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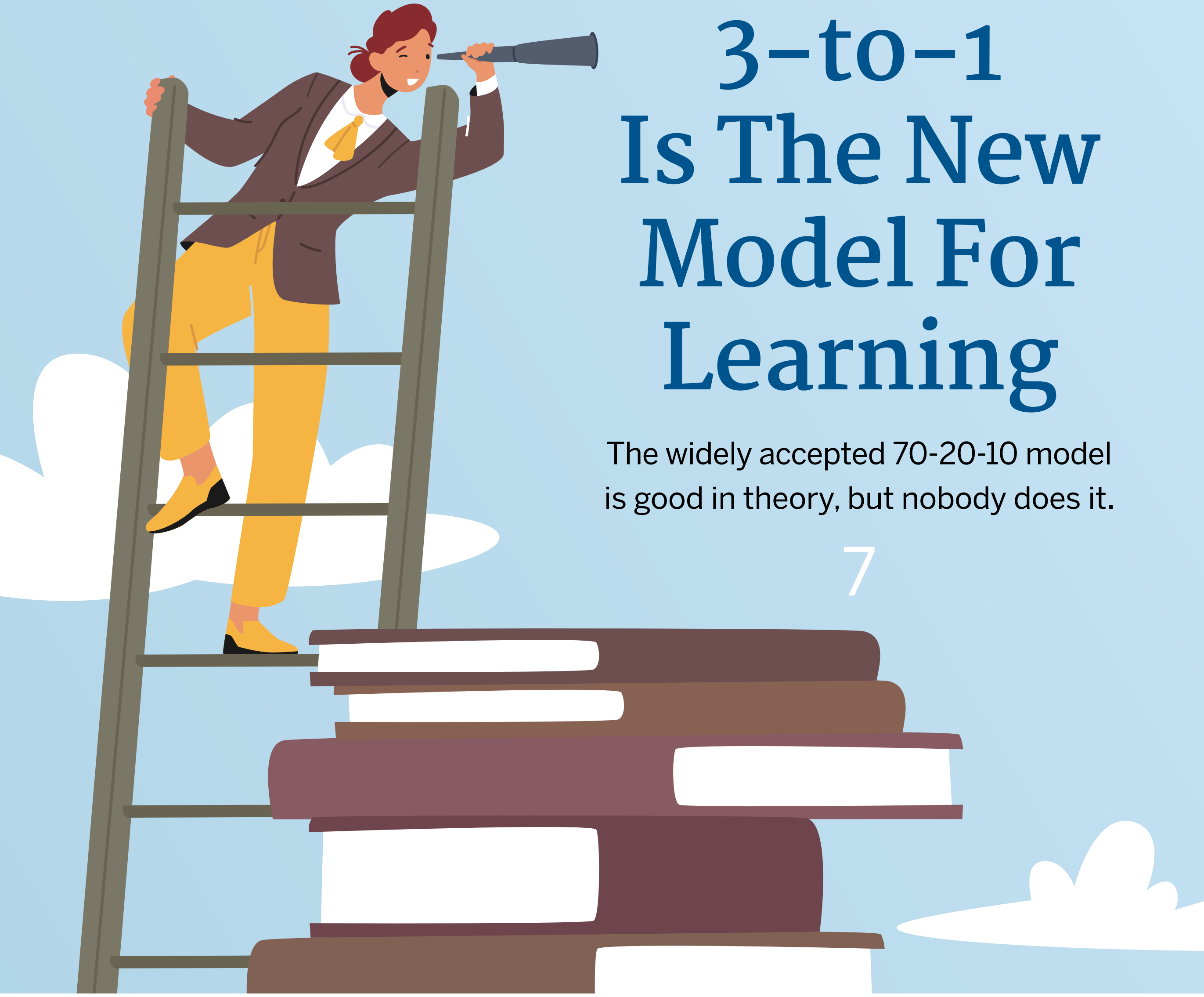

3-to-1 Is The New Model For Learning

The widely accepted 70-20-10 model is good in theory, but nobody does it.

7

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How Nestlé Personalizes Leadership Development For 30,000 Leaders
14

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20

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23

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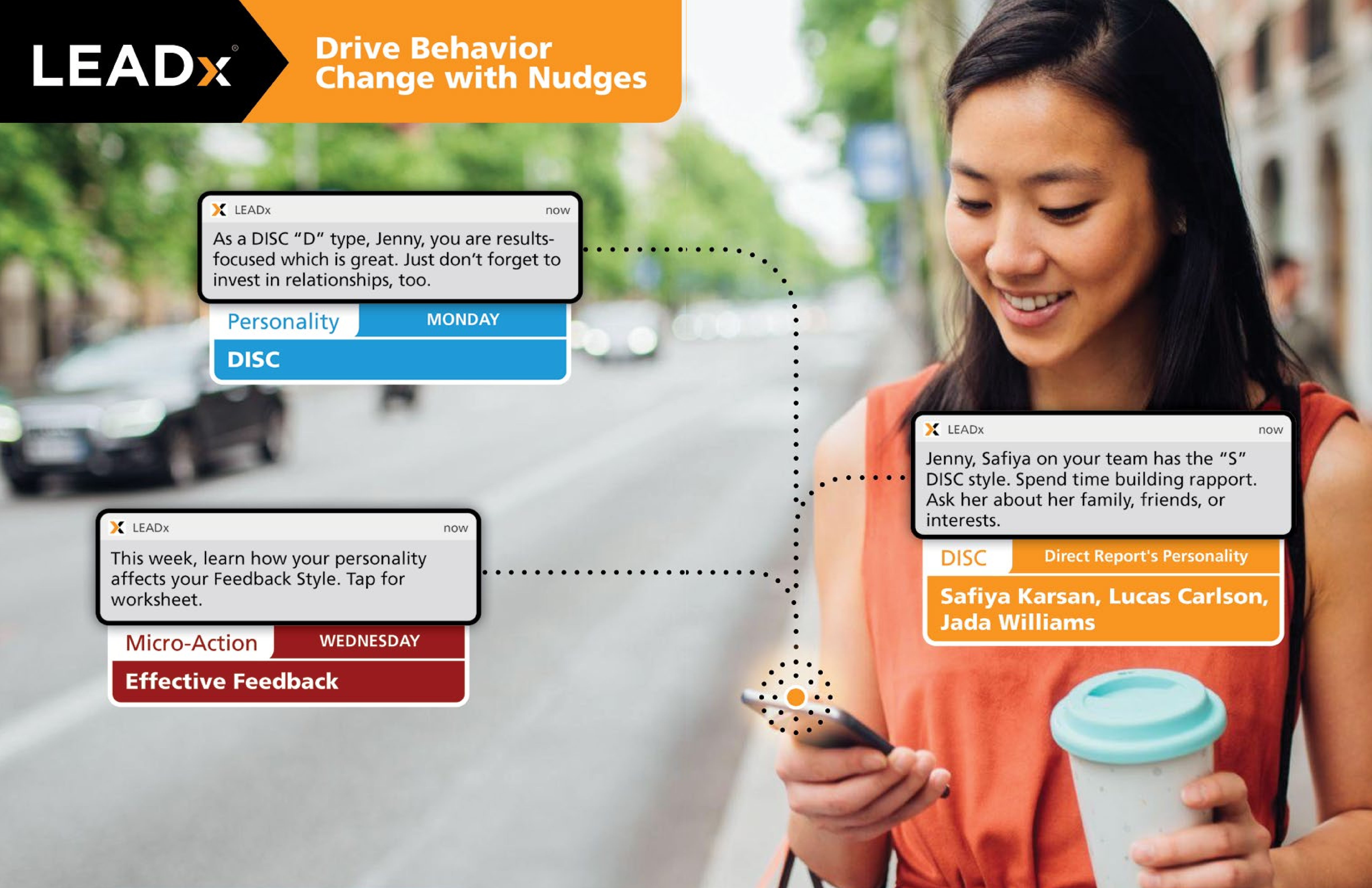

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As a DISC "D" type, Jenny, you are results-focused which is great. Just don't forget to invest in relationships, too.

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DISC

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Micro-Action | WEDNESDAY

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DISC | Direct Report's Personality

Safiya Karsan, Lucas Carlson, Jada Williams

CONTENT

INSIGHTS

3-to-1 Is The New Model For Learning 7
The widely accepted 70-20-10 model is good in theory, but nobody does it.

Why "I Don't Have Time For Training" Is A Lie 10
Three ways you can increase and communicate the value of training.

CASE INTERVIEWS

How Nestlé Personalizes Leadership Development For 30,000 Leaders 14
Scaling leadership to 30,000 leaders is a massive challenge. Imagine doing so in a way that's highly personalized to each leader and their challenges and needs.

How The CPO Of Sam's Club Develops Great Leaders 17

How Grant Thornton LLP Proved The Value Of Their Digital Badges 20

Six Key Ingredients To Culture-Infused Learning At Wix 23

How The Adobe Women In Leadership Program Cultivated A 34% Promotion Rate 26

RESEARCH

OUR 2023 BENCHMARK SURVEY RESULTS AND WRITE-UP 30

Innovating Leadership Development
LEADx

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Elevating The World's Most Important Job

The average person works about forty hours per week. Not to mention the countless hours spent thinking *about* work, unwinding *from* work, and recharging for work.

And when it comes to making those hours as fulfilling as possible, no one's impact is as large as a manager's. There's the classic Gallup research that attributes 70% of engagement to managers. And there's the classic saying that "Employees don't leave companies. They leave managers."

For that reason, leadership development is the single most important job. Only through leadership development can you change the employee experience at scale. Only through leadership development can you shift company culture. The changing landscape of "what work looks like" is ultimately in the hands of leadership development professionals.

In our recent interview with an emergency room doctor at Mayo Clinic, Dr. Richard Winters, he pointed out that even as an ER doctor his biggest opportunity for impact was in leadership development. After decades as an ER doctor and department head, he came to the conclusion that he would split his time between practicing medicine and serving as the Director of Leadership Development.

Winter's reason? *"To impact the most possible lives."*

That's the ambition behind this magazine: To elevate leadership development and make a positive stamp on as many lives as possible in the process. By laying out interviews with elite leadership development professionals from around the world, by offering up cutting-edge ideas, and by sharing original data and case examples, we strive for every issue of this magazine to serve as a clear advantage to any leadership development professional who picks it up.

Our inaugural issue should give you a glimpse into just how fresh and cutting-edge this magazine is. We cover a newer, better framework to think about leadership development (out with 70-20-10!). We cover case examples like:

- how *Nestlé* scales leadership development to 30,000 leaders across the globe
- the lessons *Adobe* learned from their 10-year-old women in leadership program
- how *Sam's Club* put their leadership development directly into the flow of learning using microlearning.

And, we wrap with a close look at our *original survey data from 117 leadership development professionals.*

For the most important job in the world, quality resources are lacking! At least, until now...

