

Supporting Talent Development:

CREATING COLLECTIVE CAPABILITY IN AN UNPREDICTABLE CONTEXT

OUR POINT OF VIEW, RESEARCH, AND SOLUTIONS



Talent development is a complex puzzle. The options for growing employees' skills, knowledge, and capabilities are seemingly endless — and the pressure to get it right is stronger than ever. In an era of increased uncertainty marked by a rapidly changing landscape of dynamic, interconnected issues, it's challenging yet critical to understand:

How do we develop the talent we have today to achieve the outcomes we want tomorrow?

We at CCL are working with HR and L&D teams every day to answer that question.

Research consistently shows the benefits of investing in development, as it [creates competitive leadership advantage](#) by boosting self-awareness and effectiveness, increasing engagement and retention, driving performance, and fueling a more agile and resilient organizational culture. It increases the ability of individual leaders to understand and fulfill their potential by expanding their mindsets, capacity, and capabilities — which impacts organizational outcomes, from the success of business strategy to performance management to succession.

But creating greater collective capability in an unpredictable context isn't easy. Organizations that weathered the COVID era of uncertainty now face many more new and complex challenges. The push-pull of hybrid workplaces and return-to-office mandates, new generations entering the workforce, and the rapid evolution of AI are all propelling massive change. Geopolitical and economic instability, plus regional and global crises, have strained people and systems. Intertwined, complex issues overwhelm and cannot be solved by heroic action or a single person.



The challenge of talent development is often twofold: determining the leadership skills and behaviors that matter most for your organization — and then scaling the learning of those across your entire workforce.



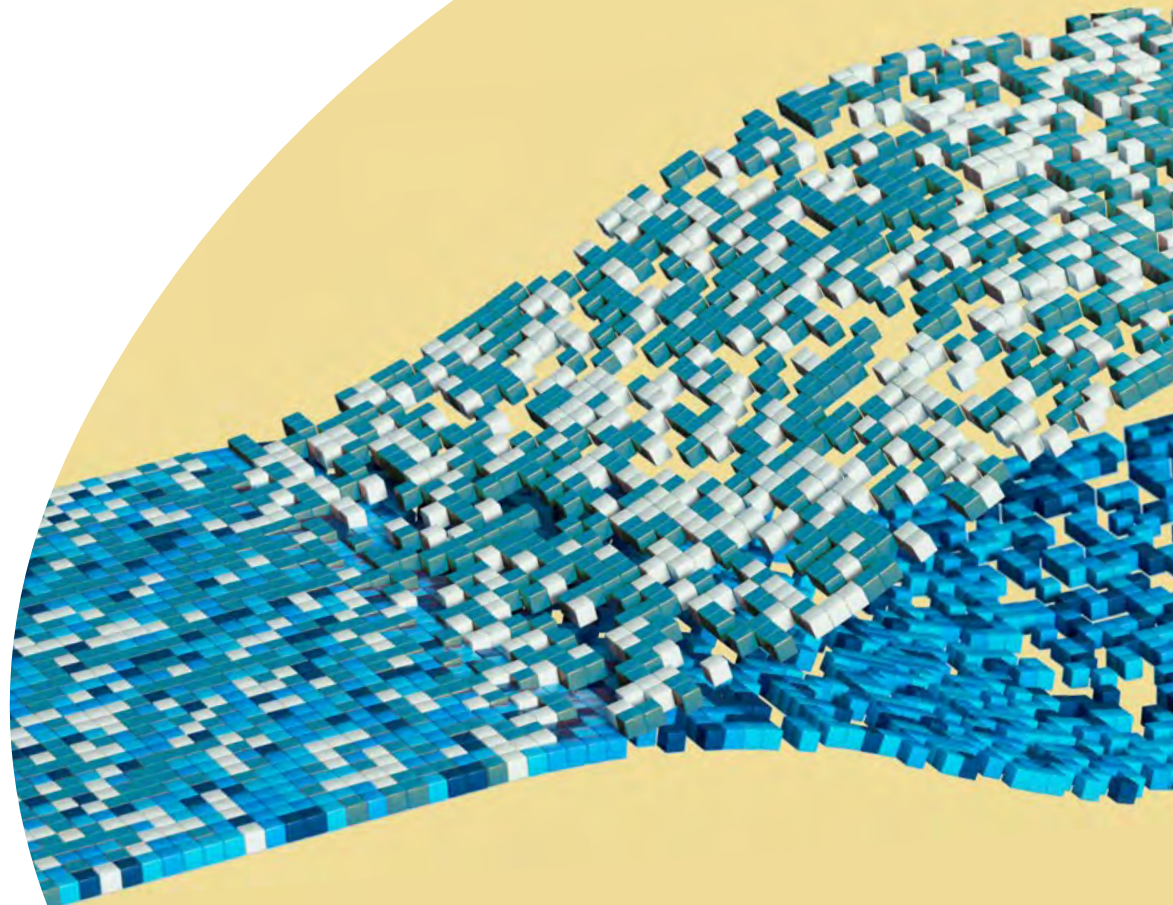
In this uncertain context of sustained disruption, [effective leadership through polycrisis](#) — where multiple crises interact and problems resist clear solutions — is what’s needed.

