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Ebook

Reimagining Leadership Development for a **Multi-Generational Workforce**

The New Look of Leadership Development

Great leaders create a culture where employees — and the company — thrive. They <u>double employee engagement</u>, which increases <u>earnings-per-share by 147%</u>. Skilled leaders encourage employees to stay longer, reducing hiring and onboarding costs.

Despite the clear connection between effective leadership and company success, organizations are failing to cultivate their leaders. Only <u>one out of ten people</u> naturally possess the talent to manage. We can't expect everyone who is promoted to thrive in a leadership role instantly. It takes intentional training, preparation, and time to help leaders of all experience levels succeed.

But leadership development hasn't adapted to the demands of 21st-century business. The old take on leadership development is a "stepwise, architected process," according to HR and workplace learning expert <u>Josh Bersin</u>. These programs can last years and require employees to spend too much time away from projects and teams. Today's business world demands a different approach where leaders can put learnings to use immediately.

This guide explores the challenges of developing leaders and identifies what leaders across multiple generations need to help their company succeed.

Executive Summary

The new world of work requires a new approach to leadership development. This guide will help you understand what today's aspiring leaders will need to succeed. You'll discover how to reframe traditional and outdated approaches to training to align them with today's business and employee needs. **Here's a preview of what's to come:**

Leaders need a new set of skills to adapt and thrive in today's environment.

Learning by doing is critical for leaders, and **companies must provide opportunities** for this to happen.

All levels of **leaders need guidance, coaching, and mentorship** to continue developing their skills.

1   Get to know a new
generation of leaders

2   Explore the skills that set
today's leaders apart

3   Create on-the-job
learning opportunities

4   Create one-on-one
learning opportunities

1

Get to know a new generation of leaders

There are now multiple generations in the workplace — traditionalists (those born before 1946), baby boomers, Generation X, millennials, and Generation Z (Gen Z).

While generational differences can sometimes be exaggerated and cause unnecessary friction, it's worth acknowledging some of the defining characteristics of the younger generations. They have specific expectations when it comes to training and development.

Both millennial and Gen Z employees rate development opportunities in the workplace as their top priority. Yes, even above financial rewards. The younger generations of employees expect to grow themselves and their careers, even if they don't have their sights set on the C-suite.

Members of Gen Z are true digital natives. Their familiarity with technology means Gen Z employees expect customized learning experiences. McKinsey reports, "This personalization is increasingly expected as Generation Z navigates learning and development within companies. They want a learning tool personalized to their interests — a platform that serves up customized learning pathways to help them acquire the skills to achieve their goal or solve a problem in the moment of need. To appeal to them will require organizations to truly personalize career experiences."

Generation	Born	Communication Preferences	Noteworthy Stats
Traditionalists	1925-1945	Personal touch: handwritten notes over emails	Traditionalists currently comprise 2% of the workforce.
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	Efficiency: in-person meetings, phone calls, or emails	10,000 baby boomers reach retirement age every day.
Generation X	1965-1980	Efficiency: in-person meetings, phone calls, or emails	Generation X will outnumber baby boomers by 2028.
Millennials	1981-2000	Typing: instant messages, texts, or email	By 2025, millennials will make up 75% of the global workforce.
Generation Z	2001-2020	Typing: instant messages, texts, or email	84% of Gen Z employees expect formal training provided by their employer.

Data via Purdue University Global

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Beyond the learning tools themselves, Gen Z employees seek personalized career paths.

"Employers will need to understand the behaviors and tendencies of a generation that expects much more personalization in how they want to be treated by their employer and is seeking more than just filling cookie-cutter roles," writes Deloitte.

Flexibility was already a big priority for younger employees before the pandemic.

A 2019 New York Times article, "Young People Are Going to Save Us All From Office Life," highlighted this trend. "More [young employees] expect and demand flexibility — paid leave for a new baby, say, and generous vacation time, along with daily things, like the ability to work remotely, come in late or leave early, or make time for exercise or meditation. The rest of their lives happens on their phones, not tied to a certain place or time — why should work be any different?"

Now that many employees have gotten a taste of this flexibility, they are reluctant to give it up. Sixty-five percent of workers would like to continue working from home full-time after the pandemic, and 31% want a hybrid work environment.

Employee expectations are shifting, and leadership training strategies must follow suit. Training must be available to all (not just the executive leadership level), personalized, and easily accessible to stay relevant and valuable.

In the next chapter, we'll explore which topics today's leadership training must address.

2

Explore the skills that set today's leaders apart

The traditional framework for leadership development often takes a cookie-cutter approach. As <u>McKinsey</u> puts it, "Too many training initiatives we come across rest on the assumption that one size fits all and that the same group of skills or style of leadership is appropriate regardless of strategy, organizational culture, or CEO mandate."

