> The Leadership Development Playbook

Trends and Best Practices to Design Powerful Development Experiences

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The Big Question: What Really Works?

Who drove your digital transformation: Your CTO, your CIO, or COVID?

It's a joke we've often seen shared as a response to the pandemic. At heart, it's a testament to how much we worry about change, but when forced, we're surprised by how adaptable we really are.

For decades, we've been talking about digital transformation, including in the leadership development industry. We've wondered how to create the right blend of digital learning with the human touch of in-person interactions, and carefully tweaked approaches over time.

But when the pandemic hit, leadership development professionals were forced to make a tough choice: go all-virtual or do nothing at all. And "nothing at all" became the worst choice to make as organizations relied more heavily on strong leadership to get them through the crisis.

As we look to the future, there's no question that it will be more virtual. But it won't always be an all-or-nothing choice. And it doesn't mean learning should lose the human element. Rather, we need to rely more than ever on great leadership development design that meets your context.

In this playbook, we aim to place the current state of leadership development in context—a word you'll see used here repeatedly—and to provide food for thought as you juggle multiple leadership development priorities and seek to answer the Big Questions facing all resource-strapped HR and talent functions: What should we do next? What will work today and in the future?

This guide includes a review of the current leadership development landscape, research-backed trends that point toward its future, a case for change, and best practices drawn from DDI's 50 years of innovation and experience working by the side of organizations around the world.

The right answer, of course, depends on the context of your organization, your situation, and your goals. This playbook has insights and options to help you design powerful development experiences so you can build better leaders for a better future.

"To meet this challenge, companies should craft a talent strategy that develops employees' critical digital and cognitive capabilities, their social and emotional skills, and their adaptability and resilience. Now is the time for companies to double down on their learning budgets and commit to reskilling. Developing this muscle will also strengthen companies for future disruptions."

McKinsey, "To Emerge Stronger from the COVID-19 Crisis, Companies Should Start Reskilling Their Workforces Now," May 2020

The Disruptive Leadership Development Landscape

A profound shift in the human experience at work.

We are at a profoundly pivotal moment in the history of leadership and leadership development. Why? Because we're in the middle of a radical transformation of the human experience at work.

First and foremost, the pandemic has forced a shift to remote work in many companies. As a result, leaders are struggling to connect with their teams more than ever, especially when there's a lot of change and emotional upheaval.

Second, there's been a deep change in the role of purpose in business. It has always been a fundamental truth that the purpose of business is to make money, particularly for shareholders. Yet in late 2019, the Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs from 200 of America's most prominent companies, declared that the fundamental purpose of business is to:

1. Deliver value to customers

2. Invest in their employees

3. Deal fairly and ethically with suppliers, and

4. Support the communities in which they work

Coming in at #5 on their list was what most assumed would be at the top: generating long-term value for shareholders.

While this statement caught the attention of many observers, it didn't come as a complete shock. After all, this reordering of priorities reflects the culmination of trends that have been building for some time. In a world that's highly transparent, people want to know the companies they buy from, partner with, and work for are positively impacting the community.

This sense of ethics and community purpose has been called into question even more during the social unrest during 2020. Organizations are expected to do good in the world, and value diversity and inclusion for all employees.

And that creates a major shift for leadership development.

New Demands on Leadership Development

No surprise, these trends are having a deep impact on leadership development. Today's corporate leaders are called on to do more than manage work. They need to be masters of emotional intelligence, expert coaches, and engaging motivators. They must help people see the purpose in their work and show them clear paths for growth. All while delivering business results.

And leaders will be doing all of this while facing a deeply uncertain future. They will likely be in a near constant state of crisis management, which creates a new demand for what were once called "soft skills," but are now being viewed as the essential skills of leadership.

And it's critical that every company begin to re-evaluate not only which skills are most necessary, but how they can develop these skills in their leaders.

Doing so will require organizations to navigate a growing maze of learning and development options and modalities. But it also requires an understanding of the state of modern leadership.

"History never looks like history when you are living through it."

John W. Gardner

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Leadership: It's Never Been Tougher!
Leaders feel the impact of rapid change.

Need proof? Consider these four major forces of change:

1. **Work:** Radically Compressed

Everything is being compressed: shorter work cycles, more complexity, experimentation, and rapid decision-making. Business decisions that were once the domain of senior leaders are being pushed further down the organization, putting more pressure on leaders at all levels to make decisions that can have significant consequences for a business.