Yet the challenge of talent development is often twofold

— first, figuring out the skills, behaviors, and mindsets that matter most for your organization, and then supporting the learning of those things across a large workforce. Developing high-potential talent or small segments of leaders is just one part of the story. For most large organizations, the bigger challenge is building enterprise-wide capabilities. That’s where talent development at scale shines.

When development reaches all employees, individual and collective potential are fused and magnified.

In their most challenging moments, leaders fall back on what they’ve already learned — applying the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and mindsets they’ve developed to new or quickly shifting situations. Individuals are more agile, resilient, and future-oriented. And when scaled effectively, talent development ensures that the *entire organization* itself becomes more agile, resilient, and future-oriented, too.



Think of talent development at scale as creating protective scaffolding around — and throughout — your organization. When access to talent development is widely available, it not only boosts engagement and retention and fosters personal resilience, it also increases collective capabilities and creates [organizational resilience](#). By building lots of different skillsets and behaviors, you gain greater durability. By developing adaptable mindsets and a culture of learning, you gain increased flexibility and innovation. By layering talent development into all levels and functions, your organization can withstand the unexpected without everything toppling. You're better poised to respond and rebound, whatever happens.

Organizations that invest in large-scale talent development are shoring themselves up now, so they're ready for the uncertainty and chaos ahead. They're better prepared to handle disruption. What's more, organizations that scale development find that they don't just survive; they actually get better in the face of adversity. They get stronger. They develop the leadership culture to face whatever comes next.

Effective talent development strategies can look different, and the solutions will vary, but the strongest moves are grounded in understanding the culture and context of your organization and the people who are leading the business strategy,

Talent development unlocks individual potential, of course. But talent development at scale exponentially increases that potential — building a stronger workforce and culture, creating protective scaffolding around (and throughout) the organization.

the projects, and the teams. Here, we offer a guide to help you take effective action to use talent development to build a future-oriented organization, starting with understanding where you are now — and where you need to go.

We'll look at the 6 most common talent development challenges that we hear from our clients and offer some proposed solutions and research-based recommendations to address each.

- 1. PIPELINE**
- 2. FOCUS**
- 3. OVERLOAD**
- 4. ADAPTABILITY**
- 5. CONVERSATIONS**
- 6. SCALE**



1. PIPELINE

“We have current talent gaps, and our leadership pipeline isn’t robust.”

Many organizations today are focused on business transformations, tight resources, mergers & acquisitions, and culture change. At the same time, they’re worried about talent shortages, skills gaps, retention issues, low engagement, and C-suite turnover.

But whatever else they’re facing, our clients consistently share concern about **the leadership gap**: the shortfall between current capabilities and forecasted leadership needs. This is especially common post-pandemic. They simply aren’t sure their talent pipeline is equipped to accomplish today’s priorities — much less, build for the future.

Bridging the leadership gap is the work of talent development, but the way forward is difficult and unclear in many organizations. Some managers may be leading others well, but others aren’t. Collaboration, engagement, and psychological safety levels vary across teams. It’s clear that organizations don’t know how current leaders will be ready to become tomorrow’s executives:

- About 85% of employers now report they plan to **prioritize reskilling** over the next 5 years.¹ Demand for tech-related skills is at the forefront, but creative thinking, resilience, flexibility, agility, curiosity, leadership, influence, and talent management are all top priorities.
- Similarly, **hiring is a challenge**. 75% of employers globally reported difficulty filling roles,² and when positions are filled, new hires are often missing key skills: 1 in 4 organizations report that full-time employees hired have required new skills, with top skills needed being communication and teamwork (44%), management (43%), and leadership (37%).³

- It’s not surprising, then, that 69% of US executives say they plan to prioritize candidates with much-needed soft skills, such as problem-solving, adaptability, collaboration, and relationship-building, and that companies are relying more on **internal mobility**.⁴
- **Retention**, particularly in C-level roles, is also part of the talent challenge. Global CEO departures hit a record high in 2024 amid investor pressure and low stock prices,⁵ and the average tenure of a CFO is down by 20%.⁶

All these trends directly affect the leadership pipeline, putting talent development front and center.



Building a strong talent pool with needed skills at all levels *and* preparing specific individuals to take on key senior leadership roles are both essential for a stronger pipeline and robust, sustainable organization. Taking this **dual approach to talent development** fosters an adaptable, high-performing workforce with strong leadership continuity, cultivating a culture of learning and growth.



2. FOCUS

“We don’t know where to focus; the result is generic training on too many competencies.”

Learning initiatives are more effective when they align with the real challenges that leaders are facing, tied to larger business goals. But identifying the leadership capabilities that are most important to develop isn’t easy to do. The struggle is tied to a few common reasons:

- **Lack of clear objectives.** Without clearly defined and communicated objectives, it’s difficult to align development efforts with the necessary competencies.
- **Inadequate assessment.** Without proper assessment of existing leadership capabilities and competencies, development programs may not target the right areas.
- **Failure to connect competencies to business outcomes.** If a development effort does not align with the business outcomes, it can fail to produce the desired results.
- **Neglecting the importance of context.** The effectiveness of leadership competencies or capabilities can depend heavily on the context. Ignoring this can lead to misalignment.

