

Learning Quarterly

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The Latest Leadership Development Challenges—and How to Tackle Them



Today's Leaders Aren't Ready

"Alpha Company Acquires Beta in an Unlikely Pairing"

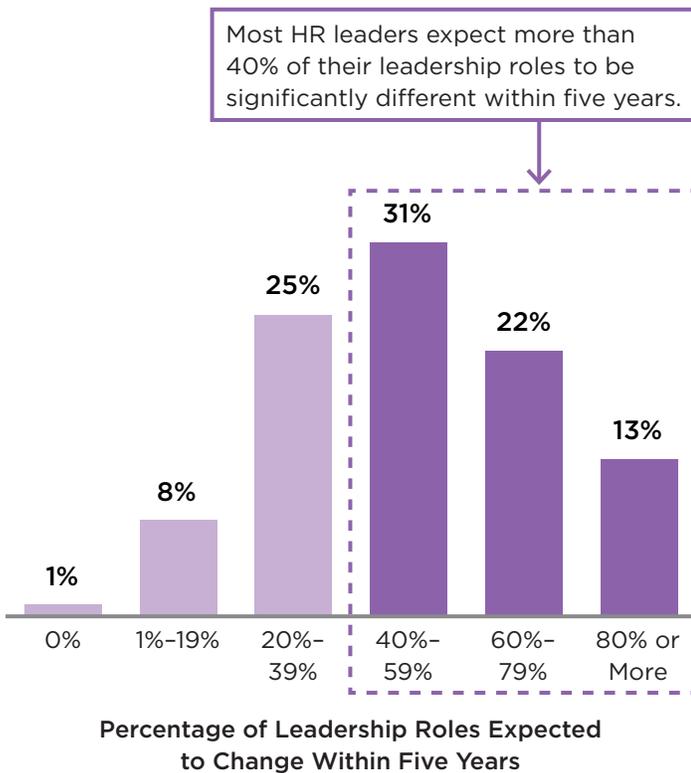
"Company X to Eliminate Performance Ratings for Good!"

"CEO Steps Down Under Board Pressure—Who's Next?"

We read about it in the news every day: organizations are enduring an unprecedented volume of increasingly complex changes. And we hardly flinch at the trend—that is, until it affects *our* organization. But change doesn't discriminate. It has, in fact, become the new normal, affecting organizations of all sizes, locations, and industries.

Leaders are often on the hook for shaping, translating, and disseminating changes throughout their organization, no matter the size of the change. This means our leaders consistently face unprecedented challenges, trying to make sound decisions that yield the best business results. This monumental ask hasn't gone unnoticed by HR; two-thirds of HR leaders expect more than 40% of their organization's leadership roles to be significantly different within the next five years (figure 1).

Figure 1: HR Leaders' Change Expectations
Percentage of Respondents



n = 173 HR leaders.
Source: CEB 2016 Quick Poll.

Here's where L&D gets involved: because leaders have an integral role in an organization's success and that role is ever-changing and unpredictable, L&D has prioritized leadership development above all else. This is why, when asked about their priorities for 2018, the vast majority of L&D executives identified "developing leaders"

as their top priority, above manager-led development, HIPO development, and other top-of-mind objectives.¹

The natural reaction to tackle a top priority? Invest in it. Eight in 10 L&D executives expect to increase or maintain their investment in leadership development—to no avail.² Despite all this attention and investment, just 30% of L&D executives believe leaders at their organization are prepared to lead today, and only 22% believe they will be ready to lead in the future.³

When it comes to developing leaders in today's changing environment, L&D faces very real challenges. We've seen three key challenges among our members:

1. Leaders' capability needs are always shifting.
2. Being inclusive is a newly essential competency spurred by globalization and increased diversity.
3. Individual leaders' needs vary widely, so the standardized and scalable development of the past now fails.

Challenge 1: Shifting Capability Needs

L&D tries to keep pace with changing leadership capability needs by determining which needs will be necessary in the future. This assumes the function can plan ahead and begin building today the skills leaders will need tomorrow. To further cover its bases, L&D develops leaders across a wide range of capabilities so they can flex their abilities depending on the circumstance, and it invests in agile people who can adapt to situations and learn new skills quickly. A whopping two-thirds of organizations today focus on agile individuals (figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of Organizations Focusing on Agile Individuals

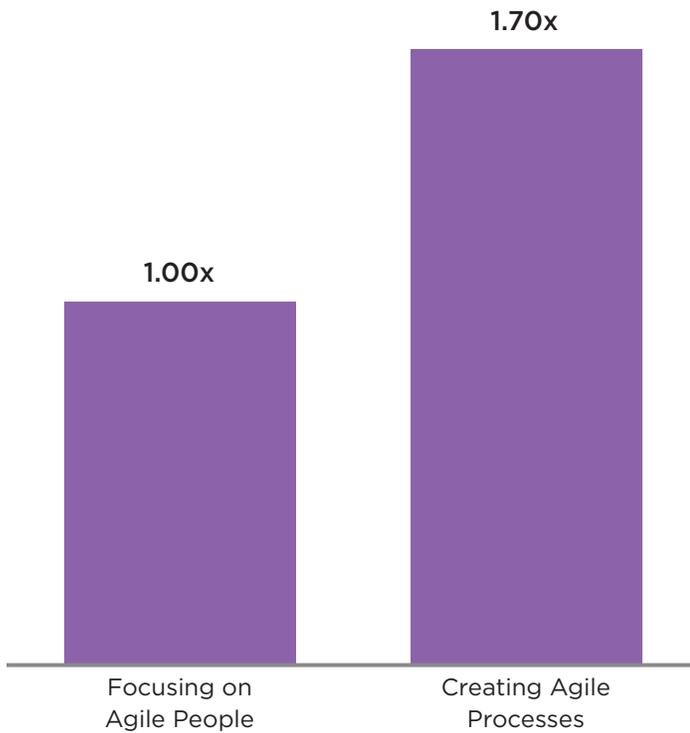


n = 142 HR leaders.
Source: CEB 2016 HIPO Survey.

The best bet against uncertainty and change is agility, right? On the surface, this common approach is rational and sound. Unfortunately, these attempts aren't paying off, and HR leaders are still unable to fill changing leadership roles with internal candidates. Despite L&D's attempts to build agile leaders, 8 in 10 HR executives report lack of readiness as the top reason a leadership candidate couldn't fill a position.⁴

But concentrating on agility isn't a misguided concept. Focusing on leaders' agility may not yield results, but organizations that have agile leadership development processes are 70% more likely to have a strong leadership bench (figure 3).