Evan Watkins
Editor

3-to-1 Is The New Model for Learning

by Kevin Kruse

The 70-20-10 learning model is widely accepted as one of the best frameworks for corporate learning and development. The 40-year-old model suggests that people should acquire 70% of new knowledge from on-the-job experiences; 20% from interacting with peers; and 10% from formal education — like classroom and Zoom lectures. The ratios make sense on paper, seeing that "learning by doing" is the most effective way to apply and habituate new skills.

70-20-10 Is Good In Theory, But Nobody Does It

There's just one problem. The 70-20-10 model is aspirational, but it's not being implemented. The Association for Talent Development concedes that on-the-job learning is difficult to track and measure. In its 2020 State of the Industry survey, ATD asked participants to rate the extent to which their organization emphasized on-the-job learning. Almost half of the organizations surveyed do not emphasize on-the-job learning to a high extent.

Ask any director of learning and development to show the allocation of their budget and focus, and they'll show you that the vast majority is focused on formal education (the category that is supposed to be 10%). They sweat the details of the curriculum, the delivery format, how to move classroom instruction into Zoom, how to do role-plays during the program.

But very little thought and support are given to what happens back on the job; not a lot of effort or tracking is put into the "pull-through" elements, the application elements, of skill development. It's no wonder the dreaded "knowing-doing" gap continues to plague our industry.

A Better Model for Learning: 3-to-1

My humble suggestion is that we replace the 70-20-10 model with something I call the 3-to-1 learning model. It's a simple, actionable model: for every one formal learning event, you should design and facilitate three on-the-job application exercises.

For example, let's say you want your managers to do a better job of giving effective feedback. Your "curriculum" would become an action learning journey like:

WEEK 1: Live workshop to learn and practice an effective feedback framework. For example, a facilitator could teach the B.I.G. model of feedback (Behavior, Impact, Get Agreement).

WEEK 2: Participants would ask their team members to give them feedback (supporting materials could include model emails, discussion guides, a job aid on how to receive feedback)

WEEK 3: Participants would give their team members feedback — but only positive feedback.

WEEK 4: Participants would give constructive feedback as appropriate. If they see something, they'll say something.

Ideally during weeks two through four, rather than suggesting these application activities as suggested reinforcement activities, the L&D team would treat this time as more important than week one. They might:

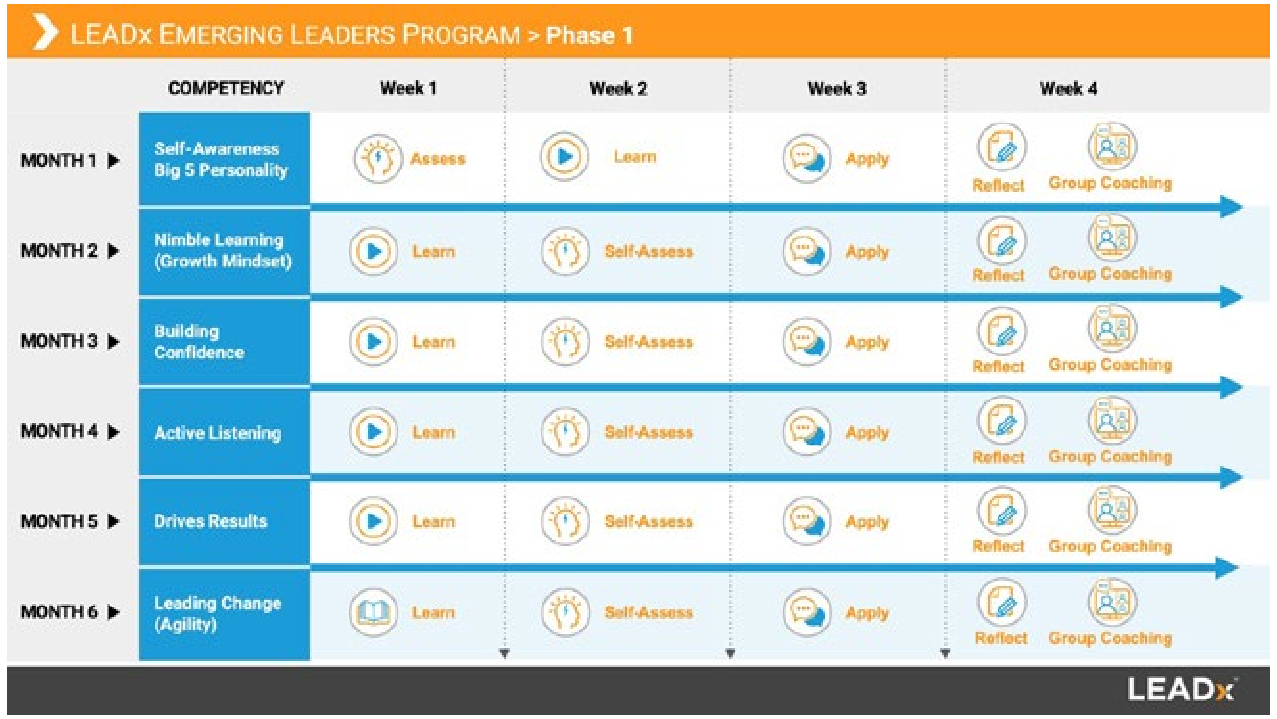
- ask for feedback activities to be scheduled
- ask to be cc'd on email communications related to the activities
- require participants to fill out reflection worksheets (what went well, what didn't, what questions do they have about what happened)
- hold follow-up coaching conversations

A Shift In Focus

While the 3-to-1 model seems simple, it's a large shift in mindset. Learning and development professionals should re-imagine their roles. Shift your focus:

- from knowledge transfer to behavior change
- from instructional design to habit design
- from learning to application
- from activity metrics to behavior change metrics

In brief, it's time to put the 40-year-old 70-20-10 model behind us. A simpler 3-to-1 model is actionable and effective. ■



LEADx EMERGING LEADERS PROGRAM > Phase 1

	COMPETENCY	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
MONTH 1 ▶	Self-Awareness Big 5 Personality	Assess	Learn	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 2 ▶	Nimble Learning (Growth Mindset)	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 3 ▶	Building Confidence	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 4 ▶	Active Listening	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 5 ▶	Drives Results	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 6 ▶	Leading Change (Agility)	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching

Example of the 3-to-1 model applied to a 6-month emerging leaders program.

This is Micki,
Director of Leadership Development.

She needs to launch a new leadership series for first-time managers. They'll cover topics like **GROW Coaching, Effective One-On-Ones, Psychological Safety, & Trust.**

But, she keeps running into the same two problems:

1. **People are too busy for long workshops**
2. **Online learning falls dead flat**

Micki was at her wit's end until she found LEADx.

With LEADx, she built her own bundle of new manager skills and delivered them via micro-learning, personalized nudges, and group coaching.

Usage jumped over 90% and new behaviors STUCK.

BOOK A DEMO

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Why “I Don’t Have Time For Training” Is A Lie

by Kevin Kruse

After a client rolled out a new training program recently, they did something interesting. They surveyed everyone who chose not to participate, and asked them “why not?” The top three reasons people opted out of the program were:

- ✓ **Being too busy**
- ✓ **Bad timing**
- ✓ **Irrelevant content**

What’s interesting about the results is that, while the responses appear different on the surface, they actually all mean the same thing: “the value of this training isn’t worth my time.”

Most everyone is busy at work, but they always make time for what’s important to them. It’s easy to claim you don’t have time to go to the gym if you don’t value exercise as much as you value an extra hour of work or watching a basketball game. Every decision about how you use your time comes at the expense of something else.

Not having enough time isn’t the real reason people are skipping out on training. It’s just another way of saying the training isn’t valuable to them.

This points to a gap between what employees want from training and what organizations are actually delivering. SurveyMonkey found that 86% of employees say job training is important to them, but eLearning Industry reports 33% of U.S. workers say their current company-provided training doesn’t meet their expectations.

33%
of U.S. workers say their current company-provided training doesn’t meet their expectations.

If you want to increase participation in learning and development programs, the question isn’t how to make people less busy — that’s a nonstarter. What will actually move the needle on participation is increasing the value of training, and then communicating that value in a way that makes people realize they can’t afford not to make time.

Here are 3 ways you can increase and communicate the value of training:

1. Start at the Top and Align Training to Broader Company Strategy

Aligning training with company strategy is one way to create enormous value. No company is doing this better than Keysight Technologies. Every year, Keysight’s CEO holds an executive development meeting where top company leaders discuss the company’s strategy for the next 12 months and define the behaviors needed to deliver on that strategy. Then, the content is cascaded down throughout the company. During training, people receive important information about where the company is headed and also learn the behaviors and skills they need to help the company hit its goals and objectives.

“We design something new every year based on the company’s strategy and what is happening during the year,” said Leslie Camino, Senior Director of Corporate Leadership Development, Culture, and DEI at Keysight Technologies. “For example, during the pandemic, we realized that we would need to find new ways to develop our dispersed employees. We focused on engagement and innovation, and our employees responded very positively.”

Tying strategy and training together will create programs that people must make time to attend in order to effectively do their jobs. If your content is newly aligned with company strategy every year like it is at Keysight, the program will be especially relevant.

It’s also a lot harder to find an excuse not to attend training when your boss, your boss’s boss, and their boss have gone through the training. Using leaders as teachers creates accountability. Most people will show up to a training run by their boss’s boss.

2. Create Personal Interest

When it comes to training, you must be prepared to answer the question, "what's in it for me?" Many employees appreciate training programs that don't just help them do their job better, but also help them build skills to advance their careers (regardless of the organization). Others, like those seeking a promotion or looking to increase their commission, may want hyper-targeted or personalized training that will help them reach those goals faster. To increase the value of training, ask people what they want to get out of it.

Bettina Koblick, Chief People Officer at the Robotic Process Automation company UiPath, puts it this way: "How are you going to bake someone's favorite birthday cake if you don't ask them what cake flavor they want? It's so simple, but you have to ask. We don't know best, [the employees] know best. It's on us to ask."

As you survey or initiate those conversations with employees, keep in mind that people likely care less about the skills themselves, and more about the outcomes they're trying to achieve — like a promotion, or the increased credibility that would come with completing a certification. With the outcome top of mind, the value of the training will be obvious from the very beginning.

3. Communicate Value through Managers

What's valuable to a manager is inherently valuable to the employee. So when an employee's manager includes training as a priority alongside their other work, they'll be much more likely to see and understand the value — especially if it's tied to the employee's goals. For instance, if a sales manager's goal is to retain all her reps for 12 months, her boss may suggest an e-learning program about how to increase employee engagement. That program is now worthy of her time because it's tied to a goal, and because her manager made it clear that the training will help her reach the goal.

This, of course, requires that managers regularly have development conversations with their people — which means managers must, first and foremost, go through training themselves on how to lead and develop their employees.

