> # India's First-Time Leader Report
Surprising Insights into the Path to Frontline Leadership

Exploring the Most Critical Segment of Leaders

For decades, DDI has studied and worked alongside frontline managers through their transformation from individual contributor to leader. In our work, we've seen a common theme of anxiety—felt both by frontline leaders and the people around them. This lack of confidence is critical because frontline leaders are responsible for more than 80 percent of an organization's workforce and are directly responsible for executing an organization's strategy.

India's First-Time Leader Report explores research behind the anxiety of first-time frontline leaders, including their path to leadership, the challenges they face, and the expectations on them by other people.

DDI
Better Leaders. Better Future.

Struggling to See Purpose

Our research shows purpose-driven companies outperform the market by 42 percent financially, and many corporate HR departments work tirelessly to create and perfect mission statements to drive purpose and inspire their leaders. Of the HR respondents we surveyed, 30 percent said their companies had mission statements.

Yet, only 26 percent of first-level leaders say their companies have a mission statement. On top of this, one third of the people we surveyed don't feel that the leaders in their organizations behave in a way that exemplifies the stated purpose of the organization. Somewhere along the way, purpose is getting lost in translation. While HR is creating documentation around organizational purpose, their messaging isn't getting to the front line.

30%
of HR
say their company has a

26%
of leaders
say their company has a

MISSION
Statement

Purpose is Getting Lost in Translation

No Room to Fail

Business leaders often talk about the importance of "failing forward," which means learning from failure to become even better. While this concept is embraced in theory to drive innovation, 8 percent of the first-level managers we surveyed feel failure is not at all embraced in their organization in pursuit of innovation or different ideas, and 11 percent believe failure is embraced to a very great extent.

Managers taught to be risk-averse could be missing out on new ideas and the shared learning that comes from making mistakes. Not to mention, as the folks who lead the majority of an organization's workforce, they could be engraining the idea that failure is unacceptable in the minds of their teams, who then allow their pursuit of perfection to squash innovation—a requirement for organizational success.

only
11%
of leaders say failure is strongly embraced for innovation
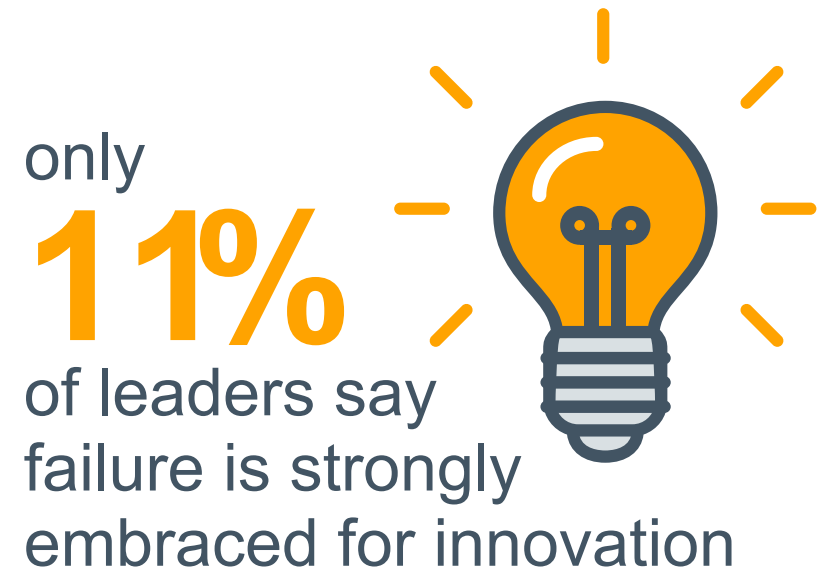
To What Extent is Failure Embraced in Pursuit of Innovation?

Digital Skills a Must

When it comes to the most critical skills managers need in the next three years, HR rated skills surrounding digital literacy, leading with digitalization, leading virtual teams, intellectual and cultural curiosity, and 360 degree thinking as most important. The problem is all of these skills currently have a low development focus at organizations, showing that managers could be falling behind on developing the skills they'll need most to be successful in the future.