Figure 3: Impact on Bench Strength of Focusing on Agile People Versus Creating Agile Processes



n = 142 HR leaders.
Source: CEB 2016 HIPO Survey.

Design is a foundational element of a flexible leadership development process. When chasing a moving target, linear processes may yield an out-of-date solution by the time all steps have been completed. An iterative design, on the other hand, allows changes as feedback comes in. L&D should therefore **design iteratively to enable quick adaptation to changing needs**.

William Hill, a UK-based gaming company, takes this iterative and adaptive approach.⁵ L&D at William Hill realized that business needs and leadership roles were changing too quickly to develop a comprehensive and timely leadership development program, particularly for HIPOs. Rather than trying to predict future leadership needs, William Hill purposely built room for organic growth into its HIPO development program design.

First, William Hill reset mind-sets and expectations to help key stakeholders understand the need to transition to the new design approach by asking:

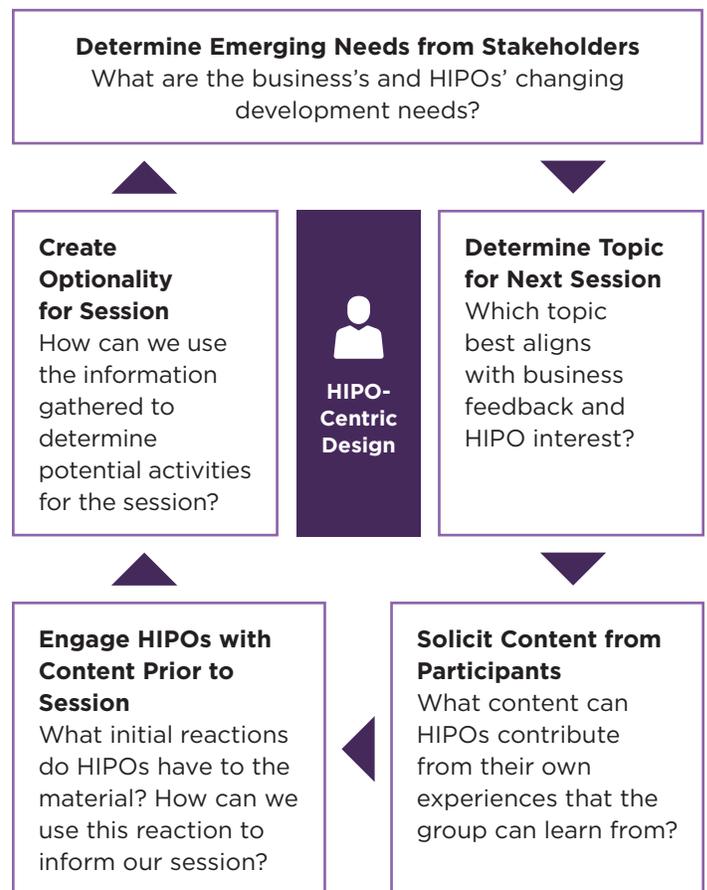
- Senior leaders and managers to be more active in program evolution,
- L&D to shift from building a comprehensive solution to using a build-as-you-go and modular approach, and
- HIPOs to be active co-designers of the program.

Once expectations were set, William Hill deployed a flexible design process for its new HIPO development program that included the following interconnected elements:

1. Determine emerging business and HIPO development needs from stakeholders.
2. Based on feedback, identify the topic or series of topics to include in the 16-month program.
3. Solicit content from HIPO participants that others in the cohort can learn from.
4. Gather feedback from participants before the session to pressure-test the content.
5. Refine the content, and make it as relevant and actionable as possible.

Staying true to the agile nature of the program, these five steps are fluid and can be truncated, revisited, or reordered as circumstances demand.

Figure 4: William Hill’s Iterative Design Process

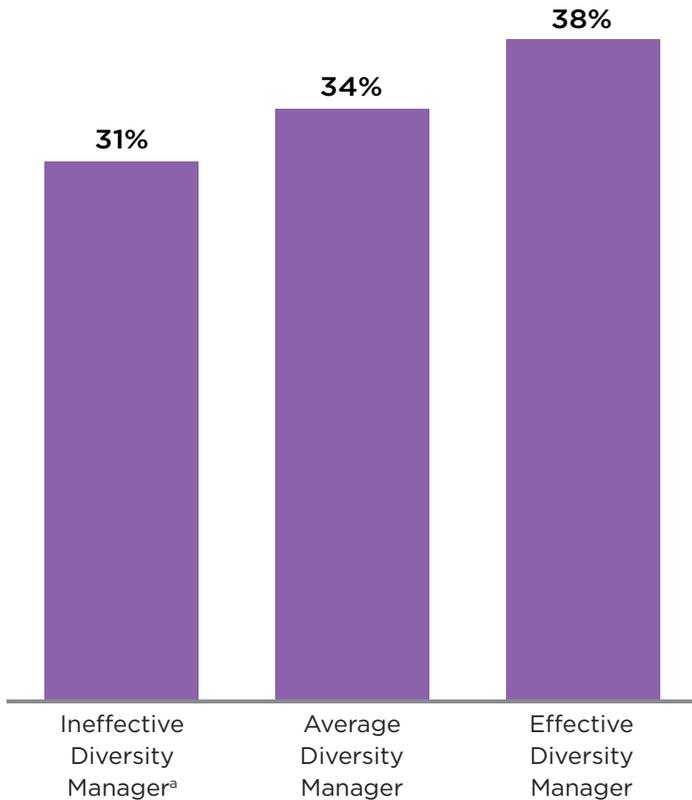


Source: William Hill plc; CEB analysis.

Challenge 2: The Gap in Inclusive Leadership Capability

As organizations become increasingly global, diverse, and collaborative, executives have begun to understand that leaders who can build inclusive environments are a necessity, not just nice to have. When polled, 97% of executives recognized that talent management strategies must significantly adjust to reflect this new reality.⁶

Figure 5: Percentage of Ineffective, Average, and Effective Managers Who Are High Performers



n = 3,989 leaders.

Source: CEB analysis.

^a Diversity management refers to the ability to effectively manage across diverse cultures. It includes managing ethical issues in different environments, managing workforces of different backgrounds, and creating a new culture that reflects all the organizations involved.

