

The LEADx Leadership Development Benchmark  
Report 2024

# Leadership Development Must Prove Its Value in 2024

As budgets shrink, leadership  
development professionals focus on  
“working smarter, not harder.”





In 2024, leadership development professionals highlight the need to show measurable impact.

There's no easy way to say it: The economy took its toll on leadership development in 2023.

Average budgets decreased 70% since January 2023. The ratio of leadership development professionals to managers also decreased by 70%.

The result? Leadership development professionals show a strong desire to deliver and measure impact in 2024.

Read on for insights and ideas you can bring to your company and your career.

1 leadership development professional for every

**267** managers.

This ratio plummeted since last year's report when it was 1 leadership development professional for every

**89** people managers.

## Is your team overstaffed or understaffed?

How many people leaders are there at your company

Divide that number by

$$? \div 267 =$$

The expected number of leadership development professionals at your company based on the average ratio.

# Budgets Plummet Since 2023

**\$316.94**

**< 2024 Average** Budget per Manager

**\$1,247**

**< 2023 Average** Budget per Manager

**\$312.50**

**< 2024 Median** Budget per Manager

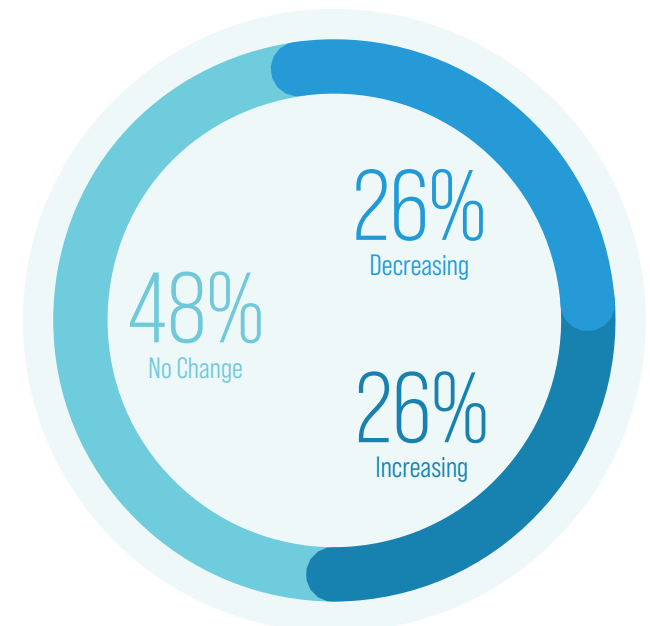
**\$1,059**

**< 2023 Median** Budget per Manager

The average budget has dropped 70% since January of 2023. This aligns with what we've heard from our community of 1,000+ leadership development professionals: There have been layoffs and drastic cuts.

The forecast for 2024 doesn't look to improve much either. Most leadership development professionals expect their budgets to stay the same (48%) or decrease (26%). Just 26% expect an increase.

For that reason, many leadership development professionals find themselves forced to rethink their approach...



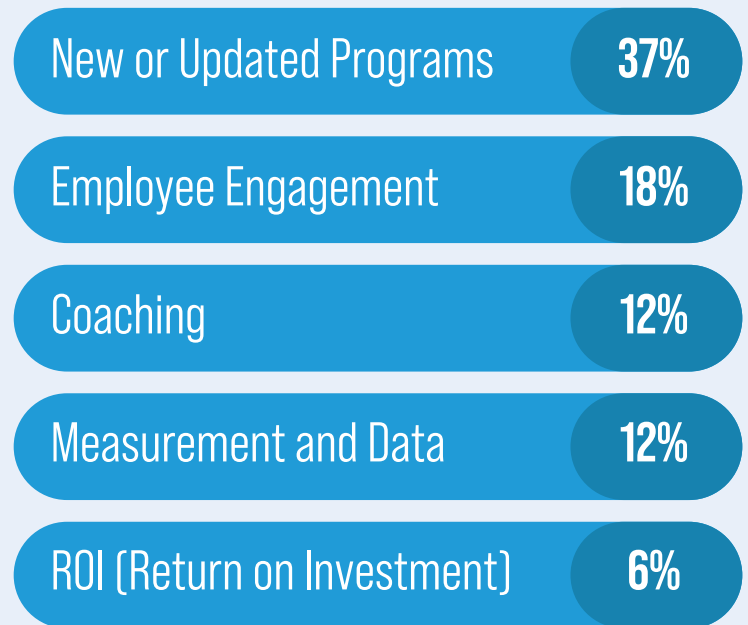
# Leadership Development Grounds Itself In Impact

One theme immediately stands out in the 2024 priorities: **Impact**.

