



**READY. SET. LEAD.  
PREPARING YOUR  
NEW MANAGERS  
TO LEAD**

{ PERSPECTIVES } **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

C O R P O R A T E   L E A R N I N G





---

# READY. SET. LEAD. PREPARING YOUR NEW MANAGERS TO LEAD

Today's complex and dynamic business environment demands fast decision making on the front lines. Instill a leadership mind-set in your managers so they are ready to act decisively on strategic opportunities.

BY PJ NEAL, ROB MCKINNEY, AND ELLEN BAILEY



**“MANAGERS ON THE FRONT LINE ARE CRITICAL TO SUSTAINING QUALITY, SERVICE, INNOVATION, AND FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE.”**

**FROM *BECOMING A MANAGER*  
BY LINDA A. HILL, PROFESSOR,  
HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL**

New managers matter.

They're on the front lines with your workforce, your customers, your competitors, your markets. They have tremendous potential. And some of them will become your organization's future executives.

In tapping these employees for the managerial ranks, your organization is recognizing this.

But while you'll be relying on your new managers to take care of the management basics—assigning workloads, supervising others, approving vacation requests, managing budgets, conducting performance reviews—there is another role that they can, and should, also step into: the role of leader.

New manager as new leader? Yes.

You'll need your new leaders to keep up with all the changes that are happening in the business world. An Innosight analysis of nearly 100 years' worth of data found that “corporations in the S&P 500 in 1958 lasted in the index for 61 years, on average. By 1980, the average tenure had shrunk to about 25 years. Today, it stands at just 18 years based on seven year rolling averages.” (“Creative Destruction Whips through Corporate America,” Innosight, Winter 2012).

In this fast-paced and complex world:

- *Opportunities emerge quickly, and disappear with equal rapidity if someone else gets there first.* Taking advantage of new opportunities can seldom wait for decisions to be made through a long-drawn-out, top-down decision-making process. Not every opportunity is the next Facebook or Twitter, but first-mover status continues to have its advantages.
- *New threats seem to emerge continuously, making competitive advantage more difficult to sustain.* Organizations need to act rapidly and decisively to respond to, and leapfrog, the competition. One needs only to look at the ups and downs of the smartphone industry to see how fast things can happen.
- *Globalization opens up new markets, but new markets often require intimate local knowledge.* Strategic decisions need to be made in the field. Leading brands from Mattel to eBay have faltered in China because they misread the legal and cultural environment.



Leadership is not about attributes; it's about behavior. And in an ever-faster-moving world, leadership is increasingly needed from more and more people, no matter where they are in a hierarchy. The notion that a few extraordinary people at the top can provide all the leadership needed today is ridiculous and it's a recipe for failure.

**John Kotter, "Management Is (Still) Not Leadership," HBR Blog, January 9, 2013**

#### **NO LONGER JUST IN THE C-SUITE**

Kotter's belief is underscored by "Global Human Capital Trends," 2014, a recent report by Deloitte Consulting/Bersin by Deloitte. Based on a survey of executives and HR professionals worldwide, one of the most critical trends is the "need to broaden, deepen and accelerate leadership development at all levels."

Your new managers are on the front lines, where all this is happening. And these new managers, with their enthusiasm, energy, and fresh ideas, can be positioned to become effective as leaders if they're properly developed. Organizations are recognizing that developing new leaders is vital. In a 2012 pulse survey, "The Rising Risk of a Double-Dip Leadership Crisis: Exploring the Increased Focus on Leadership Development," CARA found that more than half—62 percent—of their respondents said that their organizations faced a leadership skills gap and that they did not have enough leaders coming up through the ranks to fill open and future leadership positions.

Working with organizations around the world, we have found that new managers—especially the millennials now stepping into management positions—are eager to embrace a level of responsibility and take on business challenges far earlier in their careers than previous employee generations.

Organizations are finding that their millennial managers approach work with a unique set of characteristics. More than other generations, they seek meaning in their work. They have a strong focus on collaboration. And for millennials, much of life happens online.