Inclusion gives you more than just a feeling of moral righteousness; developing inclusive leadership has tangible performance results. Leaders who effectively manage across diverse cultures outperform their peers who struggle in this metric (figure 5).

The problem is that, by their own assessment, barely 9% of leaders are effective diversity managers.⁷ This lack of proficiency in a necessary capability means L&D should **develop leaders to invite and encourage diverse perspectives at work.**

Red Hat, a software company headquartered in North Carolina, tackles the inclusion challenge by helping leaders involve employees in decision making, a traditionally exclusive task.⁸ To ensure an efficient and structured process, Red Hat provides its leaders with the guidance and framework for open decision making.

At Red Hat, open decisions are:

- Transparent (decisions are not made behind closed doors),
- Inclusive (leaders invite and are open to diverse perspectives and ideas), and
- Customer-centric (ideas, no matter whose they are, keep the customer front and center).

Figure 6: Red Hat's Open Decision Making Framework



Source: CEB analysis; Rebecca Fernandez and Kirsten Zapotok, "Open Decision Framework," Red Hat, <http://redhat.slides.com/rfernand/deck-1-3-3-4-6#/> (log-in required), accessed May 2016; Jim Whitehurst, *The Open Organization: Igniting Passion and Performance* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2015).

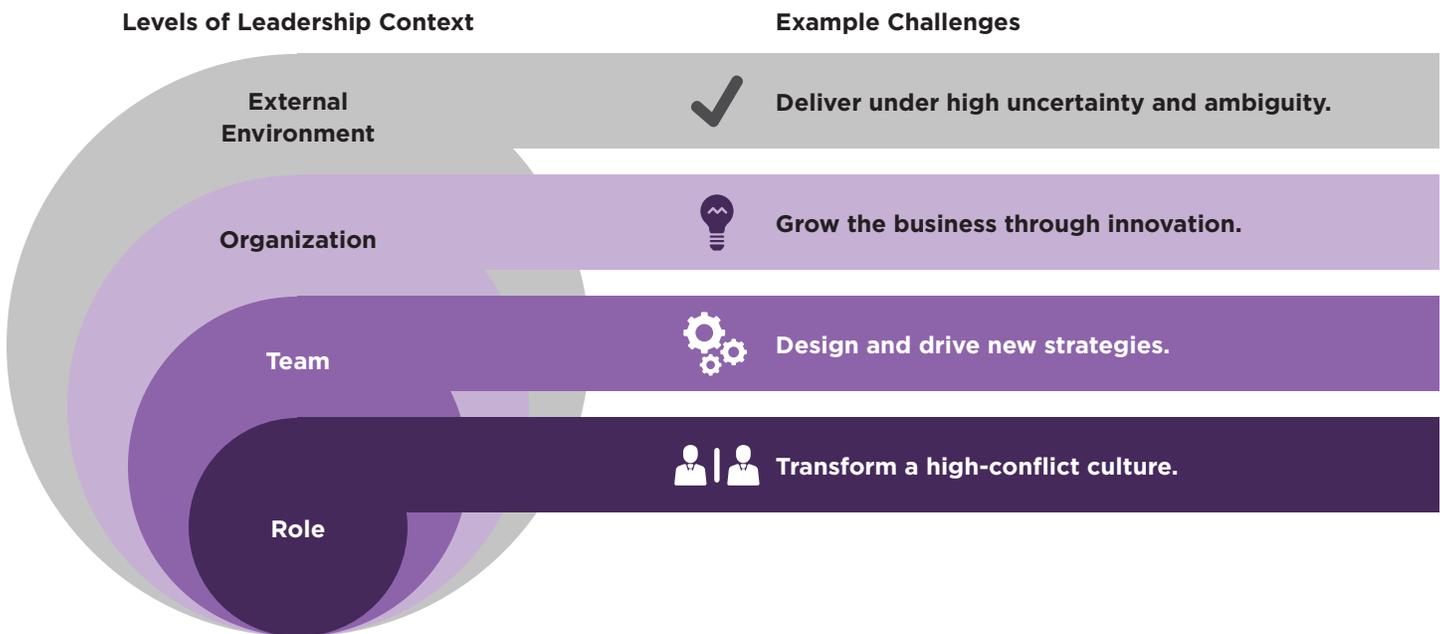
Rather than including people in the decision process because of seniority or previous involvement, Red Hat helps its leaders ask the right people to weigh in (e.g., those affected or surprised by the decision, those who care about it). Although open decision making can feel slow at times, it leads to more effective and faster results because all levels of employees are involved; responsibilities are clear; and the reasons for the project are understood and accepted, if not always liked.

Challenge 3: Individual Leaders' Needs Vary

L&D tends to think of leaders as a homogeneous group and develops them using universal competency models for universal work contexts because they are scalable for large organizations. In reality, leaders' individual needs vary widely based on role, team, organization, and external environment.

All leaders face tough challenges, but different challenges require different leader capabilities—one-size development doesn't fit all. In fact, leaders are far more likely to perform successfully when their capabilities and experiences are matched to the particular challenges of a specific role.⁹

Figure 7: Examples of Leadership Contexts and Challenges



Source: CEB analysis.

To ensure leaders perform their best, L&D should **personalize development to fit leaders' varying contexts**.

Microsoft India, a subsidiary of the American software company, created a cloud-enabled training app called ASPIRE to maintain a personalized focus while scaling development to a large audience of leaders.¹⁰ As part of Microsoft India's 12-month customized leader development program, the app includes post-program support and serves as a platform open to alumni and others who want to go through the development process in a self-driven way.

ASPIRE abides by three design principles:

- 1. Assess holistic development needs**—Microsoft India conducts future-focused interviews with the leader and key stakeholders to identify the root cause of any skill gaps and allow the leader to spend significant time up front exploring his or her capabilities.
- 2. Customize and integrate development touch points**—In lieu of generic learning paths, Microsoft India allows leaders to construct their own development path from L&D's curated list of options within the app.
- 3. Involve an extended network to ensure change**—Microsoft India uses a core group of supporters comprising managers, L&D coaches, and leaders to regularly discuss participants' progress in the program.