With budget cuts and layoffs surging, leadership development professionals show a strong desire to train for and measure impact. **Measurement, ROI**, and **employee engagement** all jumped up to the top five priorities for 2024.

It seems that leadership development professionals see the writing on the wall: If they can't prove their value, they're going to lose even more budget and resources, especially in a tough economic climate.

What is your  
#1 leadership development  
priority for 2024?





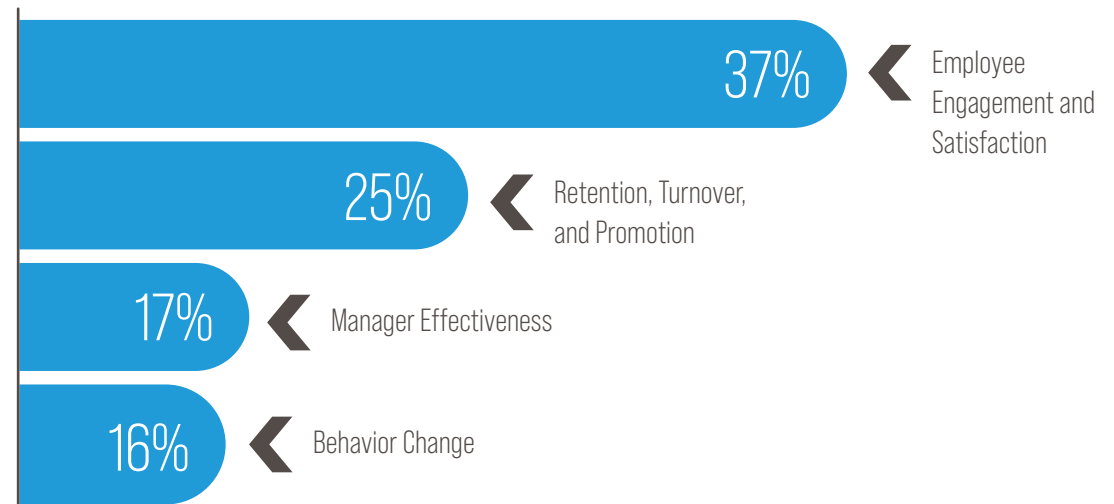
# Leadership Development Professionals Set Their Sights on Measurements that Matter

As leadership development professionals prioritize measurement in 2024, they indicate that smile sheets, attendance, usage, and learner engagement won't cut it. Instead, they've chosen to focus on measurements that are closely tied to impact.

“Wearing my operational hat, I think a lot about capacity planning and how much a team can take on. I think those areas are directly related to employee engagement scores. As engagement decreases, so will the load that your team can handle. If you wait every six or 12 months to measure team engagement, you clearly can't plan effectively.”