Further, millennials recognize that they're not leading the enterprise. But they do want to be plugged in, in the know, and connected to their organization's strategic purpose. They want to play an important role in achieving that purpose, and they want this acknowledged through training and development, opportunities to take on challenging and important assignments, and exposure to your organization's senior leadership.

Organizations that encourage these new managers to assume leadership roles can see tremendous benefits:

- An organization that's more consistently focused on and aligned around strategy
- The ability to respond more nimbly to market shifts and new opportunities
- A more engaged workforce
- Higher retention rates

## REACHING GOALS. ACHIEVING PRODUCTIVITY. ENGAGING EMPLOYEES.

How important are frontline managers? When it comes to these key areas, management's answer is "very."



Ratings based on a survey of executive management, directors, senior management/department heads, and managers/supervisors. Source: "Frontline Managers: Are They Given the Leadership Tools to Succeed?" Harvard Business Review Analytic Services, 2014.

How can an organization achieve these benefits? After all, new managers are already coping with the shift from being an individual contributor. They suddenly have to take care of a set of tasks that someone else used to worry about. They may now be supervising their former peers, maybe even their friends. In most cases, they continue with their work as an individual contributor, as well. Isn't being a new manager enough? Does it make sense to also charge them with becoming leaders? And how can organizations best support the shift to simultaneously being both a manager and leader?

### Managers vs. Leaders

Before answering those questions, it's important to clarify just what we mean when we're talking about being a manager versus being a leader. While there is definitely some overlap, management and leadership are separate and distinct spheres. Succeeding as a manager means acquiring managerial know-how; succeeding as a leader means honing inner qualities that enable an individual to act with authority, confidence, decisiveness, and clarity.

It's also important to point out that there's a difference between what frontline leaders do and what

executive leaders do. Executives have responsibility and are accountable for the success of an entire organization. Frontline leaders have responsibility and are accountable for the success of their teams, and that success must be defined *within the context of the organization's overall strategy and vision.*

**"WE NEED NEW MANAGERS WHO CAN LEAD AND NOT JUST MANAGE. THIS IS CRITICAL TO ENGAGING EMPLOYEES AND BUILDING VALUE IN OUR ORGANIZATION."**

**BETTY COTTON, AVP, MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT, AT&T UNIVERSITY**

### Going Beyond Management Basics

All organizations expect their new, first-level managers to concentrate on the basics of management. For new managers transitioning from being individual contributors, acquiring the know-how needed to handle routine day-to-day management tasks is crucial.

But in today's dynamic business environment, successful organizations are realizing that even those newly managing on the front lines can make a more

## DAY IN AND DAY OUT: MANAGERS VS. LEADERS

### MANAGERS

Managers get things done. In order to get things done, new managers must build their managerial skillsets.

- Plan
- Budget
- Delegate tasks
- Supervise task completion
- Focus on tactics
- Problem solve
- Remove roadblocks so that those who work under them are better able to do their jobs

### LEADERS

Leaders set the direction and the tone. In order to be able to do this, new leaders must develop a leadership mind-set.

- Understand the organization's strategy
- Understand how their team's efforts support the strategy
- Convey the importance of the organization's strategy—and the team's role in achieving it—to their team
- Think creatively—and encourage their team's creativity—about how to achieve strategic goals
- Act nimbly—and encourage their team to act nimbly—in the pursuit of strategic goals

significant impact if they can also lead. To do so, new managers need to be able to establish a vision, inspire others, think strategically, respond rapidly to change, and take decisive action.

Yet these capabilities are seldom on the new manager playlist, and leadership development for new managers has not often been viewed as important. While high-potential employees may be invited to participate in leadership training, the majority of new first-level managers often represent untapped leadership potential. This is a significant lost opportunity. After all, it's these first-level managers—on the front lines with employees, customers, and competitors—who have the collective power to make a real difference.

To make this difference, new managers need to think and act as leaders. Taking care of day-to-day management, strategic thinking, and execution are all critical for their success, and for their organizations.

Most organizations have company-specific skill development covered through in-house new manager training focused on the organization's internal business practices and processes. Some may also offer training in basic management skills, like budgeting and planning. But a new approach to new manager development is emerging to fill the manager-as-leader gap. It aims at developing new managers who can both manage employees *and* act as strategic leaders. And it's rooted in the understanding that there's a difference between the management skillset and the leadership mind-set.

