs**

Why role can L&D play in delivering the **workplace experience** frontline workers want (and deserve)?



What builds it up

- Strong brand vision and values
- Strong communication
- A sense of camaraderie/investment
- Empathetic leadership
- Recognition
- Consistent hours and income
- Upskilling/employee development
- Feedback tools
- A livable wage
- Benefits/perks





Design for frontline

MOMENTS

Before we can effectively enable frontline employees, we must adapt our tactics to **design solutions that fit** within their reality and align with their needs.



When are the **moments that matter**?

- Onboarding
- Job training
- Change management
- Upskilling / cross-training
- Career development
- **Compliance**

Frontline L&D is often confined to structured training programs delivered at a few key points in the employee lifecycle—milestones that many never reach due to high turnover.



Classroom
Sessions



Online
Content



Hands-On
Experience



As a result, frontline L&D is a primarily push exercise that is difficult to fit within the workflow and provides limited support and value to a workforce dealing with constant change.

When are the **moments that matter**?

An effective enablement strategy prioritizes TODAY - the everyday moments that matter to all frontline workers - in addition to key learning opportunities throughout the employee lifecycle.

- Shift updates
- Problem solving
- Ongoing reinforcement
- Manager coaching
- Sharing opportunities
- Resilience support



STRUCTURE

Push Training

Pull Training

Coaching

Reinforcement

Performance Support

Shared Knowledge

L&D must rethink our enablement tactics to better align with the frontline persona and foster a comfortable, capable, confident workforce.

AVAILABILITY



STRUCTURE

First, ensure frontline workers have a reliable place to go for information - without relying on their peers or managers.

Shared Knowledge

AVAILABILITY



STRUCTURE

Performance Support

Next, provide frontline workers with ways to get help if they cannot find the information needed to solve a problem (aka eliminate the "I don't know" issue).

AVAILABILITY



STRUCTURE

Reinforcement

Give frontline workers regular opportunities to practice applying what they learn in low-to-no risk environments so they remember critical information and refine essential skills.

AVAILABILITY



STRUCTURE

Coaching

Leverage data, insights and continuous training to empower frontline managers to provide actionable feedback.