Identifying and developing talent is also a skill rated by HR as being critical for the future, and our research reveals leaders are only moderately effective in this area. While it's certainly positive that this is a current heavy focus area for frontline manager development, this is also an incredibly challenging skill to master, making it unlikely that they will be fully prepared to select the right talent for their teams in the next three years. Managers could be headed into the future already behind on the skills they'll need the most to thrive.

Five Most Important Skills Leaders Need...

Digital Literacy

Leading with Digitalization

Leading Virtual Teams

Intellectual & Cultural Curiosity

360 Degree Thinking

...but get the least development

Critical Skills Frontline Leaders Need in the Next 3 Years

Unprepared to Lead a Digital Workforce

Leaders reported relative confidence in skills related to their personal abilities—skills they have high control over—such as determination, adaptability, and alignment, and reported less confidence in skills that depend on other people, such as hyper-collaboration and developing future talent.

Skills related to the digital workforce have been rated by HR as among the most critical skills for the future, but leaders reported the least confidence, and even fear, in competencies surrounding digital literacy, leading with digitization, and leading virtual teams. This is problematic for management because skills surrounding the digital workforce are currently a low development focus for them, indicating a skill gap that is unlikely to close anytime soon—one that will likely only grow larger. What's more, leaders lacking confidence in even one realm of their skillset can affect their daily performance, as well as their ability to reach their full potential.

MORE CONFIDENT	LESS CONFIDENT	LEAST CONFIDENT
What I Can **CONTROL**	Working with **OTHERS**	Going **DIGITAL**
▸ Determination	▸ Developing talent	▸ Digital literacy
▸ Inspiration	▸ Hyper-collaboration	▸ Leading with digitalization
▸ Alignment	▸ Empathy	▸ Leading virtual teams
▸ Adaptability		

Skill Confidence, Self-Rated by Leaders

Classroom is Still King—Even for Millennials

Even more than they want additional coaching from their managers and external mentors, people want formal learning to help them develop their leadership skills. Of the frontline Indian leaders we surveyed, 64 percent said they want more formal workshops, training courses, and seminars than they are currently getting.

Surprisingly, this finding extended to Indian Millennial leaders, 66 percent of whom said they wanted more formal learning. While it's often assumed that the "digital generation" wants everything delivered via technology, it's also worthwhile to consider that they are the most educated generation in history and are highly used to a classroom setting. Our data on the learning preferences of Millennials concurs, revealing that what this subset of leaders is used to in terms of formal learning is also how they prefer to be developed.

Classroom is KING

LEADERS WANT MORE FORMAL LEARNING

64% Frontline Leaders

66% Millennials

Millennial Leaders Want More Formal Learning

Craving Coaching

In our research of frontline leaders, most indicated they are not receiving the type of learning and development they need to be more effective leaders in their organization. Half of the frontline leaders we surveyed said they wanted more coaching from their current manager than they are currently getting, and 67 percent said they wanted more external coaching than they are currently getting. And when it comes to their overall development needs—the activities that improve the skills, abilities, and confidence of leaders—more than a quarter of the first-level managers we surveyed (27 percent) said they are not getting the development support they need from their leaders.

It's clear that frontline leaders crave more coaching, and the external coaching they want most is often not an option at their organization. According to our research, only 44 percent of companies use external coaching for their employees and typically only for senior leaders.

50% of leaders want more coaching from their manager

67% of leaders want more **external** coaching

Frontline Leaders Not Getting the Development They Need

Missing a Mentor

Most people step into frontline roles without much guidance on what to do or how to grow as leaders, and few are getting the mentorship they need. In fact, 56 percent of the people we surveyed reported that they've never had a mentor. However, among global organizations where leaders rated the overall quality of leadership in the organization as excellent, 53 percent said they've had some form of mentorship.

With mentorship clearly connected to better quality managers, organizations are missing out when they don't have a mentoring program in place. Furthermore, they are not helping to connect more senior leaders who can pass along their knowledge and experiences to their future successors. The data shows that only 30 percent of frontline leaders feel very prepared to capture organizational knowledge before it's lost, which is an urgent need as a rapidly growing number of Baby Boomers retire.