2. **Structures: Networked, Virtual Teams**

In more team-based, flat, networked organizations the ability to get things done through others requires a very different approach to traditional structures based on position power and authority. And as more of these teams work remotely, the ability to connect and influence virtually has become even more important.

3. **People:** Craving Impact and Purpose

Employee expectations have changed dramatically. Employees want to know they are making a worthwhile contribution to the organization and society at large, they want work that is interesting and meaningful, and they are constantly looking for growth and opportunity. And they are looking for connection with their peers as they switch to remote teams.

4. **Leaders:** Constant Transition

Leaders themselves are in a constant state of transition, dealing with increasing uncertainty and ambiguity. As a result, what was once called "change leadership" is now simply leadership. Furthermore, many of them are doing it from a distance.

The forces of change are bearing down on leaders. What's making it more challenging?

Leadership transitions are tough.

DDI's research has shown that a leadership transition[1] is among life's most challenging adjustments, ranking up there with personal illness or a major life event. And given the pressures facing leaders now, these transitions are getting harder, not easier.

Leaders aren't prepared.

Just one in three leaders feels they are effective at handling the challenges associated with a new leadership role. Only 40 percent of executives feel the development they receive is high quality[2]. Additionally, 60 percent of frontline leaders say they have never received any training or preparation for the role and two-thirds of frontline leaders felt unprepared for the role[3]. As a result, 87 percent of first-time leaders feel frustrated, anxious and uncertain about their role and at least half of executive transitions fail[4].

60% of frontline leaders say they have never received any training or preparation for a leadership role.

[1] DDI, Leaders in Transition, 2015.
[2] DDI, The Conference Board, and EYGM Limited. Global Leadership Forecast, 2018.
[3] DDI, The Frontline Leader Project. 2019.
[4] Harvard Business Review. 2017.

What's Standing in the Way?

Research by *Harvard Business Review*[5] and LinkedIn Learning[6] found that *time* is the number one obstacle to leadership development. Time creates pressure, and pressure leads us to make some less-than-ideal choices about how we approach learning and leadership development.

Unfortunately, these choices are driving some undesirable trends:

Relying on "old faithful."
Rather than investing in the next generation of leaders or enhancing the skills of current leaders, we default to the usual suspects: those who we know can get things done. While this may deliver short-term benefits and results, it does little to strengthen the overall leadership pipeline.

Taking a "build it and they will come" approach.
Many organizations make online learning curricula and other self-directed resources available to leaders, and assume their work is done. While self-directed learning is and should be a part of an organization's approach to leadership development, not all development should be self-directed. Leaving leadership development to individual curiosity and chance is a high-risk approach (i.e., it often doesn't work). It's not hard to understand why as DDI research confirms, learners are in fact looking for *less* self-directed learning[7].

Adopting a "sink or swim" strategy.
Not a new mistake, but the now-constant pressure of time makes it tempting to allow "natural selection" to take its course. However,

The biggest barrier to developing leaders? Time.

[5] HBR, The State of Leadership Development, 2018
[6] LinkedIn, LinkedIn Learning Report, 2019
[7] DDI, The Conference Board, and EYGM Limited. Global Leadership Forecast, 2018.

the debate about leaders being born or made is over; leadership is developed over time. While some people may bring qualities and attributes that predispose them to be effective in certain situations, leadership—and leadership development—requires focus and practice.

The evidence is there to support formal development particularly with key leadership transitions. Companies that have transition programs and prepare their leaders to step up, are more than two times more likely to be in the top 20 percent of organizations in their financial performance.[8]

Employing a one-and-done program.
Some organizations simply invest in a single event or short program for their leaders. While a one-and-done approach satisfies the need to do *something* it ignores the fact that leadership behaviors and new habits are developed over time, not in a single moment or event. Effective leadership development needs to be constructed as a learning journey that unfolds over time, draws on multiple learning options and modalities, and provides opportunities for skill practice and application.

Compressing learning to save time.
This growing trend builds on the previous point about development as a journey. With the pressure of time, companies are legitimately looking for ways to reduce time spent on all activities, including training. However, we need to constantly ask ourselves if these "more efficient" approaches really deliver the outcomes we are looking for.