"All roads lead to managers and leaders," Melanie Foley, Executive Vice President and Chief Talent and Enterprise Services Officer at Liberty Mutual, expressed in a recent interview. "Think about how to strengthen your leadership capabilities aligned to what your expectations are and how you're going to achieve your own mission and purpose. And remember that people are multidimensional. It's about supporting the whole person and taking a holistic approach to continuous learning and providing employees with as many resources as you can."

Showing Participants the Value of Training Shows Your Value Too

When you take the time to show participants the value of training, you also show the value of the work you do. Instead of a nice-to-have program, your training becomes a necessary piece of the bigger picture and the company's strategy. This will help you to win interest and engagement from employees and to win a seat at the table with senior leadership. ■

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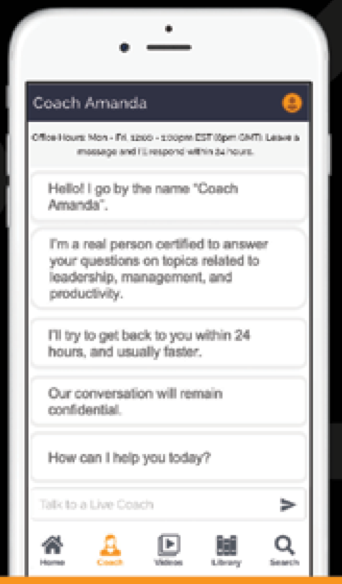
↑35% INCREASE IN APPLICATION OF GROW COACHING

↑27% INCREASE IN REMOTE LEADERSHIP SKILLS

HOW LEADX HELPED SYNEOS HEALTH INCREASE COACHING BEHAVIORS AMONG DISTRICT MANAGERS



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Hello! I go by the name "Coach Amanda".

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Our conversation will remain confidential.

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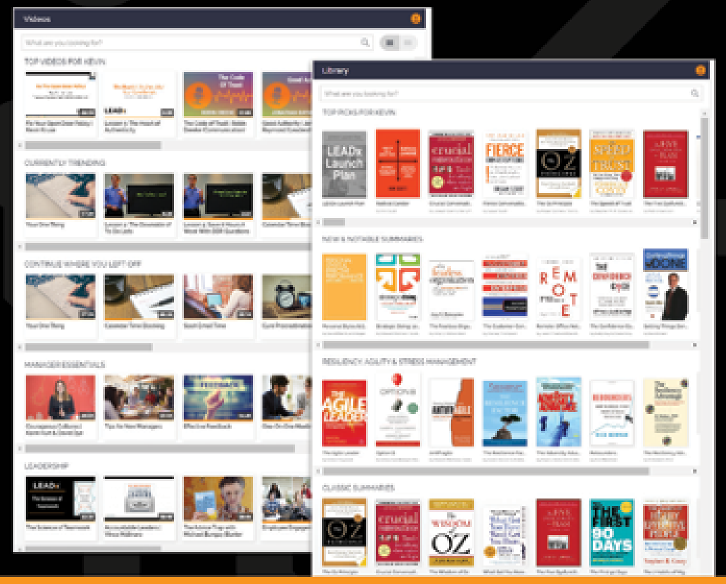

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Tiffany, with your Focus strength, you can show stability by helping others avoid time-consuming distractions and keep everyone on point.

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Messages
Contact
LEADx
Profile
History
Account
Profile: Gary DeNardo
DOMINANCE
16
INFLUENCE
18
STEADINESS
15
CONSCIENTIOUSNESS
14
Message

VIRTUAL GROUP COACHING

COHORT-BASED COACHING SESSIONS LED BY WORLD-CLASS LEADX COACHES.

NUDGES

PERSONALIZED TO TRAINING TOPICS AND ASSESSMENT RESULTS.

TEAMVIEW

LEADERS CAN VIEW SPECIFIC PERSONALITY TRAITS OF THEIR TEAM MEMBERS IN ONE PLACE.

How Nestlé Personalizes Leadership Development For 30,000 Leaders

Scaling leadership to 30,000 leaders is a massive challenge. Imagine doing so in a way that's highly personalized to each leader and their challenges and needs.

It sounds like a pipe dream, but in this interview, Adeline Looi, the Global Head of Integrated Leadership at Nestlé, described how her team does exactly that.

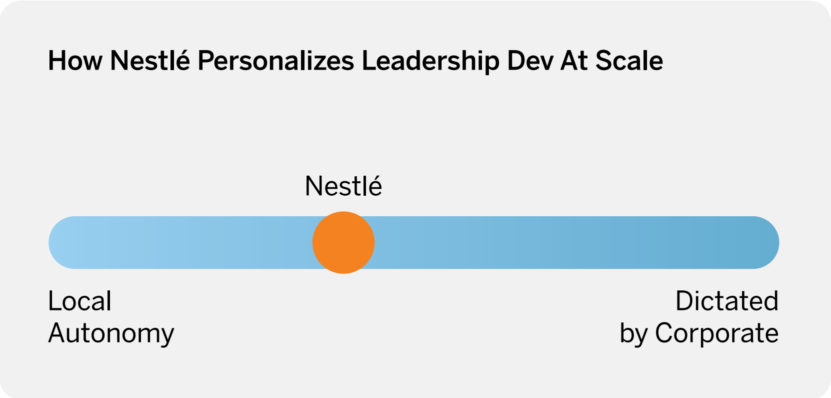
For other Nestlé-sized companies, Looi's interview is a masterclass in building a leadership development program that ties to different business needs and geographies. For companies smaller than Nestlé, her interview is full of insights into how to personalize leadership development and design a thoughtful experience for participants.

The Key to Scaling to 30k Leaders? Big Picture Alignment + Local Freedom

Kevin Kruse: Nestlé has 273,000 employees and 30,000 leaders. How do you scale training?

Adeline Looi: For big companies like us, there are several ways to scale. Some companies are structured so that Corporate communicates the strategy and drives the implementation plan, and regional/local markets execute accordingly. Then, you have the opposite where Corporate doesn't intervene at all. Local Markets are free to do what they want as long as they are succeeding in their contribution to the business.

Nestlé falls on a spectrum in between the two. We have global strategies, roadmaps, frameworks and principles. But, we also have a substantial piece that's local, where regional geographies and categories have the agency to decide how they want to execute on our bigger strategy. So if you imagine it, it's more like handrails than handcuffs!



How Nestlé Personalizes Leadership Dev At Scale

We have our global Nestlé Leadership Framework, which is embedded in every single Talent and HR process, and is a key backbone to our employee experience. This is a framework of our leadership behaviors and beliefs that every single Nestlé employee needs to embody, underpinned by our purpose and values.

But the expression and implementation of this framework is localized and multi-pronged. Each piece of the framework plays out within the local context in a way that makes sense for them, as we believe fully in empowering our markets and our people on ground.

Personalized Learning Journeys Prove Value and Win Engagement

KK: What would you say is your core philosophy around leadership development?

AL: Curiosity. You have to get each person to be curious. If they don't know what they need, if they don't know what will help them, then it's very much just dumping content on them. This was one of the key learnings through COVID. People's schedules were packed with meetings and they kept saying, "I don't have time to develop anymore."

That's when we realized it's not true that people don't have time. The problem is that traditional education and training approach is too much of a "spray-and-pray," versus it being targeted and personalized. We only have so much cognitive energy. Our cognitive budget is limited and we wanted to allocate it deliberately and accurately for our growth.

We decided that to overcome that problem, we'll have leaders drive their own leadership development. With that sense of agency comes curiosity. We don't dump training content on them over a period of 18 months. Instead, at a key point of transition or at point X, we have leaders choose and build their own roadmap. That personalized leadership journey is then something that the leader or the employee owns, and it answers the whole "what's in it for me" from the get-go.

Learning Simulations Bring Learning to Life for Emerging Leaders

KK: What kind of training do you have for emerging leaders?

AL: As we look at our research and data, we find that less and less people want to be people leaders. That's because it comes with a burden. A lot of people don't transition well — sixty percent struggle within their first 12-18 months, and that number is staggering. And, it's not just tough for the new team; it's also tough for the leader. It's a highly stressful time. So, we built a journey that helps employees transition from individual contributor to a first-time people leader.

We created a first-time people leader development center. It's a simulation where emerging leaders go through different role plays and simulations around being a first-time people leader. The simulation helps show these emerging leaders how different this new leadership position is from their work as an individual contributor.

KK: What do these simulations look like in action?

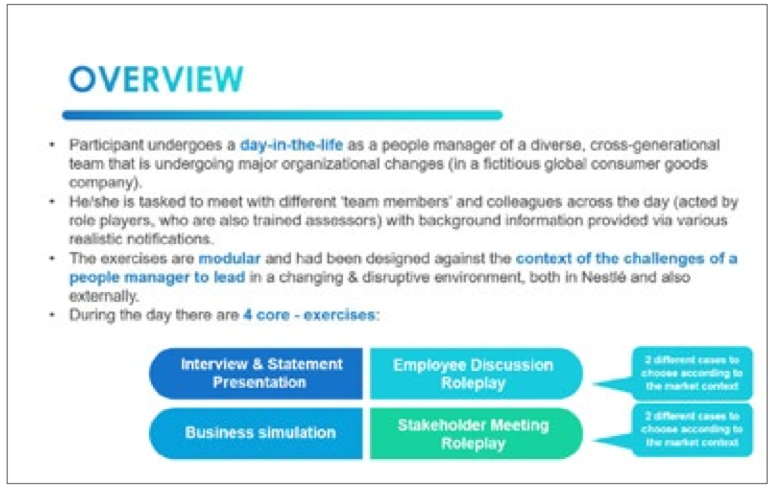
AL: Here's an example with the leader of an intact team: The leader of an existing team learns they're going to inherit six more people as the result of another site closing down. They're all virtual. How do you then put the teams together, matching their strengths in an inclusive manner? How do you create an environment of psychological safety and trust? How do you work with hybrid and remote team members? How do you communicate change in a way that's understandable, but that's also credible? How do you position yourself to provide support to the team?

In this example, the participant reads a communication from their boss about the merger. Their boss asks them to connect with their new team members, communicate the change, help them understand why they need to relocate, and start to get a sense for their strengths and areas of interest to match them to the right projects moving forward. There's also an overarching business story that the scenario connects to.

The leader gets a period of time to prepare, then they go into interactions virtually. Some people are off camera, some people are on. The people role playing as new team members are also observers who will later offer feedback. Role players aren't just from HR. They're also business leaders who want to see their young leaders succeed. The business leaders get trained on how to role play and be observers. Later on, they will also mentor and coach these young leaders.

We believe a lot in double-loop learning, so at the end of the day, they watch back a recording of themselves in action and reflect based on prompts. In reflection, they highlight what they did well and how they could have improved. They watch their own body language, the words they said, and the impact they had. They also have the opportunity to buddy up and exchange recordings with another leader. This helps move the conversation away from feeling like an evaluation or a judgment and toward helping one another grow.

