

The Impact of Leadership

Studies consistently confirm what most leaders already know – managers and leaders have the most impact on organizational performance. Managers have significant influence on organizational outcomes - both positive and negative. Managers need to look no further than the mirror to find the source of their organization’s success as well as their organization’s troubles. Employee engagement, operational excellence, strategy, revenue growth, and profitability are most impacted by the decisions, indecisions, methods, and approaches used by their organization’s leaders.

Do managers know they are most responsible for their organization’s results? Do they realize that overcoming challenges and leveraging opportunities depend on how well they motivate, exhort, coach, guide, enable, manage, and assimilate their people? Many do not. For example, the cause of most employee disengagement is well known—people’s boss. Yet the chosen remedy is often better incentives, more work flexibility, or other solutions that all but ignore the fundamental issue.

Many managers are also surprised when individual contributors don’t want to move into management, or when they struggle to make the jump from performing tasks to leading people. Or when supervisors struggle with the move to middle management, or when managers move into the executive ranks. Statistics such as those below reveal the significant struggle with these transitions as so many leaders fail to meet their leadership performance expectations.

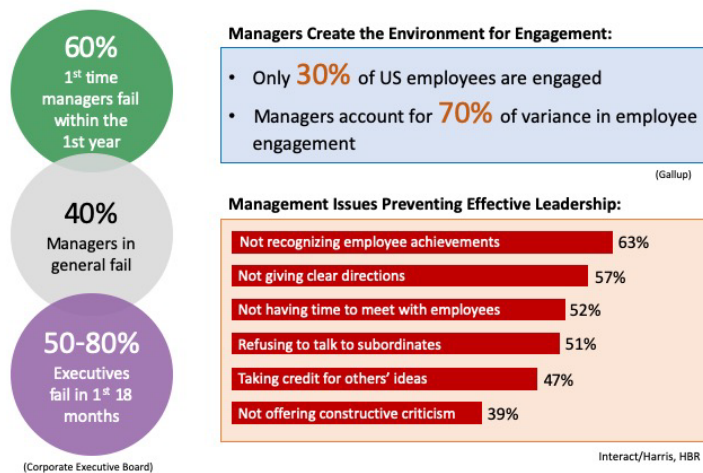


Figure 1: Leadership Statistics

Leadership Approaches

Managers and leaders impact their organizations through varying approaches and styles, but leadership approaches generally fall into three categories. At the lowest category of leadership performance, leaders are so dysfunctional that they have a negative impact upon organization performance. Taskmasters, for example, use a telling approach that makes people feel belittled and fearful. Equally demotivating are phantom leaders who are virtually absent due to their inaccessibility or inability to hold people accountable.

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Both taskmasters and phantom leaders saddle their organizations with hidden costs related to poor employee engagement, productivity, and retention.

The second category of leaders have a neutral or slightly positive impact on organizational performance, but fall short of their positive potential. They lead as contributors who apply their skills in tactical ways or organizers who merely work as organizational traffic cops who are masterful in the art of delegation but add little direct value. Contributors and organizers get work done, but because they are so focused on the work, people’s development and motivation are largely ignored.

Third, there are leaders who increase organizational performance in significant ways. They lead as coaches who develop top talent and transformers who inspire, exhort, and guide people through strategic organizational improvements. Leaders in this third category create loyal employees who give significant discretionary effort, work collaboratively, innovate, create competitive advantage, and cultivate high-performance organizational cultures that attract other top performers.

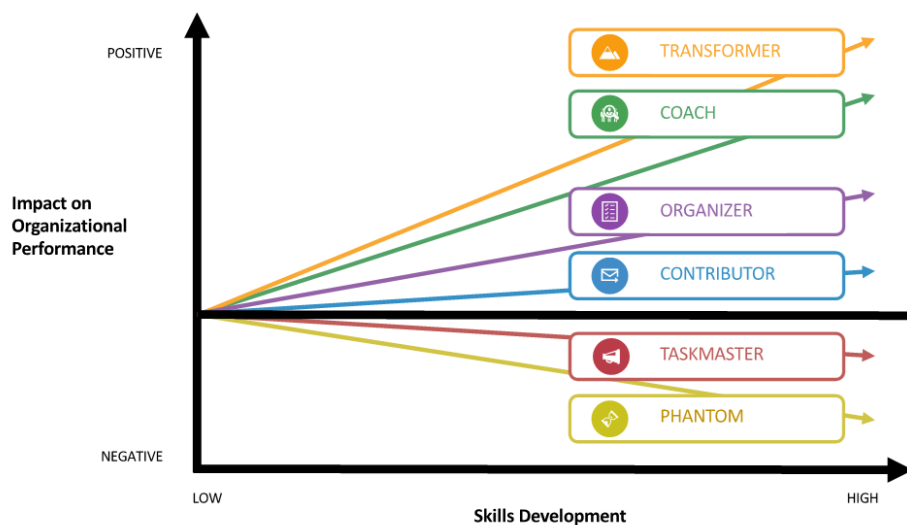


Figure 2: Leadership Approaches

When people think about great leaders, they often associate great leadership with public company CEOs whose companies have created market leading products and been popularized by the media. However, those companies, like all companies, reach top levels of performance due to the effort of others. Therefore, great leaders who inspire, exhort, coach, guide, manage, and assimilate people must exist at all levels.