— **Karan Singh**, COO and CPO of Headspace

## What metrics will be most important to measure your team's success in 2024?



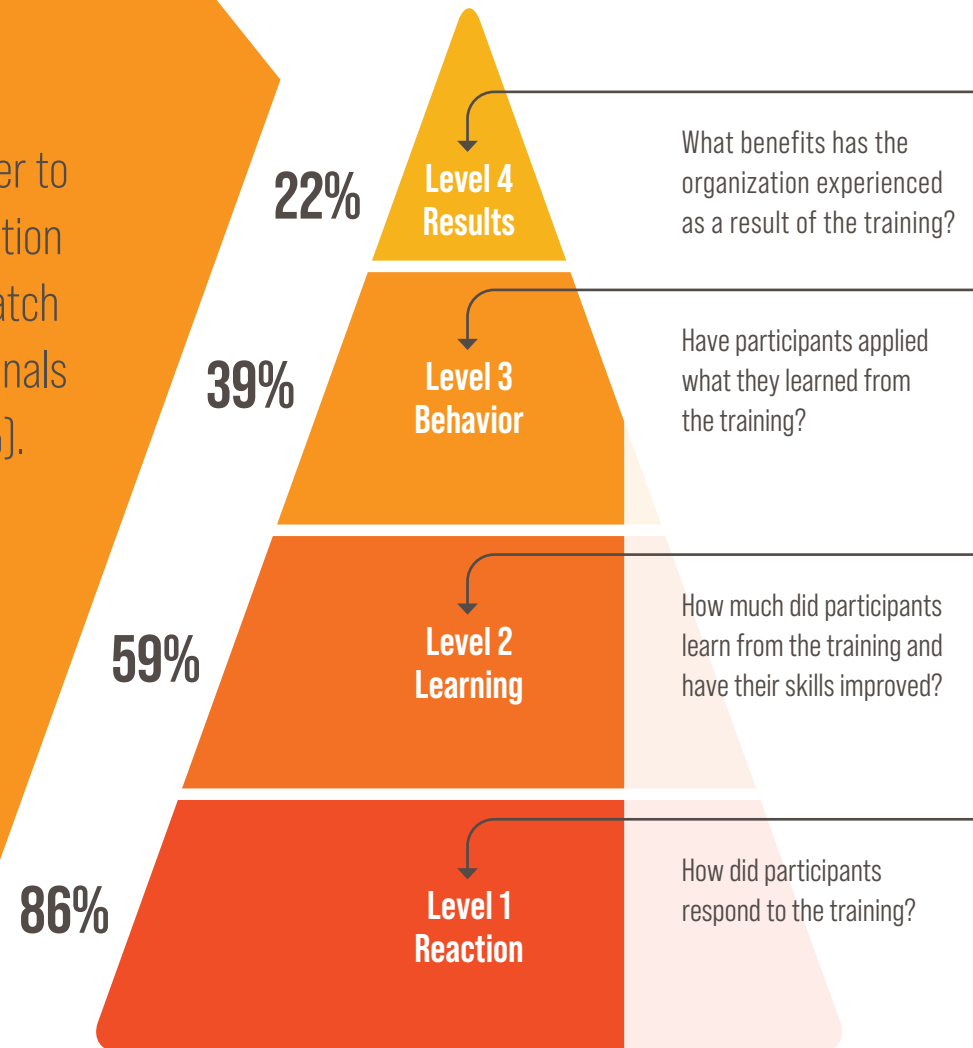
# Measuring Impact Will Be New For Most Leadership Development Professionals

Even though leadership development professionals are eager to measure impact and prioritize it, the responses to this question indicate that most will start these measurements from scratch in 2024. Less than half of leadership development professionals measure behavior change (39%) and business impact (22%). Yet, nearly 90% measure learner reaction.

This stands at stark odds with the top five priorities that leadership development professionals set for 2024, where metrics, measurement, and ROI all topped the list.

As budgets drop and leadership development professionals seek to prove their value and restore their budgets, it's the Level 3 and 4 measurements that will get them there.

## Do you measure Kirkpatrick Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4?



# Case-Based Strategy for Measurement: Devise A Simple, Data-Informed Plan

*“After a year of training, our engagement survey showed that the factor we targeted increased by 15 points.”*

— **Dawn Mitchell**, CPO of HackerOne



You can read or listen to Dawn Mitchell's full interview here for a breakdown of her approach:

[CLICK HERE](#)

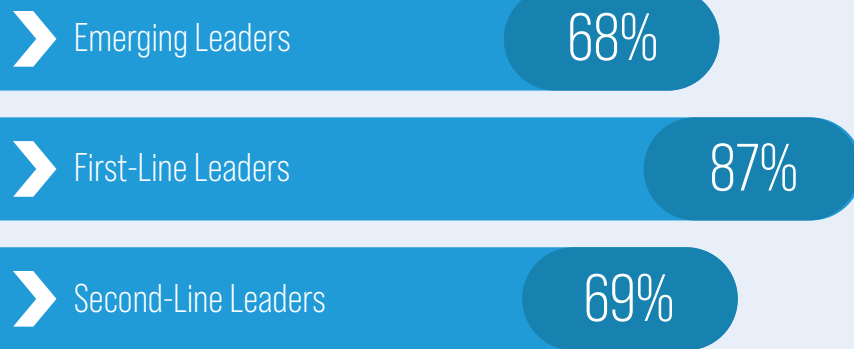
The biggest stumbling block leadership development professionals face when they attempt to measure impact for the first time? Trying to do too much. You don't need a fancy budget or a people analytics department to measure impact (though it's certainly nice to have). You just need a plan. Here's a simple, highly effective measurement plan from HackerOne, where they follow a data-informed process:

1. Measure engagement.
2. Determine the largest leverage point: “trust in executives.”
3. Train for that leverage point: Trained leaders in team & org health, clarity around mission, and communication.
4. Remeasure: +15 points in “trust in executives.”

