



Strategies to Strengthen Leadership Development



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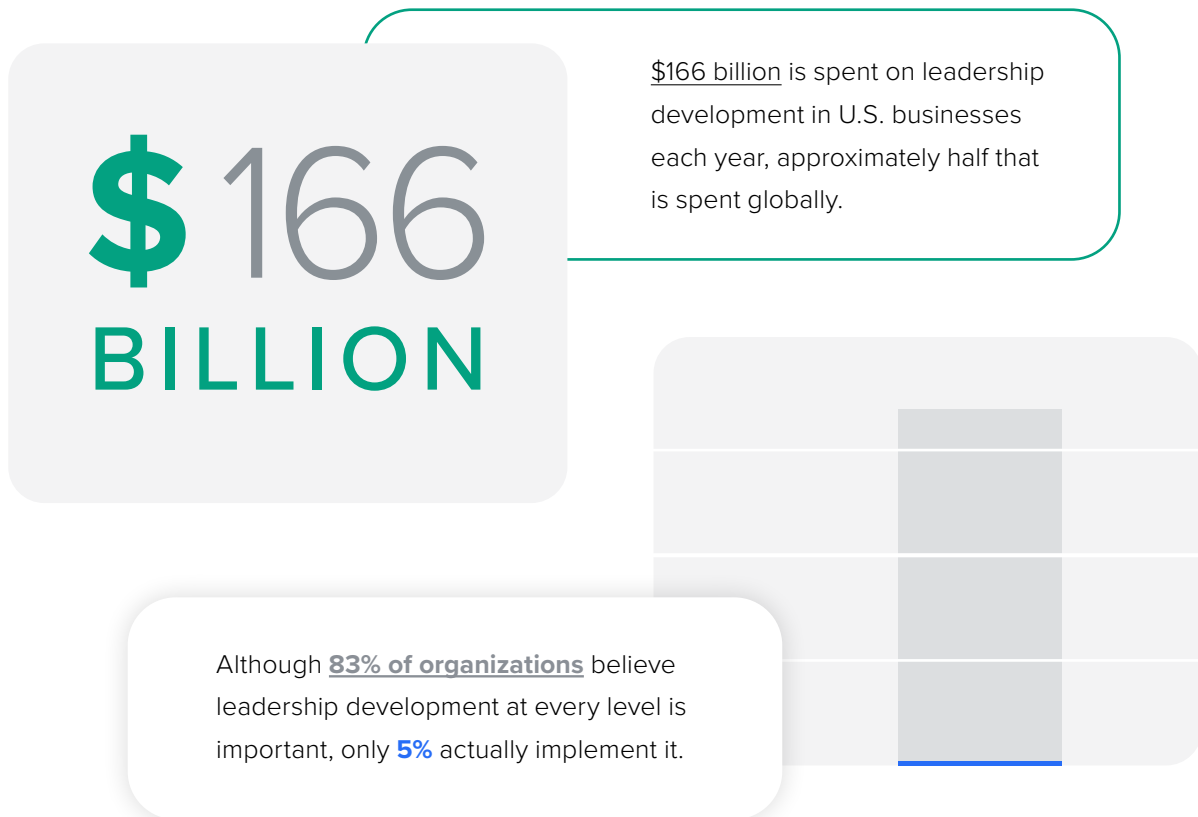
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Introduction

With an unpredictable economy, organizations are leaning on current leaders and employees to step up. So it comes as no surprise that businesses need to elevate their leadership development to promote existing workers.



While leadership development may be a top priority and of great importance to businesses, many are not investing the necessary time, budget, and resources to support it. Strong leadership can have significant impacts to overall organizational goals, success, and culture. When talented leaders are given the right tools, training, and support, their ambition knows no bounds.

Here are just a few of the benefits of building leadership within your organization's foundation:

Develop resilient teams	Higher adaptability	Boost emotional intelligence
Push performance levels	Critical thinking skills	Effectuate change

Source: [AICPA](#)



Tackling the Top Leadership Development Challenges for Businesses

Understanding Differences in the Workplace

When it comes to understanding differences in the workplace, there are a lot of influences that contribute to what makes people who they are. Leadership styles, personalities, generational gaps and experiences, and unique backgrounds are only a few of the factors that comprise an individual.