56%
of Frontline Leaders have
NEVER had a formal mentor

Missing Critical Mentoring Relationships

Working in a Vacuum

Only 61 percent of first-level leaders said that individuals in their organizations work across organizational boundaries to accomplish goals and solve challenges. Similarly, many reported that they feel their collaboration skills aren't very strong, with only 66 percent feeling confident that they take action based on input from multiple sources or perspectives.

This is concerning considering organizations that have strong collective leadership make better-informed decisions and are more confident in responding to the competitive environment and acting on customer needs, not to mention having a five times higher likelihood of a strong leader bench and twice the rate of "definitely engaged" leaders. Organizations should focus on creating leadership teams that cut across boundaries and give their managers of all levels the skills that enable them to work collectively. Without this focus on collaboration, organizations risk that the majority of their leaders will be lacking the commitment and engagement necessary to drive their teams towards common goals.
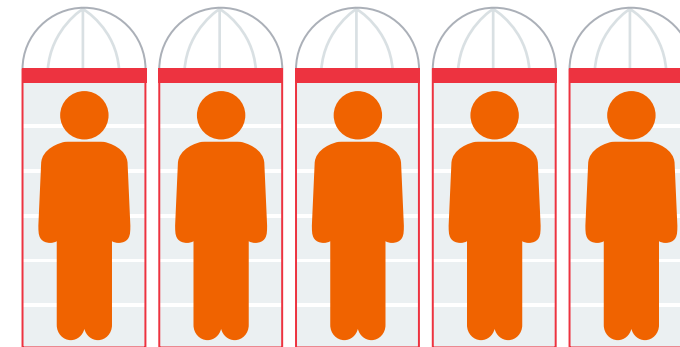
39% of leaders say individuals
at their organizations work in silos

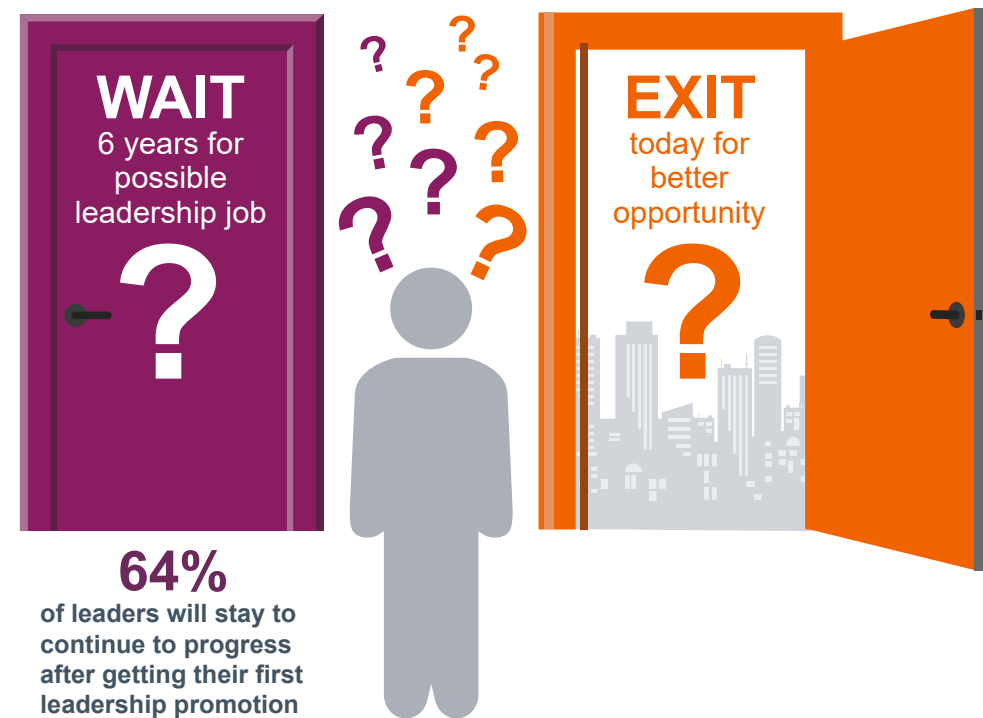**Do Individuals Work Across Organizational Boundaries?**

Become a Manager at Age 36

The average age that people first become a manager is 36. While the majority of first-time leaders are between the ages of 25 and 38, people may be stepping into their first leadership job as young as 16 or as late in their careers as 69. The varying ages people take on their first leadership role also has implications for their training and development. A "one-size-fits-all approach" likely won't fit the needs of both extremes—a young high-potential leader still getting comfortable in their first job has a very different learning trajectory than someone just promoted into their first leader role after having spent 30 or 40 years as an individual contributor.