At CCL, we guide organizations through these challenges, drawing on our extensive research over the past several decades about the [most common leadership challenges faced at every level](#). Across the board, we found that the challenges of leadership generally fall into 3 high-level themes:

- Personal growth;
- Managing people and getting work done; and
- Managing across the organization and within a larger system.



If your organization is challenged by the complexity of identifying what to prioritize for individual development, consider programs that **focus on addressing what leaders need most** right now and in the future. Our global, [open leadership programs](#) specifically address the challenges faced and capabilities needed at each leadership level and can help ensure relevant, consistent, and personalized learning for your leaders — whatever their industry, role, seniority level, or location.





Take Action: Get Focused on Your Unique Context

Your talent development strategy should align with your business strategy, but how do you focus it? Our leadership experts recommend identifying what challenges your employees are facing and providing development opportunities tailored to what they need most.

Themes will overlap based on your challenges, strategy, and priorities, but it's important to get clear on who needs what, where the pain points are, and how to address them effectively.

Consider:

- ***What disruption are your leaders facing?*** What are the challenges with which your leaders have no prior experiences? What is the context for learning?
- ***What are the goals for development?*** What would success look like? How would your leaders behave differently? What business outcomes would you see?
- ***What are current capabilities and skill levels?*** Are you confident that what you want to develop is what most needs to be developed?

With a deep understanding of the context, you can get clear on the purpose of any talent development effort. With a focus on the *why*, you can focus the design and implement strategies that will work for your organization — and avoid common mistakes and misaligned efforts.



3. OVERLOAD

“We struggle to reach busy, overloaded employees.”

There are proven steps to ensure that leadership development efforts are accessible, intentional, and effective. These steps are even more essential when people are busy, overwhelmed, and under pressure to perform for the present, while making decisions about the future.

Employees need access to development that keeps *experience* at the center of the process. Effective strategies pull both formal coursework *and* on-the-job learning through the individual employee experience and across the entire organization.

Stretch assignments and [heat experiences](#) foster **learning through doing**, which can complement formal development opportunities. By building around real work challenges and context, development feels more hands-on, relevant, and seamless.

In addition, what happens before and after any formal part of a program or development effort is just as important as the content and delivery. This is true whether the initiative is long or short, in-person or virtual, ongoing or one-time. New skills and behaviors must be reinforced, until they become part of how people operate.

Learning is also a social process. An environment for people to learn together helps [“make learning stick”](#) and [ensure learning transfer](#). The work context, including the level of support from role models, mentors, peers, coaches, and bosses, has a powerful impact on turning lessons learned into leadership in action. For example, access to [coaching and mentoring programs is especially critical for new leaders](#) to provide them with support in a critical transition period in their careers.

Leadership development is most effective when it’s relevant, experience-driven, reinforced, and social.



Make sure your talent development initiatives combat overload: **integrate “learning into the flow of work,”** so it happens organically. Employees appreciate a thoughtful combination of [on-the-job learning](#) experiences, along with intentional, focused formal training to reinforce concepts. Ideally, you can leverage curated learning paths with content that’s deliberately designed to feel applicable and match the way people learn best, ensuring opportunities for development don’t feel like another burden.



4. ADAPTABILITY

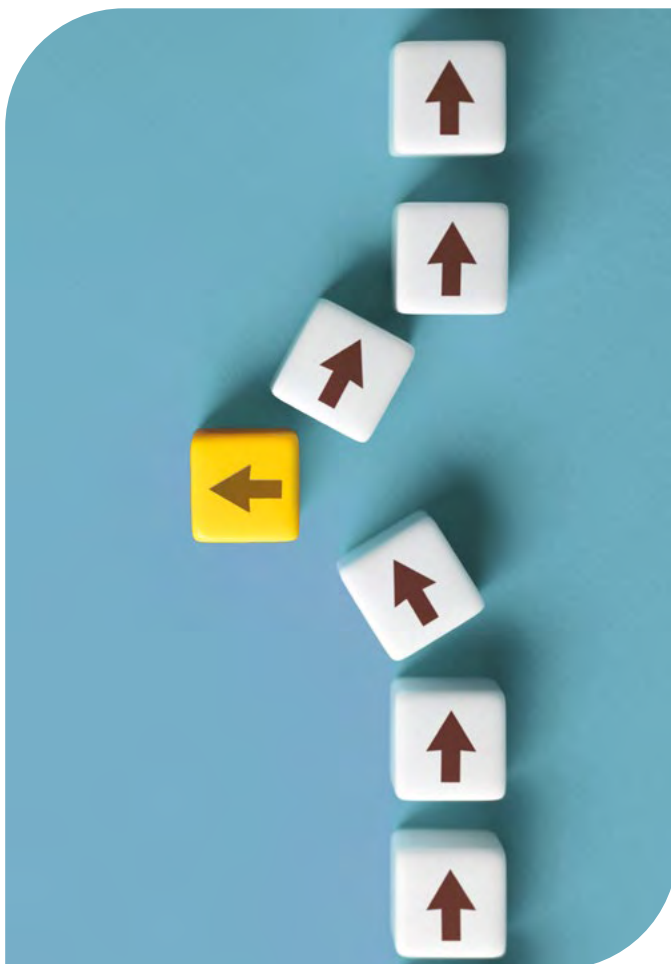
“We want to be ready for the future, but don’t know how to prepare for what we can’t predict.”