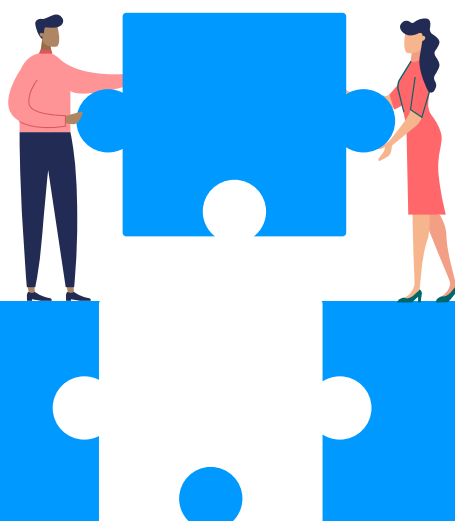
Determining Leadership Style

Employees have different approaches to various workplace duties, including how they lead. Discovering each leader's style can help provide insight into their work preferences, the strengths and challenges of their style, and the impact their leadership style has on your organization. Explore eight different leadership styles below.

Definition	Strengths	Area for Improvement
<p>Affiliative</p> <p>Affiliative leaders take a people-first approach with the intent to create workplace unity.</p>	<p>Boosting empathy</p> <p>Strengthening people and relationships</p> <p>Cultivating high trust and communication</p> <p>Emphasizing positive interactions and employee advocacy</p>	<p>Low performance due to conflict avoidance</p> <p>Employees developing unrealistic emotional dependence on leaders</p>
<p>Autocratic</p> <p>This type of leader does not consider employee opinions in decision-making.</p>	<p>Quick decision-making</p> <p>Most useful to control specific situations</p> <p>Most effective when looking to make difficult decision(s)</p>	<p>Can lower employee morale and problem-solving</p> <p>Fostering too much reliance on a single leader</p> <p>Creating intimidation</p> <p>Tendency to micromanage</p>
<p>Authoritative</p> <p>Authoritative leaders provide a “follow me” approach.</p>	<p>Motivating and inspiring employees</p> <p>Promoting a sense of accomplishment</p> <p>Personalizing feedback and interpersonal relationship development</p>	<p>Difficulty seeing other perspectives or opening up to feedback</p> <p>Tendency to micromanage</p> <p>Controlling demeanor</p>
<p>Coaching</p> <p>Coaching leaders focus on collective growth and promote individual strengths and skills.</p>	<p>Supporting independent development</p> <p>Mentorship approach</p> <p>High performance</p> <p>Well-communicated</p> <p>Embracing diversity</p>	<p>Ineffective for some employees</p> <p>Time constraints for developing employees</p> <p>Doesn't fit every company culture</p>
<p>Democratic</p> <p>Much like a democracy, these leaders consider decisions based on employee perspectives and feedback.</p>	<p>Collaborative decision-making</p> <p>Ensuring everyone is heard/all opinions considered</p>	<p>Consuming too much time, resources, and communication to reach final decision</p>

Definition	Strengths	Area for Improvement
<p>Laissez-faire</p> <p>Like the translation explains, laissez-faire leaders permit employees to just “let them do” – meaning employees hold leadership authority.</p>	<p>Empowering employees</p> <p>Effective for more creative businesses (i.e. ad agencies, product design), organizations with highly-skilled teams, and startups</p> <p>Creating high-level of trust</p> <p>Ensuring employees feel valued</p>	<p>Limiting team development</p> <p>Difficulty scaling with growing companies</p>
<p>Pacesetter</p> <p>In-sync with “trendsetter,” pacesetters are ambitious, lean toward perfectionism, and hold high expectations to exceed goals.</p>	<p>Willing to grind alongside employees</p> <p>Pushing performance to set and exceed expectations</p>	<p>Creating high-stress workplace</p> <p>Reducing employee engagement</p> <p>Increasing employee burnout</p>
<p>Transformational</p> <p>These are among the most common types of leaders in today’s workplaces, with the goal of transforming the workforce through enhanced responsibilities and proficiencies.</p>	<p>Push boundaries</p> <p>Growth-minded</p>	<p>Inability to individualize feedback and growth (i.e. learning curves)</p> <p>Higher employee burnout</p>

Sources: [Emeritus](#), [HubSpot](#), [IMD](#), [vistatec](#)



Exploring Personalities in the Workplace

There might be some people you meet that you just don't "click" with – and then some you do! You're likely not going to vibe with every person you meet, but exploring and understanding personalities can help guide you to a more collaborative, effective workplace.

For example, personality tests like the DISC Model and Myers-Briggs, can provide insights into how a person processes their thoughts, communicates and prefers to work (i.e. receiving feedback), and responds to workplace stimuli, which can lead to understanding how or why they might respond in various scenarios or to different personalities.