Conclusion

Leadership development continues to be top of mind for L&D executives—and with good reason; leaders are the people trusted to navigate the organization to success amid unrelenting change. As executives expect leadership roles to face significant unpredictability

Figure 8: Microsoft India's ASPIRE App

L&D's Role
Curate Content for Each Leader

Curate for Quality Development
Curate internal and external L&D opportunities for leaders to add to their paths.

Ensure Personal Relevance
Use the personalized lists from each leader's assessment to recommend development.

Leader's Role
Customize Your Own Path

Allow Individual Selection
Allow leaders to customize their own development paths from L&D's curated list of options.

Go Beyond What's Offered
Leaders can add on-the-job assignments and personal development initiatives to customize their development paths.

Source: Microsoft India Corporation; CEB analysis.

in the near future, L&D is charged with ensuring today's leaders are ready for tomorrow's trials.

To combat shifting capability needs, a gap in inclusive leadership, and ineffective standardization, L&D functions must adopt iterative leadership design processes, develop leaders to invite and encourage diverse perspectives, and personalize development to fit leaders' varying contexts. These approaches will help leaders perform their best, regardless of how the world around them shifts.

For more information on leadership development:

- Watch the replay of our webinar, [Trends and Innovations in Leadership Development](#),
- Read our research on [Hallmarks of Agile HIPO Development](#), and
- Use the [CEB Ignition™ Guide to Designing a Leadership Development Program](#).

Endnotes

- ¹ CEB 2017 Learning and Development Agenda Poll. *n* = 63 L&D executives.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ CEB 2016 HIPO Survey. *n* = 142.
- ⁵ For more information, see our case study of [William Hill's Change-Adaptive HIPO Development Program Design](#).
- ⁶ CEB 2016 Business Executive Survey. *n* = 155.
- ⁷ *n* = 3,989 leaders.
- ⁸ Rebecca Fernandez, "Open Decision Framework," Red Hat, <http://redhat.slides.com/rfernand/deck-1-3-3-4-6#/> (log-in required), accessed May 2016; Jim Whitehurst, *The Open Organization: Igniting Passion and Performance* (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2015).
- ⁹ CEB 2016 Leadership Validation Study. *n* = 8,674 leaders.
- ¹⁰ For more information, see our case study of [Microsoft India's App-Enabled Personalized Leader Development and Transformation](#).

Enterprise Issue

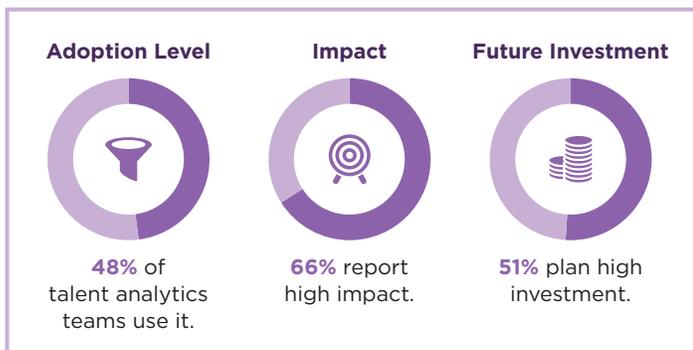
6 Talent Analytics Innovations That Shape the Future of HR

Heads of HR agree that talent analytics can positively affect business priorities, especially given the many new technological and methodological innovations. However, far more innovations exist than any team will ever effectively be able to use.

In this article, we'll focus on six innovations that are likely to shape the future of talent analytics success. These innovations are not yet fully embedded in most HR organizations, but they are highly effective for the organizations using them today, and HR leaders expect them to be high-priority investments in the next two years.

1. Data Visualization

About the Innovation: Data visualization is the most commonly used of our top talent analytics innovations and is increasingly becoming a “must have” for HR organizations. Whether accessed as stand-alone software or as a feature of larger HR systems, data visualization simplifies data and presents it in a way users can easily understand.



Key Consideration: Data visualization enables the democratization of data, but going too far can lead to privacy and security concerns.

Since data visualization makes it easy to present often-complex data to a host of non-data-savvy individuals, it enables HR organizations to democratize talent data—extracting it from behind-the-scenes HR systems and making it available to HR and line users. By doing so, HR organizations can significantly reduce the burden on their analytics and reporting experts and make it even easier (and quicker) for leaders and managers to make informed talent and business decisions. This is all good news.

However, data privacy and security are growing concerns for employees and organizations. HR functions must balance the benefits and challenges of data democratization to make informed decisions about how much data should be shared and with whom. This opens an opportunity to create and leverage cross-functional relationships with CIOs or chief data officers to determine which talent data, and how much, to democratize.

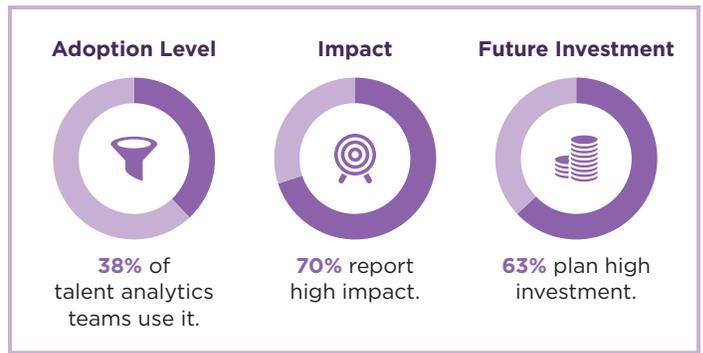
2. Workforce Planning Analytics

About the Innovation: Every organization wants to get workforce planning right, but few organizations have actually found a good approach—let alone the best approach. Workforce planning analytics helps organizations understand and visualize the gap between

