



Leadership Development That Makes A Difference

Kirsty Yates, TLC

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thelearningcurve

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The Learning Curve are experts in leadership development grounded in robust psychology with a proven track record of delivering a commercial and cultural return on investment. We transform cultures by equipping leaders to be outstanding so they create a climate for success and drive organisational performance. We do this through bespoke Leadership Development, Cultural Transformation, 1:1 and Team Coaching as well as 360-degree feedback implementations with mid-tier and large organisations. We are based in Kent and also work internationally.

TLC have won awards for Best Change Management Programme, Best Coaching Programme and Best Training Partner.

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Participants

We are very grateful to the 54 organisations that have contributed to this study. The following agreed to have their name cited as participating in the research:

Atkins Global

Association of British Ports

Blue Chip

BMW Group

Capco

E.ON SE

Equiniti

Essex County Council

Govia Thameslink Railway

HE Academy

Hitachi Rail

Leaders

LSL

McCarthy & Stone

NFU Mutual

One Housing

Origin Housing

The Priory Group

Saint Gobain

Secure Trust Bank

Leadership Development Survey 2017 Key Findings

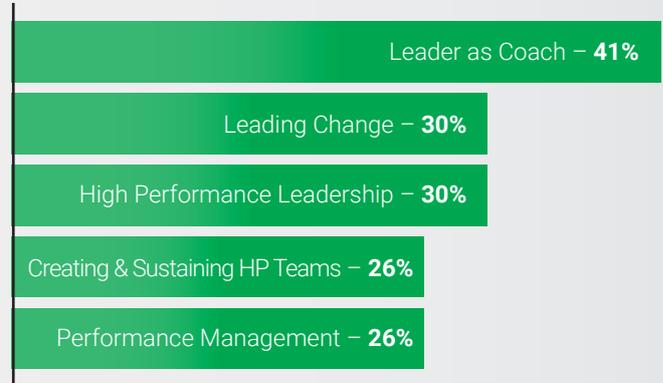
Leadership Development – biggest investment

[% rating in their top 5]



Leadership Development – most effective

[% rating in their top 5]



Most effective methodologies

[% rating in their top 5]



Leadership behaviours/attributes:



Most linked to business performance:

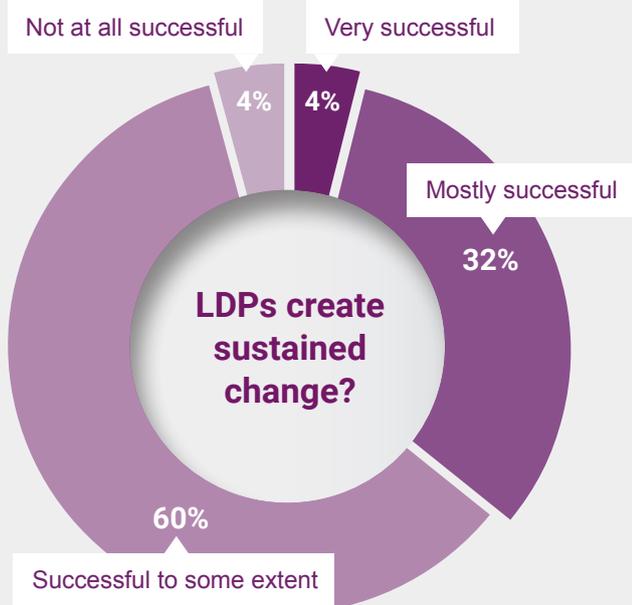
[% rating in their top 3]

- » Emotional self-awareness – 46%
- » Collaboration – 46%
- » Direction and focus – 42%
- » Vision – 38%
- » Developing self and others – 38%

Most need to develop:

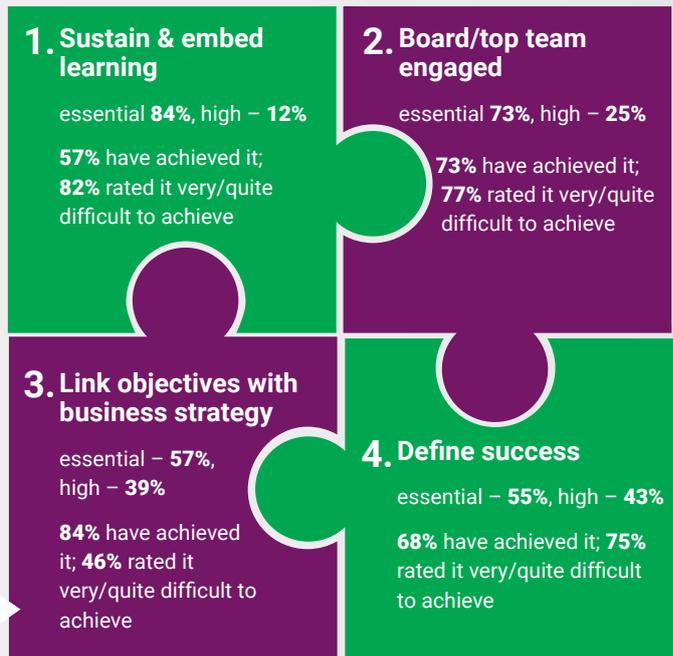
[% rating in their top 3]

- » Emotional self-awareness – 46%
- » Developing self and others – 38%
- » Inspiration – 38%
- » Collaboration – 35%
- » Direction and focus – 27%



Key enablers to successful leadership development programmes:

[Top 4 responses rated essential or of high importance]



Objectives and Methodology

Objectives

We live and work in a world where the nature of work, the workplace and the workforce are going through transformation at a relentless pace ... one where the only constant is change. This changing landscape makes it challenging for companies and leaders to respond and transform in a way that meets the development needs of a diverse and multi-generational workforce.

Whilst the purpose of leadership - to drive organisational performance – remains constant, the role of the leader in creating a climate for success is more challenging than it has ever been before. A leader can have the best vision and strategy but if their people don't want to be part of it, or lack the required skill, behaviours or mindset to deliver against it, then the leader's vision will not be realised.

TLC's Leadership Survey gives confidence as to where to invest by shedding light on what organisations are doing to support their leaders through their Leadership Development Programmes. In this report we identify:

- What's working well and what isn't in relation to leadership development

- What the pitfalls are so we can learn from each other
- Future trends for leadership development.