Other personality evaluations, like Adobe Create's [Creative Types](#), can provide diverse perspectives of personalities.

Sources: [Florida Tech](#), [Indeed](#), [Human Capital](#)



Adjusting to Generational Demands

Generation Z: born between 2001 and 2020

Millennials: born between 1981 and 2000

Generation X: born between 1965 and 1980

Baby Boomers: born between 1946 and 1964

Traditionalists: born between 1925 and 1945

Developing Fluency in Generational Preferences

Communication. Each generation prefers different methods of communication. For example, Baby Boomers and Gen X typically prefer to communicate in-person or via phone, whereas Gen Z prefers electronic communications, such as text messaging or emailing.

Professional Development. Differences in methods and openness to professional development vary by generation. Gen X and generations before them are likely set in their careers and more interested in planning for retirement. They may require reskilling or upskilling to stay competitive in today's job market, while Millennials and Gen Zs are likely looking for mentorship opportunities and ways to establish or boost their careers.

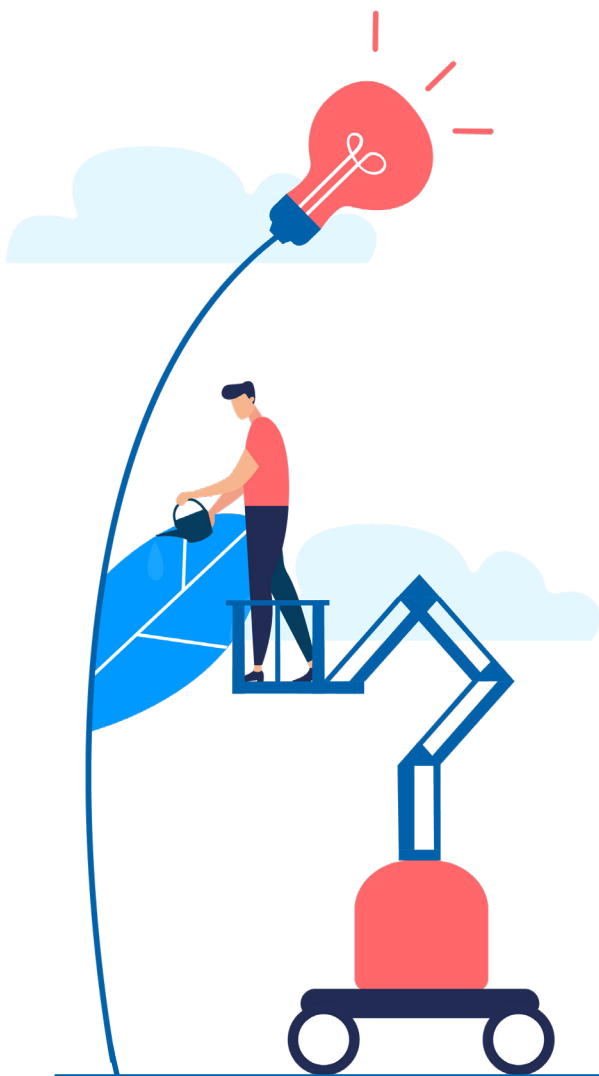
Work Styles. While remote and hybrid work models are more popularly the “new normal,” not all businesses and employees prefer those types of work arrangements. Generations like Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, and some Gen X are likely to prefer in-office work environments. This is a common belief that those generations believe in-office settings are more conducive to higher productivity. However, generations like Millennials and Gen Zs are more inclined to prefer remote or hybrid options.



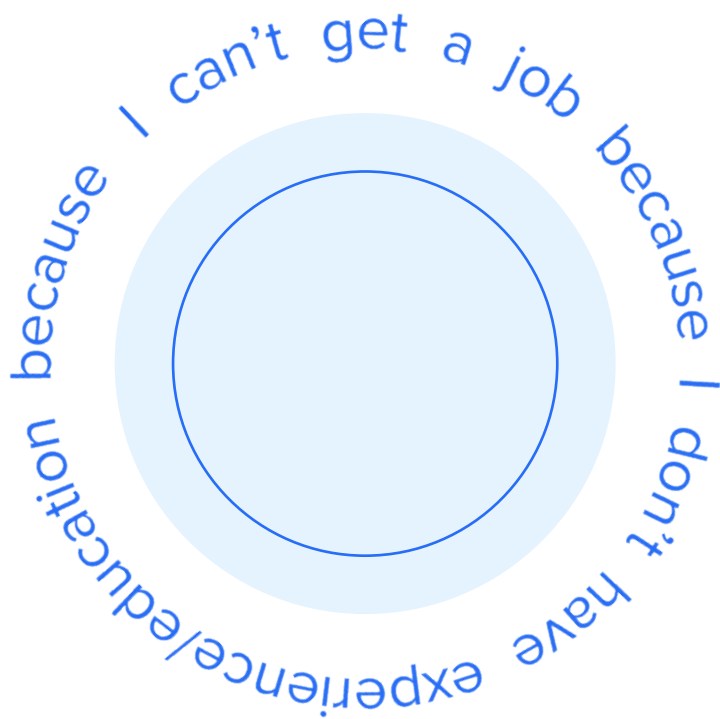
Creating Generation Awareness and Continuing Education