Overvaluing the role technology can play.
Despite the immense attention and investment it attracts, learning technology isn't having a notable impact on leadership or business outcomes,[9] nor is technology surpassing high-touch methods such as formal learning and development assignments. The appropriate use of technology has the potential to significantly enhance the learning and leadership development experience, but it may not always be the best option.

Shortsightedly ditching the classroom.
With more teams working remotely, many companies feel like they can't bring people together in the class-room. But even if you can't bring people together in person, it doesn't mean all classroom training should be stopped. In fact, people working remotely are looking for more opportunities than ever to connect and learn in the classroom with other leaders. Rather than ditch the classroom in favor of all self-driven learning, companies can look to virtual classrooms to keep the connection between leaders.

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[8] DDI, The Conference Board, and EYGM Limited. Global Leadership Forecast, 2018.
[9] DDI, The Conference Board, and EYGM Limited. Global Leadership Forecast, 2018.

Small, yet profound, moments that happen every day define a leader's performance and impact.

A New View: Leadership Development By Your Side

Leadership is a human endeavor inevitably filled with challenges, triumphs, and failures. Behind every leadership role is a person trying to do their best in an environment of changing expectations and uncertainty.

Organizations need to focus on supporting leaders through their critical leadership moments—what DDI refers to as "by your side" leadership development. These critical leadership moments can be the large, transformative moments such as making a transition into a new leadership role or aligning the skills and capabilities of leaders with an organization's strategic and cultural priorities. They can also be the small, yet profound, moments that happen every day and define a leader's performance and impact. These moments include having a performance conversation, making a critical selection decision, or setting up a new team.

The argument could be made that these moments are not only where leadership happens, but they are leadership. Those responsible for leadership development need to understand this and seek to adopt a more human-centered approach that recognizes the challenges of leadership and puts the leader at the center of development experiences.

While this sounds both noble and logical, it's easier said than done.

Make Every Moment of Leadership Count

If time is the biggest obstacle to developing leaders, how do we change our relationship with time? How do we make a meaningful investment of the time we have and develop leaders for their most critical leadership moments?

At DDI, we developed a framework to think about leadership development across three horizons to ensure that time doesn't get away from us. We call this approach Leadership 480 and it revolves around the number 480.

The first horizon is 480 minutes.
That's approximately eight hours or one work day. Consider the moments that leaders have across a day and the impact that these can have on themselves, their teams, and the organization. For example, think about a hallway conversation with a direct report. While it might seem insignificant at the time, it can have a profound impact on how the direct report feels and what they do. If that hallway conversation goes poorly, the team member can feel disengaged, frustrated, or even angry.

Ask yourself: How are you preparing leaders to deal with the critical leadership moments they face each day? What are the core skills needed to maximize their impact each minute?

The second horizon is 480 days.
This number of work days represents a two-year period and for most companies is the horizon of critical business priorities. In 480 days, leaders are often asked to drive priorities such as innovation, transformation, or operational performance. But too often, companies don't prepare leaders for these challenges. As a result, days slip by without leaders doing the things that will enable them to step up to the demands of these key priorities. Before they know it, they are missing quarterly and annual goals and targets.

Ask yourself: What are your two-year business priorities? Are you preparing your leaders to execute on them?

The final horizon is 480 months.
Or the length of a 40-year career. To fuel their leadership pipelines, organizations need to be thinking about today, tomorrow, and the future. What are they doing to build the longer-term careers and capabilities of leaders within the organization to ensure a steady flow of leaders moving through the pipeline? That can mean getting leaders ready for significant career transitions, identifying and developing those with high potential, and equipping leaders with the skills and insights to manage their own development and careers.

Ask yourself: How are you building the longer-term careers and capabilities of leaders to ensure a steady flow of leaders moving through the pipeline?

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What are the implications for your organizations when you view time in this way?

- Prepare your leaders to make the most of their 480 minutes every day, by helping them develop a core set of foundational leadership skills (such as communicating effectively, coaching, managing work and performance).

- Begin with the end in mind. What are the organization's short- and long-term strategic and cultural priorities, and what needs to be included in the portfolio of skills, knowledge, experience, and attributes that will set your leaders up for success.

- Take a pipeline approach. Your organization's leadership is only as strong as its weakest link. Applying the Leadership 480 framework and approach across all levels can strengthen and activate your leadership pipeline.