AVAILABILITY



STRUCTURE

Push Training

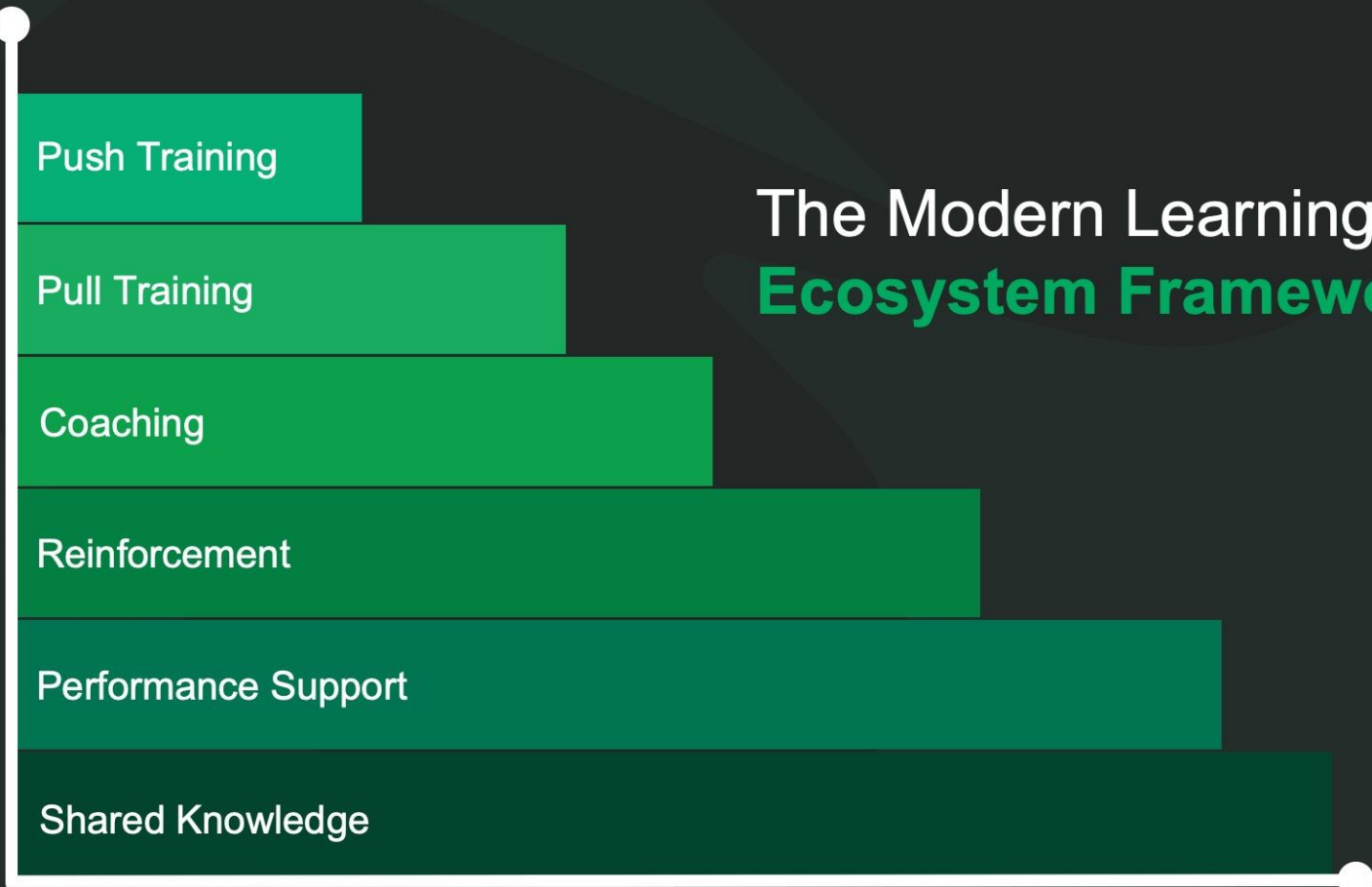
Pull Training

Leverage structured training programs (which are heavily disruptive to the frontline workflow) as a last resort to tackle complex and/or required topics.