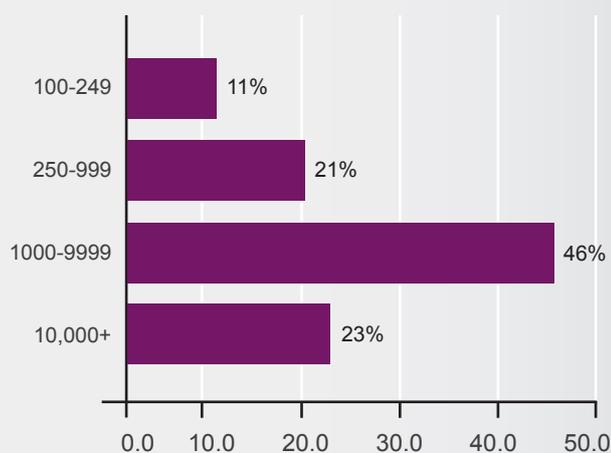
The report's findings are presented under six headings – (i) triggers, (ii) content and methodologies, (iii) leadership behaviours, (iv) enablers and barriers, (v) sustaining change and (vi) future trends. We conclude by offering our recommendations for how to get the best from your leadership development. The report's key findings are also summarised in an infographic.

Methodology

We invited L&D, HR, OD and Talent Directors and Managers from a range of organisations to participate in the research. 54 respondents participated in the survey, with 44 responding to every question. As Figure 1 shows, almost half the organisations (46%) completing the survey have between 1000 and 9999 employees, and another fifth (23%) have over 10,000 employees. Three quarters of organisations (73%) are private companies (Figure 2).

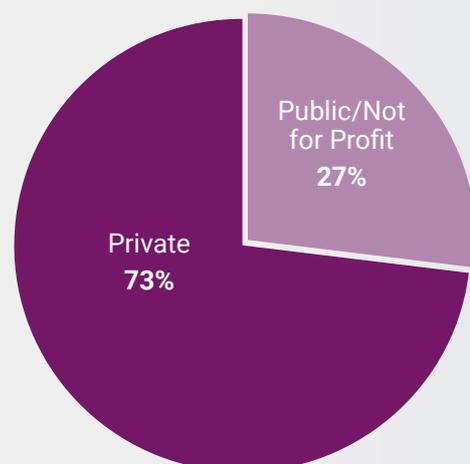
Only organisations that have invested in, or currently invest in, leadership development were eligible to participate in this research.

Figure 1 - Organisation size - Number of Employees



n = 44

Figure 2: Public/Private Sector breakdown

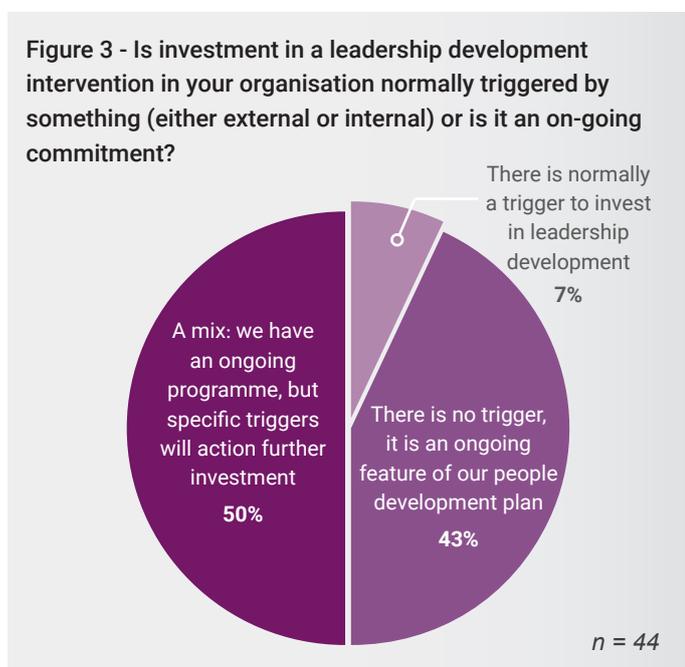


n = 44

Research Findings

i. What triggers investment?

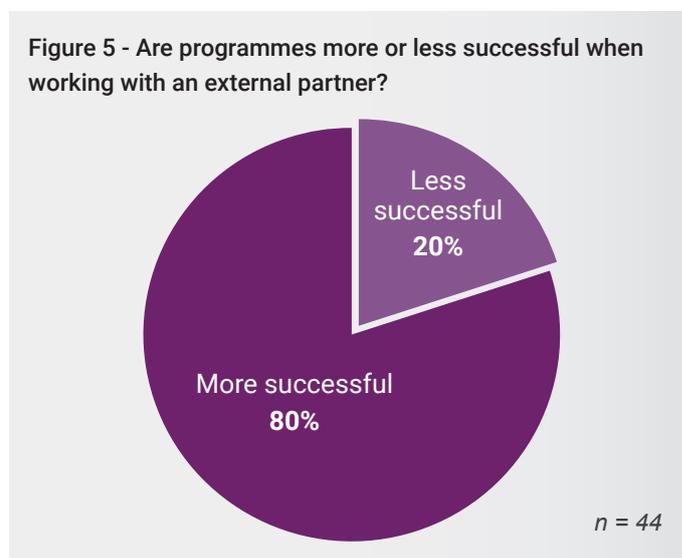
We start by looking at what prompts investment in leadership development. As Figure 3 shows, 50% of companies surveyed said that their investment in leadership development is both part of an ongoing commitment but could also be triggered by something specific - whether internal or external - requiring further action. For 43% of organisations leadership development is an ongoing feature of its people development plan – there are no triggers - whilst for 7% the opposite is the case – i.e. investment in leadership development is only triggered by something specific.



Organisations report a range of triggers which prompt investment in leadership development. Most frequently, it is due to organisational changes, whether a restructure, a change in direction for the business or other internal or external factors influencing the changes. Additional triggers include new leaders joining or moving roles, performance issues identified and engagement survey results.

We also asked organisations what percentage of their leadership development is delivered through external versus internal suppliers. Most organisations partner with one or more external partners for their leadership development rather than use internal partners (Figure 4), although 11% do not use

any external suppliers. Almost 6 in 10 (59%) use externals for at least half of their leadership development. 80% believe leadership development programmes are more successful when they have worked with an external partner (Figure 5).



ii. What content and approaches work best?

We asked respondents which types of programme content organisations have invested the most resource in – in terms of both time and money. As Figure 6 overleaf shows, Performance Management came out on top, with 57% of respondents identifying this as one of their five biggest investments of resource, followed by Creating and Sustaining

High Performing Teams (50%).