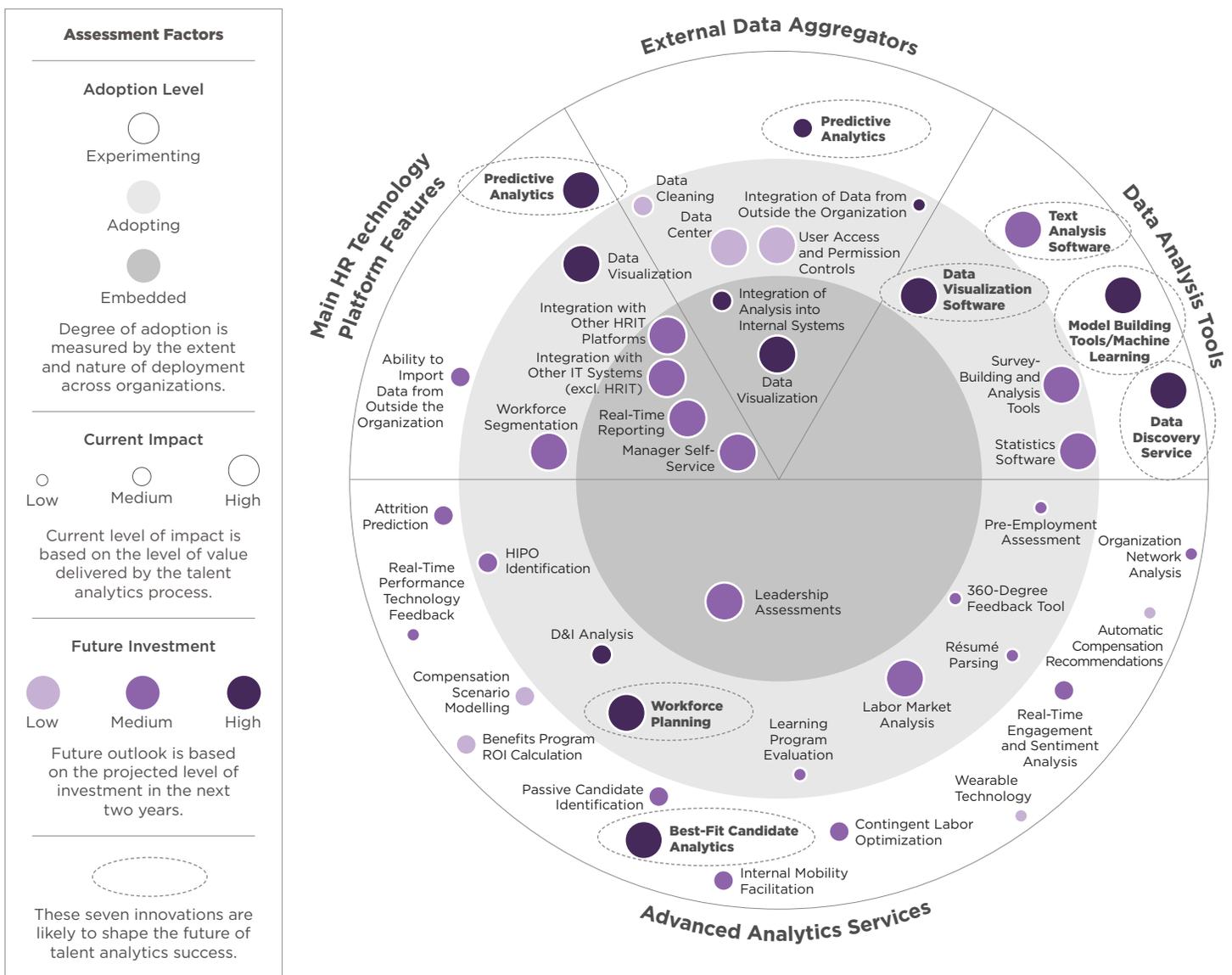
current and future talent needs, and it enables easy scenario planning to help leaders understand the implications of workforce plans.

Key Consideration: Workforce planning analytics can accelerate a shift to strategic workforce planning, but getting buy-in is still a critical first step.

Workforce planning analytics can help organizations shift from staff planning to strategic workforce planning by compiling data from multiple sources and enabling iterative, integrated analysis of workforce needs and capability. Workforce planning analytics makes it easier for leaders to visualize and understand how talent decisions will affect future talent and business outcomes and do more complex comparisons of different scenarios. In short, workforce planning analytics creates more rigor in workforce planning, demystifying what tends to be a very conceptual topic.



Talent Analytics Innovations Bullseye



n = 116.

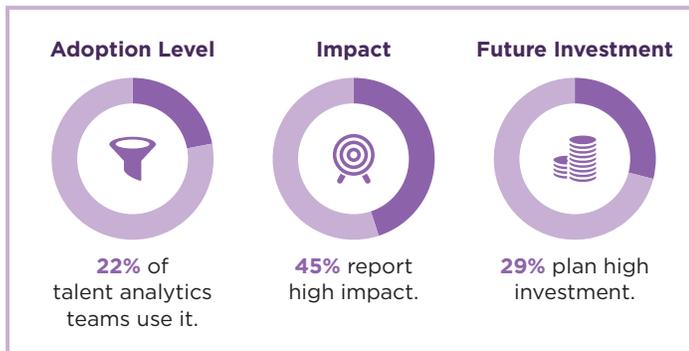
Source: CEB 2017 Talent Analytics Innovations Survey.

Note: We used a weighted scoring method to determine the relative adoption level, current impact, and future investment outlook of each attribute on the talent analytics innovations bullseye. Items are scored relative to one another in each section.

Unfortunately, although workforce planning analytics can benefit the business, our research shows that talent analytics teams often struggle to drive business decisions through workforce planning. The challenge may largely stem from business ownership; workforce planning analytics may make the process easier and more comprehensive, but that doesn't mean business leaders will understand the importance of acting on the workforce planning data—or do so. Leaders should start the process of getting buy-in for workforce planning before investing in analytics.

3. Text Analytics

About the Innovation: When you begin to think of words as data, new analytical possibilities emerge across all the major HR domains. Text analytics software helps organizations methodically analyze text (e.g., résumés, e-mails, reports) for tasks such as monitoring employees' engagement levels passively via their language and assessing how well a team is working together via their exchanges during a meeting.



Key Consideration: Text analytics enables exploration of traditionally hard-to-quantify topics, but don't start too big.

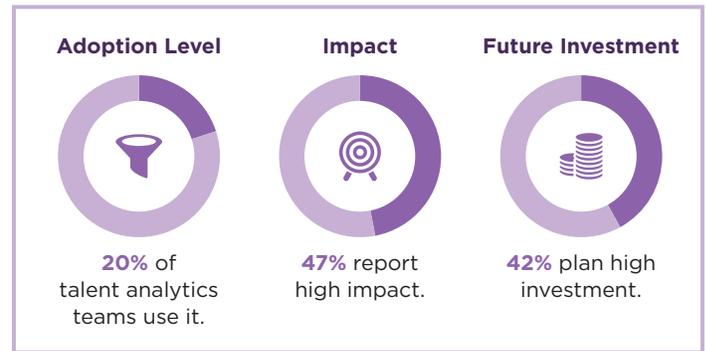
Words underpin nearly everything we do, which makes them a great passive source of data for HR organizations. Think about topics that are difficult to understand from typical HR data or require extensive employee surveying to analyze, such as learning application or engagement. Now think how much easier it would be if you could analyze employees' everyday communication (e.g., e-mail, social media). The opportunities abound, so start your text analytics journey by selecting a topic that is of high interest to stakeholders but currently hard to quantify (e.g., engagement).

