

Building a high-performing leadership pipeline

Masterclass handout



Masterclass structure

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About the expert

Mira Magecha is a seasoned Chief People Officer with over 25 years of experience in coaching, consulting and community development. She's also the leader behind Play for Change and host of the 'A Class of Their Own' podcast.

As a former FTSE 100 and start-up people leader, Mira knows the difference that great leadership can make — as well as the transformative power of meaningful, performance-focused leadership programmes. In this Personio Masterclass, Mira shares how to develop a deeper and more impactful leadership bench at your organisation.



Understanding the leadership landscape

Poor leadership can have negative consequences:

Higher employee turnover

Employee disengagement

Lower productivity

Employee turnover costs UK businesses over £30,000 per employee on average, according to research by Oxford Economics and Unum.

Leadership has changed

Leadership as a concept has shifted from traditional command-and-control to a more human-centric approach, prioritising engagement and motivation.

Here's what that looks like:

Empower rather than supervise

Leaders should create a supportive environment that enhances job satisfaction, innovation and retention.

Accelerate innovation and growth

Successful leadership requires building trust and authenticity, coaching colleagues and supporting their development.

Foster a culture of belonging

Leaders need to manage interpersonal relationships empathetically and promote an inclusive workplace where everyone can contribute fully.

What it means to be a good leader

Being a leader isn't about taking a step-by-step approach, it's about learning how to get better and leading with authenticity.

Build trust

Great leaders get to know colleagues on an individual level, being curious about who they are while sharing their own story.

Be vulnerable

As Brené Brown says, vulnerable leadership requires bravery and being willing to play and experiment, even if that means getting it wrong.

Acknowledge limitations

Great leaders openly admit "I don't know". They understand their weaknesses, finding people who excel in different areas to form a cohesive team.

Foster diversity

Flexibility is crucial for sensitively and inclusively managing teams with diverse backgrounds, as is creating forums for open communication.

What great leadership looks like for your organisation

This is a two-way process: decide who you want to be as an organisation *and* what colleagues need from their leaders.

Start at the top with the board and C-suite

Organisations should have clear frameworks and principles in place, enabling leaders to follow processes, guidelines, and policies that align with your organisation's values.



Determine what your employees value most

Ensure employees have regular opportunities to share feedback with their managers. Collect and analyse that data, noting where it aligns with the principles instilled and exemplified by senior leadership.

Building this philosophy will help you create programmes to develop leaders for the future.

Find your leaders

When looking for these traits among your colleagues, keep a long-term perspective. You're not necessarily looking for today's great leaders, but for people who embody the traits you've identified — people who could grow into leadership.

Look for leaders of all ages

An age-agnostic leadership pipeline focuses on identifying and nurturing leadership potential at all stages of an employee's career.

To do this, assess leadership potential based on skills and behaviours rather than tenure or age.

Mitigate bias

Diverse leadership teams bring a variety of perspectives and experiences that drive innovation and better decision-making.

Create networks and programmes to support the career advancement of underrepresented groups.

Masterclass Tip: Your organisation's core values can help you spot and nurture leadership traits

For example, if your business has a core value of transparency, identify employees who communicate openly and clearly with their team. They could be your leaders of tomorrow!

Identify leadership gaps

By identifying these gaps in your organisation, you can prioritise areas where strong leadership is most critical for achieving business success.

Here are some data sources you might consider reviewing:

Employee surveys

Speak to colleagues across the business to gain insights into their experiences with leadership.

Performance reviews

Analyse qualitative feedback about leaders or managers to understand areas that could be strengthened.

Business outcomes

Look for trends in high turnover, low employee engagement or underperformance.

Exit interviews

Check for reasons employees are leaving, especially during spikes in turnover.

Onboarding leaders

Whether you are hiring a new leader, or helping an IC transition into leadership, onboarding is critical for their immediate and long-term success.

Here are four things to keep in mind:

1. Strong pre-boarding

Send a welcome package detailing company culture, leadership expectations and key resources. Schedule introductory meetings with team members.