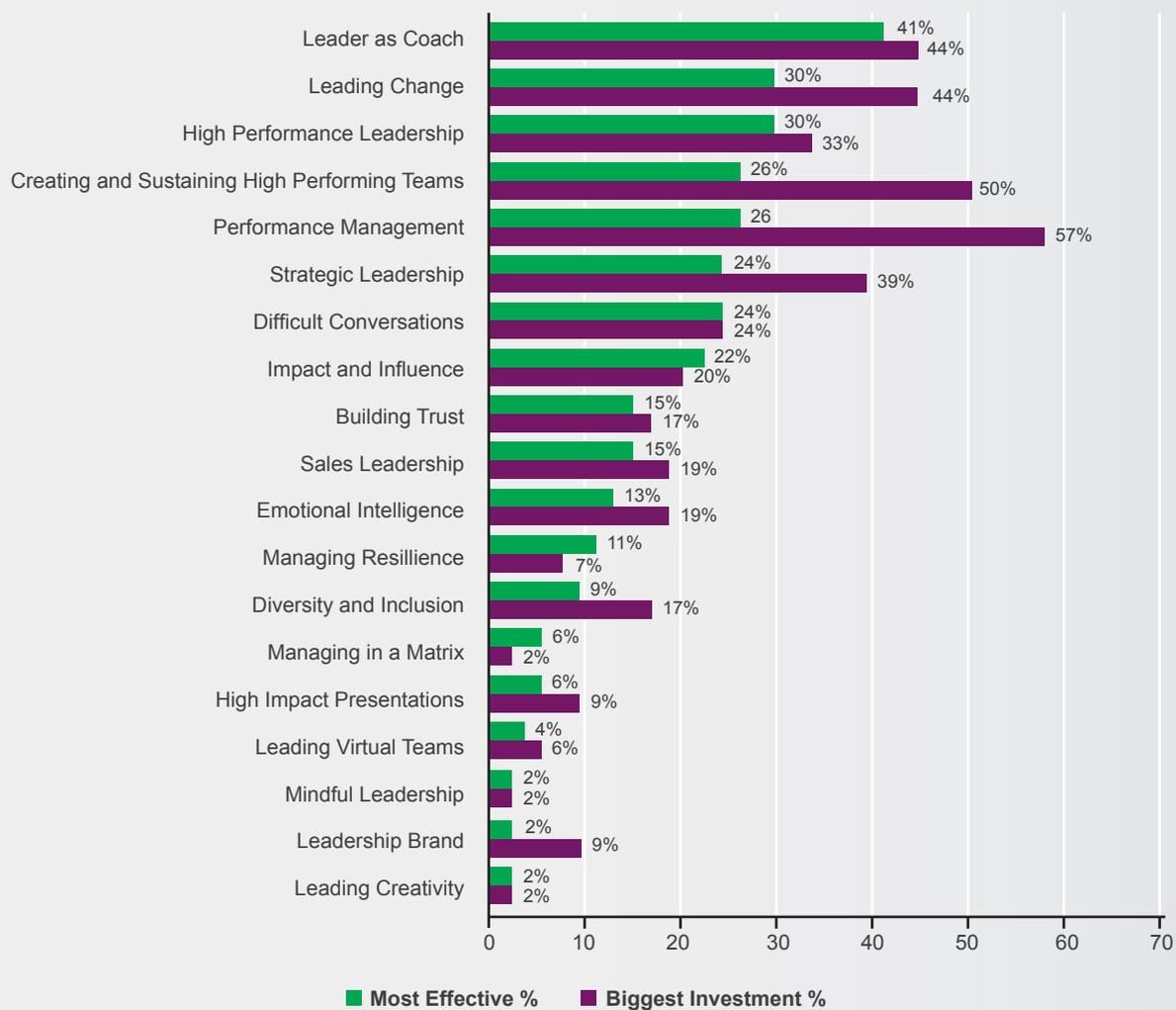
Interestingly, looking at the most effective programmes, Leader as Coach comes highest, with more than 4 in 10 organisations rating it in their top 5 most effective programmes, followed by Leading Change and High Performance Leadership (almost one third of respondents in both cases.)

The results highlight a mismatch between some of the programmes organisations are making their biggest investments in and their most effective programmes, particularly Performance Management (31% difference), Creating and Sustaining High Performing Teams (24% difference) and, to a lesser extent, Strategic Leadership (15%) and Leading Change

(14%). A few organisations indicated this was because it is too early to see the benefits of their investments, or that the impact is not as clear for some content.

As well as programme content, participants were asked to highlight their most effective leadership development learning methodologies. The results are detailed in Figure 7. Coaching was identified as the most effective – 80% rated it in their top 5, followed by Classroom Learning (75%) and 360-Degree Feedback (51%). There is much evidence on the positive impact of coaching when developing leaders – for example Jones, R.J., Woods, S.A, & Guillaume, Y.R.F.¹, Fielden, Dr S.², and CIPD³ as well as the most recent Ridler Report to which TLC contributed⁴ and the data here clearly supports this.

Figure 6 - Thinking about the focus of leadership development, what subject matter have you invested the most resource in (time and money)? Irrespective of your investment choices, what has been the most effective in terms of positive impact on the organisation? (Top 5 in each category)



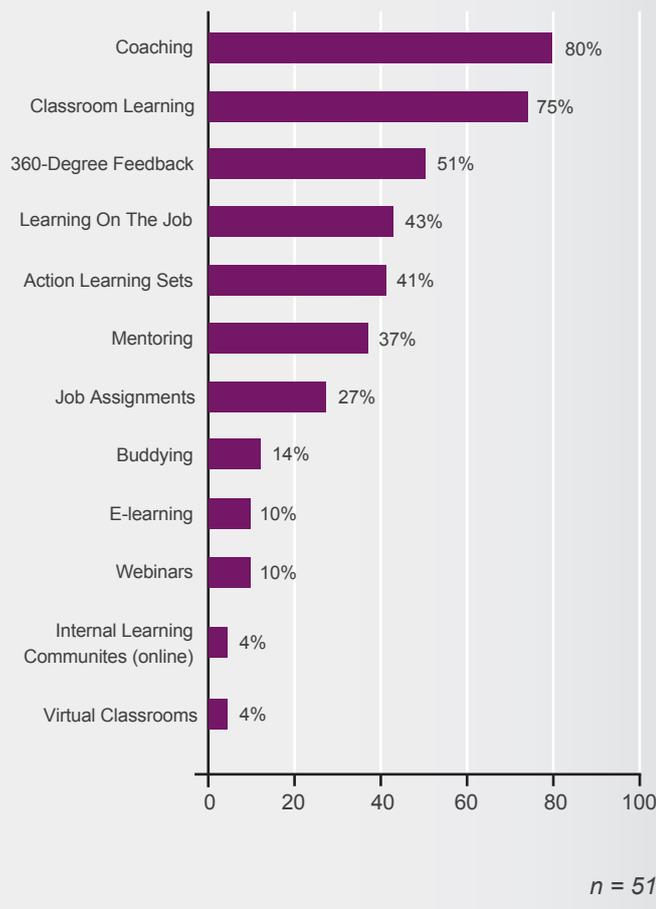
¹ Jones, R.J., Woods, S.A, & Guillaume, Y.R.F. (2015) - *The effectiveness of workplace coaching: A meta-analysis of learning and performance outcomes from coaching*, Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology

² Fielden, Dr. S (2005) – *Literature Review: coaching effectiveness – a summary*, NHS Modernisation Agency Leadership Centre

³ *Learning and Development 2015 Annual Survey Report*, CIPD

⁴ Mann, C. (2016) – *The 6th Ridler Report*, Ridler & Co.