- Continue initiatives to identify leadership potential early, plan for future leadership needs, and provide opportunities for growth. Build and maintain a culture that promotes growth and engagement so you can retain talented leaders and address their desire to have fulfilling careers.

The most important implication is that organizations need to consider all three horizons concurrently. Focusing exclusively on one at any given time, while neglecting the others, may put critical leadership development needs at risk.

It's not about making everything fit in less time or waiting until there is a better time. It's about making a more meaningful investment of the time we have.

Stop the chaos. Design leadership
development experiences with purpose.

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Leadership Development Redesigned

The shifts in leadership require new ways of thinking about leadership development and new ways to address them.

What follows are DDI's points of view on the trends and realities of today's leadership development landscape, and descriptions of the approaches we take to help the organizations we work with address this new reality of leadership development.

DDI's 5 Best Practices

1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Context Matters in Leadership Development	Design "Leader-First" Experiences	Variety is the Spice of Learning	Don't Leave Development to Chance	Learn to Perform
Leaders will have different development needs, depending upon their context.	*Technology isn't changing the landscape for leadership development. The expectations and needs of today's leaders are.*	*Trying to pick the best learning method is like trying to pick the best ingredient in a recipe.*	*The foundations are the foundations for a reason.*	*It's less about learning and more about performing.*

Best Practice | **Number 1**

Context Matters in Leadership Development

Leaders will have different development needs, depending upon their context.

Leaders' learning and development needs aren't sparked by a single definable moment. Instead, many needs are dictated by context, as different contexts drive different leadership. So, to build effective leadership development experiences—much like the different ways to view time across 480 minutes, days, and months—we need to understand the range of micro and macro moments that spark a learning or performing opportunity.

An understanding of the context for learning is critically important and it should shape the type of leadership development resources you make available to leaders. For example, accelerating leaders towards future leadership roles is a business imperative that can't be left to chance. It requires putting in place structured development that prepares leaders for the needs of future roles and levels.

Because different contexts exist concurrently, you'll never be in a position where you can choose one or the other. Rather, you need to build an ecosystem of leadership development that can support multiple needs and deliver the outcomes you need.

What's their context? Why do your leaders need to learn?

Just-in-Time

Often leaders need information, knowledge, or guidance at a point in time to do their jobs or complete a task.

Curiosity

A desire to learn is often sparked by curiosity for a subject matter or area of practice. It may not be grounded in any specific leadership need, but it often helps to build an individual's portfolio of knowledge and skills.

Self-Improvement

Leaders will often recognize the need to improve their knowledge or skills in an area. This is more formal than curiosity and often requires deliberate focus and practice. The drive for self-improvement is typically underpinned by a specific need to enhance certain skills or build one's knowledge and understanding of a subject.

Advance to New Role or Level

Leaders and organizations recognize the need to develop new skills and acquire new knowledge as people advance or move to a new role or level. This is based on the simple reality that the skills and knowledge at one level of the organization may be very different to those at another level.

Prepare For A Specific Business Challenge

Leaders must often pivot toward a specific company business challenge or priority. This may demand new skills or perspectives.

Prepare For Future Role or Level

Leaders and organizations will often forecast the need for a set of skills and knowledge that will be important in future roles and levels. For example, leaders recognize the need early in a leadership journey to develop their approach to strategic thinking.

Leaders are looking for leadership development tailored to their specific needs and context.

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Design "Leader-First" Experiences

Technology isn't changing the landscape for leadership development. The expectations and needs of today's leaders are.

The traditional approach to education and learning has been based on the premise that the teacher knows best. This has contributed to learning environments defined by a one-size-fits-all approach. Today, this model is no longer relevant. Leaders are far more aware of their needs and are looking for leadership development solutions tailored to their specific needs and context.

Organizations must find ways to personalize the leadership development experience. The key is to ensure they understand the specific needs of their leaders and build solutions that speak to those needs. This means putting the learner or leader at the center of the development experience. Methods such as human-centered design can inform both the approach and the toolkit used by leadership development practitioners.

DDI has adopted several design principles that ensure the leader and the leader's needs are at the center of our approach to building effective, high-impact leadership development solutions. Together these principles contribute to a leadership development experience that is deeply relevant, connected to the context of the organization, and integrates a more personalized perspective of skills and application.