The reflections and feedback session end with a loop back into the young leaders' personal development planning session with their line manager. Their manager helps support them with continuous development through their transition. The young leaders also get access to our Leaders' Academy, which is a one-stop shop for their learning needs based on the areas identified. Lastly, there is upward feedback that happens 9 months after to measure behavior change, so they can get a good sense of progress.



OVERVIEW

- Participant undergoes a day-in-the-life as a people manager of a diverse, cross-generational team that is undergoing major organizational changes (in a fictitious global consumer goods company).
- He/she is tasked to meet with different 'team members' and colleagues across the day (acted by role players, who are also trained assessors) with background information provided via various realistic notifications.
- The exercises are modular and had been designed against the context of the challenges of a people manager to lead in a changing & disruptive environment, both in Nestlé and also externally.
- During the day there are 4 core - exercises:

Interview & Statement Presentation

Employee Discussion Roleplay

2 different cases to choose according to the market context

Business simulation

Stakeholder Meeting Roleplay

2 different cases to choose according to the market context

KK: How has the response been to these simulations?

AL: The response has been strong at the individual level. Emerging leaders weren't able to spend three or four days in a workshop, but they were keen to invest eight hours into something directly meaningful to them. It's eight personalized hours: Six hours of interactions and two hours of reflection, feedback, and facilitated learning. Many leaders said, this is the most impactful intervention they've been on for the first eight, ten, fifteen years of their career. When we ask them why, they say, "Because it was about me." Then, the program just took off because of referrals. Our Net Promoter Score (aka "likelihood to recommend") was 98%.

We started small with 2 pilots in Europe and LATAM, and now, this is running in 25 markets and regions all around the world, and often, in their local languages.

On an organizational level, we have also been getting very positive feedback on the benefits. Every time a market runs this Development Center with their emerging leaders, we get collated quantitative and qualitative data (anonymized, of course) which also feeds as inputs into our global leadership development strategy. This helps us understand where the biggest strengths and areas of opportunity are for this target segment. Then, we can pivot and adjust some of our global offerings.

Looi's Advice for Leadership Development Pros: If You Want to Scale, Start with Needs

KK: What advice would you have to those who are just starting to try to figure this out and to implement it? What would you tell them?

AL: If you are like us at Nestlé and your objective is to scale, then you have to start with the end in mind. That means whatever you're designing cannot meet the needs of just a few people in an ivory tower. It's got to be so relevant. It's got to be close to the business and close to the user. That's why I always recommend that you start with design thinking: You design the interactions or the outcomes based on what the people need, not what HR needs.

When it comes to scaling, think about ways that you would be able to put guide posts in for calibration and for getting more people involved as part of the community. Because then, when you have a pool of assessors, when you have a pool of business observers, you don't just get traction, but you get the ability to weave in and weave out and support one another across markets.

The Perfect Combination of Empathy and Trust

Nestle's ability to scale such a personalized approach revolves around empathy and trust. Empathy is required to personalize leadership development plans for each individual, and to truly understand the business, geography, and challenges of each audience. Trust is required to scale, and to let local businesses tailor these simulations to their own people and challenges. ■

How The CPO Of Sam's Club Develops Great Leaders

Christopher Shryock began his role as the SVP and Chief People Officer of Sam's Club nearly two years ago, in the midst of the pandemic. Responsible for all aspects of human resources for Sam's Club, Shryock had (and still has) his work cut out for him. How, for example, does he scale leadership development and culture to 100,000 associates across 600 locations? And, with so much under his purview, how does he decide which problems and ideas to focus his attention on?

During this interview, Shryock shared how he approaches each of these challenges, and he shared a whole lot more. He spoke about how Sam's Club is building an ongoing system of measurement to capture a constant pulse on employee engagement. He spoke about how the organization has evolved their frontline leadership programs to happen "on the floor" in the flow of work. He spoke about the issues that keep him up at night. And, he spoke about the lessons he's learned so far on-the-job. Throughout the conversation, one thing became very clear: Shryock is immensely thoughtful about his approach and how he focuses his time and energy. Despite how unique his role is, his insights and examples offer immense value to anyone in the HR function.

Building an Ongoing System of Measurement around Employee Engagement and Culture

Kevin Kruse: How do you think about and measure employee engagement at Sam's Club?

Christopher Shryock: I think about engagement as a way to understand if people connect with and want to be part of our culture.

In terms of measurement, our goal is to have a clear and concise definition of engagement, as well as to better understand what drives engagement. I think about several components when it comes to measurement:

First, I think about the "ultimate measure," the employee net promoter score which asks associates, how likely are you to recommend the company as a place to work to a good friend or to a family member? Second, we have tried to be more prescriptive in how we define engagement. To me, this is about assessing and understanding some basic constructs. Are our associates energized by their work? Are they supported in their work? And is Sam's Club an organization that people are proud to work at? Third, we measure each of these constructs, and many other elements about our culture, with a broad annual engagement survey.

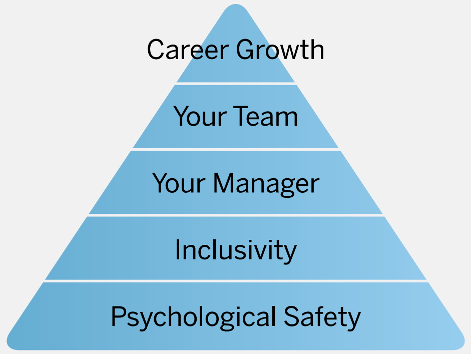
At the same time, we're working on enabling an "always on" listening process. We want to have that engagement and cultural data, as well as data from associate listening forums, other surveys, and external sources. The idea is to build this continual sense of the pulse of the organization. Where are people now? Are they fundamentally connecting with the culture and with the company? Do they want to be part of it?

The Pyramid of Engagement at Sam's Club

KK: Through your measurement, what have you found are the big drivers of culture and engagement at Sam's Club?

CS: It's a tough question to answer because there are so many things that can have an impact on engagement. For Sam's, I think of our drivers as being kind of like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, in the sense that each layer is essential to having the next layer. Psychological safety is that bottom layer. If you don't have psychological safety, it's going to be tough for you to be engaged. The next layer is inclusivity. Do you have a culture that is truly and genuinely inclusive? Is the culture caring? Is your perspective listened to and heard? The third piece as we move up the pyramid, is the type of manager that you have and work for. Managers set the tone of your culture. This is especially true on the front line. At Sam's Club, we have 600 clubs across the U.S. and Puerto Rico, each with Club Managers and Team Leads. Those frontline leaders set the tone and they empower their associates to do their jobs and make decisions. The fourth piece is the team, the individuals you're working with. Are you encouraged to try new ideas? Is success celebrated? Lastly, the fifth level is career growth. Are you able to grow and have a career? Are you able to develop? Do you feel like you have the resources you need?

The Sam's Club Pyramid of Engagement



Developing Frontline Managers: A Common Foundation, but Tailored by Role

KK: I'm looking at this pyramid of engagement at Sam's Club and its third layer specifically, and one of the audiences we work with most often at LEADx is frontline managers. I'd love to hear about your frontline leaders and how you're developing them.

CS: My belief is that frontline managers set the tone for everything our associates experience. They enable the culture, define the standards, and drive the results of the business. My role is to ensure that our frontline managers have the skills to be great managers, in addition to being great operators. Six months ago, we launched a new Manager Quality program in Sam's to help associates understand how to identify, develop, manage, and reward talent. Our program is intended for all associates in the frontline, from an hourly associate at the membership desk, to associates decorating cakes, up to a club manager or a supply chain site leader.

There's a lot of that content that's common for all associates. For example, I think everybody should understand concepts of continuous improvement, how to solicit ideas from people that you work with, and what a basic development plan looks like. But there are some things that a Club manager or a team lead needs to be competent in that other associates might not. For example, how do you truly become a sponsor, and how do you build effective teams? Those topics aren't as relevant for an associate who is not a manager, working at the membership desk. But that person at the membership desk probably should know how to lead by example.

Because we have a common curriculum for all associates, as well as content that is bespoke to specific roles, the impact is that as our associates are promoted and move up (75% of our managers started as hourly), the content becomes dynamic. Lastly, the delivery mechanism to the frontline is the part that I'm the proudest of. Nearly everything is delivered entirely on handheld devices in the flow of work via micro- or nano-learnings.

Moving Learning out of Classrooms and into the Flow of Work

KK: I'd love to hear more about how you adjusted your delivery to micro-learnings in the flow of work for frontline leaders.

CS: I've devoted a significant amount of my focus and attention to moving learning out of the classroom and into the flow of work on handheld devices.

Learning on devices accomplishes three things for our frontline: One, associates can access learning while they're on the floor in front of members. Two, associates can apply those learnings in real time. Third, associates can recall learning as they need it. I believe that our associates' work should be "open book tests." We want our associates to have the information they need at the moment they need it.

KK: When my now grown teens were doing retail, they would always be told, you're not allowed to bring your cell phone to work. They don't want people distracted on the floor, surfing Snapchat. So, I'm curious, did you get any pushback against learning in the flow of work?

CS: No, our associates already use handheld devices to do their jobs. When a member has a question, there's an app our associates use. Apps are what associates use to monitor feedback from our members or to check inventory levels on exercise bikes. Adding learning to these devices felt natural and easy.

KK: What made you decide to make the switch to in the flow of work?

CS: When I toured clubs, I felt like people development wasn't happening where daily work was happening. We've got to be right there, where associates are doing every other aspect of their job. Learning can't be something that's carved off to the side. If your learning program is not integrated with business processes, you're really missing the mark. You're never going to be able to sustain it.

Two Things that Keep Shryock up at Night

KK: You have this huge role where you impact so many people. I'm curious what kinds of things keep you up at night?

CS: The first thing is this idea of skills. I was looking at the World Economic Forum and their top 10 skills for the future. If you look at that list for 2025, there are some skills that I think we absolutely can develop in others: people management, analytics, and programming. But there are a lot of other critical skills that I don't know how to develop. I don't know how to develop judgment, critical thinking, resilience, or emotional intelligence. At the same time, I agree with the report. The companies that figure out how to develop or hire leaders with those skills will be the ones who win in today's more anxious, fragile, and non-linear world.

The second thing that keeps me up at night is wellness and mental wellbeing. For the last three years, it's been especially hard for a lot of people to take care of their own mental wellbeing. COVID, the new ways of working, and other societal events that affect associate wellbeing...People are really struggling. And these stressors impact people differently. As organizations, we have to double down on procuring and communicating tools and resources that help people with their mental wellbeing. Organizations need to communicate that they care, and they need to support employees with resources like virtual counseling, online chat forums, and proactive mental healthcare.

Three Pieces of Advice for CPOs

KK: You've been the CPO at Sam's Club for almost two years now. I'm curious, if you were to start over from scratch, what advice would you give yourself knowing what you know now?

CS: I would have a few things I would remind myself to do...