Figure 7 - What methodologies for leadership development have had the most positive impact? (Top 5)



Also of note is the fact that on line methods were identified by far fewer respondents – only one in ten respondents rated E-learning and/or Webinars in their top 5, whilst other approaches such as online Internal Learning Communities, Virtual Classrooms, internet research⁵ and external learning communities such as LinkedIn scored even lower (the last two had no responses in fact.) It seems that digital approaches have yet to make a real, positive, impact when it comes to leadership development, a sentiment echoed by CMI’s ‘Learning to Lead: The Digital Potential’ report.⁶

iii. What leadership behaviours should be the main focus?

We asked participants to indicate the leadership behaviours and attributes⁷ they believe are most linked with business performance and then, separately, those they feel leaders most need to develop.

As Figure 8 shows, Emotional Self-Awareness and Collaboration are seen as the most important attributes linked to business performance – almost 1 in 2 respondents rated one or both in their top 3. Direction & Focus is next (identified by 42% of organisations), followed by Vision (38%), and Developing Self & Others (38%).

Whilst Emotional Self-Awareness is most linked to business performance according to our respondents, it is also the behaviour leaders most need to develop, with 46% rating it in their top 3. Developing Self & Others is second (38% of those surveyed) along with Inspiration (38%).

The findings show that priority behaviours for development are Emotional Self-Awareness, Developing Self & Others, Collaboration and Direction & Focus.

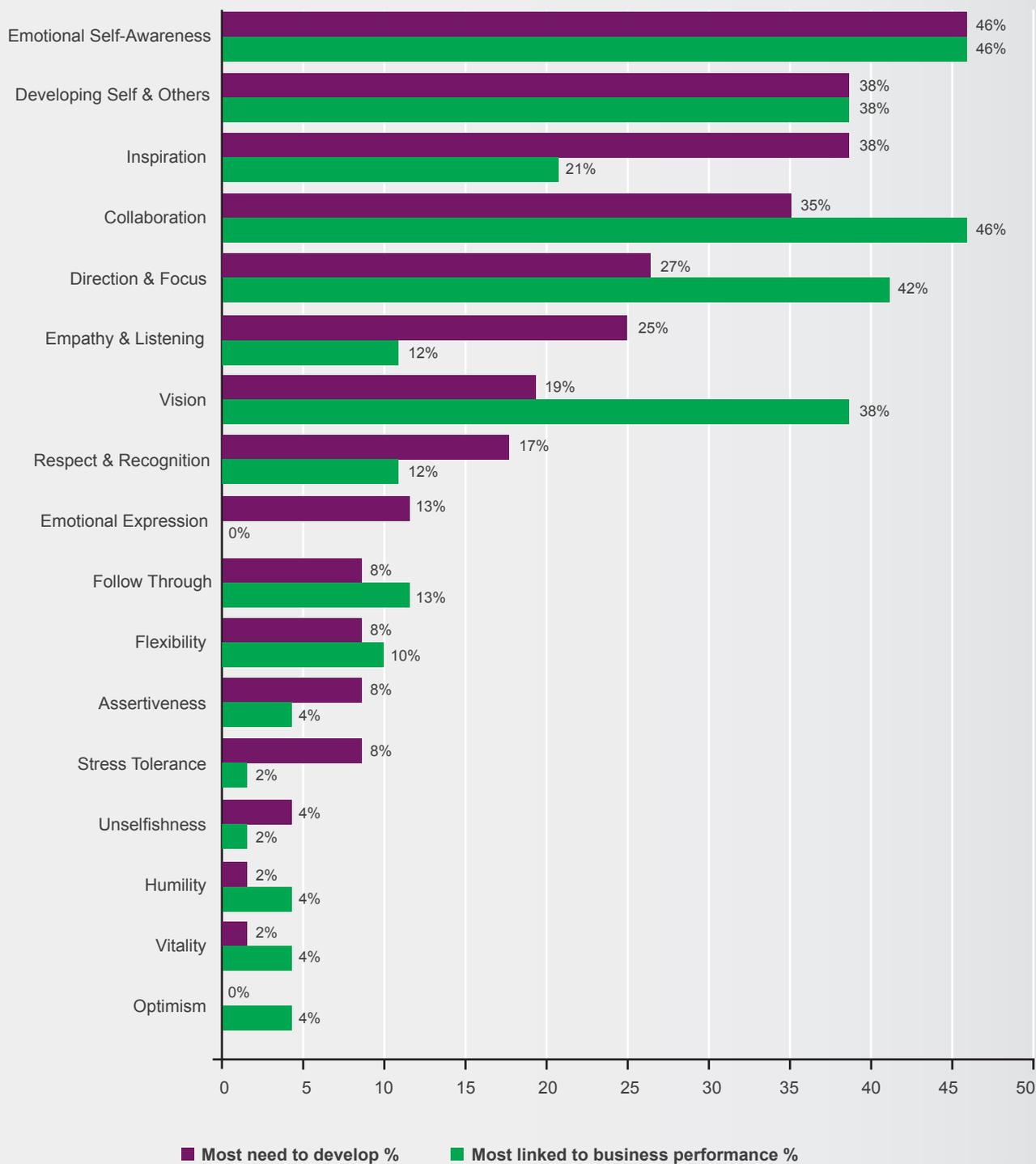
Another behaviour identified by respondents themselves is the need to avoid resorting to ‘command and control’ behaviours in times of stress. *“The minute people are put under pressure in a stressful or difficult situation they almost forget all their development and revert to type,”* said one respondent. Other behaviours highlighted include authenticity, leading ‘in the moment’, empowering leaders to make decisions and take risks, and helping leaders to ‘share the load’ given the complex environments they’re working in.