Stereotypes and Characteristics. Like most things in today's society, there are generational stereotypes. For example, traditionalists are known to be some of the most loyal and hardworking employees. Yet, they're rule followers and practical, which can lead them to be resistant to change or slower to adapt to technology. Gen Z and Millennials are stereotyped as disconnected and lazy/entitled in the workforce, but are known to be tech savvy and most diverse generations. Understanding generational stereotypes, including conflicts, challenges, and expectations, can help you capitalize on strengths, identify areas that may cause friction, and create a more cohesive workplace for all.

Organizational Impact. Despite various stereotypes, all generations have a different organizational impact. Exploring and continuing education on generational diversity can improve overall company culture and working dynamics.



Sources: [KnowledgeCity](#), [Purdue Global](#), [Unretire Yourself](#), [AccessPoint](#), [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#)



Addressing the Education Dilemma

There's a dilemma in today's workforce: people are having difficulty progressing in their careers due to either a lack of education or experience. Yet, there is \$1.75 trillion total student debt with borrowers owing \$28,950 on average.

So how can employers help employees gain the experience and education needed to progress in their desired career?

Tuition reimbursement or assistance is one of the most desired benefits employers can offer. Whether your company establishes policies that embrace existing student loan debt or assists with student loan payments for approved programs or schools is completely up to you.

Additionally, offering financial assistance for specialized training and/or certifications can be appealing for employees. Learning customization is a trending new topic in the professional development conversation. Taking an organizational pulse on preferences for education resources and financial assistance will help you establish a baseline to guide your efforts.

Advocating Internal Promotions

While hiring externally might be necessary—heading up a new department or treading into a new industry and needing someone to hit the ground running—it can come with more disadvantages than advantages. Hiring internally can provide exceptional benefits that impact you in the long-term.

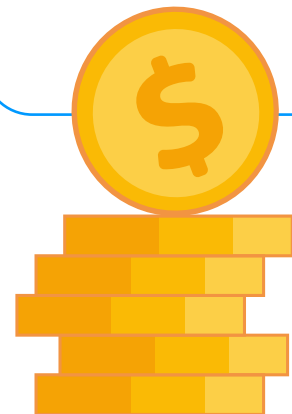
Benefit #1: Redirect Time and Money

Hiring a new employee is no easy feat – it requires crafting that perfect job description, advertising the vacancy, seeking and vetting talent, running background checks – and that’s not even considering the time and money spent on onboarding.

The more time spent trying to fill a position, the more it costs your business. Recruiting for up to 60 days or longer can make a big dent in your budget – not to mention the time and productivity it can have on existing employees required to undertake the vacant role responsibilities until filled.

Additionally, because external employees have room to negotiate their salaries, they often make up to 18% more than internally-promoted employees. However, performance reviews have shown that externally hired workers are worse in the first 24 months of hire.

On average, it costs six to nine months’ salary to replace a salaried employee.



Benefit #2: Boost Employee Retention and Motivation

Not only does internal promotion support career advancement opportunities, it also cultivates and encourages a positive employee experience and reinforces morale.

With lack of career advancement being one of the top reasons employees leave companies, 77% also believe that professional development is their responsibility. So when a company invests in employee development, both employees and organization reap the benefits.

Benefit #3: Reduce Risk of Losses

Unfortunately, it can be difficult to decipher whether a candidate is providing genuine responses or simply telling you what you want to hear. And more often, you find out after you bring them into your organization.