First, know what's going on in the world. World events are not abstractions. They impact how employees feel. They inform opportunities and innovation for organizations. They inform what makes a company, a leader, and a CPO. You have to understand and play a role in broader society.

Second, know the business and the people. Spend time understanding the strategy and the initiatives, the thinking behind it, and how the ecosystem connects. Spend time in the market, seeing how it comes to life. What works, what doesn't? How does that impact associates? You also have to talk to people. I don't think you can really do a job like mine from behind a desk at corporate. Look at the data, sure, but don't forget to meet people for lunch or coffee. I think you'll be amazed at what you learn.

Third, don't try to do it all. I've made that mistake more than once in my career. I had the 19-point HR agenda where you're on page forty of a presentation and nobody really knows where you're going or what you're focused on. To me, if it takes you more than two minutes to articulate what you're focusing on in terms of a people agenda, you're doing it wrong. Look at the strategy of the business, look at some data, and then pick a few key things. Focus on them. Drive them. Measure them. Then, you can come back next year and make the agenda even better. You can think about what you want to sustain, what you want to improve, and what new initiatives you might want to add (if any). It's imperative to push back on that instinct to do everything. ■

How Grant Thornton LLP Proved The Value Of Their Digital Badges

Grant Thornton LLP (Grant Thornton) is one of America's largest audit, tax, and advisory firms. As a community of more than 9,000 problem solvers across 51 offices nationwide, they help public and private organizations of all sizes and industries. In the fiscal year through July of 2021, they achieved revenues of $1.97 billion.

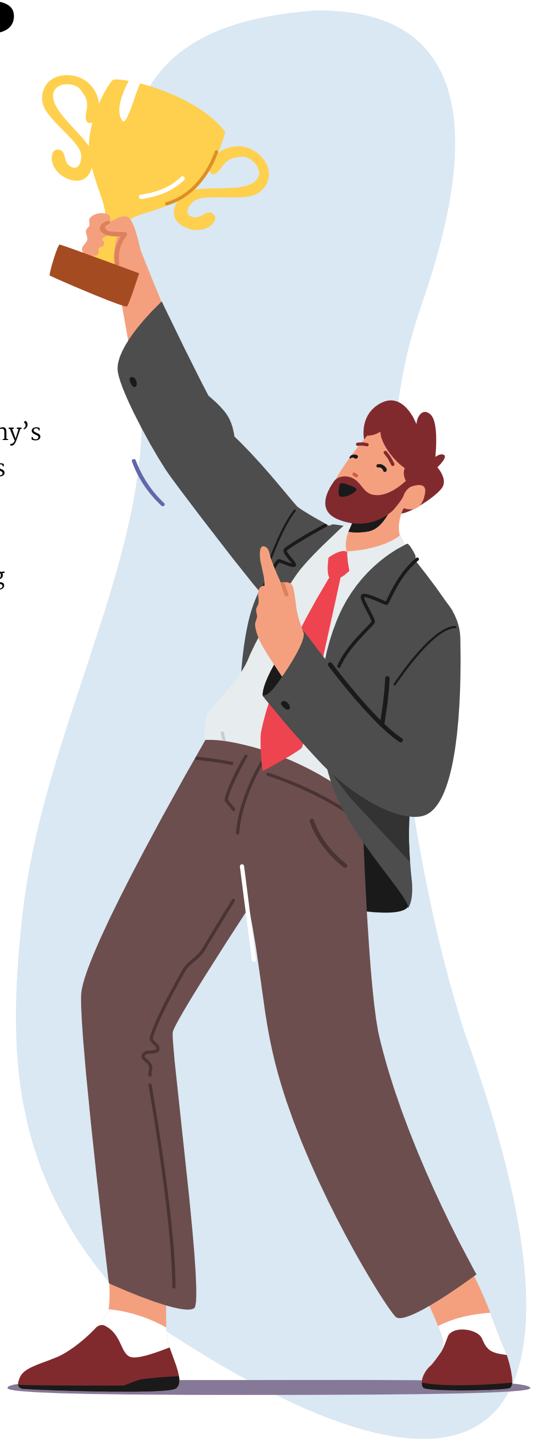
At firms like Grant Thornton, managers play a uniquely pivotal role in their company's success. Managers drive the engagement and performance of their team members as well as the firm's commercial success through the total value of the engagements they manage and their total billable hours. These outcomes are the building blocks of the firm's $2+ billion in revenue.

Amy Happ is the Director of Leadership Development and Learning Innovation at Grant Thornton. She oversees the firm's suite of leadership academy programs which help develop high-performing leaders at all levels of the firm. She also leads a small team that researches new learning technologies and tools.

Last year, in an effort to increase motivation and engagement in the firm's training programs, Happ launched the firm's digital badging program. Digital badges (also known as ebadges or skill badges) are an increasingly popular way to link learning experiences to longer-term career benefits, and to spark enthusiasm and engagement in the process.

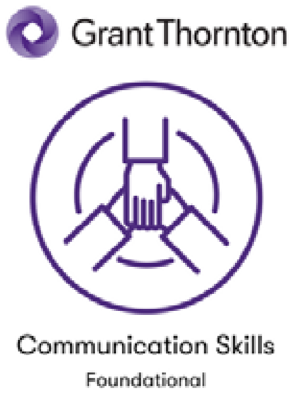
For this article, Happ shared:

- How she launched digital badges and built momentum around them.
- How she measured the potential impact of badges on three key performance indicators for new managers.
- How she plans to expand their badging initiative.



From 30 Badges Earned In 5 Months To Over 2,000 This Year: How Happ Sparked Buy-In and Embedded Badges into the Culture of Learning

As is often the case with new ways of doing things, digital badges didn't immediately catch on. In fact, the initial response in March of 2021 was almost concerningly weak. Happ saw little to no traction despite offering foundational badges in four skill areas: Manufacturing Industry, Technology and Telecommunications Industry, Introduction to Project Management, and Communication Skills. By the beginning of that summer, they had only issued some 30 badges. Instead of growing disheartened or scrapping the initiative, Happ stayed patient and worked to increase traction. First, she worked with her team to increase the number of digital badges the firm offered, focusing initially on soft skills. Within a few months, 20 foundational skill badges were added in areas like diversity, inclusive leadership, emotional intelligence, time management, remote working, Microsoft Excel, and personal branding. The increased offerings helped employees grow more comfortable with and excited about the concept. Enthusiasm began to pick up some steam. Then, the firm made earning a DE&I badge required for all partners and principals. This, in addition to the new soft skill offerings, became a pivotal moment of traction. Badges really took off in popularity and use. "By getting enough badges and enough skills," Happ said, "we started to get the word out. We began to find ways to reinforce and embed the badges into existing initiatives and milestone learning programs."



Sample badge from Grant Thornton.

Incorporating a Digital Badge into their Manager Development Program

An essential piece of Happ's work, and Grant Thornton's success as a firm, is the Manager Development Program (MDP) for new managers. This year-long program helps to engage, develop, and retain a diverse pipeline of future managers.

As the popularity of badges grew, Happ and her team capitalized on this momentum to implement a digital badge for MDP. The badge offering was thoughtfully constructed and demanding to ensure managers come out with the skills they need to succeed as both people leaders and drivers of the business. To earn this "experienced level" badge, learners would have to complete six core components of the program:

- **5 Virtual Sessions:** New managers attend five virtual sessions covering key new manager topics (i.e., "Business of our Business" and "Leadership Presence").
- **Self-Paced Learning:** New managers complete approximately 25 hours of coursework on key topics (i.e., "New Manager Foundations" and "Project Management").
- **Learning Series on Conversations that Matter.** New managers go through a set of activities designed to increase their "career coaching" skills.
- **Monthly individual and cohort activities.** New managers attend and engage with cohort meetings, DE&I resources, and Leadership Spotlight videos.
- **Online Group Discussions.** New managers discuss topics like the "Business of our Business" in online forums.
- **Developmental experiences on the job.** New managers practice on-the-job application by completing and documenting five developmental experiences that prove they can meet the demands of manager-level work.

Badge vs. No-Badge: A Statistically Significant Difference in Performance

Of the 232 new managers who finished the program last year, 83 committed to and earned the experienced-level MDP badge. Happ (in collaboration with the team's data analyst) took a close look to see if there were significant differences between those managers who earned badges and those who didn't. They measured three key indicators of successful management:

- **Utilization:** "Billable hours" are an essential metric for firms like Grant Thornton. Simply put, the more hours you bill, the more revenue for the firm. Over the last year, badge earners exceeded their target number of "billable hours" by 0.9% while those who did not earn the badge fell short of their target by an average of 0.2%.
- **Managed Revenue:** Over the last year, those who earned a badge managed an average of 18% more total monetary value in their engagements than those who didn't.
- **Leadership Impact Index:** Every quarter employees share "upward feedback" with their managers in a 180 survey. On this leader impact index, badge earners outperformed their counterparts with a 4.7/5 average leader impact index versus 4.6/5 for those with no badge.

A Question of "Causation" or "Correlation"

Happ, of course, is incredibly pleased with the significant positive association between earning a badge and key performance metrics. However, she was also quick to point out that the statistics, though significant, don't necessarily prove that badges were the cause. "It's possible," she pointed out, "that the people who chose to pursue a badge were those who are more likely to be high performers."

Moving forward, she plans to explore potential causation more deeply, either by making badges mandatory or through a deeper and more complex ROI analysis.

Expanding the Use-Case Across Grant Thornton

With such impressive initial results, Happ is looking for new ways to expand the use of badges. One clear opportunity is to roll out badges with all milestone leadership programs. This would include the New Senior Experience (NSX) program for newly promoted senior associates (the level just below manager) and Manager Leadership Academy (MLA) for experienced managers. In addition, there are several firm initiatives around Technology Quotient (TQ), where badges are being created to encourage upskilling in data analytics, artificial intelligence, and new technologies and apps. Last, but certainly not least, in the area of industry knowledge and proficiency, the team has expanded industry skills badges from two to over 10. In addition to learning new skills through badges, Grant Thornton professionals, many of which are CPAs, can achieve their continuing professional education credit (CPE) requirements. Whereas a year ago the firm touted a few hundred badge earners, today that number is close to 2,500 and growing every week. Grant Thornton professionals are developing tangible new skills that not only benefit the firm but that they also carry with them as they advance in their careers. ■

Six Key Ingredients To Culture-Infused Learning At Wix

The initial idea for Wix came to be in 2007 while its three founders sat on the beach in Tel-Aviv talking about how unnecessarily difficult and frustrating it was to build their website. At the time, they were constructing a website together for an entirely different start-up. Their conversation inspired them to shift gears though, and suddenly. They dropped their initial start-up and focused instead on creating a platform where anyone could easily build their own website without coding or design skills.