If your organization is like most, you’re thinking about the future, but preparing for the unknown feels impossible. You know bigger challenges are coming, and leaders and teams need to work together differently, but future-ready skills are difficult to identify — and harder still to develop.

Many clients tell us they’ve been focused on skill development, but also recognize that a set of skills alone isn’t enough. Organizations must **adapt how they’re adapting** to execute business strategy now and steer through ongoing change and disruption.

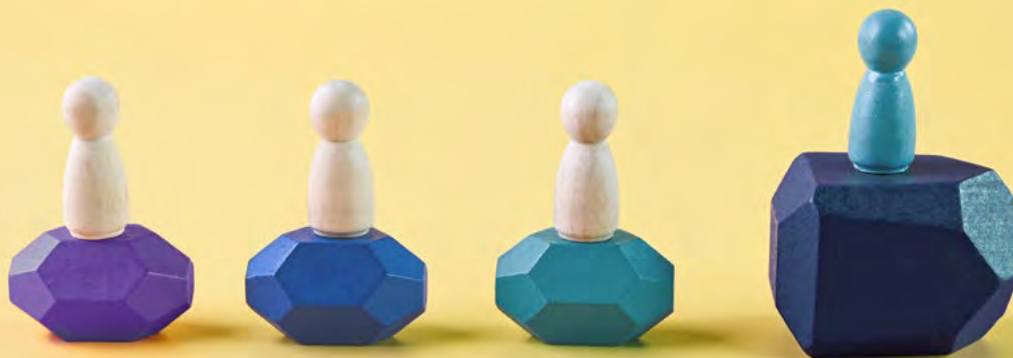
Effective leadership requires not just skills, but also **greater capacity**. Typically, employees have all sorts of opportunities for *horizontal* development — the knowledge, skills, and information related to their role, career, or industry. While growing leadership competencies is necessary and important, it’s no longer sufficient.

More than ever, leaders need future-oriented, more expansive *vertical* development that helps them grow more sophisticated ways of thinking, greater wisdom, and clearer insights. Based on a concept of tiered levels, or different stages, of thinking, [vertical development](#) involves gaining new perspectives and **leadership mindsets, not just skillsets**. While organizations and individuals cannot prepare for every scenario, they can learn to think in new ways.



If you want to create more collective capability for your organization to handle the predictably unpredictable future, you need more adaptable leaders. Ensure L&D includes **both horizontal and vertical development**, so your leaders are able to get unstuck, adapt, innovate, and thrive in increasingly complex situations or when there’s no clear path forward.





Take Action: Tie Development to the People

If you're looking to grow the adaptability of talent across the organization, identify the skills, behaviors, and mindsets that are most needed in today's context, orient to the future, and tailor the opportunities for learning and practice.

Prioritize your talent development efforts and design experiences based on the people involved, the roles they're in, and what's expected.

- ***What type of leaders do you need for your biggest known challenges and current goals?*** What capabilities, skillsets, and mindsets are required? What are the concerns and needs people have?
- ***What future are you building toward?*** What type of leadership is needed now to get you there? Who is front-and-center to shape the future and respond to others who are driving their own vision?
- ***How are people in your organization leading today?*** Which behaviors are working and which are not? Is there a leader level or group that is challenged in a particular way?

By understanding the people who are leading teams, projects, and the organization, you can design and implement development that will be relevant and impactful.



5. CONVERSATIONS

“We aren’t having the deeper conversations that we need to have.”

The conversations that need to happen in organizations are often not the ones that people *want* to have — especially when everyone is feeling overloaded and overwhelmed.

Issues today are complex, layered, and unclear, and people come to conversations with vastly different perspectives and information. Important discussions can be [difficult conversations](#), but avoiding them can lead to anxiety, frustration, or worse.

Candor, psychological safety, a climate of trust, and a culture of feedback yield better business outcomes. That’s why equipping people to hold effective, powerful conversations is a key priority for talent development. Truly, [better conversations lead to better culture](#) and higher performance.

Anyone can learn to have more effective communication and productive conversations when they do 4 things: genuinely listen to understand, ask thought-provoking questions, give feedback that challenges thinking, and establish next steps.

People managers can build on those skills to [hold coaching conversations](#) and [give effective feedback](#) to direct reports. By **intentionally improving how they interact** in everyday moments, leaders establish stronger relationships, [create psychological safety](#), increase engagement, build trust and rapport, and encourage learning.

When people are having needed conversations, roadblocks to problem-solving and innovation come down. Simple matters do not get overcomplicated, more robust solutions emerge, and complex challenges are faced in new and thoughtful ways.