New managers need to be prepared not just to manage, but to lead. They must:

- Learn what leadership at their level, on the front lines, means
- Understand their connection to an organization's strategy
- Develop the ability to convey that connection to their teams

- Be able to motivate their employees
- Be empowered—and equipped—to make decisions, implement strategy, and operate nimbly

Your new managers are ready and willing.

Now it's time to make sure that they're able.

## Keeping Things Real

The need to equip new managers with a managerial skillset, while at the same time developing their leadership mind-set, seems like a nearly insurmountable challenge. To help overcome this challenge, organizations have long used traditional methods, relying on face-to-face workshops of short duration. However, new manager training programs that compress learning into a two- to three-day time frame seldom yield lasting results. What may stick is the rote learning—how to approve an expense report. Not to denigrate this: learning how to do “stuff” is important. But management (and leadership) requires more than that.

**“WE NEED TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP SKILLS AMONG OUR MANAGERS EARLIER IN THEIR CAREERS, IDEALLY BEFORE THEY STEP INTO THEIR FIRST MANAGEMENT ROLE.”**

**AMY ALEXY, DIRECTOR, LEARNING AND TALENT DEVELOPMENT, GOODYEAR, NORTH AMERICA**

In addition to covering the how-tos, traditional new manager training may also involve role-play, which, because it's decoupled from actual work and thus lacking in any true context, ends up being no more lasting than a cameo appearance.

What's missing here is the mind-set development, the behavioral change that is so critical to a new manager's success. This requires learning that's tightly integrated into a new manager's workflow, learning that enables participants to put what they're learning into immediate action. It also requires learning that occurs over time, so that it can be better absorbed and more effective.

## WHO ARE TODAY'S NEW MANAGERS AND NEW LEADERS? WHAT ARE THEIR CHARACTERISTICS?



### THE MILLENNIAL

This cohort wants their work to be meaningful, and craves understanding how it fits in with the big picture. They want to make an impact now and are impatient with waiting. And, oh yes, they are technically fluent.

**But it's not just the millennials who are joining the managerial and leadership ranks:**



### GENERATION X

Characterized by their adaptability and flexibility, they may feel squeezed between the old command-and-control management styles they came of age under and the millennials who are raring to go.



### THE TECHNICAL EXPERT

Experts hold an increasingly important role in the technology-driven or scientific workplace, but may be more comfortable working on their own or in an informal, collaborative environment than being the one suddenly “in charge.” And their earlier career growth was likely focused more on acquiring technical skills than people skills.

---

**“EACH YEAR, DOW INTRODUCES NEARLY 1,000 EMPLOYEES TO THE MANAGERIAL RANKS WORLDWIDE. IT’S CRITICAL THAT PROGRAMS THAT HELP OUR NEW MANAGERS BECOME NEW LEADERS CAN REACH, SCALE, AND SUPPORT A GLOBAL AUDIENCE.”**

**JOHN KOLMER, GPHR, MANAGER OF GLOBAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, THE DOW CHEMICAL COMPANY**

The learning also needs to be aligned with the organization’s strategy. The ability to understand and articulate an organization’s strategy, willingness to engage and motivate the employees on their team, and the capacity to identify and quickly tackle opportunities that further that strategy are important elements of leadership.

For both skill building and mind-set development, many organizations struggle to provide training to large, globally dispersed groups. Travel expenses, and time away from work, make fly-ins for face-to-face learning prohibitively expensive. Locally based classroom training brings with it facilities and instructor expenses that make it difficult and costly to scale. For today’s global organizations, we find the best approach for turning new managers into new leaders means going virtual.

Fortunately, many organizations are taking a fresh approach to development programs for their new managers. These programs factor in today’s demanding work style. Delivered over time, they’re easily incorporated into a new manager’s workflow. Recognizing the importance of learning by doing, they include activities that ensure that program participants put what they’re learning into immediate—and relevant—action. And designed with the need for global reach—and the technology bent of the millennial generation—in mind, these programs lend themselves to virtual delivery.