Dr. Eli Bendet-Taicher (Left) and Brooke Rodriguez (Right)

The result was Wix, a company that took flight, and quickly. They hit their first million users in 2009, 50 million users in 2014, and now they're at 200 million users. Throughout COVID, the Wix platform has saved countless businesses by making it simple for them to build out and implement an online component.

To grow a company to over 5,000 employees and 1,000 leaders distributed around the globe, and to do so in just a decade, you of course need great leaders. And that's exactly what Wix has done — focus on developing great leaders.

For this article, Wix's Head of Global Learning and Talent Development, Dr. Eli Bendet-Taicher, PhD, and Skills Development Manager, Brooke Rodriguez, broke down how Learning & Development plays a vital role in Wix's multifaceted development program for the Customer Care function, the program's key components, and what makes it unique.

Here are six key ingredients to their success.

1. Tune In to the Values and Culture on Both a Macro and Micro Level

Not all learning professionals are skilled at connecting their training directly to core company values, but Bendet-Taicher and Rodriguez see culture and values as the essential starting point to leadership development at any company. Bendet-Taicher put it this way: "Whenever I start a new job in employee development, the first thing I do is seek to understand the culture. Because nothing I did at a previous company resembles the next company. Everything will be completely different, and it all comes back to the leadership, the values, and the culture of that specific organization."

Bendet-Taicher and Rodriguez put this idea to practice at both the macro- and micro-level. Big picture, they work closely with Organizational Development to get to know the new competency model well and they have deep conversations with senior leadership about the culture.

Bendet-Taicher described their approach as follows: "A lot of management training will contain the same kind of topics: how to do one-on-ones, how to interview, how to hire, how to give feedback. These are the universal topics of management training, but effective training is less about these general topics than it is about how those topics connect to your company's culture. It's about how to be a manager at this specific company on this specific team with these specific people. To get to this level of understanding, you really need to do your research and talk to people. Not just the CEO and senior leadership. It's about talking to all levels at different departments."

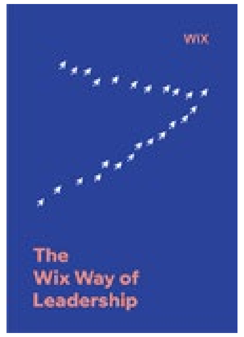
2. Build Rapport to Personalize at Scale

Rapport with other people, teams, and departments is not talked about as part of learning design as often as it should be. The more effort skills development professionals put into building relationships across the organization, the more readily people at all levels of the organization will engage with and adopt their training. And, those relationships will lead to valuable feedback which will improve future programs.

Here's how Rodriguez described their approach: "Focus on building rapport and being the best collaborator ever. Much of our success is dependent on the information that we're getting from all different parts of this huge tech company. I am at the mercy of how people want to work with me and so I want to work closely with them, their examples, and the intricacies of their work. Unless I'm getting good information, I'm not going to succeed. Building rapport sounds obvious, but people aren't that great at it. How are you actually communicating and with who? Build rapport in the right way across different functional areas, and you start to get what you need to be successful in return. Then you create a virtuous cycle where you're getting the information you need and you're using it to give the best training in return."

3. Have One Central Piece of Content to Lean on

A central piece of content can serve as a kind of hub that all training connects back to. At Intuit, they use a playbook that leaders can turn back to for training-based strategies, real case examples, and strategies for on-the-job application. At Wix, their central piece of content is an internal book: The Wix Way of Leadership.



The Wix Way is just one great example of how the Organizational Development and Learning & Development teams work closely together. The Organizational Development team — whose interview will be Part II in this series on People Development at Wix — created, edited, and updated this book, which applies to all leaders at Wix. The Learning & Development team then uses components of this book as a guiding standard as they create different learning outputs to address on-the-job behavior. Having The Wix Way of Leadership as an anchor ensures that learning can occur, whether that be in product or skills development, without contradicting the core principles and values of Wix.

Rodriguez described how the book drives their training and their culture within Customer Care: "The book is all about how we behave. We apply it to everything. The book is set up in a way that explicitly says that Wix wants everyone to be a leader. Closely tied to the philosophy in the book is the fact that we have small teams. That's intentional. We do that so that individual people can make decisions for their team. This is about being employee-first. Wix believes that if the employees are treated and respected as leaders, they will want to be here."

4. Apply the 80/20 Rule to Maximize Your Impact

The 80/20 rule says that 80% of our success is dictated by 20% of our time, effort, and decisions. Wix applies this rule directly to their learning approach to help simplify and maximize their impact. As Bendet-Taicher and Rodriguez seek insights from employees across the Customer Care organization, at all levels and all departments, an overwhelming number of problems inevitably surface.

The 80/20 rule helps Bendet-Taicher to narrow in and address the problems that will have the biggest impact. "We constantly drive for feedback, feedback, feedback. We measure the temperature very frequently. Can we know exactly what's happening with all 5,000 plus employees? No. But on the other hand, what's the alternative? I lean on the 80/20 rule in this circumstance. I always say, let's take a look at the top 20 highest impact issues that we have and focus on those."

How Wix Customizes Reinforcement to Drive Behavioral Change

LEARNING CONTENT → **APPLICATION** → **NEW CUSTOM CONTENT**

LEARNING CONTENT
- program
- workshop
- speaker

APPLICATION
- activities
- discussion Q's
- case examples
- role plays

NEW CUSTOM CONTENT
- review application step for trends
- find common areas for improvement
- build custom content to support those areas

5. Double Down on Reinforcement of Learning to Build Habits

Bendet-Taicher and Rodriguez maximize the impact of their training by reinforcing key learnings. They don't just let responsibility for application fall on their leaders; they actively set up ways of reinforcement that fit the needs of those leaders. Rodriguez said, "What a lot of companies miss is the reinforcement element. Sure, you can go listen to a workshop or a speaker. And someone's like, 'That was great.' But then what? So much falls on somebody's manager, or on themselves, having some reason to practice this. So we'll take them through some content, but then give them activities, discussion questions, case examples, role plays, and things that we want them to work on over the next month. Then, through their application we start to see trends in what they need help with. For example, we'll notice they need help phrasing feedback in a certain way. We then make an infographic with phrasing help, that they can practice with."

6. Deliver Training Tailored to a Specific Team's Needs

Wix delivers on key audiences, hot topics, and stages in an employee's development. On top of that, the Learning & Development team delivers constant customized training to individual teams within Customer Care. For example, Customer Care experts are given allocated time on a weekly basis where they are taken off live channels to complete new training, or refresh on skills and topics they need to improve on.

Rodriguez described this combined approach of Organizational Development efforts and Learning and Development efforts as follows: "We have three buckets that I think about. The first bucket is programs that follow a linear path in career progression (i.e., new manager training). The second bucket is self-driven programs. Employees choose to enroll in training to further theirself in a specific area. The third bucket is specialized training which comes in a couple forms, but these are each prescribed based on a diagnosed need — that need could be a product need that's rolling out, that can be an initiative that senior leadership really wants to push out, or it can be the need of a specific leader of a specific team."

Each bucket is critical to their success with developing the workforce personally and professionally, but the third bucket is by far the most unique and difficult to pull off. It requires, on the one hand, thorough conversations with individuals, and on the other hand, careful attention to the bigger picture data. Rodriguez said, "We have conversations with specific people and teams in focus groups. A lot of analysis happens beforehand. Because a lot of times people think they know the problem or they'll say everyone is struggling with this. But, I have to step back to see, is that true? Is everyone struggling with this? I have to do my due diligence. What data do they have? With this level of preparation, we can step into scheduled meetings and really offer a different voice."

Individualization Is the Key to Bringing These Strategies To Life At Your Organization

All these strategies share something in common: Wix's development of its workforce is built around conversations and feedback from the entire organization. Not just senior leadership or the CEO. By taking the time to build and deepen their relationships throughout the organization, Bendet-Taicher and Rodriguez, in close partnership with the Organizational Development department, are able to build out programs and learning reinforcement in a way that maximizes their impact on each team. ■

How The Leadership Circles Program At Adobe Helps Grow Female Leaders

The Director of DE&I Talent Development at Adobe, Angela Arvizu Szymusiak, began working at Adobe right out of college. At that point in time, she was one of 300 employees, and their main product was PostScript.

Over her 20+ years at Adobe, Szymusiak has helped Adobe grow into one of the largest and most diversified software companies globally. Their mission is to change the world through digital experiences. As Adobe celebrates its 40th anniversary, they stand at over 28,000 employees.

One of Szymusiak's crowning accomplishments during her tenure has been to expand and produce the Leadership Circles™ program at Adobe, which is based on the book *The Inner Edge: The 10 Practices of Personal Leadership*, by Joelle K. Jay, Ph.D., and is delivered by and in partnership with the Leadership Research Institute (LRI). The program celebrates its 10th year at Adobe, and over 800 high-performing women at Adobe have graduated with an impressive 35% of participants having been promoted to Director-level and above.

It all began in 2013 when Adobe noticed a need in the Sales Organization: To diversify their leadership pipeline.

** This interview was edited for clarity and concision.*

Adobe Launched the Leadership Circles Program to Invest in Talent and Diversify its Leadership Pipeline

Kevin Kruse: When did Adobe first launch the Leadership Circles program? Why at that moment in time?

Angela Szymusiak: We launched the Leadership Circles program at Adobe in 2013. Like many tech companies, we saw an opportunity to do a better job of ensuring that our leadership represented the diversity of the world around us. We wanted to invest in our talent and diversify our leadership pipeline.

At Adobe, we believe that people are our most important asset. When we hire very talented, ambitious individuals, they want to continue to grow. They want to make an impact. Through this program, we're investing in our female employees and telling them: "We're doubling down on your growth and development, we believe in you, and we're putting time and resources into supporting your growth." We know from all the research that employee growth and development is one of the key drivers for people staying at an organization. If they feel that they are invested in, growing, and have growth opportunities, they're less likely to leave.

We first launched Leadership Circles within the Sales organization. It was a success, so we repeated it for many years. After the fourth year, our Engineering and Product organizations approached us about expanding the program with them. We did, and a year after that, we expanded the program to all corporate functions. For the last five years, it has been a corporate-wide program. Adobe is a place that celebrates creativity, curiosity, and constant learning. I believe Leadership Circles is a great example of a long-lasting, impactful program that empowers women to bring their best selves to work and helps them unlock their full potential.

The Selection Process: 150 Executive-Nominated Leaders

KK: How do you select your participants for Leadership Circles?

AS: Our senior leaders identify their high-performing, high-potential women leaders. Typically, these nominees are just below the Director level. That's where we have more women, and we're trying to build them into Director-level and above. Historically we have had 120 participants, but this year we are expanding to 150 participants.

Program Design: 10 Monthly Topics, Executive Coaching, and Long-Term Pull-Through

KK: What's the design of the program?

AS: The first month starts with a vision of what success looks like, personally and professionally. We break that vision into key priority areas and get into strategic actions that bring value to the organization. Each month after that, we focus on a different practice of personal leadership.

