

Taking Leadership to New Levels of Success

“The single biggest way to impact an organisation is to focus on leadership development. There is almost no limit to the potential of an organisation that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders and continually develops them.”

— John Maxwell, Author of The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership and The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader



Introduction

When it comes to running a successful organisation, the importance of having strong, dependable, and competent leadership cannot be overstated. As such, it is essential for organisations to ensure that their leaders are well-prepared to tackle the complex challenges they are expected to face in their positions, especially given the fast-paced, rapidly changing nature of the modern world.

However, leadership development is not always a straightforward process, and organisations often find it difficult to carry out such initiatives effectively:

- ⊖ In a survey of 208 organisations conducted by Brandon Hall Group in 2015, 36% of the firms surveyed rated their leadership development programmes as below average or poor, with 71% of saying that their leaders were not equipped to lead their organisations in the future.
- ⊖ In a separate survey on over 3,000 U.S. employees conducted by Careerbuilder in 2010, almost a third of the managers surveyed said they felt ill-equipped to lead when they took on their positions, while almost 60% reported that they received little to no management training.

In this paper, we aim to summarise some key competencies and attributes that are critical for high performing leaders, as well as some strategies organisations can consider in order to better develop these characteristics in their leadership.

What Makes An Effective Leader?

What Research Says

Over the past decade, a great deal of research has been conducted to determine which key competencies are the most important for a leader. A summary of select studies carried out by global leadership-focused firms and organisations can be found below:



In 2016 the Harvard Business Review conducted a survey of 195 leaders in 15 countries over 30 global organisations and found that the ability to establish trust with employees, as well as providing clear direction and delegation to be the most important competencies desired in a leader.

A separate study by the Centre For Creative Leadership (CCL) surveyed 2,239 leaders from 24 organisations. This study identified Change Management, Inspiring Commitment and Leading Employees as among the nine most important competencies leaders need to succeed in the present and the future.

In a joint research with CCL, the Human Capital Leadership Institute (HCLI) conducted 30 interviews with top leaders in Asia, who listed people development, building relationships, strategic thinking, adaptability, and continuous learning as important characteristics for an effective leader to master.

Over the course of two years, research from Development Dimensions International (DDI) found that “Empowering/Delegation”, “Guiding Interactions” and “Managing Relationships” were commonly identified by organisations as lacking in their leaders/managers.



The findings presented above are hardly an exhaustive list of every leadership competency that has been found to be useful for effective leadership, which includes characteristics such as Resilience, Emotional Intelligence, Change Agility, and more. That said, most key leadership competencies identified can generally be grouped according to the following proprietary framework “LEADRE”.

LEADRE Framework

COMPETENCIES

DEFINITION

LEAD

Competencies in the “Lead” category are required for leaders to manage their people effectively and lead them to achieve results. These include skills such as Coaching & Mentoring, Providing Motivation, Asserting Authority and Influencing.

ENGAGE

Competencies in the “Engage” category allow leaders to network effectively and build strong positive relationships with their subordinates, peers, and other stakeholders. These include competencies such as Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Cultural Intelligence, and Conflict Management.

ANALYSE

Competencies in the “Analyse” category help leaders break down and think through complex situations, allowing them to make timely decisions that lead to long-term success. Skills which are essential to this ability include Strategic Thinking, Problem Solving, and Creativity.

DRIVE

Competencies in the “Drive” category relate to driving organisational performance, taking full advantage of available opportunities to achieve high standards and exceeding expectations. These competencies include Business Acumen, Taking Initiative, and Decisiveness.

RESILIENT

Competencies in the “Resilient” category help leaders remain calm and composed under pressure, persevere through challenging situations and adapt effectively to change. Such competencies include Resilience, Stress Management, and Change Agility.

EXECUTE

Competencies in the “Execute” category relate to ensuring that tasks are completed in a timely fashion, and developing comprehensive plans to achieve organisational objectives. These include skills such as Planning & Organising, Performance Management, and Delegation.