As you design leader-first experiences, consider our core design principles:

- **Relevance:** Connect to the challenges of the leaders in your organization's context.
- **Personalization:** Highlight the unique value to individual leaders.
- **Immersive:** Learn by doing and experiencing the challenge.
- **Human:** Engage the heart and make it authentic.
- **Trusted:** Ensure that the time leaders invest is in experiences that really work and are aligned with the company's values.

Development Designed for Leaders
Core design principles

Relevance

Too often leaders are presented with frameworks and situations they don't see as immediately relevant to the challenges they face. Learning must address real situations and challenge leaders, and it needs to happen quickly to ensure leaders are engaged. They're also seeking a connection to the purpose of the organization and, therefore, want to see how their learning and leadership development efforts connect them to the values, strategic priorities, and broader business purpose. Our approach to building relevant leadership development programs draws on a number of simple but profound design elements including:

Bringing in the Organization Culture
Find ways to incorporate the leader's current situation by tying the concepts to the company values or current initiatives. Ask leaders, "Does this work at our organization? If not, why?"

Leveraging Learner Scenarios
When introducing a topic, ask leaders to provide examples or scenarios that are relevant for them. Canned examples can work but give them the option to suggest others. Make sure exercises don't preclude the ability to customize to the learner's scenarios.

Asking About Learner Needs
Always ask learners what challenges they face most often. Where do they need help the most?

Personalization

When leaders have a limited amount of time, it becomes much more important that every minute spent learning is meaningful. A personalized experience helps to do that and enables leaders to understand and apply concepts more quickly.

Personalization is the most dominant feature defining what leaders want most from their learning and development experience[10]. Personalized learning can take many forms, from allowing leaders to choose their own learning path, to linking individual goals to development plans, or providing leaders with relevant content and tools.

DDI believes that personalized leadership development recognizes the leader's uniqueness but stays grounded in the context of the business. Deep personalization is driven by data and insight, which DDI gathers through diagnostics and self-insight tools. For example, before embarking on a development journey, leaders might participate in an immersive assessment center to

[10] DDI, The Conference Board, and EYGM Limited. Global Leadership Forecast, 2018.

ensure they enter the program with a clear understanding of their strengths and development priorities in relation to the areas to be covered.

Technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are creating opportunities for the kind of person-alization that in the past has been extremely difficult. AI can not only react to individual differences and needs, it can start to anticipate and predict leader needs that are deeply personalized.

Immersive

Immersive learning is learning by doing. Learners become active participants in the learning process by directly engaging with situations and challenges they can relate to. While the pedagogic value of immersive learning is strong, it also contributes to learning that is absorbing and satisfying. This is important in a world where leaders are constantly exposed to a full range of engaging experiences outside of the learning realm.

Emerging technologies like virtual reality can create unique and memorable immersive experiences. DDI is quickly building expertise in virtual reality to develop and practice leadership skills. In a recent trial to build coaching skills, more than 70 percent of participants felt more confident in their coaching ability after the virtual reality experience.

Technology alone isn't enough—but adds value when it's relevant and personalized.

It's not about implementing technology for its own sake, particularly not to enable the self-study forms of learning libraries that many leaders shun (and don't really have time for!). When technology is designed and implemented to match a specific need or program, it can generate value for on-demand learning. Technology works best when giving "always on" leaders the tools and access they need to grow themselves and develop others.

DDI's digital platform Pinpoint is designed for you to curate what your leaders need most: focus on the most relevant leadership skills and alignment to the broader business context. With Pinpoint, time-strapped leaders can have a personalized experience with the right content and reinforcement tools aligned to your leadership development program. Leaders can also create personal boards by pinning their favorite content like microcourses, games, simulations, job aids, and more.

"Immersive Learning is becoming one of the hottest and most transformational approaches to learning in business."
– Josh Bersin, HR Industry Analyst

At the same time, they also placed a high value on the more traditional approach of practicing coaching skills with a peer in real life. This confirms what we already know about leaders' preferences: a blended learning experience is still the best experience.

For organizations that aren't ready to put their leaders in VR goggles just yet, leaders can benefit from other experiential activities as well as immersive "day in the life" simulations.

Human

One thing every leader brings to their role is themselves: head and heart. Leadership is a fundamentally human activity and most of the challenges leaders deal with elicit an intellectual or emotional response—or both. For this reason, leadership development must also connect at a human level.