⁵ Internet research included YouTube videos, reading articles/white papers or viewing PowerPoint presentations

⁶ Scott-Jackson, W., Owens, S., Saldana, M., Charles, L., Green, M., Woodman, P., and Plas, L. (2015) - *Learning to Lead: The Digital Potential*, CMI and Oxford Strategic Consulting

⁷ The list was adapted from the 33 elements in the Bain Inspirational Leadership System (www.bainleadership.com)

Figure 8 - What are the leadership behaviours/attributes most linked with business performance and which ones do your leaders most need to develop today? (Top 3)



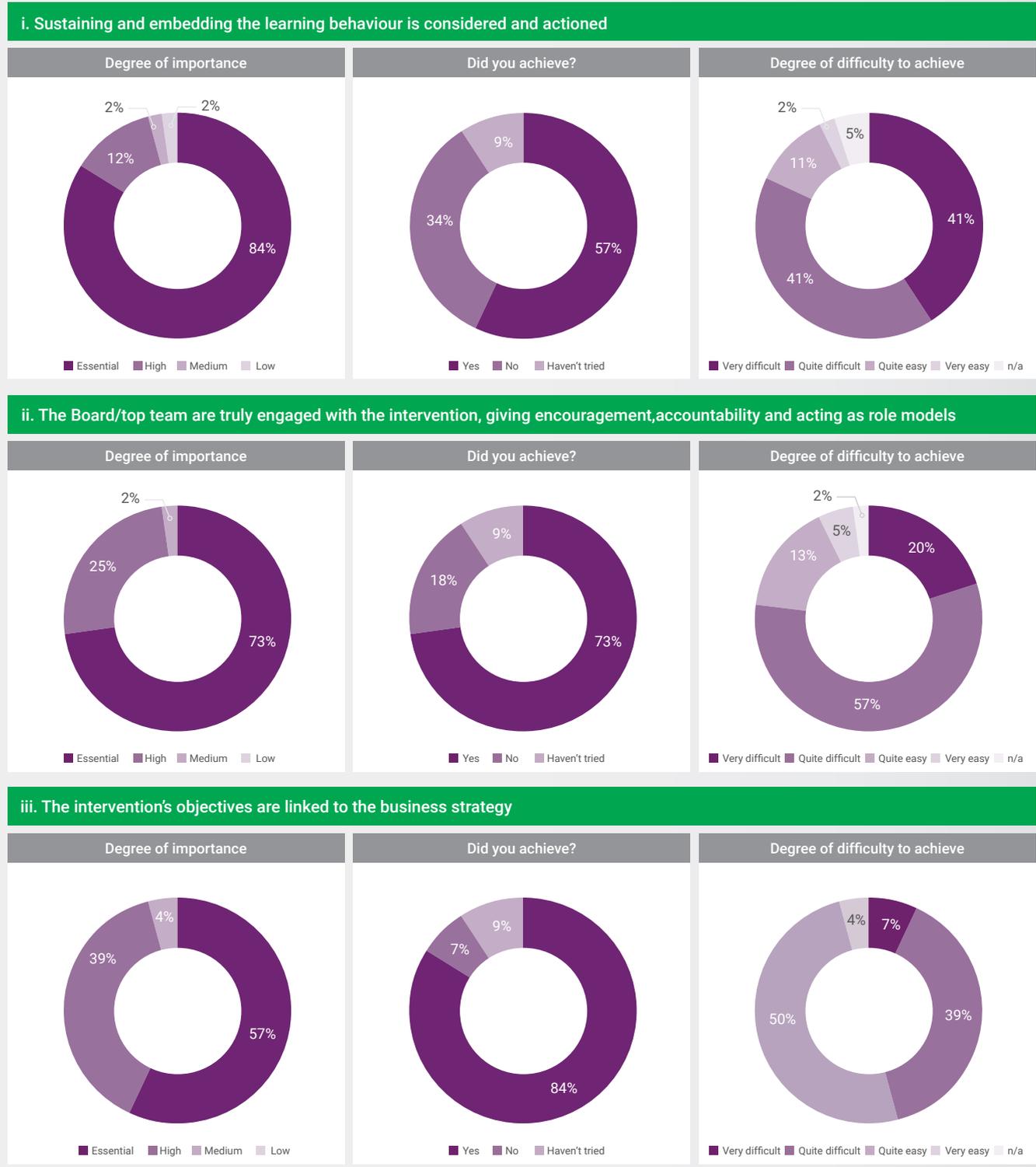
n = 52

iv. What are the biggest enablers and barriers?

In order to test our hypotheses as to what needs to happen for leadership development programmes to be successful,

respondents were asked to consider a number of statements, rating their importance, whether they'd achieved them and if they had, their degree of difficulty to achieve. The results are detailed in Figure 9.

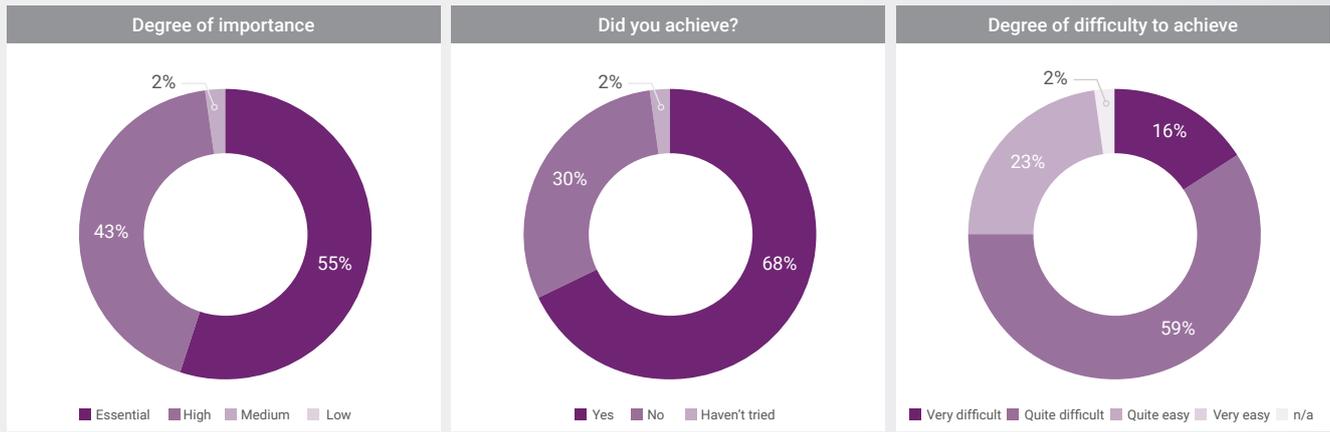
Figure 9 - How would you prioritise the importance of the following to the success of a leadership development programme? Have you achieved any of them? How difficult was this?