Today's workplace is dynamic and unpredictable, so leadership training must also adapt to these demands. Forget the rigid training curriculums of the past. Allow space for customization for a truly innovative training program.

But there are a few foundational skills that will help leaders thrive in nearly any role. These skills ensure that leaders treat employees equitably, create a positive work environment, and maintainan open dialogue with their teams.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DE&I)

Today's employees want to work for companies that align with their values. They want workplaces that have made a genuine commitment to DE&I — 57% of people think their company should be doing more to increase diversity. And 67% of job seekers say that a diverse workforce is an essential factor when evaluating companies and job offers.

Leaders define the company culture and values through their actions.

For example, conscientious leaders take steps to promote psychological safety. "Creating environments where all people feel psychologically safe means that all experiences and viewpoints are included, and it makes our work stronger," says Shelley Osborne in her course, Fostering Psychological Safety and Belonging on Teams.

The pandemic has amplified many existing inequities. There is a greater urgency for leaders to create an inclusive work environment. "Managers are dealing with the impacts of social inequality magnified by a pandemic, scrambling to support employees dealing with increased racial discrimination, those with mental health challenges made worse by stress and anxiety, and those who risk their lives to make a paycheck they can't afford to miss, to name a few," writes DE&I consultant Lily Zheng in Harvard Business Review. So if DE&I is a priority at your organization, you need to help leaders understand their role in promoting these values.

Break down bias to promote inclusive work environments

Leaders have a responsibility to create an open and inclusive environment where employees from all backgrounds can thrive. But this won't happen automatically.

Everyone is susceptible to bias and blind spots. "We create narratives about people or entire groups based on the limited information we have about them. This can be detrimental to creating inclusive environments, especially when these stereotypes result in disparate treatment," says DE&I strategist and Udemy instructor Ulysses Smith. "As champions of inclusion, it is incumbent upon you and your employees to actively seek to make the unconscious conscious and to learn to recognize and challenge bias."

When bias goes unchecked, it leads to further inequity. For example, women are more likely to receive vague feedback. "Receiving biased feedback reduces women's chances of improving, which then impacts their ability to advance in their careers," says executive coach and Udemy instructor Marie Deveaux.

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Jossie Haines, Senior Director of Platform Engineering at Tile, believes **leaders must consider DE&I at all stages of the employee experience**. She recommends taking steps to:

1. Limit the role of unconscious bias in hiring decisions
2. Diversify candidate sourcing
3. Have more meaningful conversations in 1:1s to promote inclusion
4. Implement fair performance evaluations

Limiting bias involves both raising awareness and taking action. Make sure your inclusion efforts include both of these elements.

Empathy

Successful leaders can tailor their management style to the needs of each direct report. This concept, known as "situational leadership," relies on empathy and high emotional intelligence. Marie Deveaux believes empathy drives performance. "When managers are empathetic," Marie says, "More ideas get shared and more innovation occurs. Leaders must work to create an environment where people from different vantage points feel encouraged to get their ideas across."

Research shows a connection between the emotional well-being of employees and their productivity. Emotions can be contagious. When employees witness unpleasant interactions between coworkers, they feel emotionally depleted. Empathetic leaders are skilled at reading how people are feeling and addressing problems before they escalate.

Empathetic managers experience higher performance and less turnover on their teams. High emotional intelligence helps managers motivate their team members and defuse tense situations.

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Communication

Leaders must feel comfortable shifting between different forms and styles of communication. They may need to persuade or convince others, deliver tough news, or coach their direct reports through challenges.

Difficult conversations are not areas that those in leadership positions can shy away from.

In fact, skillful leaders don't hesitate to communicate often with employees. Harvard Business Review explains why this is so critical. "When leaders clearly communicate their expectations, they avoid blindsiding people and ensure that everyone is on the same page. In a safe environment, employees can relax, invoking the brain's higher capacity for social engagement, innovation, creativity, and ambition."

Beyond simply sharing information, leaders know how to ask the right questions and understand the value of two-way communication. They may provide broader context but also encourage their direct reports to make their own decisions. Leaders who have learned to ask good questions empower their teams rather than preventing progress.

In the next chapter, we'll consider how to create opportunities for your leaders to develop these essential skills.

3

Create on-the-job learning opportunities

One of the best ways to develop your leaders is to give them the chance to learn on the job. First, employees are simply not that good at remembering what they learn during training. Adults only retain about 10% of what they hear in classroom lectures. But retention jumps to two-thirds when they learn by doing.

"Leadership, like HR, is a 'craft,' not a 'profession,'" writes <u>Josh Bersin</u>.
"In other words, you learn it by doing it, through coaching and apprenticeship, and by learning and reflecting on your mistakes."
Every time you lead a project, program, team, or operational solution, it's a chance to learn how to do it better next time.

