



Resetting Leadership Training and Development Strategies

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- COVID-19 has been a catalyst to rethink learning and development, providing management with the tools they need for leading in the future.
- From communicating face to face to connecting digitally, the new capabilities leaders should acquire present both challenges and opportunities.

The fallout from COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on the leadership, learning and talent development (L&D) community like few other events in modern times. It has forced L&D professionals to look closely at the tools they currently have and find ways to maximise their usage. Simultaneously, leaders need to be

supported and schooled in new ways to build trust, coach performance, and manage the workforce through evolving times, including working in a hybrid or virtual setting.

With digital tools becoming more widely available, the challenge is not to replace the human element, but to utilise technology as a people

connection enabler. A key starting point to maintaining human connections is to combine technology with the opportunity to practise, apply, refine, and learn from others. This hinges on effective leadership development solutions that deliver what leaders at different levels need today, to prepare them to lead tomorrow.

What does the future of leadership development look like?

Like the future of the workforce, the future of leadership development is hybrid. It is a blend of synchronous and asynchronous; virtual and face to face; and self-directed learning with guided experience and reflection — all connected through community and relationships with experts. In other words, it is widely flexible to meet the needs of distributed populations, but it is also undeniably human.

The future of leadership development blends every modality, maximises every touchpoint, and is curated to address the needs of leaders today and tomorrow. It harmonises the human and the technological. For instance, for small groups of up to 20, virtual instructor-led training experiences can evoke the feeling that participants are taking part in a highly interactive classroom session. For larger groups that need to learn new skills in a way that scales broadly and quickly, collaborative online experiences that unfold over time — usually six weeks — are equally effective. This modality combines self-driven learning with the hallmarks of the best that the classroom has to offer — self-directed lessons leveraging

nimble micro-learning, discussions, application, and reflection, all under the guidance of a leadership expert.

For more in-depth experiences, digital learning journeys can provide a turnkey way to deliver leadership-specific learning. Content delivered in this format can be offered in weekly bursts that merge self-directed learning with discussions, reflection, and opportunities to practise. L&D practitioners can leverage their existing technology stack to explore new ways to blend and intersect content, creating new experiences and capabilities directed towards a predetermined outcome. Developing new types of leadership development programmes also provides a good opportunity for L&D practitioners to upskill their technology and programme delivery capabilities.

Keeping learning relevant

To continue learning at the forefront after the formal learning sessions end, regular chatbot sessions that extend the learning from the classroom to the flow of work can provide ongoing motivation. Chatbots offer an easy way for learners to reconnect and recommit, providing a convenient performance support tool for leadership learners. Another option is to

pulse curated content or build pathways for performance support on a L&D Learning Experience Platform (LXP).

Coaching by mentors and senior L&D practitioners also provides additional rigour to any learning journey, and helps leaders turn freshly formed skills into new habits and ways of working. Coaching activities can range from a peer model that aligns with the journeys of different levels of leaders, to individual one-on-one coaching.

Laying the groundwork for leadership training

Creating a map or framework for an organisation's leadership development goals and practices is a good place to start. A leadership development framework can consist of three, four, or five levels. A typical five-level framework can include:

- Expected outcomes
- Capabilities needed to deliver the outcomes
- Specific skills and competence needed to demonstrate the capabilities
- Types of learning experiences needed to develop the skills and competence
- Most effective modalities



Each level of leadership skills, competence, and capabilities ideally scaffolds on one another, building and extending on baseline skills and knowledge. This helps equip leaders for today's work and for their next leadership role through using modalities that resonate by level. With a map, the L&D team can create a common language of leadership and consistent capabilities across an organisation's leadership population.

Reinforcing purpose

To ensure vitality and energy are sustained, it is important for learners to create their own relevance as they learn. To do that, the L&D team needs to get to know their leadership-learner demographic. To this end, organising a design session that is collaborative and co-creative and incorporates the tenets of design thinking (specifically, empathise, define, and ideate) can help define goals and craft the learning

experience. Focusing on leadership-learners early not only strengthens human connections, it helps shape and develop relevant content, create context, and build meaningful experiences for all levels of leaders.

What tools should be used?


Templates can help the L&D team create solid foundation practices:

- *Empathy Exercise*: What do we want leaders saying, doing, thinking, and feeling differently?
- *Personal Envisioning*: Empathise with who you are offering solutions and solving problems for.
- *Journey Design*: Identify how you plan to reach learners pre, during and post programme. How will they engage with content and with one another? How will progress be measured? How can organisational traction be nurtured?
- *Empathy Map*: Take stock of

the experiences that are being delivered. Also note where there are opportunities to lift any low points if identified.

- *Content Blueprinting Template*: Explore how today's legacy learning can be delivered in a more modern manner.

Reaching learners in new ways

Learning and development must adapt to the changing times and technologies, especially in the wake of COVID-19. In a hybrid working environment, leadership-learners need to be reached where they are, and these days, for many organisations this can mean anywhere in any time zone. This means learning strategies need to shift from requiring people to complete all the pieces and parts to asking what is important for them to say, think, do, and feel. If there is a solid plan for measurement, communication, and involvement of leader-learners, the foundation is established for the new way forward. 

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