If your organization is challenged by misalignment, poor understanding of shared issues, lack of engagement on key initiatives, low levels of psychological safety and trust across teams, or difficulty communicating on many levels, you’re struggling with the quality of conversations and communication. Consider a development initiative that **builds a shared leadership language**, improves skill at listening to understand, and increases comfort with giving feedback. Our proven [conversational skills training program](#) helps foster dialogue, collaboration, and trust across your entire organization. Deployed at scale, across levels and groups, it creates a strong foundation for other leadership development initiatives and expands collective capability.



6. SCALE

“We need to develop many more people, but meaningful talent development at scale is difficult to do well.”

Many organizations have excellent pockets of development, with initiatives for specific groups like executives, emerging leaders, those who are deemed high potentials, or select teams. But this can create a **piecemeal or patchwork approach**, fostering inconsistencies across the broader leadership ranks, and gaps in knowledge and values across teams and divisions that can hinder efficient decision-making.

And learning can't be reserved just for the hi-pos or handful of employees who are currently leaders. Today, **all talent, at every level, expects opportunities to grow**. In fact, 41% of employees who recently moved to a different organization said they left for better professional development opportunities.⁷ Providing access to opportunities for development is especially important to younger workers, who will readily leave if they aren't learning. As [our global research study](#) found, 60% of Gen Z and Millennial employees feel that access to opportunities for leadership development is inequitable.

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of employees who recently moved to a different organization said they left for better professional development opportunities.

Your organization may lack a **unified development strategy** to align across all levels. Adding to the complexity: what new managers need is quite different from that of seasoned executives. Leaders at different stages face different issues and require different capabilities for success. But providing everyone in your organization with what they most need can be a big ask. Even after identifying needed competencies, expanding access to development, and clarifying talent goals, there's still the hurdle of delivering effective training across an entire workforce. Fluctuating staffing and limited resources make execution at scale difficult for many HR and L&D teams.

Enterprise-level development is quite simply a content, culture, and logistics challenge — which is why, at many organizations, **scaling is the biggest challenge of all**.

Not long ago, technology was seen as the key. Virtual and just-in-time learning, bite-sized lessons, or gamified experiences would ensure engaging development across the organization, or so the thinking went. But a giant library of content doesn't ensure usage, and while technology has expanded access and AI is sure to usher in new approaches, they don't guarantee learning.



By ensuring development opportunities are **cohesive and aligned across the enterprise**, emphasizing learning as a benefit for everyone, and [cultivating a learning culture](#), you send the clear message you're committed to your employees' long-term success.





Take Action: Start From Where You Are

Look carefully at what is needed now and grow from there.

- ***What's your baseline?*** What talent development has been done before, how has it been received, and what is the need now compared to then?
- ***What are your drivers?*** What's most important for your business strategy and priorities?
- ***What are your internal superpowers?*** What are the strengths and capacity of your internal L&D team?
- ***What's preventing you from bringing out the potential in all your talent?*** What would success look like if development was offered broadly and deeply in your organization?

When you understand your current talent development capacity and cultural reality, you can map out a talent development strategy rooted in the now but prepared to grow and flex.



To get more confidence and clarity about your talent development approach, download our complimentary worksheet to help you think through your current state and future goals: ccl.org/talent-development-strategy



Are You Ready To Scale?

WHAT'S YOUR CURRENT CAPACITY & CULTURAL REALITY?

Understanding the talent challenges you face is a starting point for making talent development decisions. And time and budget are always in play.

But there's another piece to consider, too: **readiness**. Organizational, individual, and talent management readiness all impact the success of any development effort, particularly at scale.

ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS

Consider context and culture, as internal and external factors can influence what the organization can scale — and when. A recent merger, key leadership change, market shift, or emergent crisis, for example, are all likely to influence the effectiveness of your talent development initiatives, as people process learning within their larger context.

More subtle factors are cultural: *Will leaders who participate have support from their managers and peers? What value does the organization place on development? Are people held accountable for their development goals or modeling effective leadership behaviors?*

INDIVIDUAL READINESS

Factor in leader characteristics and previous experience. Is there buy-in at the executive level to participate and learn, and to champion and provide resources? What are the perceptions of people and teams involved that may help or hinder success? What information do you have to inform your efforts? Consider these examples:

- Future-oriented, collective capabilities such as “adapting how we adapt” may be of keen interest and high value to the executive team. *But what's the level of awareness and interest among other leaders or stakeholders?*
- A high-profile program for high potentials may already be in place — but seen as not going very well. From the selection process to the program content and design, the experience may be viewed as disconnected from reality or ineffective. *What residual negativity in the organization do you need to overcome for a successful next effort?*
- Many frontline managers or team leaders in key roles may have never received any coaching or training. Despite good intentions, foundational skills are inconsistent and there isn't a common approach. *What baseline development and structures are needed to strengthen this group, before they can tackle more complex skills, behaviors, or mindsets?*





TALENT MANAGEMENT READINESS

Think through roles and capabilities within the L&D or HR teams, and draw on the strengths of your internal team while leveraging partnerships to support and supplement. Clarity about the internal talent team's structure, interests, and abilities can help you make decisions about how best to scale. *Is the internal team strong in key content areas or learning design? Are there skilled coaches or facilitators? Who has influence and relationships across the organization? What else is competing for the team's time?*

For example, an external provider could assist by providing an extensive library of content adapted for cultural contexts, while your internal training staff could tailor curriculum for your organization and deliver to your offices all over the world. If the unexpected happens, such as turnover on internal development staff or other unforeseen events, the partner could perhaps step in to conduct training as a stopgap measure, while working with your team to onboard and support new staff. Working through scenarios like this can help you clarify priorities and readiness.