AVAILABILITY



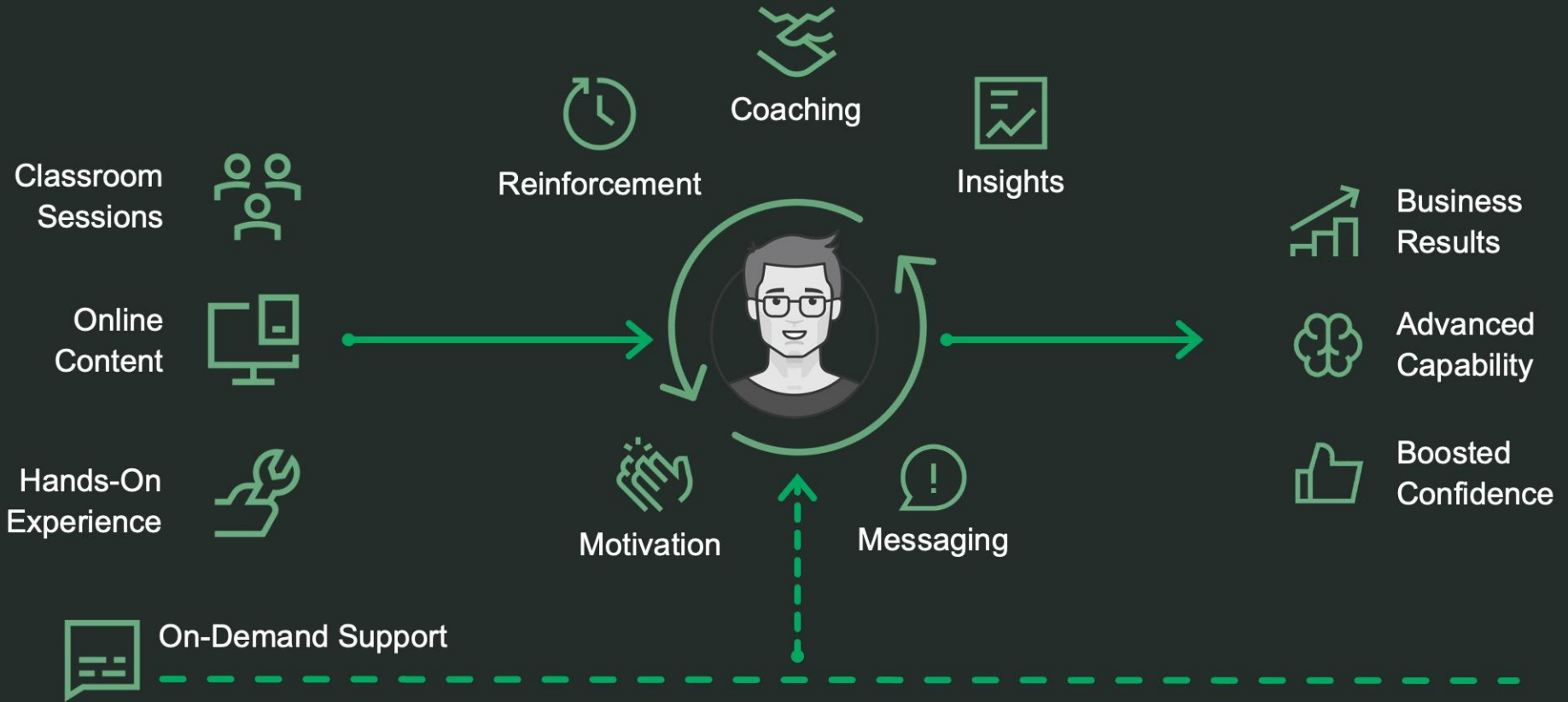
STRUCTURE



The Modern Learning Ecosystem Framework™

AVAILABILITY





An always-on enablement system shifts the relationship between L&D and the frontline workforce.



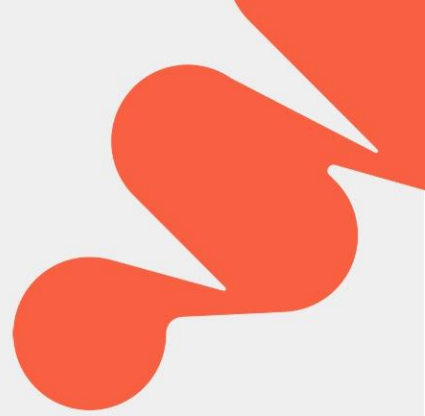
Empower frontline

MANAGERS

Before we can effectively enable frontline employees, we must empower the people who influence their work experience (and L&D success) more than anyone else - **frontline managers.**



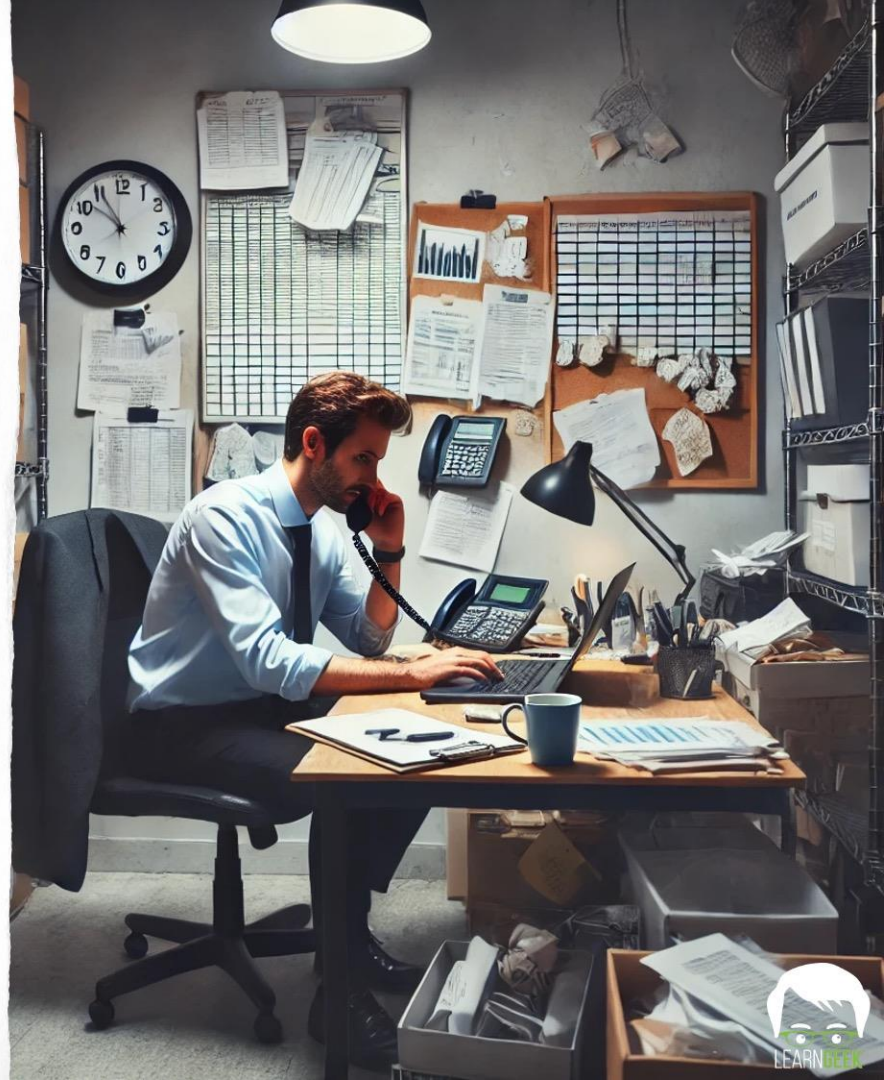
What percentage of frontline managers are **making it up as they go along**—at least some of the time?