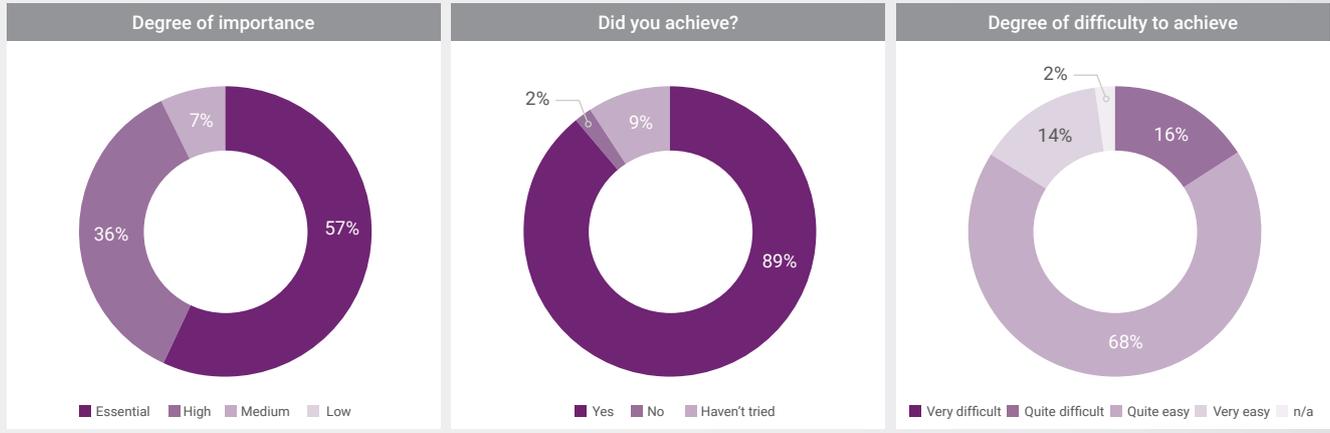
n = 44

Figure 9 contd.

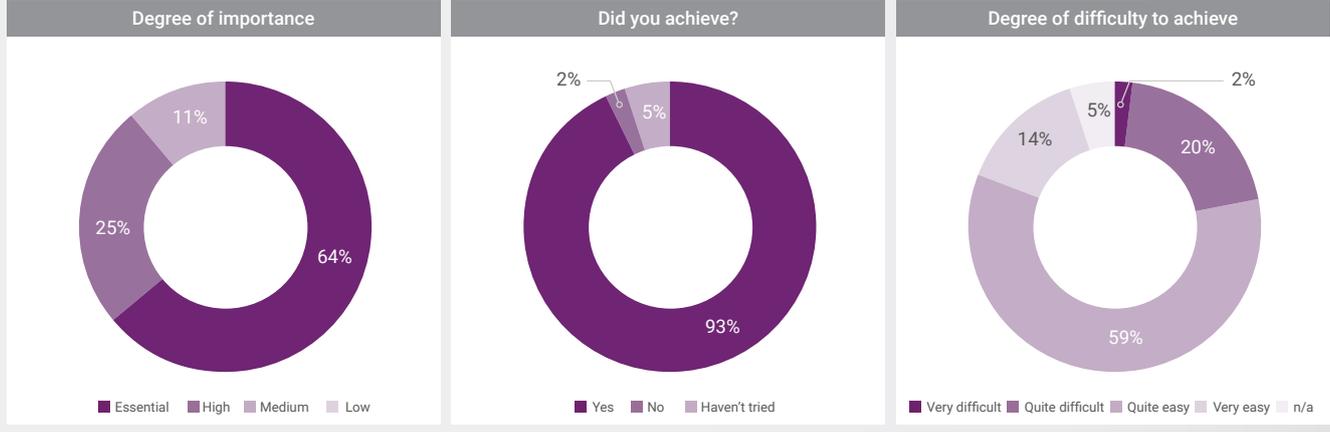
iv. The organisation clearly defines what success looks like for the intervention



v. Content is customised for the organisation



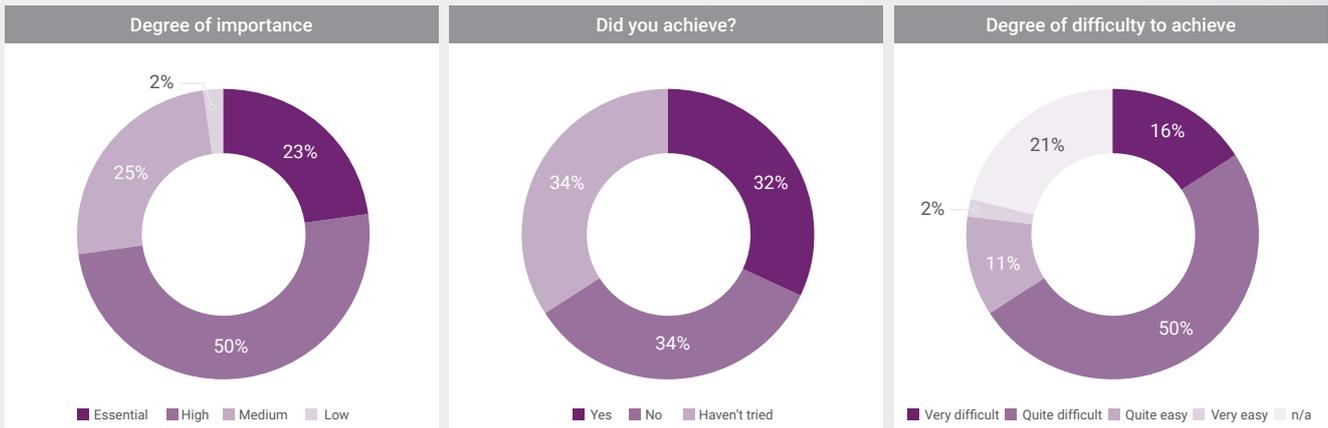
vi. The classroom experience allows time for practising new behaviours