- What are your superpowers? What are your unique talents and strengths? How can you amplify them and bring them to the organization?
- What are your values? If your work aligns with your values, that supercharges your impact.
- Who can be on your personal board of directors to support your success?
- How can you maximize your time for greater impact?

Along with those monthly sessions, we break participants into groups of four to six people called Masterminds. Mastermind meetings allow participants to develop a small cohort of trust where they can peer coach, go deeper into the content, and support each other with business challenges. We also assign participants an executive coach. They meet with this executive coach throughout the program to go deeper into the content and to create business value for the organization.

KK: How often do participants meet with their executive coaches? And what do those meetings look like?

AS: Participants meet one on one with their executive coach six times throughout the year. They work with their coach to amplify the program's learnings and support their growth as strong leaders. They go deep into the content and discuss business challenges they're facing. For example, if they have a new work project and need guidance on how to approach it strategically, they can discuss that with their executive coach: Who are the right people to engage? How do I creatively approach this problem? How do I maximize results?

Thoughtful Application Exercises Help Participants Overcome the Knowing-Doing Gap

KK: One area I'm incredibly passionate about is how to make learning stick. What are you doing to overcome the knowing-doing gap?

AS: Learning pull-through begins during their sessions. After we introduce the concept, we send participants to breakout sessions to interact and wrestle with new concepts. Each breakout session prompt helps participants put these concepts to practice:

- How will they use this concept?
- What will it look like?
- What questions do they have?

Any "homework" we assign helps participants put their learning into action. One of the best ways we do this is by encouraging participants to engage with their manager. Periodically, I update the people managers on what we've covered, what's to come, and how they can continue supporting their employees who are participating in Leadership Circles. We also ask the participants to give monthly updates to their managers and share what they learned, how they can apply it, and how their manager can help:

- "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 a new concept?"

It's about encouraging participants to engage their managers throughout this yearlong experience to help ground their learning and make it practical, relevant, and valuable in their day-to-day jobs.

Adobe Establishes An Ongoing Network of Learning for Women in Leadership

KK: Is there a capstone or graduation event?

AS: We have Celebration Days at the end, where we reflect on the journey over the last year:

- What did you achieve along the way?
- What were your big successes this year?
- How do you want to begin planning for next year?
- What do you want to achieve?

The idea is to give them a repeatable framework they can use in 2023, 2024, and beyond. It's not just one-and-done. It's building the skills, the muscles, to be able to lead their "self" and lead in the organization.

Then they graduate to our alum community, which stays connected. We have an internal channel where people share. I continue to post monthly about the latest personal leadership practice to help them reconnect to the concepts. When participants learn something during the program, it may not be 100% relevant to what they need at that moment in time. But, a year from now, when they're no longer in the program, that tip or concept could resonate.

The Results: 35% of Participants Have Progressed to Director Level and Above

KK: How do you measure success? What results have you seen from the program?

AS: Throughout the program, we conduct surveys. We do pre- and post-program surveys. We also do a midpoint pulse survey, and I continue to pulse leaders throughout the year around questions like:

- How is this program going?
- Do you see changes in your behavior and way of thinking?
- What's the impact on your growth?
- What's the impact on the business?

We also measure the program's success through Concrete Measurable Results, or CMRs. It's a framework to help participants talk about the impact of their work in a succinct and powerful way. A lot of times, we "work, work, work" and just assume someone's going to recognize it, and then the Job Fairy is going to come, and boom, you get promoted. The reality is it doesn't always happen that way. You have to be able to talk about your impact: Not your activity, but your impact on the business. Each participant submits one Concrete Measurable Result at the end of the program. This concept of CMR helps show participants' immediate impact on the business in dollars, percentages, metrics, customer impact, et cetera.

The final way we measure success is through promotions. As of today, 35% of our alums are Directors and above. Of those, twenty-four are Senior Directors. Four are Vice Presidents at Adobe.

5 Ways Adobe Dramatically Improved their Program over the last Decade

KK: How has the program evolved over the last decade?

AS: The essence of the program has remained unchanged, but LRI and I are continuously seeking ways to improve. We want each change to have a transformational impact, not an incremental one. Here are five examples of transformative improvements:

First, 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.

Second, we added an element where the manager meets with their participant's coach at the beginning of the program. The coach hears directly from their participant's manager about:

- What are the key priorities for this individual?
- What do they do well?
- What are their opportunities for improvement?
- What are some of the challenges that their team may be facing?

This meeting helps the coach build context for their executive coaching sessions.

Third, we added a meeting at the end of the program between the participant, their coach, and their manager. In this meeting, the participant covers their key learnings, how they want to continue growing, and how their manager can continue to support them.

A fourth component that we added is what we call Executive Champions. These are vice presidents across the organization who commit to participating in the yearlong program alongside the participants. The Champions discuss how they apply these practices from the program to create business impact.

Lastly, we want to make it easy for alums to find growth opportunities at Adobe. With over 28,000 employees, there are many opportunities. But it can be challenging to know where those opportunities are. So, I bring in our executive recruiting team each year to talk to my alums and help make it easier for them to find their next opportunity.

A Lesson for Leadership Development Professionals: Make Changes on the Transformational Level

One crucial lesson from this interview that you can apply to any training program is this: Seek to make transformational changes, not incremental ones. Szymusiak and LRI built impressive results, like their stat of over 35% of alumni at the Director-level and above, by thinking big. Instead of small tweaks or minor improvements, she made adjustments that helped learners overcome the knowing-doing gap and change their behavior long-term. ■

Recent Feedback from Leadership Circles™ program participants at Adobe.LEADX

> "Leadership Circles helps women connect to their authentic selves, find their unique voice, and communicate their value. It also creates a community of smart, passionate women at Adobe who can support one another and cheer each other on — not only now, but also for years to come."

> "I have been able to shift my style of leading. I am able to practice strategic leadership rather than reactive leadership."

> "This program not only makes employees feel valued, but gives them the power to push Adobe further still!"

Five Key Insights From The LEADx 2023 Leadership Development Report

The LEADx Leadership Development Report 2023 is out, entitled "Engage and Foster Talent at Every Level."

The report draws on a blend of data and interviews to lay out the current state of the leadership development industry. It highlights survey data from 117 leadership development professionals (LDPs) and blends in ideas and insights from interviews with 100+ cutting-edge LDPs.

What follows are the top five insights from the report. Bring these ideas to your company and your career to gain a competitive edge.

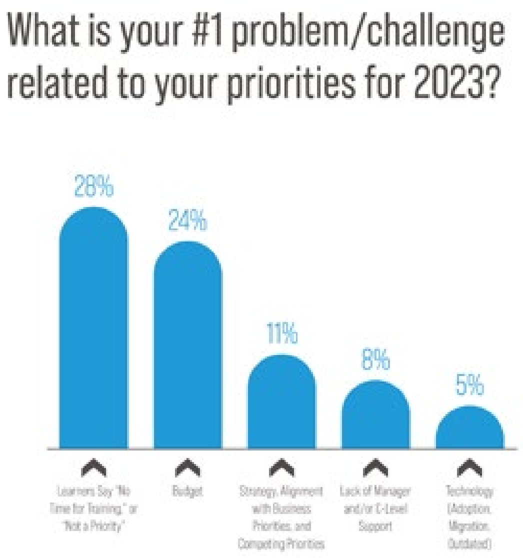
1. The Top Challenge for LDPs: Proving the Value of Training

When you look at the top three challenges faced by LDPs, a theme emerges: *LDPs struggle to prove the value of training.*

And, it's a problem with a huge ripple effect. It causes:

- **employees to say they "don't have time for training."** What this really means is that they feel that training "is not as high a priority as their other work."
- **lack of C-level support.** If you prove the value of training, the C-level buys in. When, on the other hand, your C-level doesn't advocate for leadership development, it can send motivation grinding to a halt. Managers won't care about their direct reports going through training. As a result, direct reports, even if they're interested, will be much less inclined to prioritize training.
- **lack of budget.** The C-level speaks in numbers. They won't allocate budget toward leadership development unless they see a clear ROI.

What about the companies who never seem to suffer from the above three challenges? What sets them apart? One thing they all tend to have in common is that they don't struggle with "Strategy and Alignment to the Business" (the third largest challenge). LDPs who thrive at proving value can rattle off KPIs and connect them directly to their top priorities. And, they can connect their top priorities directly to greater business goals.



What is your #1 problem/challenge related to your priorities for 2023?

Check out this article for a six-step guide to build out a strategic plan: *UAB Medicine's 6-Step Strategic Plan For Leadership Development*

2. "Coaching Skills for Managers" is the Most In-Demand Topic

Training managers to hold effective coaching conversations is the top focus for many leadership development professionals in 2023. That's mainly because retention and internal mobility so heavily linked to an employee's relationship with their manager. It's also because, in light of our uncertain economic climate, accountability and productivity are being held at a premium.

One of the most successful examples of a coaching skills program in 2022 was at AllianceBernstein (AB). Here's what they did (in a nutshell):

1. **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.
2. Meanwhile, **managers** go through a train-the-trainer to learn how to better facilitate career conversations with their employees.
3. Then, built into the program itself, managers and employees work through a series of actual employee conversations.

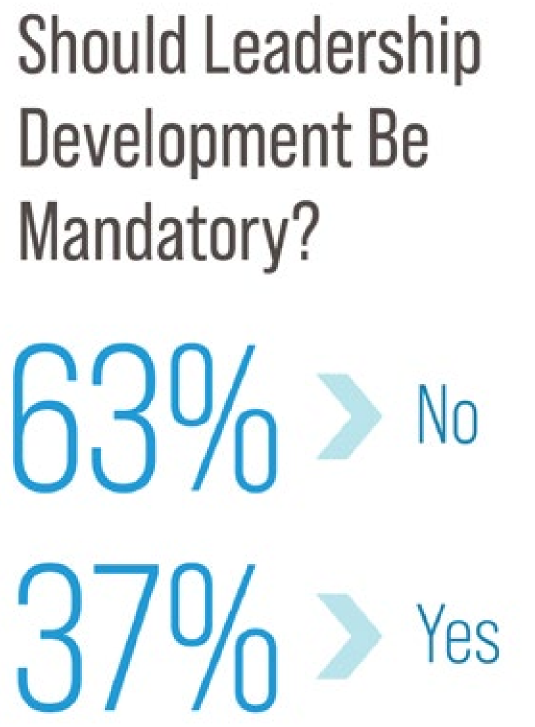
For more on the AB Career Conversations program, read: How AllianceBernstein Implemented A Career Conversations Program To Boost Engagement

What topics / competencies will you focus on in 2023?

#1	Coaching Skills for Managers
#2	Leading Change
#3	DEIB
#4	Resilience / Wellness
#5	Accountability
#6	Emotional Intelligence
#7	Feedback
#8	Performance Management
#9	Psychological Safety
#10	Employee Engagement

3. Leadership Development is Still Not Mandatory at Most Organizations

Despite the growing buy-in to leadership development, there's still a disconnect between its value and its treatment at the organizational level. Only 37% of LDPs say that leadership development is mandatory at their organization.