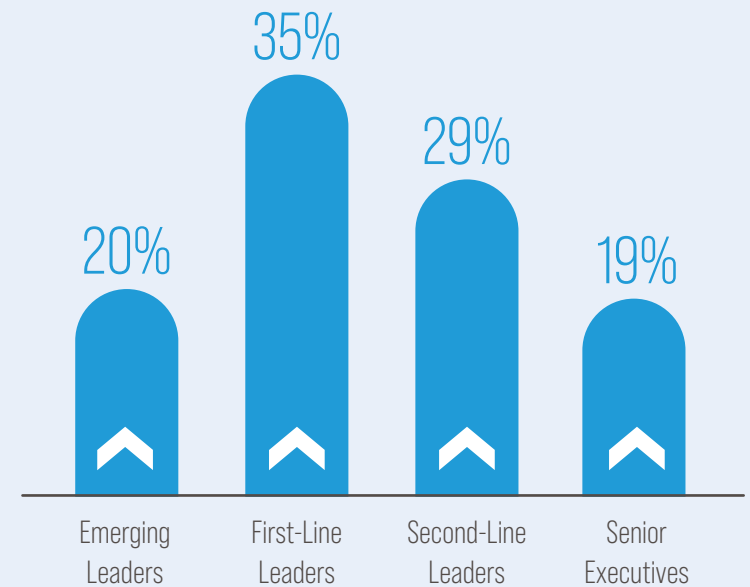


# A Breakdown By Leadership Level: From Emerging to Senior Leaders

## Do you offer a program for...



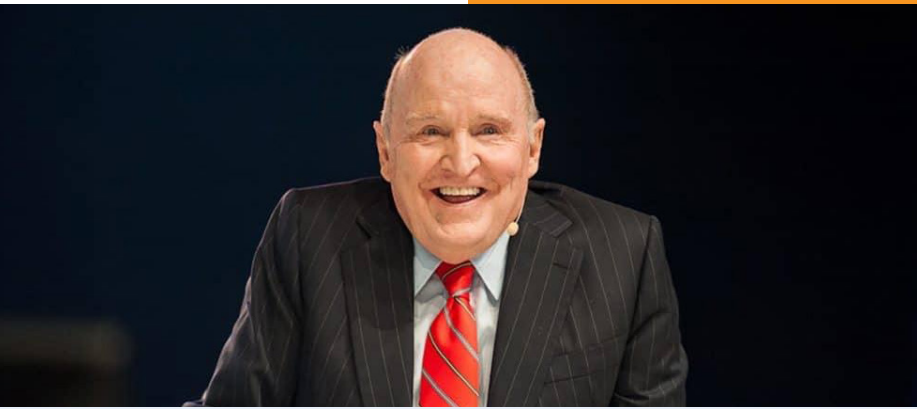
## What percentage of your total budget is allocated to each level?



The majority of leadership development professionals deliver unique offerings for each level of leader. This is, of course, ideal for training to the distinct challenges that exist at each level.

The budget distribution from level to level is quite even on average with first-line leader programs receiving the most budget.

These numbers are overall encouraging, but it is surprising to see that over 30% of leadership development professionals still don't offer unique programs for emerging leaders or second-line leaders. This is likely why "new programs" is a top priority for many leadership development professionals in 2024.



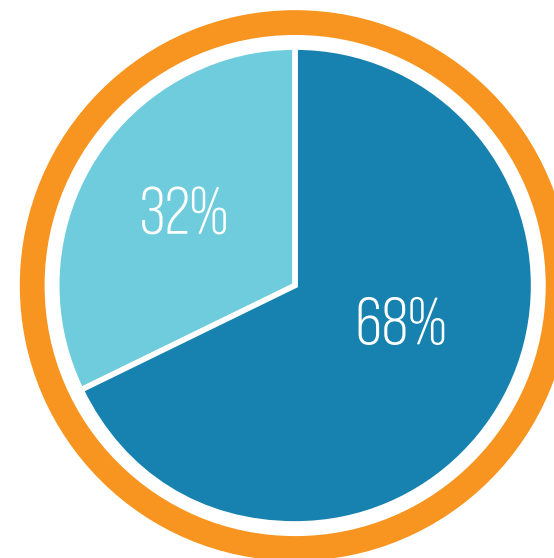
# Most Leadership Development Professionals Train Emotional Intelligence

“A leader’s intelligence has to have a strong emotional component. He has to have high levels of self-awareness, maturity and self-control. She must be able to withstand the heat, handle setbacks and when those lucky moments arise, enjoy success with equal parts of joy and humility. **No doubt emotional intelligence is more rare than book smarts, but my experience says it is actually more important in the making of a leader.** You just can’t ignore it.”