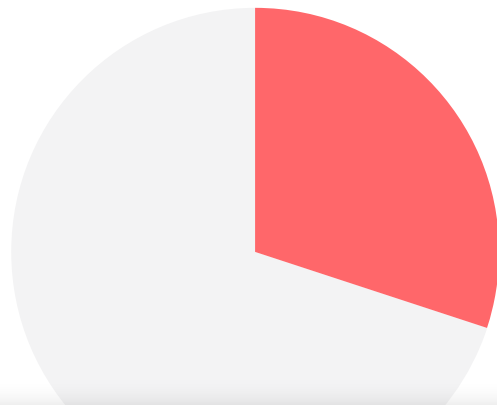
Promoting from within your organization can help mitigate the risk of hiring the wrong fit for the position or for your organization. When you promote internally, you're providing trusted employees an opportunity to move up and continue contributing to your company's successes.

Another important factor to consider is personal definitions of what is the "top." Like "success," definitions across individuals and demographics can vary. While obtaining a leadership position may be a "goal," not everybody enjoys the grit that can come with it. Perhaps offering a senior role that requires no supervisory responsibilities is the "top" for an employee seeking a "leadership" role.

Source: [UMass](#)



Externally-hired employees experience higher layoffs and terminations in the first two years of employment.



About **one-third (30%)** of applicants abandon a position within the first 90 days.

Leveraging Mentorship

There are many ways to provide the support your employees need to develop their careers. Internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships are all great avenues to foster work relationships that offer employees and/or prospective employees an opportunity to receive expertise, additional resources, and tools from seasoned professionals.

Explore the differences between the three.

Internship

Internships are often opportunities for those looking to enter the workforce to gain basic skills and knowledge of a particular industry or organization.

Time Commitment

Typically, short-term ranging from one to three months.

Structure

Internships frequently focus on entry-level skills, which don't normally require a structured plan.

Compensation

More often than not, internships are unpaid and do not guarantee a full-time position. Most internships offer college credit for participating schools.

Apprenticeship

Apprenticeships provide individuals personalized training with an experienced professional who guides them through specific processes.

Time Commitment

Longer-term from one to three years depending on the industry.

Structure

Apprenticeships include a framework for training explicit skills an employee needs to fulfill a position within an organization.

Compensation

Apprenticeships are usually paid roles that lead to full-time roles and industry-recognized credentials. Apprenticeships often provide college credit and offer a debt-free option for college degrees.

Mentorship

Like apprenticeships, mentorships involve matching a mentor and mentee with an individualized industry overview.

Time Commitment

Varies, but typically longer term ranging from six months to years.

Structure

Mentorships generally require some structure, including mentee's intended expectations and goals for the mentorship, and the mentor's strategy for providing the resources, expertise, and support to achieve them.

Compensation

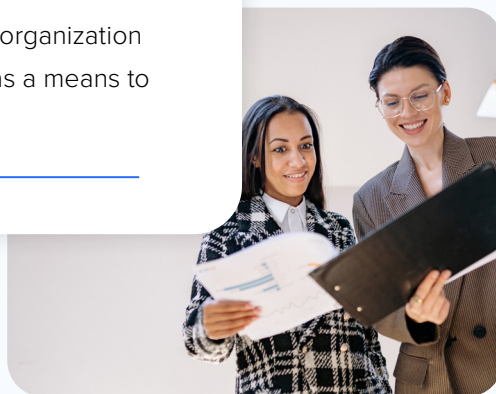
Depending on the industry, organization, and other factors, a mentorship is typically established between two current employees – a junior employee (mentee) and a senior employee (mentor) – meaning, both participants are already employed, paid, and do not receive credit or credentials.

Sources: [Apprenticeship USA](#), [SJC Engage](#)

Tips for Developing a Mentorship Program

While all three – internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships – furnish invaluable skill-building resources and expertise, mentorships are typically the most common in leadership and employee development. This is because it's the most feasible and beneficial for that goal.

Over half of HR professionals believe that their organization will focus on mentorship in the next two years as a means to prevent isolation, burnout, and stagnation.



Conduct research to customize your program. Your best starting point is researching where your employees' greatest potential is – whether that's through pulse checks or one-on-one meetings, touch base on where your employees want to see growth, change, and opportunity. This will help guide you in customizing a program that fits your needs.

Match mentors with mentees. Next, check with your great leaders to see who would want to participate in a mentorship program. Offering incentives, such as extra paid time off, catered lunches, or some other value prop to not only attract mentors to join in, but to also thank them for their participation. Create profiles of all participants to help match mentors with mentees, so both parties receive a beneficial relationship.