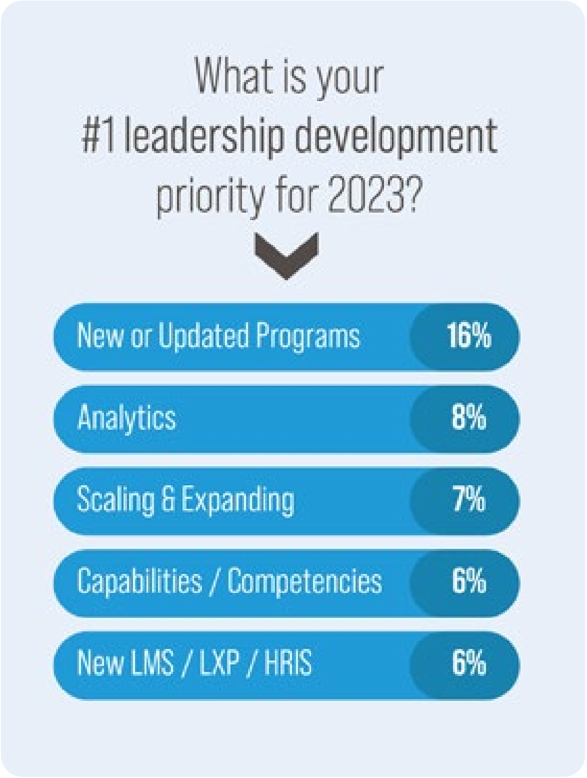


Joe Ballou, the head of leadership development at Box put it this way: "We've been iterating on this idea of having a Managers' Essentials Training program that's a foundational ten classes. Anyone who joins management at Box, needs to complete at least 75% of that path within the first year. Or, they can get approval to build and complete a custom path."

4. Scaling is the Top Priority for 2023

New and updated programs topped the list this year for strategic priorities. And, the top 20 list of priorities includes: New Hire programs, Emerging Leaders Programs, New Manager Programs, Frontline Manager programs, Manager of Managers programs, High-potential programs, and C-Suite programs. All of which are specific examples of new programs (totaling another 16% of top priorities).

Point being, as leadership development teams prove their impact, they look to build out new programs to support new audiences. They're also revamping their existing programs to maximize impact.



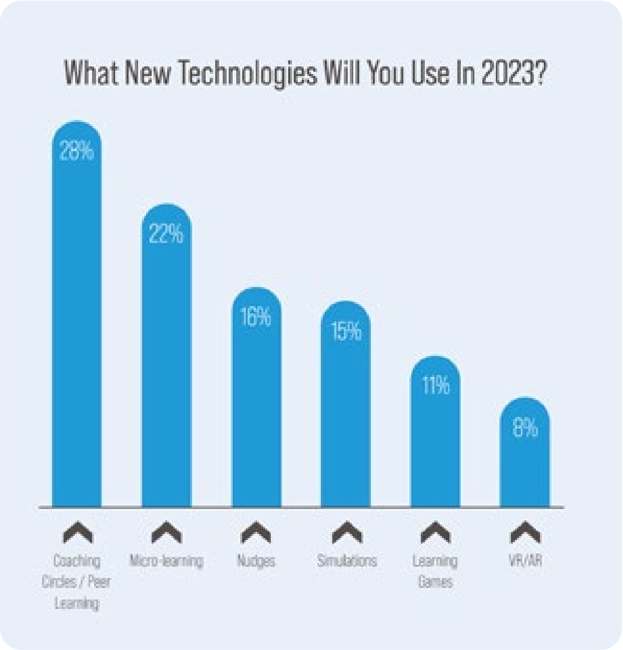
It makes sense then that Analytics and Scaling come in as close second and third priorities. "Analytics" to track progress, understand what's working, and prove measurable impact. And, the desire to "Scale" is the driver behind most of the new program initiatives.

5. LDPs Look to Leverage Tech for Behavior Change

When you consider the number one challenge of "Proving Value" and the number one priority of "Scaling," tech that facilitates behavior change is the silver bullet. It enables scale and sparks behavior change (proving value).

It makes sense then that the top six types of tech LDPs plan to activate in 2023 are all closely tied to scaling and behavior change. Here's a quick breakdown of the top six types of tech LDPs plan to unveil:

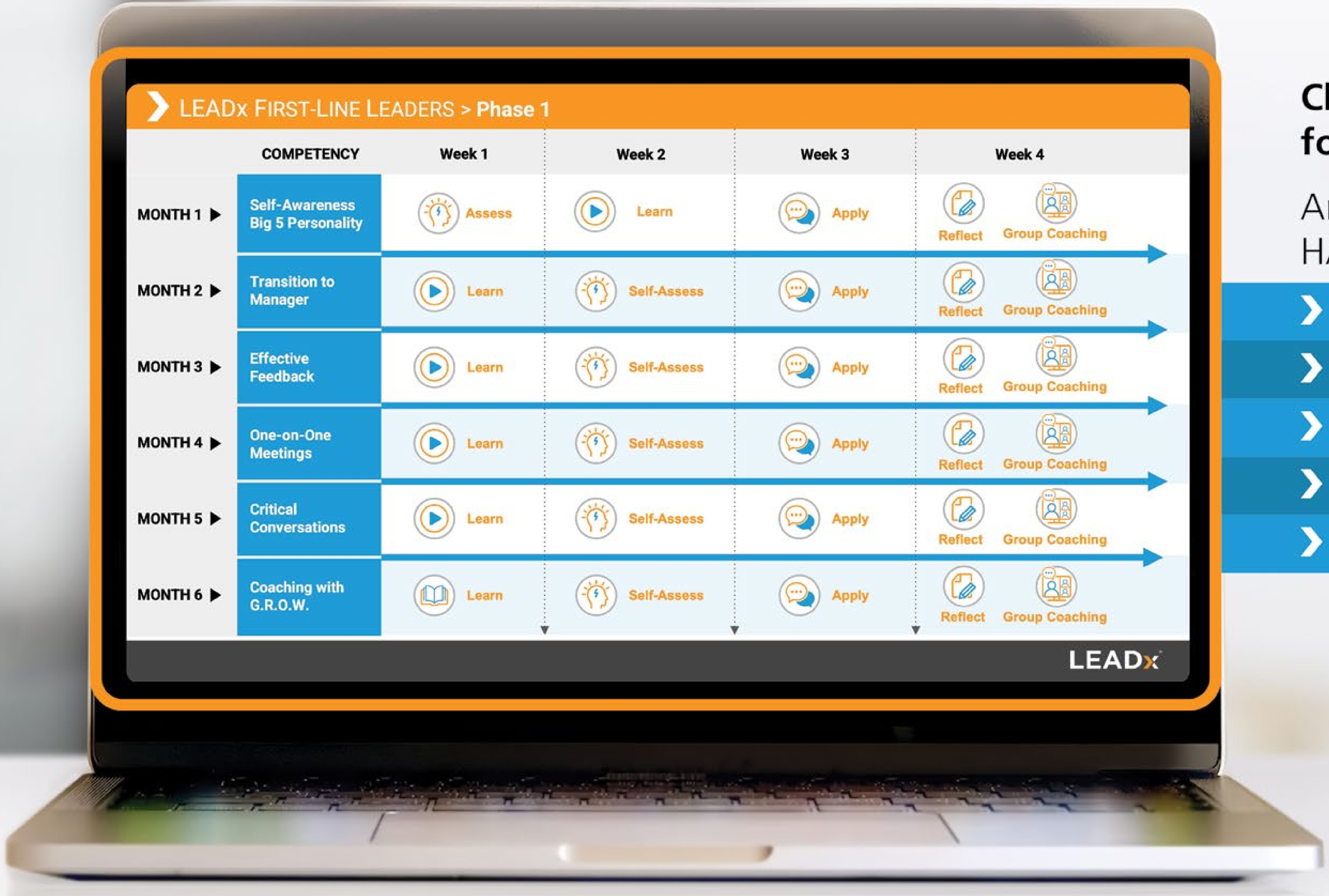
- **Peer Learning.** Peer learning tech enables collaboration and productivity in ways that in-person can't. For example, one leadership development team at a major Tech company used a simple Google doc to share insights, ideas, questions, and examples of how leaders work from locations around the world. As their doc grew, themes emerged, ideas intersected, and they had a running record of key information.
- **Micro-learning.** Micro-learning solves for "I don't have time for training" challenge. On top of that, it makes learning available on-demand (open book test), helps increase repetition to build habits, and brings learning into the flow of work.
- **Nudges.** Nudges solve for the behavior change challenge. It takes repetition to build habits (~60 days of practice). But the average programs hit learners several times at most. Nudges turn the table and make it possible to deliver pithy strategies and insights at a regular cadence.
- **Simulations.** Simulations work better virtually than in-person. They're also much more affordable. For example, Nestlé used virtual video simulations in their leadership training. They used business leaders, peers, and HR as role players. All of those people then offered feedback after the simulation. And, they recorded the simulations so leaders could rewatch for body language, tone, and communication skills.
- **Learning games.** Gamification brings several key advantages: 1) increases engagement, 2) encourages active learning, 3) incorporates real-world scenarios, 4) gives immediate and useful feedback, and 5) facilitates collaboration and teamwork.
- **VR and AR.** Closely tied to simulations, VR and AR are a way to make simulations even more realistic.



Scaling Leadership Development without Sacrificing Quality

As companies seek to retain their talent through economic uncertainty, scaling and expanding their leadership development programs is their top priority. But, the best LDPs know that simply offering up a library of videos is not a sufficient form of scaling. Scaling, after all, is only as useful as its impact. That's why in 2023 LDPs are looking to scale without sacrificing quality. To do so, they need crystal clear strategic priorities, proof of value, and in most cases, the right technology to drive behavior change without breaking the bank. ■

LOOKING TO LAUNCH A WILDLY SUCCESSFUL NEW MANAGER TRAINING PROGRAM?



LEADx FIRST-LINE LEADERS > Phase 1

	COMPETENCY	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
MONTH 1 ▶	Self-Awareness Big 5 Personality	Assess	Learn	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 2 ▶	Transition to Manager	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 3 ▶	Effective Feedback	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 4 ▶	One-on-One Meetings	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 5 ▶	Critical Conversations	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching
MONTH 6 ▶	Coaching with G.R.O.W.	Learn	Self-Assess	Apply	Reflect Group Coaching

LEADx

Choose monthly topics for your managers.

And turn these topics into HABITS using:

- Self-Assessments
- Micro-Learning
- Nudges
- On-the-Job Application
- Group Coaching

LEADx®

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>
> **—Kim Zimmerman,**
> **Leadership Development Manager at Inspire Brands**

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