36
Average Age

16

69

10.00   20.00   30.00   40.00   50.00   60.00   70.00

Age of First-Time Manager
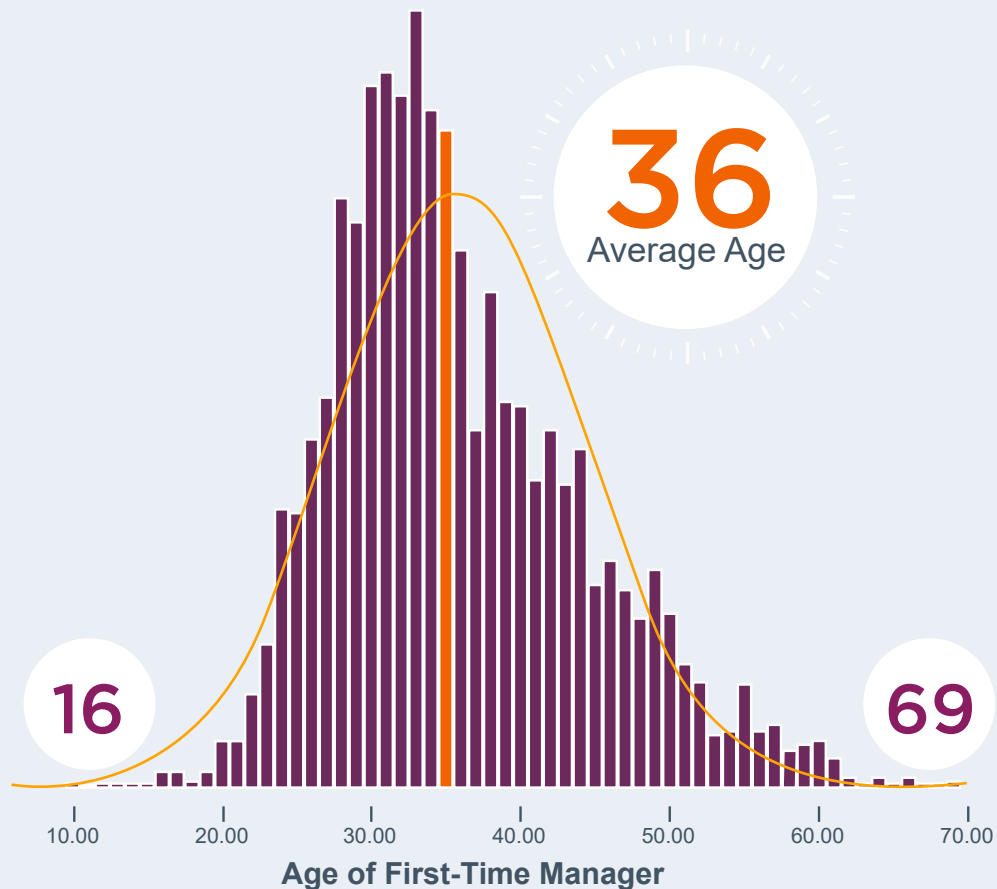
To Wait or Not to Wait?

Around the world, the average organizational tenure of someone taking on their first frontline leader position is six years. However, as low unemployment rates persist and organizations increasingly rely on workers with specialized skill sets, top performers may not be patient, and feel they need to find a new employer to land their desired promotion. Therefore, companies that fail to promote leaders-to-be in a timely manner—or at least make it clear that they are on a path to leadership—may find themselves losing out on critical talent. The good news is that the first step into leadership goes a long way toward retaining talented people: Once in a frontline manager role, 64 percent are willing to stay at an organization in order to progress to the next level of leadership.

WAIT
6 years for possible leadership job
?

EXIT
today for better opportunity
?