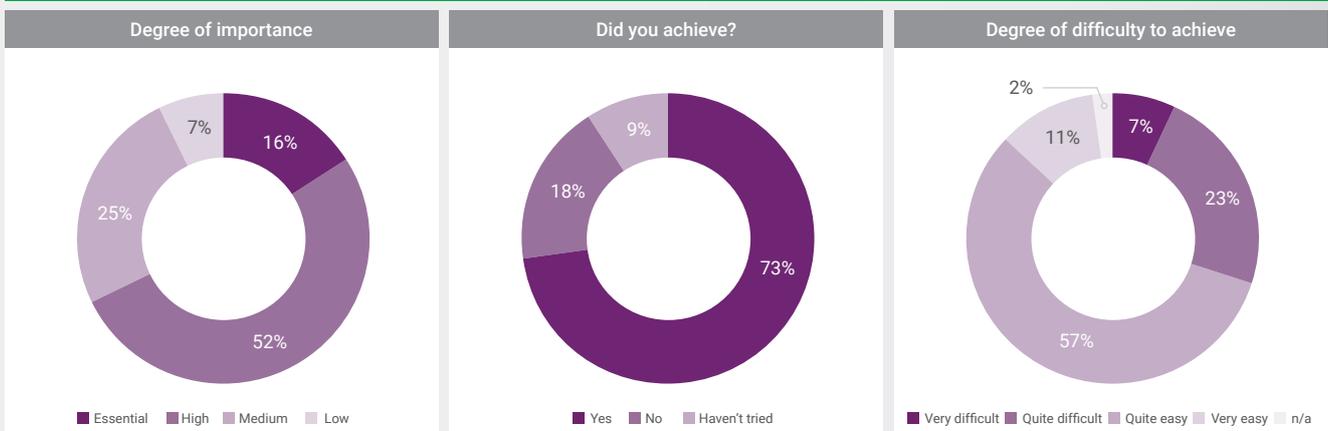
n = 44

Figure 9 contd.

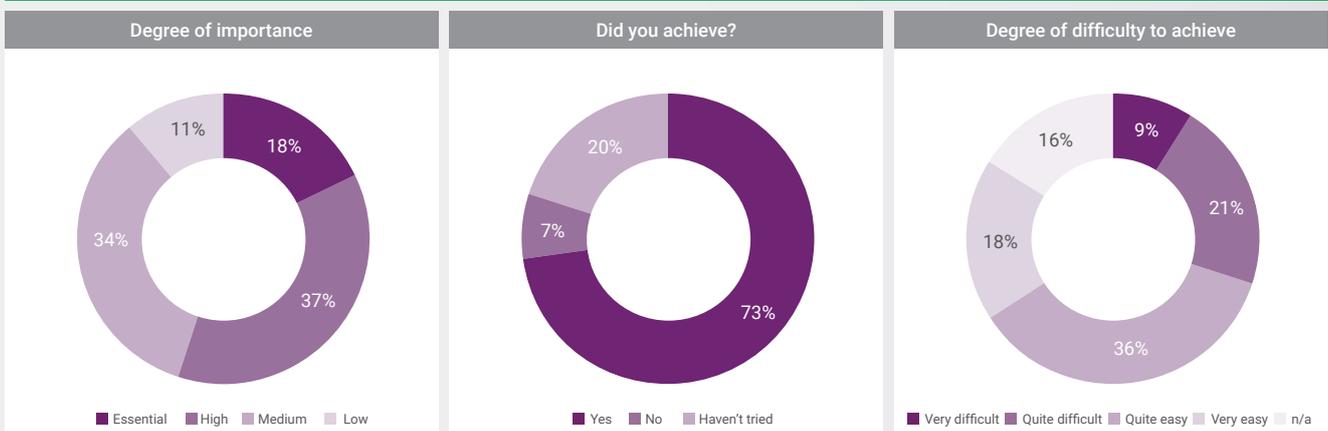
vii. The organisation's readiness for change is assessed and accounted for prior to the intervention



viii. The learning preferences of participants are taken into account



ix. 360-degree feedback is used to raise awareness as part of the leadership programme



n = 44

Figure 9 contd.



The need to sustain and embed learning behaviour is paramount, with 84% of organisations rating it as essential to the success of a leadership development programme and another 12% giving it a high priority.

Similarly, the importance of having the Board/top team truly engaged with the intervention, giving encouragement, accountability and acting as role models is huge, with almost 3 in 4 organisations rating it as essential and another quarter giving it a high priority.

“Our leaders need to role model and lead by example. We need a critical mass of people to model new behaviours and practise new language e.g. innovative thinking, for this change to become embedded into the business.” [Private sector]

Clearly defining what success looks like for the intervention, linking leadership development objectives to the business strategy and customising content to the organisation are also key priorities. Calculating ROI and facilitators having a background grounded in human psychology are not as essential.

Whilst the importance of having the Board/top team truly engaged with the intervention is very important, more than three quarters (77%) feel it is very or quite difficult to achieve. Clearly, getting this very senior group of leaders to really engage with leadership development programmes, giving encouragement, accountability and acting as role models is challenging for many, though its degree of importance firmly suggests that the effort is worth it.

Calculating the ROI is seen as challenging for just as many respondents as getting top team engagement (also 77% very/quite difficult), though fewer rate it as important. It is unsurprising therefore that when asked whether they calculate a return on investment for their leadership development programmes, more than 6 in 10 (61%) do not. In fact, only 5% calculate a return on investment for all of their leadership development programmes, with another third calculating ROI for some programmes. We found that organisations are more focused on ROE - Return on Expectation – measured in a range of ways including surveys, focus groups, performance reviews and 360 degree feedback.

Other actions respondents find particularly difficult include defining what success looks like (75% very/quite difficult) and assessing the organisation's readiness for change (66%).

Budget constraints and leaders having sufficient time to commit to, implement and follow up the development were also identified as barriers to leadership development being successful.

Having said all this, it is sustaining and embedding learning behaviour that is considered the most challenging to achieve, according to respondents – 82% rated it very or quite difficult to achieve. We discuss this in more detail next.

v. Do leadership development programmes create sustainable change?

Given one of the key objectives of leadership development programmes is to create long term behavioural change, we asked participants to rate how successful they are at creating sustained change. As the results show in Figure 10, only 4% of organisations consider leadership development programmes to be very successful at creating sustained behavioural change.

One third (32%) consider them mostly successful. The majority (60%) see leadership development programmes only successful at creating sustained change to some extent.