— Jack Welch, Chairman of General Electric

Research shows that a leader’s ability to recognize, understand, and manage their emotions is critical to their ability to engage their team, handle tough conversations, manage stress, and more.

## Is EQ a part of your leadership development programs?



Yes

No

# The 10 Most In-Demand Topics in 2024

What topics will you focus on in 2024?

## Coaching Skills for Managers

With retention and internal mobility so strongly tied to an employee's relationship with their manager, training managers to hold effective coaching conversations is the #1 focus for leadership development professionals for two years running.

## Leading Change

Leading change remained the second most in-demand skill for the second year in a row. Likely due to tumultuous and uncertain economic conditions, more businesses are asking leadership development to equip leaders with the skills they need to lead their teams through times of change and uncertainty.

### #1 Coaching Skills for Managers

### #2 Leading Change

#3 Feedback

#4 Emotional Intelligence

#5 Strategic Thinking

#6 Agility

#7 Communication

#8 DEIB

#9 Trust

#10 Developing Others

# Managers Need To Develop Coaching Skills



Indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:  
“Our managers excel at coaching their team members.”

Strongly Disagree > 6%

Disagree > 48%

Neutral > 36%

Agree > 9%

Strongly Agree > 1%

“First-line leader is one of the most challenging positions. Managers are not just managers. They are player-coaches, playing the role of manager while still having their own deliverables. In these challenging times, managers have to filter, communicate, and deliver on both the personal and the professional. It’s immense.”

– Jessica Swank, CPO at Box

“Coaching skills for managers” tops the list of in-demand topics for two main reasons:

1. Managers aren’t very good at coaching (just look at the data here). Over HALF of all leadership development professionals said that their managers were not skilled at coaching their team members and just 1% strongly agreed that their managers excel at it.
2. Coaching skills drive team engagement and are a pivotal piece of manager effectiveness. Teach your managers to coach, and everything else falls in place.

# Case-Based Strategy for “Coaching:” Build a Career Conversations Program

*“Our managers told us they didn’t feel like they knew how to offer career guidance to their employees. So, we began to build a toolkit, a way for managers to help guide their employees to think about and evaluate the career they really want to have.”*

— **Allison Pearson, AVP**, Learning and Development Manager at AllianceBernstein (AB)



You can read Allison Pearson and Robert Avinger’s full Forbes interview here for a breakdown of their Career Conversations program and toolkit:

[CLICK HERE](#)

The key to a successful career conversations program is to involve employees and their managers in equal parts.