Leadership Competency Frameworks

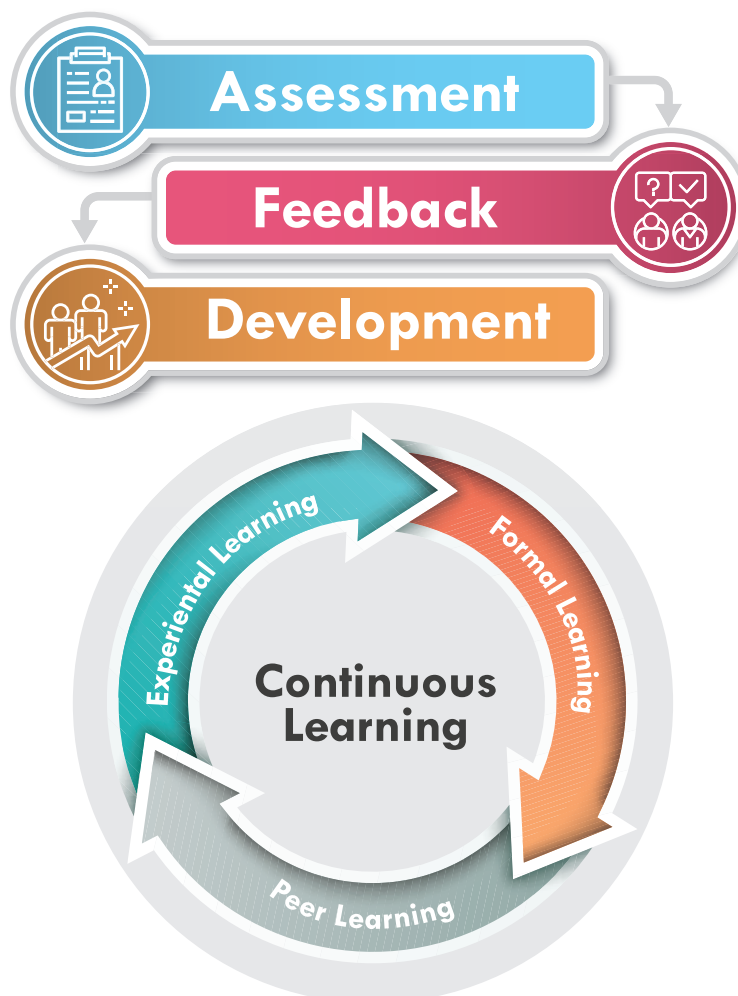
Different organisations can have radically different leadership requirements depending on their industries, cultures, and values. In order to ensure their leaders develop the right skills to meet their unique leadership requirements, many organisations choose to narrow their leadership development focus to a small number of key competencies they feel are the most relevant and important for the organisation

One useful tool to achieve this more precise focus is a Leadership Competency Framework. Such frameworks comprise a list of leadership competencies most critical to success in the organisation, obtained by surveying the organisation's top performers and key leadership figures. This Leadership Competency Framework can then be used to guide more targeted and effective leadership development programmes.

Taking Leadership to
New Levels of Success

Developing High Performing Leaders

Once organisations understand what they are looking for in their leaders, the next step would be to design an effective leadership development plan to cultivate the organisation's desired leadership competencies. This next section covers three key components of an effective leadership development programme (Assessment, Feedback, & Development), and explains some useful considerations for each.





Assessment



In order to develop leaders effectively, organisations must first conduct a thorough Assessment of their leaders' abilities, and determine which competencies their leaders excel at, and which they need to improve upon. This information can then be used to tailor leadership development programmes to be more targeted and relevant to the participating leaders.

Researchers in the field of organisational psychology have conducted numerous studies developing and refining assessments of personality, resilience, emotional intelligence, and other leadership competencies to a great deal of accuracy and reliability. Well-established tools can be used as an objective, and precise measure of a leader's strengths and weaknesses, which will translate into more robust development programmes.

Feedback



During the development process, it is important that leaders receive feedback on their performance and growth. Receiving feedback can help leaders raise their understanding of themselves and identify strengths and weaknesses they may never have discovered on their own. Feedback can not only provide much needed direction for a leader's development journey, but can also serve as a source of encouragement and motivation for them to improve themselves.

360 Survey Feedback, where leaders receive feedback from peers, managers, and even stakeholders has been found to be highly effective in this regard. One 2004 study evaluated 360 Survey Feedback as part of a management development program for 217 senior managers from a large UK public agency. The results revealed that there was significant improvement for all of their ratings in several management competencies, which includes communication skills, innovation, managing change, developing others, and strategic management skills.