64%
of leaders will stay to continue to progress after getting their first leadership promotion

It's "Sink or Swim" in the First Four Years

Despite the difficulty of transitioning to a leadership role, new managers often have little support through the transition. Many leaders receive no training, and those that do receive training often have to wait several years for it. On average globally, people are 40 years old when they first go through leadership development courses—four years after the average age when people first become leaders. What does this lack of timely training mean for the frontline leader? They may be making mistakes early in their leadership careers that may damage relationships with their direct reports or key partners, which could have long-term consequences.

Gender Gaps Start Early

Organizations with gender-diverse leadership see significant business benefits, yet women currently comprise less than one-fifth of all frontline leadership roles. And when they do get the chance to lead, they often lead smaller teams. Our data shows women frontline leaders have a median of five direct reports, compared to seven for male frontline leaders.

These gender gaps form early, even before a woman steps into her first frontline manager role. Our data on leader candidates shows women are progressively losing the chance to ascend. Globally, 40 percent of all individual contributor candidates seeking first-time leader jobs are female, dropping to only 12 percent of C-suite candidates.
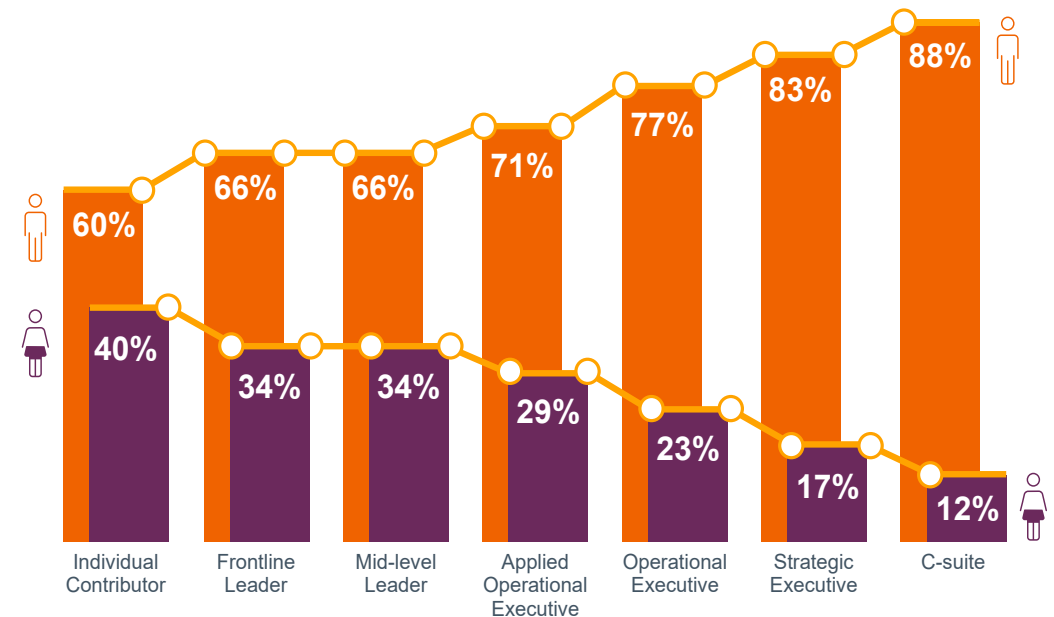
Leadership Candidates by Level and Gender

# Performance Doesn't Explain the Gender Gap

One of the reasons often cited for the lack of women in leadership is that they may be naturally less qualified leaders. However, when comparing the leadership skills of women and men frontline leaders, women perform equally as well as men on the "hard skills"—planning, judgement, and decision making—and outperform men in both leadership and interaction "soft skills," excelling in the areas of coaching others, facilitating change, and building trusting relationships. The evidence suggests that performance is not explaining the gap in access to leadership opportunities between men and women.

Hard Skills
Planning, Judgement, and Decision Making

Soft Skills
Coaching Others, Facilitating Change, and Building Trusting Relationships

Performance is not explaining the gender gap

MBAs Don't Create Better Leaders

Many people get MBAs for the sole purpose of landing higher-level leadership jobs, but does someone with an MBA outperform somebody without an MBA in terms of leadership capability? Frontline managers with an MBA showed only a minor increase in leadership behavior over those with bachelor's degrees in business who did not go on to achieve an MBA. Organizations may be placing too much emphasis on hiring only candidates with MBAs for leadership roles, wrongly assuming the people they are hiring already have the skills to do the job, just because they have an MBA. In addition, they may be failing to provide enough leadership training for these groups, assuming that their MBA education had already covered it.