There are several ways you can create on-the-job learning opportunities for your aspiring leaders. They can:

> Lead a specific project, such as exploring a new line of business for the company.
>
> Be the driver for creating a new internal process like making your hiring and interviewing practices more inclusive.
>
> Establish and run an Employee Resource Group (this may include developing the mission and vision, securing budget, organizing activities, and reporting on results).
>
> Cover a colleague's responsibilities when they go on an extended leave.

If your organization has the budget and bandwidth, you can develop a more comprehensive program. For example, Barclays and Disney run "intrapreneurship" programs. They invite employees to propose ideas for new products and services. While they continue to work on their day jobs, employees attend workshops and get coaching to develop their pitch. They ultimately get the opportunity to pitch their ideas to senior leaders. Successful ideas receive funding and resources.

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Another approach is to create an internal marketplace within your organization. Treat projects like jobs and "hire" people from within your company to be responsible for them. Josh Bersin explains that Unilever has been experimenting with this approach using a technology platform to connect people and projects. "This platform lets people post jobs and projects, find jobs and projects, apply for jobs and projects, and it recommends jobs and projects based on your skills."

Leadership development isn't just about the how. It also involves who you pair your aspiring leaders with.

In the next chapter, we'll explore the role of mentors in developing leaders' skills.

Supercharge development programs with a training partner

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership development. You'll want to create a program aligned with your company's values and needs. An experienced training partner can help to:

> Define the learning objectives and results of your leadership development program
>
> Identify when to create custom content versus curate from existing resources
>
> Take advantage of blended learning tactics to supplement classroom learning

If you're a Udemy Business customer, good news! Consider your customer success manager your training partner. They are available to help you build training programs tailored to your business and your employees' needs.

4

Create one-on-one
learning opportunities

Great leaders learn from observing, talking with, and getting feedback from those who've already walked their paths. A mentorship program is the ultimate way to support your up-and-coming leaders as well as seasoned leaders acting as mentors. Organizations with formal mentoring have 46% higher leadership quality.

Mentoring also sees positive associations to employee retention. Sun Microsystems/Oracle found that retention rates increased to 69% for mentors and 72% for mentees, while the retention rate among employees who didn't participate in a mentor program was just 49%.

However you may structure the details of your mentorship program, helping employees build a vast "network intelligence" of people with various experience levels sets a crucial foundation for a mutual learning environment where employees can learn different things from each person. To ensure your company's leaders get the most out of the program, kick it off the program by reviewing with mentees these four tips from Udemy instructor and leadership coach JeanAnn Nichols on how to approach their first meetings with mentors.

Define goals clearly

Empower mentees to decide what they expect to get out of the relationship with their mentor. For example, are they hoping to better define their career path, develop subject matter expertise, or build networking skills? Before pairing mentors and mentees, have mentees complete a worksheet to explicitly identify their goals for the relationship.

Take an honest assessment

Mentees should take stock of where they are today. How close are they to reaching the goals or acquiring the skills they've defined? JeanAnn recommends mentees give themselves a rating out of 10 for each objective.

Outline a path forward

What will it take to achieve a 10 in each category? This reflection point is where mentors can help their mentees create learning objectives and an action plan. JeanAnn suggests working in the mentee's preferred format, whether that's a vision board, spreadsheet, or bullet-pointed list.

Take the reins

Encourage mentees to lead the conversation. If they have a specific problem they're facing right now, they can talk through solutions and potential outcomes. Sometimes they might choose to discuss broader career topics like how to feel comfortable presenting to executives.

Build internal communities to tap into the power of peer learning

A formal 1:1 mentorship program isn't the only way to offer your company's leaders the chance to learn from peers. One option is to build an internal community for managers online, such as through a Slack channel. Angela McKenna, Senior Vice President of Talent at Salesforce, finds this highly effective. "The leadership community that we've created [within Salesforce] enables our leaders to help each other," she says. "We encourage them to post their own tips and tricks."

Depending on your organization's size, you can create a single space or several spaces to ensure the group size encourages dialogue and participation. If you're splitting members into different groups, make them experientially diverse to avoid creating echo chambers.

It's **time** to transform leadership development to meet your needs

There's no single, simple solution to leadership training. But there is one fact that's indisputable: the old approach simply no longer works. And it's no secret at companies. Two-thirds of executives say leadership development is their number one concern.

Massive changes in the makeup of the workforce and the work setting have already been underway. The pandemic and the shift to distributed teams only accelerated these trends. These changes to the workplace require a new take on leadership development.

Explore how to create a leadership program tailored to your business and your employees — **get in touch with our workplace learning experts today**.

About
Udemy Business

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