Just be careful not to start too big. Text analytics can eventually power big ideas, such as identifying future leaders from the content and style of their communication, but these kinds of topics are a difficult starting point for teams that are delving into text analytics for the first time because they require multiple text processing and analytical techniques. A good rule of thumb is to scope your initial text mining projects so each has no more than two required steps or methods your team has never encountered. This is especially applicable if your team is learning the software and methods at the same time.

4. Machine Learning

About the Innovation: Machine learning uses the computational power of machines to process big data and previous calculations

to speed up and improve future predictions and decisions. By automatically “learning” over time, this innovation removes the need for humans to update or rebuild predictive models based on new information.



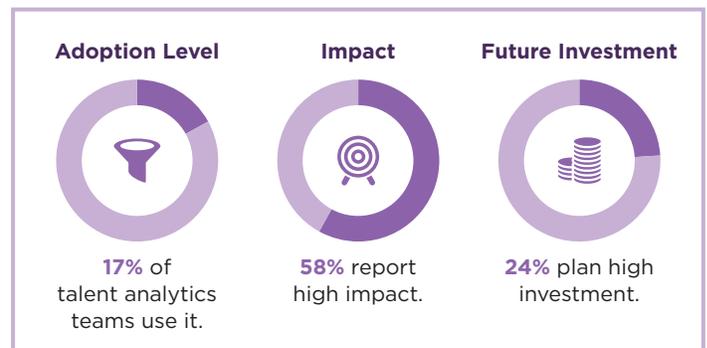
Key Consideration: Machine learning could be your key to a better employee experience, but building solutions in-house can be difficult.

The experiences employees have as customers shape their expectations. Compare an employee's experience finding a movie to watch on Netflix with his or her experience choosing a training course at work. Netflix recommendations are personalized, always improving, and accurate; most interactions with HR systems and processes are not even close. But machine learning can be used to make it easier for employees to find what they need and get personalized, timely advice or direction from HR—creating a much-improved employee experience.

The biggest roadblock organizations face when attempting to use machine learning to develop their own employee solutions is capability. Technical talent is not only scarce but also often hard to attract to a historically “data- and technology-poor” function like HR. Leveraging talent in other areas of the organization, and potentially embedding their machine-learning priorities in an organizational technology roadmap, could lead to success. The other option is to look for external machine-learning solutions aligned with your top talent management priorities.

5. Best-Fit Candidate Analytics

About the Innovation: Today, data-based recruiting has progressed to using machine learning and predictive analytics in the form of best-fit candidate analytics. These services vary, but they all use data of some kind (e.g., assessments, résumés, even video interviews) to help organizations quickly identify which candidates will likely perform best once hired.



Key Consideration: Best-fit candidate analytics can speed up recruiting; just remember machines can be biased too.

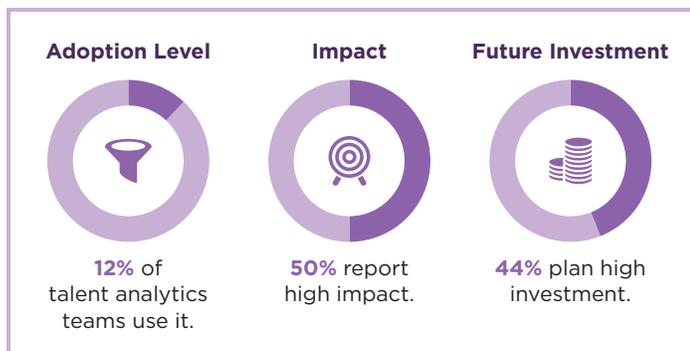
Best-fit candidate analytics replicates what recruiters and hiring managers try to do when they look at a candidate’s background. The difference is that algorithms can draw on far more information for an informed decision, can quickly compute results within a specified degree of statistical confidence, and are not limited in the number of features they can consider at any given time. All this enables the analytical process to produce far more robust decisions.

Another perceived advantage of using best-fit candidate analytics is a reduction in (unconscious) bias that hiring managers or recruiters might bring to hiring decisions. However, if you employ an automated selection approach that closely replicates human decision making, you are potentially just perpetuating existing human bias. For example, if your new hire’s postal code correlates with those of candidates who failed to receive a job offer, your finding might seem objective. However, if the postal code is predictive because it primarily comprises low-income households that are predominantly minorities, you are replicating a prior process that unintentionally discriminates against minorities.

To overcome bias, establish the right human oversight—teams should be assigned to back-test best-fit candidate analytics results.

6. Data Discovery Service

About the Innovation: Organizations have more talent data than ever, and that data is increasingly unstructured. Data discovery services guide data exploration so teams can quickly identify trends and insights from large datasets pulled from multiple systems in multiple formats.



Key Consideration: Data discovery services can supplement team capability, but don’t let technical capability outstrip human capability.

Data discovery services can be an efficient way for HR teams to acquire systems engineering or machine-learning capabilities without adding head count or searching for hard-to-find talent. In other words, the technology can supplement capabilities of new or growing talent analytics teams, enabling them to make the business case for more advanced talent analytics.

These systems are smart and can quickly analyze and visualize information for you, but it’s still important to have a team that is capable of verifying, interpreting, and making decisions based on data. What’s more, for HR teams, the data users are often not analytics experts; rather, they are HRBPs and other HR professionals who use data to make day-to-day decisions. It’s important to think

about not only how to use new technologies and innovations but also how to upskill teams to take advantage of technology investments.

Conclusion

Even in a world of more data and sophisticated technology, people and relationships are fundamental to drawing insights that drive talent and business outcomes from data. In fact, our latest talent analytics research confirms that relationships, even more than technology or structure, truly drive talent analytics effectiveness.

In the hands of L&D, talent analytics has great potential to improve employees’ learning and development experience. From using machine learning in order to generate unique learning paths to creating best-fit development partners, the applications are endless but require careful oversight by L&D staff.