67%



Why are **40%+** of frontline managers **burned out?**



Administrative Overload

1. Excessive paperwork
2. Manual data entry
3. Complicated reporting procedures
4. Unnecessary forms
5. Outdated software systems
6. Preparing presentations for higher-ups
7. Chasing down signatures
8. Organizing files
9. Sorting mail
10. Booking travel arrangements
11. Managing office supplies
12. Processing expense reports
13. Reconciling budgets
14. Updating spreadsheets
15. Creating presentations for internal use
16. Responding to low-priority emails

Operational Distractions

17. Troubleshooting technology
18. Handling customer complaints
19. Resolving minor conflicts
20. Responding to urgent requests
21. Dealing with unexpected absences
22. Managing last-minute schedule changes
23. Covering for absent employees
24. Enforcing minor rule violations
25. Dealing with deliveries
26. Managing inventory
27. Responding to after-hours calls
28. Handling facility issues

Lack of Delegation/Empowerment

29. Micromanaging tasks
30. Approving every decision
31. Answering team member questions
32. Doing tasks others could do
33. Over-explaining tasks
34. Not providing opportunities for growth
35. Holding on to information
36. Not trusting team members

Communication Issues

37. Clarifying vague instructions
38. Chasing down information
39. Resolving communication misunderstandings
40. Dealing with conflicting messages
41. Responding to unnecessary emails
42. Attending meetings with no clear purpose
43. Dealing with gossip or rumors
44. Lack of clear communication channels

Resource/Support Gaps

45. Working with inadequate technology
46. Lack of proper training
47. Limited decision-making authority
48. Insufficient staffing
49. Dealing with outdated equipment
50. Lack of access to necessary information
51. Inadequate budget for team needs





More leadership development is **NOT THE ANSWER!**

Companies spend **25% of their training budgets** - roughly \$89B - on annual leadership development.

75% of organizations **do not believe** leadership development delivers high value to the company.

82% of new bosses are **accidental managers** with little-to-no formal training on how to do the job.



Shift from leadership development to

Continuous Management Enablement!

- ✓ Clarify job expectations
- ✓ Make information available
- ✓ Provide real-time support
- ✓ Avoid disrupting the operation or adding to manager task lists
- ✓ Foster peer networks
- ✓ Use data to nudge managers in the right direction
- ✓ Provide ongoing training that fits



Foster frontline

CHAMPIONS

Before we can effectively enable frontline employees, we must **earn buy-in** from stakeholders across the organization.



Altruism doesn't drive business decisions.





“

You have to connect it to the **top line**.
Show them how enabling the frontline
drives sales and improves the customer
experience.

And don't just talk about cost savings –
focus on what you can achieve.

Former CEO – International Retailer





EXECUTIVE



LEGAL



IT



SME



MANAGER



EMPLOYEE

Connect frontline enablement with clear, measurable value for every key stakeholder (including frontline employees) to foster the buy-in, trust and engagement needed to make it work.

Five core components of your frontline enablement strategy

- Define the frontline **persona**
- Prioritize frontline **needs**
- Design for frontline **moments**
- Empower frontline **managers**
- Foster frontline **champions**



What does this
approach to
enablement look like

IN PRACTICE?



Blended Frontline Enablement Experience

Shift 1

Maximum two hours spent in training (back of house).
Training is focused on the “fun stuff” - not compliance.
Rest of first shift is focused on interacting with people.

Shift 2

Compliance and other required training begins.
Milestones pace training, ensure time spent on the floor.
Knowledge base available for on-demand support.

First 30 Days

Continued training and coaching help associate reach expected level of comfort, capability and confidence.
Performance assessment ensures readiness.

30+ Days

Reinforcement activities built into each shift (3-5 minutes).
Managers coach and provide feedback as needed.
Upskilling available through self-directed learning.



Consistency across locations



Reduced manager workload

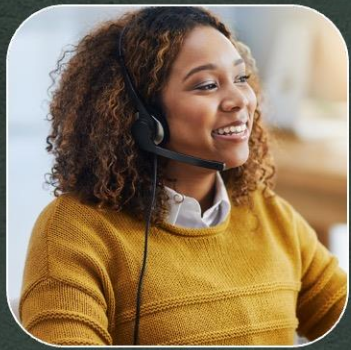


Mitigated compliance risks



Aligned with frontline realities





Focus on

TODAY

to earn

TOMORROW



The Frontline Enablement Playbook

Publishing
May 2026

frontlineplaybook.com





JD Dillon
Chief Learning Architect
Axonify



LearnGeek.co



jd@learngeek.co



linkedin.com/in/jddillon



Let's connect!

A white, hand-drawn arrow pointing from the text "Let's connect!" towards the QR code.

Be well.