## New Managers Matter

Your new managers—there on the front lines with your workforce, your customers, your competitors, your markets—are critical for the near-term and long-term success of your organizations. They’re ready to manage, and they’re also ready to lead.

And in many organizations, they’ve already assumed roles where sound management and strong leadership matter. As “Big Demands and High Expectations: The Deloitte Millennial Survey” (January 2014) revealed, flattened corporate hierarchies are resulting in millennials finding themselves in positions that are more senior than those held by baby boomers and Generation Xers when they were the same age. In fact, nearly half of those surveyed (45 percent) held such positions.

To take advantage of their enthusiasm, energy, and fresh ideas, you need to help new managers develop both their managerial skillset and their leadership mind-set. The results will be an organization more closely aligned around its strategy, more agile in responding to emerging opportunities, and better able to engage and retain its workforce.

---

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**PJ NEAL** is product director, leadership programs for Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning. He is responsible for overseeing a suite of corporate learning programs, including the *Breakthrough Leadership* and *New Leader* programs, aimed at supporting new, frontline, and middle managers. Prior to joining Harvard Business Publishing, PJ worked in management and strategy consulting.

[pj.neal@harvardbusiness.org](mailto:pj.neal@harvardbusiness.org)



**ROB MCKINNEY** is product director, leadership content and platform for Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning. He is responsible for advancing Harvard Business Publishing's portfolio of corporate leadership development programs, targeting senior and high-potential leaders, midlevel managers, and new or first-line managers. His background is in developing technology and services to enable collaboration and learning.

[rmckinney@harvardbusiness.org](mailto:rmckinney@harvardbusiness.org)



**ELLEN BAILEY** is a senior learning solutions manager for Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning, responsible for consulting with clients and designing training solutions that address their needs and goals.

[ellen.bailey@harvardbusiness.org](mailto:ellen.bailey@harvardbusiness.org)

---

### **ABOUT CORPORATE LEARNING**

Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning partners with clients to create world-class leadership development solutions for managers at all levels. Our team leverages the management insight, thought leadership, and expertise of Harvard Business School faculty and authors from *Harvard Business Review* to create tailored leadership development solutions. With more than 20 years of practical experience, our innovative, technology-enabled solutions drive meaningful and lasting business results. Corporate Learning is a market group within Harvard Business Publishing.

### **ABOUT HARVARD BUSINESS PUBLISHING**

Harvard Business Publishing was founded in 1994 as a not-for-profit, wholly owned subsidiary of Harvard University. Its mission is to improve the practice of management and its impact in a changing world. The company achieves its mission through its relationships with customers in three market groups: Higher Education, Corporate Learning, and Harvard Business Review Group. Through these platforms, Harvard Business Publishing is able to influence real-world change by maximizing the reach and impact of its essential offering—ideas.



#### **UNITED STATES**

Harvard Business Publishing  
60 Harvard Way  
Boston, MA 02163

**phone:** 800-795-5200 (Outside U.S.  
and Canada call 617-783-7888)

**email:** [corporate@harvardbusiness.org](mailto:corporate@harvardbusiness.org)

#### **EUROPE**

Harvard Business School Publishing Europe Pvt. Ltd.  
Vernon House  
23 Sicilian Avenue  
London WC1A 2QS

**phone:** +0203 463 2350

**email:** [CLEurope@harvardbusiness.org](mailto:CLEurope@harvardbusiness.org)

#### **INDIA**

Harvard Business School Publishing India Pvt. Ltd.  
Room No. 1148-1150  
Taj Lands End  
Bandstand  
Bandra (West), Mumbai – 400 050

**phone:** +91 22 65160248

**email:** [infoindia@harvardbusiness.org](mailto:infoindia@harvardbusiness.org)

#### **SINGAPORE**

Harvard Business School Publishing Asia/Pacific Pvt. Ltd.  
80 Raffles Place, #25-01 UOB Plaza 1  
Singapore 048624

**email:** [CLasia-pac@harvardbusiness.org](mailto:CLasia-pac@harvardbusiness.org)

#### **LEARN MORE**

[www.harvardbusiness.org](http://www.harvardbusiness.org)

C O R P O R A T E   L E A R N I N G