L&D can begin integrating talent analytics by:

- Considering what L&D initiatives could be enhanced by data and analytics (e.g., visualizing learning measurement data, using workforce planning analytics to identify future skill needs),
- Assessing employees’ current capabilities and development opportunities for necessary skill areas, and
- Ensuring L&D staff can understand and validate both the application and the results of the analysis.

L&D functions have been interested in learning technologies for a long time, but the future lies in talent analytics. To learn more about the technologies your peers are investing in, see our [2018 L&D Innovations Bullseye](#).

This article was adapted from the CHRO Quarterly Q3 2017 article, [7 Talent Analytics Innovations That Shape the Future of HR](#).





Quick Wins

Developing Future-Ready Leaders

L&D executives most frequently cite identifying leadership capabilities for the future as their top leadership development challenge. In times of ever-increasing uncertainty and change, preparing leaders for the future will be no small task. Fortunately, L&D can focus on a few things to get started:

1. Benchmark your leadership competency model against peers’.

While leadership competencies should be context-specific and evolving, compare your competency model against your peers’ to discover new ideas or approaches.

View our [Leadership Competencies Library](#) to see how other organizations have chosen competency models for developing their leaders.

2. Use nontraditional factors when evaluating your talent pipeline.

Brainstorm metrics you could use to evaluate your leadership bench that you are not using now or that are less obvious (e.g., willingness to take on risk).

Read our case study of [Agilent’s Leadership Effectiveness Analysis](#) to learn how to incorporate business-driven metrics into your leadership talent pipeline assessment.

3. Create stretch opportunities to build future leaders.

Give employees along your leadership pipeline stretch opportunities to prepare them for more challenging roles in the future.

Use the [CEB Ignition™ Guide to Developing an Employee Through a Stretch Assignment](#) to help leaders design stretch opportunities for their employees looking to grow within the organization.

4. Show leaders the benefit of network learning.

People will increasingly rely on one another to get work done, so ensure leaders understand the value of network learning.

Give your leaders our resource, [Employee Guide: Unlock the Power of Network Learning](#), to help them understand and identify opportunities for network learning.

5. Provide actionable support to leaders during transitions into new positions.

With today’s career paths becoming anything but linear, ensure leaders feel supported as they make transitions into, between, and out of leadership roles.

Encourage leaders to view our short e-learning module, [Leverage Your Strengths and Avoid Derailing Behaviors](#), as they enter a new leadership role.

Note: To access the tools and resources in this article, visit our website or contact your account manager.



Key Trends

Four Trends Affecting L&D



Workforce Trend: Increased Employee Demand for Merit Pay

- **Trend in Brief:** Emerging economies, such as India and Brazil, are driving up expectations for merit pay, boosting the global average for expected total compensation by 3.9%.
- **What It Means for Organizations:** Organizations should ensure they are aware of global employee sentiment and trends, not just the ones closest to home.
- **What You Should Do Differently Now:** Ensure your managers have open conversations with their employees, including remote workers, to discuss their work and career expectations.
- **Act Now:** Help managers have better career conversations with their employees by giving them our [Manager Toolkit for Improved Career Conversations](#).



Market Trend: Business Success May Not Increase Employees' Intent to Stay

- **Trend in Brief:** Despite employees' increasing business confidence, they cite lack of future career opportunity as the top reason for leaving their previous job.
- **What It Means for Organizations:** Career paths today are no longer linear, so organizations need to work harder to ensure employees can see a future for themselves at the organization.
- **What You Should Do Differently Now:** L&D should help employees make connections across the organization to develop new skills while learning about different roles within the company.
- **Act Now:** Give your managers our [Manager Toolkit for Creating Development Connections](#) to enable them to help employees take advantage of their connections.



Design Trend: Providing the Right Development Is Increasingly Crucial

- **Trend in Brief:** Development opportunity rose in the rankings this quarter, with 19.5% of employees selecting it as a top consideration when choosing a new employer.
- **What It Means for Organizations:** Organizations should not only provide and promote development opportunities but also ensure those opportunities are relevant to what their employees need and want to learn.
- **What You Should Do Differently Now:** Identify which skills employees at your organization have or lack to ensure your development offerings meet the needs of your learners.
- **Act Now:** Use our [Skills Readiness Assessment](#) to gather employees' perspectives on what skills they have and need.



Cross-Functional Trend: Pay Gaps Affect Intent to Stay More Than Pay Freezes

- **Trend in Brief:** If employees perceive a pay gap at their organization, their intent to stay will be 50% lower than if they were experiencing a pay freeze.
- **What It Means for Organizations:** Organizations should audit their systems (e.g., hiring, promotion decisions, performance ratings) to ensure they are not contributing to pay gaps.
- **What You Should Do Differently Now:** L&D can partner with the Total Rewards function to ensure managers understand how to fairly and accurately navigate performance ratings processes.
- **Act Now:** Read our blog post, [Connector Managers: The Key to Performance Management](#), to learn how L&D can leverage managers for success in performance management.

Note: To access the tools and resources in this article, visit our website or contact your account manager.

L&D Innovators

Interview with Brian Winchar,
Global Practice Lead at Northern Trust

Brian Winchar is a seasoned HR professional who has focused on the critical role of managers throughout his career.



Brian Winchar
Global Practice Lead, Curriculum Management



Brian Winchar joined Northern Trust in 2005 and is currently the Global Practice Lead for Curriculum Management. In this role, he directs a team of consultants responsible for identifying the skill developments and behavior changes most critical to business success and then designing, managing, and delivering programs to drive business results. Brian has over 30 years of experience in various HR roles in financial services. His passion is developing solutions that improve the impact of managers—a role that is the critical link between vision and execution.

What is the role of managers in employee development at Northern Trust? Has this changed? If so, what is driving that change?

A manager's primary role in employee development is to create an environment where learning and innovation can happen. It is more about enabling development than about personally developing team members.

The manager role has significantly changed over the past few years, perhaps at the fastest rate in decades. Our organization's geographic

footprint, rapid advances in technology, and evolving client needs have forced managers to alter their approach to how they do their job.

If you look back roughly a decade, the manager was the primary source of information about the company, the job, your career, how to get things done, and so forth. Now people learn a considerable amount from the Internet, their peers, and their network, and they rely more selectively on their manager for development.

If you had to choose just one, what is the most important skill you've prioritized developing in managers today?