Ask important questions. Go through your implementation process and determine how you wish to design your program. How do interested parties join – open to all, formal application process, or by invitation? Do you want to implement a specific or preferred mentorship style so everyone has the same structure? How big do you want each relationship to be – 1:1, small groups, one mentor to multiple mentees? What type of cadence do you want your mentors and mentees to connect – weekly, biweekly, monthly, or just once? Lastly, how do you plan to measure the progress of your program?

Assess program impact. Was your program a success? Be sure to incorporate a feedback component to build off what worked and what didn't work. You might even discover additional resources or insights that can help improve your program.

Source: [Chronus](#)

A majority of HR professionals (67%) believe that mentorship improves company-wide performance.



Creating a Leadership Development Program

Surely, you're eager to get started on developing your employees into the natural leaders they are – but the best action comes from a well-developed plan. Here are some steps to create an effective leadership development plan.



6 Steps to Create an Effective Leadership Development Program

1

Align training with organizational goals. The first step is to identify organizational goals and what skills/talent are needed to achieve those goals. From there, you can align training programs and resources to ensure the goals remain attainable.

2

Design a learning journey. One of the best ways to encourage employee engagement is determining preferred learning methods. Ask questions like, “Would you prefer in-person, remote, or hybrid training classes?” “Do you prefer longer time blocks delving into a single topic or shorter time blocks covering various topics?” “Do you enjoy interactive learning, such as group activities? Or one-on-one personalized training?” Find out what your learners need to not only want to participate, but to also succeed.

3

Furnish tools for managers to support employees' success. Based on what you discover during your learners' preference check, you can explore what tools to provide your managers to support their employees' success. Whether you invest in third-party vendors, capitalize on your own products and/or services, or incentivize current leaders to participate, your managers rely on your assistance to ensure that employees are set up for success.

4

Formulate an implementation plan. Once you have all the background, tools, and resources set, start formulating how you wish to roll out the program. If you're hesitant or want a "trial" period, you could launch a pilot program. Depending on what results from the pilot program, you can either make adjustments to try to improve it or perhaps consider an outside expert to step in to assist in implementing the program. Whatever you decide, it's important to map out an implementation plan for the program.

5

Recruit the right people to facilitate the learning experience. Do you want your internal leaders to drive the program? Or do you want a fresh perspective from an external, respected subject matter expert(s)? Explore different roles, such as trainers for classes, mentors for longer-term success, and bringing in internal contributors for content and supporting resources.

6

Market the new program. Most importantly, you need to make sure that you communicate your new program in the most effective way. Seventy-five percent of workers believe open communication is an essential leadership trait. There's nothing worse than trying to build excitement around a new program that invests in employee growth and development just to realize nobody knows about it.

Think critically and creatively about how you want to communicate to your employees. Remember, you're writing to foster engagement – is that best done through interesting statistics and facts? Or personalized initiatives that fuel your company's vision?

Other considerations in marketing your program include measuring participation, promotions, and even the negatives – employee turnover and employee feedback – to provide value – both to employees interested in learning and executive leadership who will likely have an integral stake in the program.

One way to garner enthusiasm is to incorporate innovative titles. For example, try "Power Up Today's Leaders" – instead of something generic like "Leadership Development 101."

You know your employees best, so trust your intuition in marketing to them!

Seventy-five percent of workers believe open communication is an essential leadership trait.

Source: [Entrepreneur](#)

Leadership Development Resources

Resources for Leadership Styles

Leadership Style Test

5 Ways to Define Your Leadership

5 Surprising Reasons to Use Games in Leadership Training

Upholding Company Culture During a Crisis: Why Leadership Matters

#SpeakHerMind: Paula Tolliver on Leadership in Tech

Guide: How to Build a Women's Leadership Development Program

Manager's Guide to Performance Reviews, Goal Setting, and Professional Development



Resources for Personality Types

Myers-Briggs: MBTI Questionnaire

- 16 personality types

DISC Model

- History of DISC Model

Enneagram

Adobe Create

- Creative Type Quiz



You're not alone! Namely makes talent management and leadership development a breeze. With goal setting, performance reviews, continuous feedback, competence tracking, and more – you can build strong performers into top leaders for your organization.

Want to learn more about how Namely can support your leadership development program?

Request a demo

About Namely

Combining intuitive HR technology and best-in-class service, Namely empowers mid-size companies to build better workplaces. Simplifying the complexities of recruiting, onboarding, time & attendance, performance management, benefits administration, compliance, payroll, and HR analytics, Namely offers an integrated platform that saves companies time and improves their employees' experiences. Distinguished by a dedicated support model and enhanced service offerings, Namely delivers an all-in-one HR solution for today's people teams.

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