A number of reasons are given as to why this might be the case. For many, it is a question of being able to apply the learning in the workplace, whether it's a case of its relevancy or capacity issues:



“Leadership development programmes can impact a sustainable level of change if the learning gained is integrated in the ways people operate when they are back in their roles.” [Private sector]

“Increasing business demands mean that our leaders seem to return to a BAU approach. They need time to reflect and adopt – if not they are thrown back into a huge workload and revert to type.” [Private sector]

“Our middle manager programme hasn’t delivered the results we’d aimed for. This appears to be down to managers unable to remove themselves from the day to day aspects of their job and lead in a more strategic manner.” [Private sector]

“If the results aren’t immediately practical, remembered or used, the programmes don’t have perceived value from senior stakeholders, or myself as an L&D manager.” [Private sector]

The changing business environment plays a part too:

“Our focus shifts so frequently, learning can be lost and old behaviours re-emerge in busy times or in times of rapidly shifting goals.” [Private sector]

“Change is not sustained for significant periods of time, impacted by changing environments and an inability of leaders to recognise on-going change needed.” [Private sector]

Participants shared other suggestions for success, for example:

- Having a clear sponsor who supports and role models the desired behaviours
- Making leadership development more tailored and individualised, thus avoiding too much theory in a classroom environment
- Grounding it in the participant’s experience, with less about tell, more about exploration, creating curiosity and working with ambiguity
- Ensuring participants know why they are doing the development (and not just attending because they have been told to)
- Making sure the development addresses a business need
- Ensuring development is a conversation about future needs, rather than past experiences and problems
- Making sure the appropriate communications and warm up activity take place
- Ensuring participants recognise the value of the intervention so they do not drop out because they are too busy
- Realising the learnings from one programme before moving on to another programme.

vi. What are the future trends?

Finally, we asked for respondents’ thoughts on key future trends for impactful leadership development. Table 1 groups the responses by themes mentioned more than once. The responses were very diverse indeed, the most common being more coaching, followed by a greater emphasis on experiential activities, integrating leadership development into real work processes, and more focus on collaboration and managing change. Leadership development settings were mentioned several times, moving away from the classroom to more accessible, digital, formats.

	No. of respondents
Coaching	7
Experiential activities	6
Digital/social media/Apps	5
Collective rather than individual leadership	5
Ability to manage change	3
EQ	2
Authentic leadership	2
ROI	2
Driving performance with reduced headcount	2
Moving out of the classroom	2
Resilience in a changing environment	2
More personalisation	2
Diversity and Inclusion	2
Mixed learning approach	2

Conclusions

Our research sheds light on what's working well and what isn't in relation to leadership development, the pitfalls and future trends. In terms of types of programmes, Leader as Coach, Leading Change and High Performance Leadership are most effective, though not the largest investments, indicating a mismatch between the kinds of programmes organisations are making their biggest investments in and their most effective programmes.

Emotional Self-Awareness, Collaboration and Direction & Focus are the leadership behaviours most linked to strong business performance whilst Emotional Self-Awareness, Developing Self & Others, Collaboration and Direction & Focus are priority leadership behaviours for development.

Coaching has the greatest impact when it comes to leadership development methodologies, followed by Classroom Learning and 360-Degree Feedback. Digital approaches have yet to make a real, positive, impact when it comes to leadership development with the organisations involved in this research.

The need to sustain and embed learning behaviour is paramount to successful leadership development; so too is having the Board/top team truly engaged with the intervention, giving encouragement, accountability and acting as role models. However, neither is easy to achieve in practice. Clearly defining what success looks like for the intervention, linking leadership development objectives to the business strategy and customising content to the organisation are also key priorities.

Learning has not just gone through an evolution but a revolution. We have moved from a time where a workshop was the default learning methodology to learning that now includes being more agile and accessible through many different mediums. Digital technology means people can work on their professional development anytime, anyplace and anywhere. With the advent of online communities people are able to share solutions, their expertise and practices, making learning more boundary less and flexible. Perhaps this is why when it comes to future trends for impactful leadership development coupled with the changing landscape of work and relentless change, there was little common ground.

Recommendations

In light of these findings we offer the following key recommendations:

1. Get the Board to step up and sponsor any Leadership Development Programme – it is critical to its success. This means sponsorship and engagement that goes beyond lip service towards encouragement, accountability and role modelling, even if it means having courageous and tough conversations to make this happen. Equally important is a lead sponsor whose role is to encourage, challenge and hold the Board to account on a regular basis. Involve this top team in the development of the programme as well as participating in the pilot so they lead the way.
2. Ensure the development intervention's objectives have a direct line of sight to the business strategy; clearly define what success looks like and how this will be evaluated.
3. Make sure the organisation's structures, systems and processes support the required behavioural change so the development programme is not done in isolation. If the desired change is not happening, investigate what is getting in the way at an organisational level that may be stopping it from happening at an individual level.
4. Design a leadership development intervention that takes into account cultural readiness, capacity, capability and commitment so the intervention provides healthy stretch and tension for change - necessary if you want to shift sustained behaviours and mindsets.
5. Design programme content that is relevant, contextualised and experiential where appropriate, based on an understanding of human and organisational behaviour if you want to get sustained changes in behaviours and mindsets. Similarly, understanding human and organisational behaviour is essential to overcome systemic issues that often get in the way of learning being sustained and embedded.
6. Develop conscious leadership, where leaders take into account the impact of their behaviours on others and have conversations that are inclusive, transparent, accountable, curious and empathetic thereby creating the climate for success that drives organisational performance. Developing emotional self-awareness, developing self and others, collaboration and direction and focus are critical to driving (and particularly sustaining) behavioural change.
7. Focus on more collective/collaborative leadership too, moving away from the individual as star.
8. With the ever increasing pressure on L&D budgets it is even more important to measure the return on investment of learning and development programmes so that a business case can be made to the Board and Exec to secure future investment.
9. Use qualified and experienced practitioners. The credibility, quality and capability of the facilitator and coach is paramount so people are engaged from the outset, focusing on the individual journey as well as gathering organisational insights that add value to the organisation. This is important for internal and external practitioners.
10. Continue to bring leaders together in a classroom setting to network and learn from one another but ensure that the learnings are made through behavioural models that are immediately brought to life through experiential real-plays that allow participants to practise the practical application of those models.
11. Involve your leaders in the kind of blended learning approach that is right for your organisation: one that is in alignment with what the business needs as well as individuals' learning styles and lifestyles. Provide a continuous stream of learning that is a mixture of mandatory and free choice and if possible create learning forums where collaborative learning can take place and can be shared with a wider audience. The role of 'mobile' is key. While staff don't collaborate much on a LMS, they do use Apps such as Facebook and LinkedIn. Engage your leaders in the development of any digital social platform to get their buy-in.
12. Capitalise on the value of coaching by considering 1:1 coaching for your leadership development interventions. Get creative with suppliers as to how to make this affordable and scalable.
13. While this research did not set out to study the demands of different generations of learners, there is growing evidence that Baby Boomers and Generation X leaders differ from their younger Generation Y colleagues. Make sure the focus of leadership development is supportive of those in leadership roles now but also those likely to come into leadership roles in the future.

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info@thelearningcurve.co.uk | www.thelearningcurve.co.uk | +44 (0)845 313 3357