2. Structured onboarding plan

Run orientation sessions covering policies and organisational goals. Tailor training to the responsibilities of the specific role. Arrange for new leaders to shadow experienced managers.

3. Regular check-ins

Schedule check-ins with the People team to provide feedback and support. Ensure new leaders can receive both top-down and upwards feedback while sharing their own experiences.

4. Team-building activities

Help new leaders build rapport with their team members. Facilitate networking opportunities with other leaders within the organisation to build connections. Make it fun and playful.

Training leaders

83% of businesses say it's important to develop leaders at all levels. But less than 5% of companies have implemented leadership development programmes that do this.

Here are the four key elements of a great leadership development programme:

1. Performance framework

Establish measurable goals for leaders that align with business objectives. Conduct performance reviews to assess progress, provide feedback, and adjust goals as needed.

2. 360-degree feedback

Implement a feedback process where leaders receive input from peers, reports and supervisors. Encourage a culture where feedback is regarded as fuel for your leaders.

3. Development plans

Match new leaders with experienced mentors. Invest in one-on-one and group coaching. Plan workshops on conflict resolution and other key leadership skills. Offer online courses.

4. Leadership community

Create a space where leaders can learn from each other's experiences, sharing their top tips, articles, book recommendations, and podcasts.

Case study 1: Leading a tricky team

Situation

A leader has a team of great individual contributors who don't operate well as one unit.

Our aims were to improve the impact of the team through a journey of openness, vulnerability, understanding, trust, and building collective power.

Actions

- Trust circle
- Play with real-life issues
- 1:1 coaching on self-awareness
- Team-building
- Creating collective understanding

Workshops

Results

- Understanding of strengths and weaknesses
- Agreed-upon values
- Improvements in communication, alignment and cohesiveness

Don't forget: The value of shared experiences across the team and leadership suite can have a game-changing effect on organisations.

Case study 2: Coming together after mergers

Situation

A global tech organisation that, through mergers and acquisitions, had different ways of working, leading and leadership principles.

This was the first time that their global leadership team was coming together. The aim of our work was to bring leaders together and break down the silos.

Actions

- Established values
- Games to 'forget' hierarchies
- Immersive theatre to help leaders play different roles
- Trust circle
- 1:1 coaching

Workshops

Results

- More alignment in business direction
- Fewer siloes
- Increased buy-in and trust of C-suite
- Increased employee engagement
- Aligned ways of working

Don't forget: Especially when you're trying to bridge a divide or bring teams together, think about how to create a 'safe container' for leaders to build trust.

Focus on the right data

By tracking relevant key performance indicators (KPIs), we can provide clear insights into the effectiveness of leadership.

Recommended KPIs to focus on:

Employee engagement

Conduct regular employee engagement surveys, including specific questions about leadership effectiveness.

Turnover rates

Track who's leaving your organisation, and why, to understand if poor management is an influence. If you witness a turnover spike in certain teams or cohorts, investigate further.

Promotion rates

Track the rate at which leaders are promoted from within, as a higher rate of internal promotion can indicate a successful leadership pipeline.

Overall team performance

To know if leaders are serving the business, Measure team performance using metrics like productivity, sales and project completion rates.

Leverage your top performers

Now you know how to identify your top-performing leaders, help them up-level your whole organisation.

Here are some things you can try:

Inspiration

Have your top-tier leaders act as role models. Organise talks and workshops where they can share their experiences, insights and best practices.

Knowledge-sharing

Create platforms such as internal blogs, webinars and discussion forums where leaders can exchange ideas and learn from each other.

Case studies

Use your top leaders' development journeys to develop resources to inspire and guide other leaders.

Continuous learning

Encourage leaders to seek out new development opportunities and stay updated on the latest leadership trends and practices.

Remember these things

Understand the cost of bad leadership

Poor leadership can lead to high turnover and disengagement, costing organisations significantly.

There's no blueprint

It's not about following a step-by-step approach. It's about authentically leading, growing and experimenting with who you are as a leader.

Leverage your top leaders

Organise talks and workshops where these people can share experiences and highlight best practices.



All your data, all together

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