At DDI, we strive to do this by:

Engaging the heart.

Always evaluate learning content in terms of where it causes learners to feel something. This can be done through video, open discussions, real examples, or other methods of engaging your leaders.

Tapping into frustrations.

Most leaders have encountered problems when trying to apply new skills. It's good to surface any challenges and talk about what makes those skills difficult to apply.

Employing storytelling.

Facilitators should share examples from their own experience to illustrate points. Encourage others in the classroom to share their stories. Bring points to life with scenarios and powerful stories.

Trusted

Leaders need to know the time they are spending on development will be worth it, so they want content that is trusted and proven to work. After all, we're living in a time when leaders can easily just search the web for any issue they have. But they need to know the content is credible and will actually help them get better. They also need development that's proven to build leadership skills.

Similarly, organizations need to know their leaders are building real skills that they can demonstrate. Additionally, they need to know their leaders are all working toward one unified leadership culture, rather than everyone applying different philosophies of leadership. That way, when everyone is speaking the same leadership language across the organization, culture change is accelerated, and results happen quicker.

At DDI, our approach is built on more than 50 years of experience in the science and practice of leadership. For us, it's about more than just activities. It's about delivering results. And we've got proof that leaders see measurable behavior change and organizations report increased engagement, lower turnover, and positive financial returns.

Variety is the Spice of Learning

Trying to pick the best learning method is like trying to pick the best ingredient in a recipe.

With the plethora of learning and development options, it's easier than ever to deliver leadership development at scale and at the right cost. However, the key is to understand the value each of these options brings and how best to use them to maximize impact, behavior change, and real results. Given the pressure of leaders' and stakeholders' expectations, it's more important than ever to use limited time and resources wisely. How can we have a more thoughtful and deliberate approach to the use of different learning modalities and options?

Take Your Leaders on Learning Journeys

A learning journey is based on the principle that true behavior change takes time and is achieved through a series of integrated learning and development experiences. It involves a masterful combination of the tools and experiences in our model—such as assessment, formal learning, online tools, one-on-one coaching, the support of managers, and more—to help leaders develop and perform their best. Increasingly, learning journeys are blended or flipped, involving a mix of high-tech and high-touch options, or online and offline touchpoints.

The Magic is in the Mix

Companies who use learning journeys (compared to those not) are 3.4 times more likely to have high-caliber leadership development, 2.9 times more likely to have high leadership strength, and 2.5 times more likely to be financially successful.[11]

[11] DDI, The Conference Board, and EYGM Limited. Global Leadership Forecast, 2018.

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At DDI, we design high-impact leadership development experiences anchored on a framework that allows us to align methods and approaches with specific needs. Inspired by research we conducted with Carnegie Mellon University, this framework is not simply a way to organize different types of approaches, tools, and technologies but a model to maximize impact. While many of these elements can be used alone, there is power in using them together in a learning journey. They key elements include:

Context: Designed for the leader, anchored to your organization's context

Measurement: Clear metrics for success ensures a program delivers impact on leaders, their teams, and business results
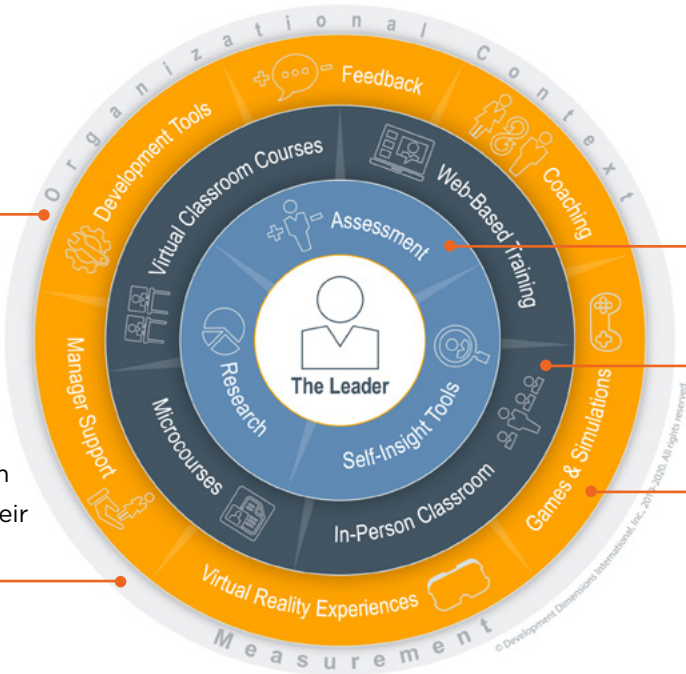
Engage: How leaders commit to change and growth

Learn: How leaders acquire new skills and knowledge

Grow: How leaders apply and sustain

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How can leaders commit to change and growth?

