



LEADERS MATTER

EMPOWERING MANAGERS TO LEAD PEOPLE BETTER



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LEADERS MATTER

Who sets the tone, vision, and culture of your organization? Leaders.

Strong leaders bring out the best in people. They're critical in bringing strategy to life. They're key to business transformation. Leaders at all levels of the organization—from frontline managers to executives—should understand how they impact and are impacted by other people.

Leaders at all levels matter. And their growth is paramount.

Here's a common scenario. A high-performing individual is promoted into a management position because they do great work. However, that doesn't mean they've had the opportunity to develop how they lead people. As these managers continue to take on more responsibilities and lead more people, the impact of their habits and beliefs is magnified (for better or worse).

Managers are the link to engaging your front line. To be successful, managers must become strong people leaders who inspire teams AND drive meaningful business results. They need the right mix of technical skills and business acumen to get work done. But they also need emotional and social intelligence to motivate and involve employees in work.

How should organizations empower managers to become better at leading people? We have a few* ideas. But first let's understand what it even means for your managers to be people leaders. Here are three key tenets:

- People leaders embrace development.
- People leaders create meaning.
- People leaders diffuse drama.

Keep reading to explore these ideas further. (And check out the centerfold to evaluate and brainstorm ideas for your managers.)

*OK, we have a lot of ideas...

We've partnered with clients across industries to develop their people leaders. Here are some of our favorite elements for designing experiences that allow managers to build their skill and influence.

SOLUTION

IMPACT

Include *challenge-based experiences* that are active, relevant, and appropriate for the manager's level.

Sustain on-the-job learning.

Provide platforms that infuse *micro-learning and network building*.

Facilitate collaboration and competition.

Create *time-based communication* that repeats essential concepts and tips for success.

Trigger meaningful moments for managers.

Ensure that content *speaks the language* of the manager and the business.

Align managers to key narratives.

Launch *badging and certifications* for encouraging continual development.

Motivate different personalities.

Develop systems and norms for *healthy and frequent feedback*.

Foster continuous development.

Build *dashboards* for displaying individual and organization progress.

Increase manager focus and efficiency.

1

People leaders embrace development.

When managers are people leaders, they recognize that the opportunity for improvement is limitless—both for themselves and others.

They actively seek growth opportunities and take time to reflect on their strengths and areas of development. They attend workshops, take assessments, meet with mentors, and seek feedback from others. By developing who they are as people, they better understand how they show up at work to lead their team.

They also embrace the continuous development of others. They strive to know the people on their team as individuals: What makes them tick? What are they currently seeking in their career? What areas can they develop to reach their full potential? What role can I, as the manager, play in their development?

The best managers encourage a growth mindset in their team. Not only do they model a growth mindset, but they recognize and reward employees who are continually finding opportunities to develop themselves and others.

Consider: Managers are busy, which means keeping all this stuff in mind can be overwhelming. Time-based communication and nudges can drive engagement and provide reminders to prioritize development. Systems for badging, social community, and certifications are also powerful for sustaining continual growth and development (and can add some friendly competition). **Do we have systems or metrics in place that are driving employee development?**

2

People leaders create meaning.

Simply put, everybody has to know why they matter. It's what motivates many of us to get involved and participate in what we're being asked to do. When we know our hard work is valued, we work harder.

Managers are crucial for communicating how their employees fit into the bigger picture. It's important for any team to understand its value and collective role in driving desired business results. Effective people leaders articulate the value their team brings to the organization. They also inspire team members to stay in the game when the going gets tough.

It's especially critical for managers to create meaning during times of change. Managers are on the receiving end of a lot of input for change—senior leadership, the market, their team, the customer. How they receive and communicate that information to their team has a huge impact on employees' ability to succeed and thrive in the new normal at work.

Consider: Managers don't exist in a vacuum—their messages and actions are viewed within the context of the organization's broader story. We often ask managers to connect the dots from the work their team is doing to the company's mission, vision, and values. **Are we asking them to say one thing and do another? Is the organization articulating and modeling the same values we ask them to champion? Are we equipping them with the knowledge they need to be this catalyst for the business?**

3

People leaders diffuse drama.

Have you ever seen a manager put pressure or strain on a situation? Maybe they stoke fires through their communication. Rather than seeking to understand and improve, they come off as accusatory and blaming. It isn't very productive and can even cause drama.

To diffuse tension and stress, managers must reframe the difficult situation as a challenge that can be overcome. People leaders engage others in meaningful conversations and interactions in three important ways:

- Asking the right questions
- Actively listening to others
- Respectfully challenging ideas to draw out better thinking

Facilitating quality conversations not only involves managers' communication skills. They also need to understand business financials in order to make good decisions. With the right “soft” and “hard” skills in place, managers can transform stressful situations into development opportunities for themselves and their team.

Consider: Some managers may struggle to diffuse drama through meaningful conversations. And changing mindsets and behavior is hard work—being handed a checklist of policies to memorize won't adequately equip managers to have better conversations. **How might you provide managers with a few guiding principles or behaviors to guide their day-to-day conversations and interactions?**

BRAINSTORM YOUR VISION FOR MANAGERS

**To get where you want to go, you have to know where you're starting from.
Grab a writing device (and your favorite beverage) to get started.**

FIRST, LET'S REFLECT.

Rate how consistently the following actions show up at your organization (1 being almost never and 5 being almost always).

My managers seek growth opportunities for themselves.

1 2 3 4 5

My managers articulate their team's value.