To help you determine your specific organizational, individual, and L&D levels of maturity, and where a partnership might best be leveraged, consider which of the following situations is most similar to yours.

What are people saying about talent development at your organization?

“We need to assess.”

“We want to expand.”

“We’re ready to elevate.”



“We need to assess.”

What this level of readiness sounds like: *“We’re looking at our current state, determining whether what we’ve been doing to develop our leaders is working, and gauging how to shore up our foundation for further development with greater confidence in our approach.”*

What it looks like: A global cybersecurity company with more than 20,000 customers grew rapidly through a series of acquisitions. Many people in individual contributor roles were moved into people management positions without much prior development — a concept we refer to as “accidental leaders.” The company wanted to build and reinforce a culture of learning, as well as instill the foundational competencies required to lead others.

In this scenario, the organization’s first step **was level-setting how all their managers would lead.**

The company partnered with us to offer our [Frontline Leader Impact](#) program — an online, self-paced leadership development experience for the HR team and people managers at the organization. The 6-week online course covered areas important for leading in a global context, including self-awareness, learning agility, communication, political savvy, influencing outcomes, and motivating others.

Within 2 years, 100% of the executive leadership team and over 90% of the company’s managers completed the course. During that time, the company experienced an increase in manager performance and engagement, and a decrease in voluntary attrition. Managers embraced their new shared leadership practices and language, and the firm created additional leadership development experiences to build on the foundation established.

“We want to expand.”

What this level of readiness sounds like: *“We have a new strategy or opportunity to develop more people. We’re looking to layer more development further into our organization to boost organizational resilience and be better prepared for the future.”*

What it looks like: A large government agency wanted a more robust approach to development, but needed a new approach to reach overloaded staff. They wanted to reach as many people as possible to strengthen key leadership skills, invest in long-term organizational resilience, and ensure workplace conversations at all levels were candid and empathetic.

In this scenario, the agency **addressed varied development needs across their workforce all at once** by partnering with us to license a library of leadership training programs and products. Through ongoing quarterly updates, content was periodically updated to stay relevant, and in just one year, this partnership:

- Enabled about 1,000 employees to take our online resilience-building program, supporting the agency’s wellness initiative to address issues with stress and burnout.
- Provided over 3,000 agency workers a development experience on leadership fundamentals and leading innovation and virtual teams.
- Facilitated access to ongoing development for the agency’s senior leadership team, with one per month attending our [Leadership at the Peak](#) program for executives.



“We’re ready to elevate.”

What this level of readiness sounds like: *“We want to take a comprehensive view of our business strategy, our leadership culture, and our context to map talent development across all leader levels and segments of our organization.”*

What it looks like: A consumer products organization was reorganizing its business to achieve a more sustainable approach to producing its products. Its leaders realized they needed to change systems and processes, as well as the ways their teams interacted with each other across the enterprise. The CEO and senior executive team connected the dots between how their new goals should link to their organization’s leadership practices and behaviors.

In this scenario, the company **realized a shift in their leadership culture was required**. This was the basis for an organization-wide leadership development initiative that focused on establishing a healthy, open, people-centric culture that would support their overall strategy and success. We helped the senior leadership team define and prototype new leadership practices and embed the new beliefs and behaviors across the organization.

Though the pandemic slowed timelines and plans, the company decided that talent remained a top organizational priority. So, the executive team leaned on us to support them in rolling out scalable leadership development solutions to a broader audience so they could continue to evolve their leadership culture and support their new business strategy, despite the disruption.



“The Easy Button” for Large-Scale Talent Development

One of the largest US credit unions, serving nearly 3 million members with 8,000 employees, was searching for a way to develop and deliver leadership training at scale. To transform the business and shape the future, the organization knew it couldn't limit development to small groups of high potentials. **How could everyone be included to create a rising tide of shared understanding, practice, and language of leadership?**

To keep their attention focused on building relationships, gaining buy-in, driving results, and leveraging their facilitation skills and organizational expertise, the L&D team knew they couldn't also spend precious time and resources planning a curriculum and creating content for leaders at all levels.

So, they took advantage of **our most comprehensive package of evidence-based, ready-to-deliver leadership development content, CCL Passport™**, which enabled them to:

- Scale development with **curated learning paths for every leader level**
- Enjoy **unlimited use of our library of training materials** on a wide array of topics, with frequent content updates
- Access practically **everything in our portfolio**, from on-demand digital modules and asynchronous ecourses, to 360 assessments and half-day workshops, to our premium training programs — all based on our 50+ years of research and experience
- Customize our resources for their needs, with the **option to create derivative works**
- Use their own facilitators via a **Train-the-Trainer** that certified their team to deliver
- Gain **clarity and confidence** with unparalleled **expert support**

The partnership included access to a **dedicated client success concierge** who could provide tailored onboarding support, assistance identifying needed leadership competencies, ongoing strategy guidance, and help illustrating the impact of their investment.