Development



Rather than approaching training as a one-time event, organisations should consider adopting a Continuous Learning approach where leadership development is conducted on an ongoing basis. This includes not just holding formal classroom sessions, but also incorporating peer learning and experiential on-the job learning in the programme. Continuous learning will help reinforce the knowledge and skills leaders acquire, as well as keep them engaged and motivated to continue improving.

A more continuous and varied approach to learning provides a holistic method of developing leaders that is generally believed to be more effective than traditional methods. Research conducted by DDI has found that organisations that use a long-term "Learning Journey" concept rate leadership development quality 90% higher compared traditional approaches and have 75% more confidence in the leaders that are developed through a Learning Journey.

○ Future Trends In Leadership

Demands Of The Digital Age



The world has entered an age of unprecedented technological advancement, particularly in the digital space. From big data analytics to smart watches, the strides of such progress have led to dramatic changes in how people live and work. Moving forward, it will become increasingly important for leaders to adapt and take advantage of digital technologies to drive their organisations forward.

Indeed, the need for “digital leaders” is becoming increasingly recognised by many forward-looking organisations. According to a survey of 140 global CEOs published by the HR Trend Institute, understanding of technologies such as artificial intelligence along with the willingness to adapt to change were listed as among the biggest trends impacting leadership in 2019.

As such, organisations may wish to investigate leadership competencies such as providing clear direction and purpose, as well as empowering innovation and experimentation, which were identified by MIT Sloan Management Review and Deloitte as key characteristics for effective digital leadership.

Managing A Diverse Workforce



The modern workplace is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of age, gender, culture, ethnicity, education, and beliefs. Diverse teams give organisations access to a wider variety of knowledge, skills and perspectives, which can lead to greater innovation and improved performance. However, these same differences can also be a source of discomfort and strife if not handled carefully.

In order to ensure that they reap the full benefits of rising diversity in the workplace, leaders will need to develop competencies such as diversity awareness, that allow them to effectively manage differences between diverse teams. Leaders should not only understand and respect others with differing attitudes, experiences, perspectives from their own, but also know how to guide their team members to do the same.

Cross-Cultural Leadership



As firms become increasingly global and interconnected, there is a rising need for cross-cultural leaders capable of managing the organisation’s interests outside of their home country. Due to differences in culture, an effective leadership strategy in one country may be less ideal when transplanted into another nation’s cultural context, which presents a difficult challenge for any organisation looking to expand their reach overseas.

Future leaders will need to be equipped with the necessary skills to adapt their leadership styles to suit different cross-cultural contexts. Cultural Intelligence, the capacity to understand and apply knowledge of different cultures effectively to suit cultural contexts, is one competency that has received much attention as a potential avenue for developing effective cross-cultural leaders.



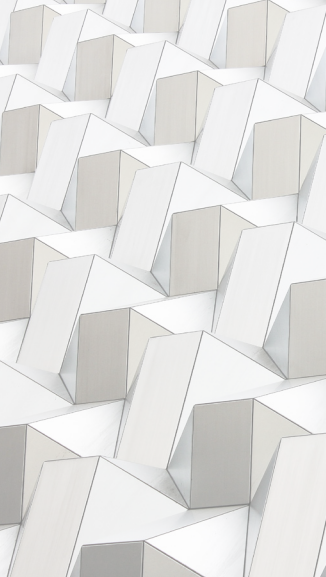
Conclusion

To develop effective high performing leaders, organisations can create comprehensive leadership development programmes that leverage on well-established assessments, all-round feedback, and continuous learning, to cultivate strong leaders based on the organisation's unique leadership competency frameworks. Such programmes should also take into account trends such as the digital age, rising diversity, and cross-cultural leadership in order to ensure the organisation's leaders are well-equipped to tackle future challenges.