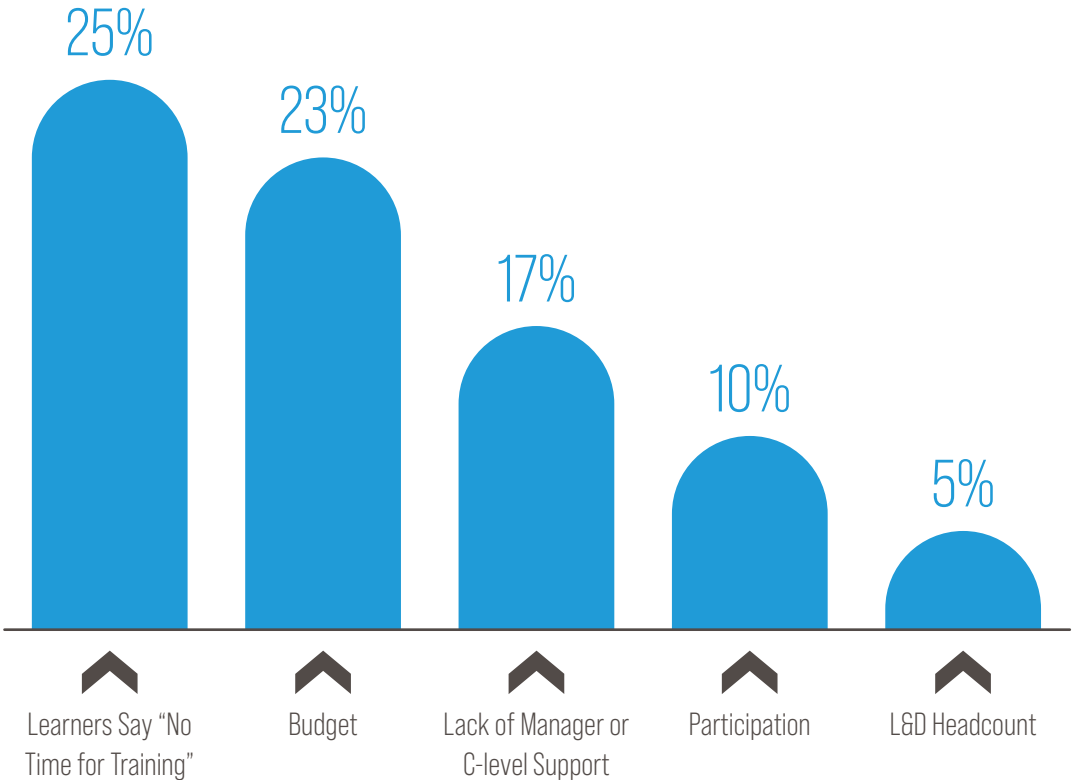
At AB, employees learn how to reflect on and plan their careers. They get:

- a Career Planner to help establish a formal plan.
- a Networking Guide to help show questions they can ask as they network and skills and areas they may want to learn about.
- a set of additional resources that employees can follow to learn more about careers, career conversations, and networking.

Meanwhile, managers go through a train-the-trainer to learn how to better coach their employees.

Then, managers and employees work together to go through a series of employee conversations.

# What is your #1 challenge to achieving your goals in 2024?



New to this list in 2024 is “L&D Headcount,” which makes sense considering the average budget and team size is one-third what it was on last year’s report.

# Case-Based Strategy: 3 Ways to Engage Learners' Managers

“We increased our engagement with the participants’ managers. Managers are busy, and we found that they weren’t always engaging with their employees about the program independently. So, my periodic updates remind them and give them some simple questions to ask, making it easy for them to check in.”

— **Angela Szymusiak**, Director DE&I Talent Development at Adobe



Angela Szymusiak has been running a massively successful program for high-potential women leaders for a decade. In that time, 35% of her program participants have been promoted to Director level or higher.

Over ten years, she said the single most impactful improvement she made to the program was “to facilitate interaction between my high-potential leaders and their managers.”

Specifically, she added 3 types of interaction:

1. She meets with participants’ managers each month. She fills them in on what’s going on and how they can best support their employees.
2. She gives her high-potential leaders specific questions to bring up in their one-on-ones. For example:
  - “I’d like to learn your best practices on how you do \_\_\_\_.”
  - “Is there somebody you think who’s good at this that you could introduce me to?”
  - “Is there feedback you can give me as I apply this new concept?”
3. She facilitates an end-of-program, three-way meeting between the high-potential leader, their manager, and their executive coach. The participant shares vital learnings, how they want to continue growing, and how their manager can sustainably support them.

These three interactions ground learnings in reality, close the knowing-doing gap, set up a sustainable process for ongoing growth, and took zero budget.

[CLICK HERE FOR THE FULL ARTICLE](#)

# The Knowing-Doing Gap Still Holds Back the Majority of Leadership Development Professionals

**Related to the Knowing-Doing Gap, what percent of the training that you offer do you think is actually APPLIED on the job?**

Nearly 75% of leadership development professionals believe that less than half of what they trained in 2023 is actually applied on the job.

As leadership development professionals target ROI with tight budgets in 2024, pull-through is going to be an essential area to improve. After all, ROI only comes if key behaviors change.

0 to 10:	3%
10 to 20:	17%
20 to 30:	20%
30 to 40:	11%
40 to 50:	24%
50 to 60:	8%
60 to 70:	8%
70 to 80:	5%
80 to 90:	3%
90 to 100:	1%

**Median: 40%**



“From what I’ve seen, it’s common in our industry to train managers at some given point in the year, and then hope and pray they’re able to use that information later. But the managers don’t have a place to practice, they don’t have a place to apply their learnings. And so they store it away and then inevitably forget what they learned.”