“

“CCL Passport™ was exactly what we needed ... it's very much like ‘the easy button’ for leadership development content,” said Ginger Goode, Vice President of Leadership Development at the credit union. **“The only hurdle was deciding which content to launch and when, and that's where our partnership with CCL has been instrumental.”**



EASY BUTTON



Can You Picture a Plan?

Wherever your organization is today, the task of talent development is to create capability for the current and future unpredictable context. Whether you're facing challenges with your talent pipeline, focusing your priorities, overloaded employees, ineffective conversations, adaptability and capacity-building, scaling development, or all of the above — **you need a partner you can trust to help you think through how best to fill the gaps between your current and desired future state.**

With a clear-eyed view of your current challenges and readiness levels, you can work with your provider to grow the skills, behaviors, and mindsets needed for long-term success and make talent development work for your internal team, workforce, and organization.

That's where we come in. While you know your culture, people, strategy, and context, we know leadership. Together, we can offer leadership development to your talent, with maximum results.



We're here to help co-create a development strategy that supports your organization's future. Download our complimentary worksheet to help you think through your next steps: ccl.org/talent-development-strategy

At CCL, we approach leadership from a whole-systems perspective. For over 50 years, we've shaped the industry, pioneering the field of leadership development with our time-tested research. We grow leaders who can genuinely engage with complexity, sustain disruption, and help transform teams, organizations, and communities. How do we do it?

WE HAVE GREAT CONTENT AND PROCESSES.

We have time-tested designs, research-based frameworks, industry expertise, and award-winning learning journeys — but solutions start with you, every time.

- We ask smart questions to understand your needs.
- We take a holistic view to help you see how various pieces of your talent puzzle fit together.
- We apply data-driven understanding of key leadership capabilities and desired mindsets, behaviors, and practices to your goals and challenges.
- We have powerful, evidence-based content already curated into learning journeys tailored for what leaders face at different levels.
- We make the most out of assessments, experiential learning, and coaching.
- We measure impact at critical points to gauge progress and push for desired outcomes.

WE BUILD EVEN GREATER PARTNERSHIPS.

We take a client-centered approach, and don't insist on a single solution or method.

- Our client advisors, designers, and facilitators apply their expertise to every conversation and experience, suggesting proven practices and formats to support your organization and each group of people you're developing.
- We work as your partner to understand what's working or not, how your talent strategy fits in, and what's going on in your context.
- We listen to you and your stakeholders to learn about your challenges, your workforce, and your level of readiness.
- We also invest in your internal capability to create a sustainable path for enterprise-wide talent development.



RESEARCH-BASED SOLUTIONS YOU CAN COUNT ON

Our world-renowned [leadership models](#) and evidence-based methods are integrated and infused throughout all our programs, tools, and experiences. Elements can be expanded or contracted, and the content can be delivered by you, or by us — but regardless of format, the expertise will be there.

Because of this content alignment, you can count on a highly effective leadership development training experience **with a cohesive, unified strategy**. Whether you start with a smaller engagement and then adjust or extend as needs evolve or excitement spreads, or whether you partner with us to create collective capability across your entire workforce. For example:

- Our individual leader training programs can help you *focus* development, addressing the common challenges faced and skills needed at each level of the organization. With many available dates and global locations, our flexible [open leadership programs](#) might be used strategically, with your organization sending a handful of employees to participate one year and dozens the next, depending upon needs at the time.
- Strengthen your *pipeline* and build capacity and *adaptability* by co-creating [customized leadership development](#) for your organization alongside our leadership experts.

- Many of our custom and off-the-shelf programs include one-on-one coaching, and we can also provide world-class, highly personalized [leadership coaching services](#) to support your organization's leaders at all levels as they navigate change and combat *overload*.
- Improve the quality of *conversations* across your organization with proven conversational skills training program [Better Conversations Every Day™](#), a simple, evidence-based, and practical one-day experience to improve leadership, coaching, and communication skills.
- Support and *scale* enterprise-wide learning initiatives with a [CCL Passport™ leadership subscription](#), which provides comprehensive access to all our content and solutions, along with access to a dedicated client success concierge.

Whatever you choose, you can be confident **the same proven methods and frameworks are threaded throughout our entire portfolio of offerings**, enabling people at your organization to gain new skills and perspectives and a shared understanding, practice, and language of leadership. Positive results will build on each other, creating new possibilities for individual leaders and your organization — as well as the customers and communities you serve.

CONTACT US

We'd love to discuss the talent development challenges, context, and culture at your organization. We're ready with a team of leadership experts to assist and support your internal L&D or HR team.

Contact our client advisors and start a conversation today at ccl.org/talent-development.



RELATED RESOURCES

These industry-pioneering frameworks and models have emerged from our decades of research and experience, and they're infused and threaded throughout our portfolio. You can leverage them to optimize talent development at your organization.

Our Research-Based Approach

We define leadership as a social process that produces the outcomes of **Direction, Alignment, and Commitment (DAC)**.