Leaders need to take charge of their own development. With insights and data on themselves and the challenges they face, leaders can more easily engage with a development program or experience and stay committed to their own growth.

WHAT'S IN YOUR MIX?		EXAMPLES
	Assessment Provides insights, data, and a roadmap to personalize development	• Learning needs analysis • 360-feedback tools • Day-in-the-life assessment centers
	Self-Insight Tools Heighten awareness to personal profile or mindset	• Self-evaluations • Surveys • Polls and quizzes
	Research Proof points and data answer the question "why learn?"	• Industry trends and statistics • Benchmarking data • Training evaluation studies

Deep personalization is driven by data and insight.

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The Leader

Virtual Classroom Courses

Web-Based Training

In-Person Classroom

Microcourses

Organizational Context

Measurement

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How can leaders acquire new skills and knowledge?

Leadership is learnership. Select the best option based on the outcomes and results you need.

WHAT'S IN YOUR MIX?	THIS OPTION WORKS BEST TO:
In-Person Classroom Engaging and interactive classroom experience with an expert facilitator and coach	• Build awareness and skills • Practice skills with other leaders • Learn from the experience of others
Microcourses Short bursts of learning on a variety of skills and topics	• Raise awareness • Enhance knowledge with related skills or topics • Address immediate and unplanned needs
Web-based Training Interactive and on-demand content at the learner's pace	• Gain knowledge on skills or topics • Test understanding and mastery • Establish a common knowledge base before a classroom experience
Virtual Classroom Online, collaborative learning and exchange—without the travel costs!	• Build awareness and skills • Practice skills with other leaders • Manage travel costs

Classroom Is King—Even Virtually

While the conversation about learning trends often assumes that learners want a higher focus on technology, 59 percent of leaders say they want more traditional classroom learning.[12] But the classroom doesn't just have to be in-person. 90 percent of leaders were satisfied with virtual classrooms, similar to in-person classrooms.[13]

[12] DDI, The Frontline Leader Project, 2019.
[13] DDI workshop evaluation from 7,080 leaders.

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Organizational Context

Feedback

Development Tools

Coaching

Manager Support

The Leader

Games & Simulations

Virtual Reality Experiences

Measurement

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How can leaders apply and sustain learning?

Leadership development extends back on the job. Plan purposeful ways for leaders to continuously learn and grow in their career.

WHAT'S IN YOUR MIX?	EXAMPLES
Coaching A personal coach can accelerate development and boost on-the-job performance	• Coaching from manager, peers, or an external coach • Skills- or problem-based
Development Tools Just-in-time access to resources	• Job aids • Planners • Templates
Feedback Candid view of strengths, gaps, and blind spots	• Formal or informal • From immediate manager, peers, or key stakeholders
Games and Simulations Engaging ways to put skills to the test	• Group competition in the classroom • Individual games or sims to test and practice skills • Gamification programs
Manager Support Tools for the managers of leaders to encourage and reinforce learning	• Overview of program content • Development plan template • Application tools
Virtual Reality Immersive learning that bring real-world scenarios to life	• Empathy generating scenarios • Skill building scenarios

Don't Leave Development to Chance

The foundations are the foundations for a reason.

Self-directed learning is and should be a part of an organization's approach to leadership development—and especially because leaders are looking for greater control over their development and more personalized experiences.

But that doesn't mean all development should be self-directed. Consider other professions. How would you feel if a pilot, surgeon, or accountant only relied on self-directed learning to acquire their skills? And yet, we often think that this is enough in what is one of the most important and difficult professions—**leadership**.

While a lot has changed, there are some important things about leadership that haven't changed, and that underscore the need to compliment self-directed learning with more formal and purposeful development:

Leadership skills don't come naturally.
The debate over whether leadership skills can be developed is over. While some people will have natural tendencies toward key leadership skills, no one is a born leader—everyone can develop leadership skills, and everyone can benefit from focused and deliberate development.