— **Brandon Clark**, Global Head of Talent Development, Adobe





**24% of leadership development professionals use AI in their work.**

Leadership development professionals used AI in three main ways (in order of popularity):

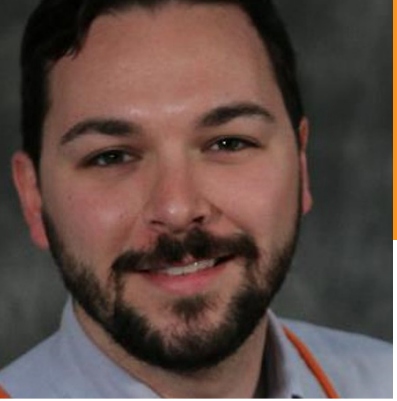
1. To brainstorm and develop content.
2. AI-powered, personalized nudges.
3. To do coach-like simulations.

## Most Leadership Development Professionals Haven't Yet Adopted AI in 2024

Since the explosion of AI in the second half of 2023, many industries have already seen a fundamental shift in how work gets done. Leadership development hasn't seen quite the same degree of change. At least not *yet*. As of now, just 24% of leadership development professionals use AI in their work. They indicated three primary use cases:

1. Leadership development professionals used AI to brainstorm ideas for content, put together microlearning, and schedule out minute-by-minute agendas for sessions. This use case makes sense as it aligns with the most common way AI is used across industries—Chat GPT.
2. Many leadership development professionals have also begun to adopt AI to pull learning through with behavioral nudges. Nudge technology makes it possible to hit learners with multiple, personalized touchpoints per week. It's an affordable and scalable way to implement sound learning science on a budget.
3. A number of leadership development professionals indicated that they are experimenting with the use of AI to run through simulations and coaching conversations.

With a quarter of leadership development professionals engaging with AI, now is the perfect time to start. You can learn from them and still be an early adopter.



# Case-Based Strategy: Deliver AI-powered Nudges

“You just have to nudge your leaders. That’s the scalable solution.”

— **Michael Cabe**, Senior Manager, Learning Strategy at The Home Depot

AI-powered nudges are perhaps the most effective way to scale personalized leadership development. Nudges enable leadership development professionals to reach their leaders with 2-3 high-impact touch points each week. Nudges are personalized and focus on quick, actionable tips. They are NOT pesky, one-size-fits-all reminders.

AI enables nudges to take into account each leader’s:

- personality
- personality of their direct reports
- employee engagement results
- emotional intelligence
- resilience level
- growth mindset
- leadership level
- manager effectiveness scores
- 3rd party training programs (e.g., SLII(R), StrengthsFinder, LCP360)
- organization’s competency model
- organization’s values
- day of the week
- time
- & more



# Is leadership development mandatory at your organization?

54% ➤ Yes

46% ➤ No

Despite the growing buy-in to leadership development, there's still a disconnect between its VALUE and its TREATMENT at the organizational level.

*The LEADx Leadership Development Benchmark Report 2024*



[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

#### Featured in this clip:

1. Kevin Kruse, CEO LEADx
2. Dwayne Bess, Director of Sales Training and Development - Hologic
3. Joe Ballou, Sr. Manager of Leadership Development at Box

# What virtual workshop length gets the highest attendance ?

Moving into 2024, more and more leadership development professionals will be conducting “Power Hours.”

Leadership development professionals indicate that the 60-90 minute length is the sweet spot for a virtual workshop. This is consistent with research showing that 60-90 minutes is the optimal amount of time for intensive focus [flow state].



“We hold a monthly Manager Power Hour, an hour-long session about things like what’s going on at Box, what managers need to know, strategy, and enablement.”

**Jessica Swank**, CPO at Box

# Scale and Sustain Manager Effectiveness with LEADx

- Drive behavior change with nudges
- World-Class live cohort-based training
- Deliver micro-learning in the flow of work

Changing behavior at companies big and small

 **accenture**

 **Northwestern Mutual**<sup>®</sup>

 **Syneos**<sup>™</sup>  
Health



*“The LEADx app is nothing short of revolutionary. Its AI-driven, on-demand coaching and micro-learning make new leadership behaviors stick.”*

— Dr. Travis Bradberry

**Book A Strategy Call**

**CLICK HERE TO BOOK DEMO**

# Survey Notes

- **145** Participating Companies
- Average number of employees = **8,000**  
- with range from **150** to **400,000** employees
- Median number of managers = **800**





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