The DAC framework underpins all our research, practice, teaching, and design.

Further reading:

[What Is Leadership?](#)

[D+A+C=Leadership](#)

What It Means for Talent Development at Scale

A shared view of the importance and meaning of leadership can help to improve the quality and consistency of it. With clarity on what leadership means, you can assess what's going well and what isn't — and take steps to fill in talent gaps.

And with **a common leadership language**, effective skills, behaviors, and mindsets can be scaled across all functions and levels of the organization.

Our widely recognized **70-20-10 framework** explains how people learn: with about 70% of their knowledge coming from hands-on experience in challenging experiences and assignments, 20% from developmental relationships with others, and 10% from formal coursework and training.

Further reading:

[The 70-20-10 Rule for Leadership Development](#)

The most effective organizational talent development programs recognize **the power of experiences** and use training and coursework to focus and amplify learning.

When your organization **clearly connects the 70% and the 10%**, *both* are enhanced, and more progress is made on real issues and strategic priorities. And when scaling development, the 20% (learning from relationships with other people) further reinforces the skills, behaviors, and mindsets the organization needs to achieve its goals.

Based on levels, or stages, of thinking, **vertical development** is about growing the capacity needed to handle complexity in current and future challenges.

This approach fosters perspectives and leadership mindsets that enable expansive thinking, greater wisdom, and clearer insights.

Further reading:

[Developing Talent? You're Probably Missing Vertical Development](#)

Adding vertical development into your talent development strategy **increases capacity** to implement the business strategy and face an uncertain future.

Vertical development helps people hold multiple perspectives and contradictions, think long term, see systems and patterns, and find new solutions.

By investing in how people think, you increase resilience and **grow bigger mindsets** in individual leaders, and when scaled, vertical development builds a more resilient, responsive, and adaptable organization.



Our Research-Based Approach

The ability to remember and apply new skills and concepts weeks, months, or years later is dependent upon successful **learning transfer**.

To make learning stick, we consider what happens before, during, and after a development experience. And we activate social / emotional learning — because learning doesn't take place in isolation.

Further reading:

[Make Learning Stick: Improve Learning Transfer](#)

What It Means for Talent Development at Scale

Talent development is ultimately about results, which means that lessons from your initiatives need to *stick*.

There are steps you can take to create leadership programs, experiences, and mechanisms that improve learning transfer and support lasting growth and behavior change. Over time, **new skills, perspectives, and behaviors can be reinforced**, until they're unconsciously put to use.

And, when talent development is scaled, **the social and cultural context** of the group or organization further fortifies lessons learned and encourages people to apply the learning.

Self-awareness, communication, influence, and learning agility are the “**Fundamental 4**” — the timeless, core leadership skills needed in every organization, regardless of role, industry, or location.

How each are applied shifts and changes based on role and context, but these are always required for effective leadership.

Further reading:

[The Core Leadership Skills in Every Role](#)

Talent development strategies can ensure that the fundamentals of leadership are developed, adapted, and strengthened for everyone at your organization, at every career stage.

With the **foundational leadership competencies** of self-awareness, communication, influence, and learning agility widely understood as core leadership skills development at your organization, a **shared understanding emerges** of “what leadership looks like.” You can be confident that the talent in your organization is prepared to accept new opportunities and greater responsibility.

Our **Situation – Behavior – Impact (SBI)™ feedback model** is a simple way to structure feedback conversations to capture and clarify the *Situation*, describe the specific *Behaviors*, and explain the *Impact* that the person's behavior had.

When feedback is given consistently and well, people are more engaged, effective, and open to learning and growth.

Further reading:

[Improve Talent Development With Our SBI Feedback Model](#)

Some of the most valuable types of feedback are given in the moment and on routine, day-to-day behaviors — but **feedback often feels difficult to give or seek**. Talent development can bolster skills and confidence at giving feedback throughout the organization, creating an environment of candor, openness, and learning.

The skills and behaviors of your people managers have a tremendous impact on your workforce and culture. Equipping them with an understanding of how to give effective feedback regularly and well is one of the fastest ways to develop talent in your organization, because they're in the best position to **boost learning and performance** — or shut it down.



ENDNOTES

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³ Talent Trends Report, SHRM (2024).

<https://www.shrm.org/content/dam/en/shrm/research/2024-talent-trends-research-overall-findings.pdf>

⁴ Global Talent Trends, LinkedIn (2024).

<https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/global-talent-trends?trk=bl-po-blog-launch-post#learning-development>

⁵ Reuters (2025).

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⁶ The Times (2025).

<https://www.thetimes.com/business-money/companies/article/stress-scrutiny-80-hour-weeks-ceos-quit-8c6tp5t0m>

⁷ How Leading Organizations Improve Talent Development, Gartner (2023).

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At the Center for Creative Leadership, our drive to create a ripple effect of positive change underpins everything we do. For 50+ years, we've pioneered leadership development solutions for leaders at every level, from community leaders to CEOs. Consistently ranked among the world's top global providers of executive education, our research-based programs and solutions inspire individuals in organizations across the world — including 2/3 of the Fortune 1000 — to ignite remarkable transformations.

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