New behaviors and habits are developed over time.
Learning new behaviors or changing old habits takes time. This is why leadership development efforts cannot be built on a single event. The most effective leadership development initiatives involve a series of development experiences and reinforcement activities over a period of time.

Evergreen or foundational skills remain relevant.
It is impossible to prepare leaders for every single situation and challenge they will confront in their roles. The answer lies in what we call The Multiplier Skills. These are the skills that have the power to increase impact across multiple leadership situations and challenges. They are also the skills that will serve leaders through all stages of their careers.

The Multiplier Skills: Leaders Need Proficiency Across Three Core Areas

INTERACTION ESSENTIALS

The ability to facilitate high-quality interactions, through a diverse range of mediums and with a diverse range of people. These skills encompass both the personal and practical needs that a leader will have in an interaction.

BUSINESS JUDGMENT

The ability to make sound business judgments that are aligned to the organization's cultural and strategic priorities.

PERSONAL MASTERY

The ability to understand, manage, and leverage one's abilities, personality, and motivations to maximize personal impact and effectiveness.

The goal isn't learning. It's performing.

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Learn to Perform

It's less about learning and more about performing.

Because we now deal with such an immense amount of knowledge and information, we no longer have the capacity to store all this knowledge for future reference. In an environment where today's tacit knowledge quickly becomes tomorrow's explicit knowledge, we must increasingly provide the tools and skills that allow leaders to quickly access knowledge and learning at the time of need. Leaders themselves are already embracing this concept, with around 70 percent using search engines to learn what they need for their jobs.[14]

Today, the goal of leadership development is no longer learning, it is performing. Helping leaders perform rather than simply learn is at the heart of this shift. It's no longer simply a matter of building "transfer activities"—although this is still relevant. It's now about finding ways to embed the learning in the workplace or what Deloitte refers to as "learning in the flow of work." It's focused on solving problems rather than learning a new skill.

Technology is quickly opening more new ways to support leaders at their most critical moment of need—just in time. With rapid advancements in mobile technology and artificial intelligence, there continues to be more opportunities to embed learning and development in both reactive and proactive ways.

Continuous Innovation

Across our 50 years of innovation, we have been experimenting with a range of approaches and new technologies. Today, our innovation studio DDI Labs explores pioneering technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, voice analysis, wearables, and more to create powerful leadership experiences.

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[14] Learnlight, Demystifying the Modern Learner, 2017.

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Leadership development practitioners enable
leaders to be continuous learners.

What's Next?

Predictions about the future of business—or the future of leadership development—are either lucky or wrong.

The value in looking ahead is not to demonstrate prescience but to bring a focus to the trends that are emerging today, which may have escaped our notice. Spotting and understanding trends allow us to respond more effectively to the present while anticipating the road ahead.

With the trends and changes already in play, we're in a time that is both exciting but also a little intimidating.

What we can say with a degree of confidence is that these changes will have a profound impact on leadership development and the role of leadership development practitioners.

It is hard to be definitive about this future but in a world where learning will be continuous, perhaps the role of leadership development practitioners will continue to move away from its traditional role of instructing to one that is more focused on enabling the leader to be a continuous learner.

The Power of Leadership Development
How DDI Can Help

Looking to design more powerful leadership development experiences? We're excited to work together.

We offer innovative leadership development experiences—including blended learning journeys, immersive experiences, coaching and more—for all levels of leaders that build core skills, address business challenges, and accelerate leadership careers.

Our award-winning solutions have delivered results including, on average:

- 51% increase in engagement

- 77% decrease in turnover rates

- 36% increase in productivity

We are excited about today and the future of learning and leadership development. We look forward to more innovations and working by your side to develop better leaders for a better future.

Explore more perspectives and solutions at www.ddiworld.com

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About DDI

DDI is a global leadership consulting firm that helps organizations hire, promote and develop exceptional leaders. From first-time managers to C-suite executives, DDI is by leaders' sides, supporting them in every critical moment of leadership. Built on five decades of research and experience in the science of leadership, DDI's evidence-based assessment and development solutions enable millions of leaders around the world to succeed, propelling their organizations to new heights. For more information, visit ddiworld.com.

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