1 2 3 4 5

My managers actively develop their employees.

1 2 3 4 5

My managers diffuse drama through daily interactions.

1 2 3 4 5

Ask yourself...

If you circled 1 or 2 for any of these, what are some barriers getting in the way?

If you circled 4 or 5, what are some contributing factors?
How might this success be replicated to other areas?

NOW, LET'S IDEATE.

How might I make space for managers to embrace development for themselves and their teams?

How might I help managers create meaning for their teams?

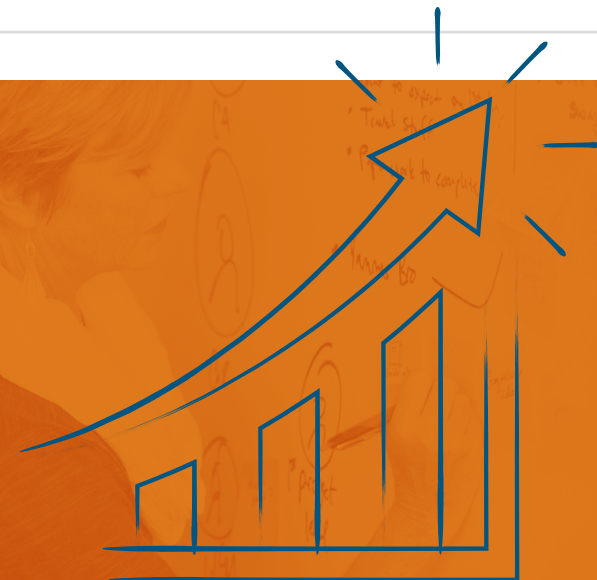
How might I model productive conversations and interactions?

How might I demonstrate my support for managers developing as people leaders?

Measuring the impact of people leadership

Your managers are never done growing as people leaders—which means leadership development efforts should never be stagnant. It's critical to measure manager success at your organization and use those metrics to drive continual improvement. Here are some metrics to consider:

- Self-assessments
- Qualitative and quantitative feedback from peers and mentors
- Pre- and post-training surveys
- Personalized dashboards for individual performance over time
- Leaderboards for group progress and competition
- Individual development plans



EMPOWERING MANAGERS TO LEAD PEOPLE BETTER

We all have to own our role in manager success. People leadership requires managers to embrace development, create meaning, and diffuse drama. But they need help getting there—organizations must consider how they're equipping managers to develop and grow as people leaders.

Creating strong leadership development is hard work, but we believe it's work well worth doing. Everybody at your organization will benefit when your managers can develop into people leaders who motivate, engage, and lead employees at work.

When managers are able to hit that sweet spot of leading people AND driving business:

- Frontline employees are empowered, engaged, and motivated.
- Relationships with customers are positive and profitable.
- Teams are aligned and communicating.
- Work processes are efficient and produce desired results.
- Organizational values are modeled to internal and external customers.

This is what it looks like when you empower managers to lead people better.

Ready to transform leadership development?

You've probably already invested in leadership development, but let's face it: nothing has a shelf life of forever. How do you know it's time to transform your organization's leadership development? Here are a few signs:

- ✓ Ongoing digital transformation requires managers (and their teams) to navigate new processes and systems
- ✓ Recent company growth or expansion makes it harder for managers to communicate with their teams
- ✓ Strategic culture transformation rewrites the rules for your managers and asks them to be ambassadors of the new culture
- ✓ An evolving brand promise overwhelms managers as they struggle to keep up and deliver

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

This whitepaper only scratches the surface of how we think about empowering managers to lead people. We really geek out on designing leadership development experiences, because we've seen firsthand the impact it has for driving organizational success.

If you're looking to partner with proven experts in manager and leadership development, we'd love to connect with you and hear about your ideas and needs. Let's talk!

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Jeremy Goebel is a Principal Consultant at TiER1 who's passionate about developing leaders, transforming cultures, and overall unlocking people's potential. He enjoys crafting learning experiences that both engage and inspire participants, using empathy to create relevant solutions that provoke meaningful and lasting change. (And he's sure to bring lots of fun along the way!)



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Jerry Hamburg is a Managing Director at TiER1. For 20+ years, Jerry has guided dozens of organizations across a broad range of industries and sizes in crafting results-driven performance solutions. He's passionate about helping people do their best work and reach their full potential.



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Kerri Chik is an Industrial Organizational Scientist at TiER1 who loves finding innovative, sound solutions to all types of cool problems and research questions. Kerri specializes in leadership and team development, performance measurement, data analysis, and instructional design. Other passions include yoga and behavioral statistics.



improving
ORGANIZATIONS
through the

PERFORMANCE
of **PEOPLE** *to* **BUILD**

A BETTER

World

WHO IS TIER1?

Founded in 2002, TiER1 Performance Solutions is an employee-owned consulting firm that activates strategies through people. As a Certified B Corporation®, we are passionate about consulting, designing, and building people-centered business solutions that deliver meaningful, long-term success. We believe that the potential for any organization lies within its people. By unleashing the best of both, we will change the world.

TiER1 is a nationally recognized company that has helped over 300 of the world's most successful corporate and governmental organizations. We are honored to have received a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Blue Ribbon Award, a PMI Small Business Award of Excellence, 21 Brandon Hall Excellence Awards, and 11 Best Places to Work awards (including twice on Inc.'s Best Workplaces list). We're also a 12-time member of the Inc. 5000 (2007-2018).

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