Managers today have to apply a business perspective to everything they do. It underpins everything else. They have to think like a business owner to drive results, which might change how they hire, promote, reward, and manage their team's performance.

We help managers focus on developing a business perspective so they can continuously create measurable value, align people with the right skill sets and resources, think big, ask "what if," always consider ROI, and own their team's results.

By the way, this doesn't reduce the focus on managers' traditional skills, such as engaging and motivating their teams. Rather, it builds employees' confidence that they are bringing the most value to Northern Trust, which, in turn, positively impacts their engagement and increases productivity.

What is the overall portfolio of solutions you offer for managers at Northern Trust?

We offer four tiers of development:

- 1. Risk Mitigation**—Managers are required to take legal compliance courses that make them a safe pair of hands when handling compliance issues after assuming the role.
- 2. Role Model**—Anchored by a flagship program that matches our management expectations, these solutions help managers become confident in their ability to motivate and accomplish tasks through people. Solutions include an assessment that creates a learning path unique to the manager.
- 3. Realize Potential**—These programs blend the traditional with the cutting edge and focus on changing managers' mind-set to help them take an "A approach" to management. We bring large cohorts together for this intense experience so they can form lasting relationships and get insight and perspectives from peers.
- 4. Visible Leadership**—This tier includes individualized programs unique to each leader, executive assessments, and coaching.

In addition, everyone has access to all Northern Trust University content, including online and instructor-led courses that support the four tiers and several catalogs of content, including the CEB [now part of Gartner] content for managers.

You've recently created a new, three-day training for managers. What factors made you realize you needed a new curriculum?

While we continually update our curriculum to remain relevant and focused, we weren't seeing positive movement in career development from our engagement survey. This led us to have a

dialogue with our employees to determine what career development really meant to them. After all, we had a career center, one of our manager expectations was to develop his or her team, and we had a strong onboarding program that defined the most critical behaviors for success at Northern Trust.

Through a partnership with Client and Partner Experience Center, an innovation lab that helped us understand emerging client and employee needs, we found six opportunities to improve career development, one of which was defining great management at Northern Trust. We then used design thinking to create our management philosophy, "lead with confidence, manage with care, enable with trust," and five "Leading Practices":

- Behave Like a Business Owner
- Connect Partners to the Big Picture¹
- Elevate Natural Abilities
- Let Partners Know How They're Progressing
- Equip Others to Take the Reins

There is a lot to unpack in each of these, of course. For example, on the surface, you might think that letting partners know how they're progressing is about feedback, but our partners find our managers are great at providing feedback. What they really want more of is candid conversations that let them know where they stand. It is this level of specificity that we were able to achieve by leveraging design thinking.

What does the three-day program look like?

A cohort of 100 managers from across the region gathers with three goals:

1. Enhance specific management skills (our Leading Practices).
2. Form a cohort of peers for learning and mutual support.
3. Give managers tools to make their lives easier on the job.

We introduced some new tools, techniques, and cohort experiences that made this more of an experience than a program or conference:

- Managers uncovered the five Leading Practices via a learning map—a visual metaphor of the Leading Practices in the context of the life of a manager at Northern Trust. Self-facilitated teams discovered the need to change their mind-set as well as how living the Leading Practices is critical to their and Northern Trust's success.
- We also introduced a video role-play tool. Managers used their phones to record role-play responses and uploaded them so others could see their responses and provide feedback via video, text, and numerical ratings. We plan to promote the best responses to a leader board so others in the organization can see what "good" looks like.

Unlike a live role play that is done once, people tended to practice and re-record their response 9 to 12 times before uploading their final response. Participants who might have "phoned in" a role play took this activity very seriously knowing others would be able to view and evaluate their response. Those in sales roles found this a particularly useful tool and are already exploring its many uses and functionality.

- We wanted to bring managers together who otherwise may never get to know each other to form relationships that will last beyond

the program. To do this, we built a private social group on our university platform where participants can continue to learn from each other and complete “missions”—individual and group activities that keep them working together and developing the Leading Practices.

Endnotes

¹ Northern Trust refers to employees as “partners.”

How has this program been received so far? What changes might you make for the next cohort?

It has been very well received. We put together a challenging program, and the level of engagement remained high throughout. Participants have to invest considerably beyond the event, and thus far, engagement has remained steady. We are making only a few small changes for our next cohort to remain relevant. I believe this will always be a work in progress.

To determine the program’s impact, we surveyed all participants’ direct reports to get baseline data of how their manager is living the Leading Practices. We will follow up with additional surveys at six months and one year to measure change.

What suggestions do you have for your peers who are trying to boost manager quality at their organizations?

- Talk to those known to be great managers, and learn about their “super powers.” Rather than teaching generic best practices, teach best practices for your organization. At Northern Trust, what convinces managers that our Leading Practices are right is that they were created entirely by managers in the business, not by L&D or HR.
- Don’t lead with training. Your brilliant course won’t change behavior if your culture, compensation, hiring and promoting practices, reward mechanisms, etc., are not aligned with improving manager effectiveness. Work with business partners and HR leaders to put a holistic plan in place that includes the other levers that will make improvement possible, such as changing hiring practices for managers, updating compensation strategy to reward great managers, and creating a strategy for managers who can no longer keep up with the ever-evolving role of the manager.
- Teach the root skills first. If you want innovation, for example, focus your manager training more on how to create an environment of psychological safety than on innovation techniques. Innovative ideas are rarely shared in teams when people don’t feel they can be vulnerable in front of each other.
- Try. Fail. Learn.

In Case You Missed It

Suggested Reading

To access these and other publications for L&D professionals, visit our website or contact your account manager.



What's New?

- [Trends and Innovations in Leadership Development](#)
- [2018 L&D Innovations Bullseye](#)
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- [Manager Toolkit for Personalizing Employee Development](#)
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A New Manager Mandate

Now more than ever, L&D relies on the manager for employee development. This means managers are increasingly expected to take an “always on” approach to coaching, developing employees more often and across a broader range of skills. But this approach is not working, as most managers today are overwhelmed and remain ineffective at coaching and developing their employees.

To drive employee performance, the best L&D functions focus on developing and supporting Connector Managers, who personalize for employee resonance, power the team for peer development, and partner for best-fit connections. Effective Connector Managers improve employee performance by up to 26% and triple the likelihood of their employees being high performers.

View the full research study, [A New Manager Mandate: Building Connector Managers](#), on our website.

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