Not only do popularized leaders receive significant exposure, so do star performers. Most are very talented and deserving of notoriety, but what is often overlooked is how they became so talented. How do star performers, and great leaders alike, become star performers? Rarely is the answer “I did it all by myself.” Most had a great a great boss, mentor, or coach who was instrumental in their development. Organizations that have many top performers place great emphasis on mentoring and have managers who lead as coaches.

How about employees? What do employees want from their boss to be able to perform their best? One of the most well-known studies on what employees want from their boss has been conducted annually by Google (<https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/the-evolution-of-project-oxygen/>). The results have varied year to year with one exception—the number one attribute. The top attribute most desired by Google’s employees is a boss who leads as a coach. Top performers value development and want a boss who focuses on their development and sets them up for success.

Maximizing Your Investment

Organizations that appreciate the impact of their leaders make leadership development a top priority. They provide training. Some provide coaching. Some provide books, videos, and other resources. Some have dedicated learning and development staff. Corporate spending on leadership development can reach \$10,000, or more, per leader per year.

Yet organizations struggle to develop great leaders who operate as coaches and transformers. They realize sub-optimal returns on their development investments. Why? The culprit for many is that the investment is focused on training without practical application. Despite the evidence that leaders who lead as coaches and transformers have the highest performing teams, few leadership development initiatives leave managers with practical tools and methods to become great coaches and transformers.

Organizations that get the most from their investment concern themselves with the entire training lifecycle. In fact, they give more attention to what happens before training and after training than the training itself.

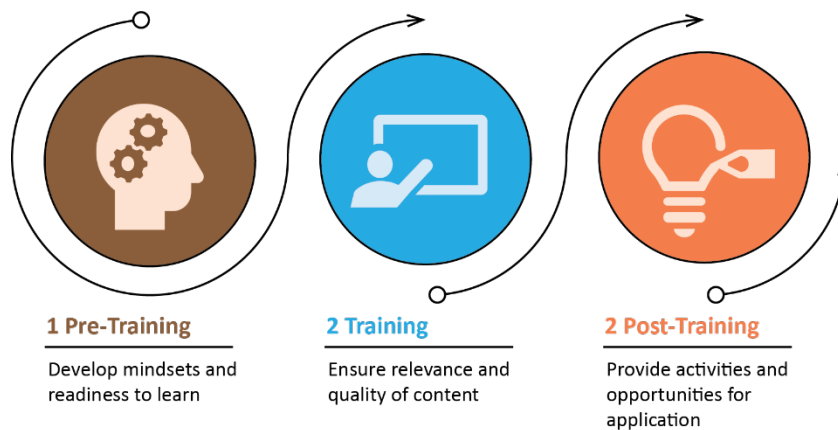


Figure 3: Three elements of the training lifecycle

Post-training assessments find that within 30 days of attending training, ninety percent of the content has been forgotten when it is not reinforced. Another problem with training is that when participants are not eager to attend, they don’t fully participate. Some even attempt “training-class sabotage.” Other issues with merely providing training include not personalizing the training to the participants, not utilizing prerequisites, and focusing on behaviors rather than mindsets. The key to growth and sustained behavioral change is mindset development, not skill development.

Best practice in leadership development is to provide a customized approach with blended methods. For example, studies find that training effectiveness goes up by 400 percent when combined with individual or team coaching. When other best practices are employed, such as utilizing assessments and experiential learning, effectiveness increases even more. People who are considered “unfixable” or who have been ineffective for years suddenly make remarkable progress.

Alpine Link

The leadership development provided by Alpine Link (www.alpinelink.com) is designed to address the shortcomings of training and approaches to leadership in general. Alpine Link’s methods employ timeless principles as well as new insights gained from contemporary neuroscience research. Alpine Link embraces the following development philosophies:

- Raise participants eagerness and readiness to be developed before initiating development.
- Precede the development of people’s abilities with the mindsets that make new behaviors sustainable.
- Employ competency models and assessments to target specific development needs.
- Provide practical frameworks, models, and checklists to ensure what is learned is applied.
- Utilize multiple resources including books, exercises, and coaching to reinforce learning concepts.
- Develop leaders’ coaching skills so they can develop those whom they lead.

Alpine Link utilizes content from the *SCOPE of Leadership* framework (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com).



Figure 4: SCOPE of Leadership framework

The SCOPE of Leadership uniquely addresses leaders’ need for growth in both their mindset and ability. It is based on thousands of hours of coaching and correlation of the leadership attributes that consistently produce tangible results. As a hierarchical model, it incorporates the development of fundamental competencies, such as setting the example for others to follow and communicating effectively, before more advanced competencies, such as coaching, leveraging partnerships and teamwork, fostering innovation, and shaping culture.

To experience the Alpine Link difference, visit www.alpinelink.com or email info@alpinelink.com.

To take the leadership approaches self-assessment, visit <https://alpinelink.com/quiz/leadership-approach-assessment/>.