MBA Degree

Bachelor Degree
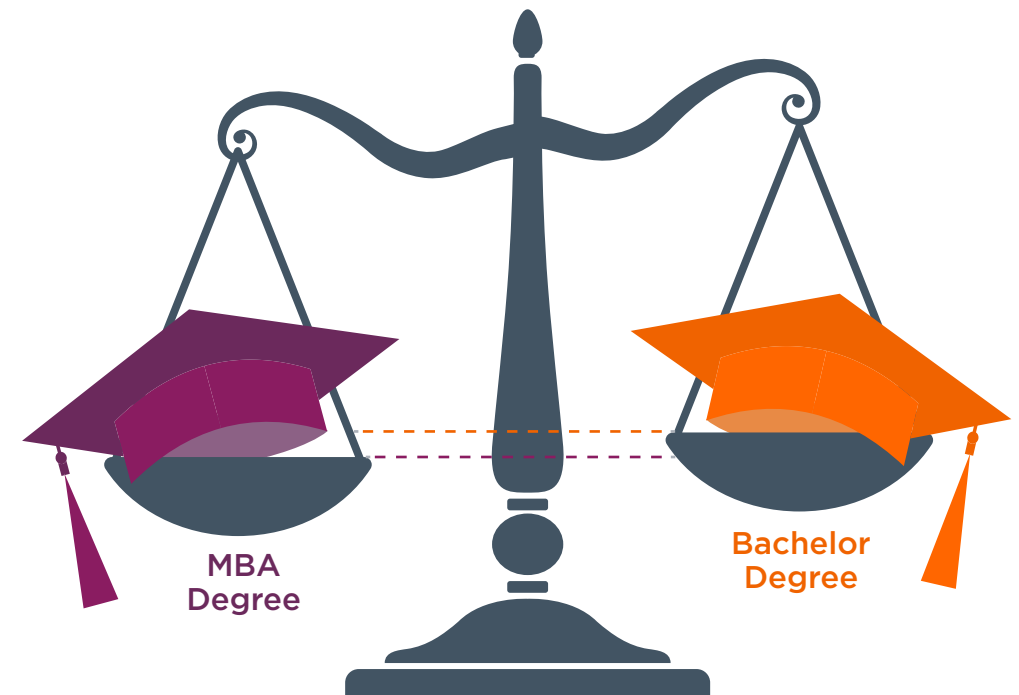
Only Minor Increase in Leadership Skills

More Than Half of Leaders Are Left Out

If leaders want more training, they better hope they get labeled as a "high-potential." Globally, 45 percent of frontline leaders are formally identified as being part of their organization's high-potential pool, which means they get twice as much funding and 25 percent more development hours each year. But what happens to the leaders left out of the pool? Leaders told they have low leadership potential show lower overall leadership ambition and a decrease in performance.
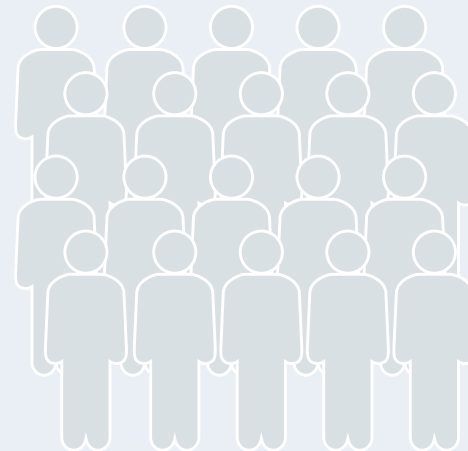
45%
of leaders get majority of development

55%
of leaders get left behind

Leaders not labeled high-potential get less development

> Prepare India's first-time frontline leaders for success.

DDI

EMAIL: info.india@ddiworld.com
VISIT: www.ddiworld.com/india
PHONE: +91-22-61911100