Taking Leadership to
New Levels of Success

References

1. *3 Steps to Unlocking Your Leadership Potential* (2018). Retrieved from https://www.ccl.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/3_Steps_to_Unlocking_Potential.pdf
2. Applebaum, L., & Paese, M. (2003). *What Senior Leaders Do: The Nine Roles Of Strategic Leadership*. Retrieved from https://www.ddiworld.com/DDI/media/white-papers/WhatSeniorLeadersDoTheNineRoles_wp_ddi.pdf?ext=.pdf
3. *CareerBuilder Survey, March 2011*. Retrieved from: <http://www.careerbuilder.com/share/aboutus/pressreleasesdetail.aspx?id=pr626&sd=3%2F28%2F2011&ed=12%2F31%2F2011>
4. Eswaran, V., & QI Group. (2019). *The business case for diversity is now overwhelming. Here's why*. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/04/business-case-for-diversity-in-the-workplace/>
5. Gentry, W. A. B., Logan, P., & Tonidandel, S. (2014). *Understanding the leadership challenges of first-time managers strengthening your leadership pipeline*. Center for Creative Leadership, 18.
6. Giles, S. (2016). *The most important leadership competencies, according to leaders around the world*. *Harvard Business Review*, 15.
7. Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R. E., & McKee, A. (2013). *Primal leadership: Unleashing the power of emotional intelligence*. Harvard Business Press.
8. Kane, G. C., Palmer, D., Phillips, A. N., Kiron, D., & Buckley, N. (2018, June 5). *Coming of Age Digitally*. Retrieved from <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/projects/coming-of-age-digitally/>
9. Kane, G. C., & Palmer, D. (2018, August 27). *Learning and Leadership Development in the Digital Age*. Retrieved from <https://hrexecutive.com/adapting-learning-and-leadership-development-to-the-digital-age/>
10. Lang, A., & Thomas, B. (2013). *Where Are Your "Ready-Now" Leaders?* Retrieved from https://www.ddiworld.com/ddi/media/white-papers/whereareyourreadynowleaders_wp_ddi.pdf
11. Leslie, J. B. (2015). *The Leadership Gap What You Need, And Still Don't Have, When It Comes To Leadership Talent*. Retrieved from <https://www.ccl.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Leadership-Gap-What-You-Need.pdf>
12. Lim, A. (2012). *Developing Top Leaders For A Globalised Asia: Lessons From Best-Practice Organisations In Singapore*. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/1794099/Developing_Top_Leaders_For_A_Globalised_Asia_Lessons_From_Best-Practice_Organisations_In_Singapore



- ^{13.} Loew, L. (2015, August). *State of Leadership Development 2015: The Time to Act is Now*. Retrieved from http://www.ddiworld.com/DDI/media/trend-research/state-of-leadership-development_tr_brandon-hall.pdf
- ^{14.} Landy, F. J., & Conte, J. M. (2016). *Work in the 21st century: An introduction to industrial and organizational psychology*. John Wiley & Sons.
- ^{15.} Moldoveanu, Mihnea & Narayandas, Das. (2019). *The Future of Leadership Development*. Harvard business review. March April 2019. 40.
- ^{16.} Morgan, J., & Haak, T. (2019, December 17). *6 trends shaping the future of leadership*. Retrieved from <https://hrtrendinstitute.com/2019/12/17/6-trends-shaping-the-future-of-leadership/>
- ^{17.} Mumford, M. D., Todd, E. M., Higgs, C., & McIntosh, T. (2017). *Cognitive skills and leadership performance: The nine critical skills*. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 28(1), 24-39.
- ^{18.} Prince, E. T. (2008). *Business acumen: a critical concern of modern leadership development*. *Human Resource Management International Digest*.
- ^{19.} Shaban, Aya. (2016). *Managing and Leading a Diverse Workforce: One of the Main Challenges in Management*. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 230. 10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.09.010.
- ^{20.} Tyson, S., & Ward, P. (2004). *The Use of 360 Degree Feedback Technique in the Evaluation of Management Development*. *Management Learning*, 35(2), 205–223.
- ^{21.} Visagie, Jan & Linde, Herman & Havenga, Werner. (2011). *Leadership Competencies for Managing Diversity*. *Managing Global Transitions*. 9. 225-247.
- ^{22.} Wellins, R. S., Smith, A., & Stern, B. (2016). *Optimizing Your Leadership Pipeline*. Retrieved from <https://www.ddiworld.com/resources/library/white-papers-monographs/optimizing-your-leadership-pipeline>
- ^{23.} Wellins, R. S., Selkovits, A., & McGrath, D. (2013). *Be better than average: A study on the state of frontline leadership*. *Development Dimensions International*.
- ^{24.} Wisankosol, P., & Chavez, G. (2016). *Developing Cross-Cultural Leadership Skills and Cross-Cultural Team working Skills through Organization Development Intervention: A Case Study of a Multinational Enterprise (MNE) in Thailand*. *ABAX ODI Journal Vision. Action. Outcome*, 3(2).