

THE POWER OF INFLUENCE

In Leadership Development

The ability to motivate and inspire others to take action is the distinguishing factor between a leader and a manager. The best leaders are those who can successfully influence up, down and across the organization, impacting business results by driving behavior change.

Organizations must arm leaders with the skills they need to succeed. Leaders are not only better prepared to influence the behavior of followers when effective leadership development programs are in place, but followers are also more receptive to direction and guidance. The lack of effective leadership can cause a trickle-down effect of high turnover rates, diminished returns on investment and lackluster engagement scores. Training is imperative to build a high performing organization with a focus on great leadership.

TRAINING'S IMPACT

Leadership is any attempt to influence. In this context, we are all leaders. And we all have the ability to influence one another – from peers to partners to subordinates. Leadership training provides leaders with the tools to influence others, and to help them appropriately cultivate and exercise their power to influence and affect change. Training can help develop critical competencies to enhance interpersonal and communication skills.

Interestingly, organizations with effective leadership development not only offer training on influence more often than ineffective organizations, but these offerings are much more likely to occur on an ongoing basis, according to a recent research study, “Influence in Leadership Development: Bases of Power in Modern Organizations,” conducted by The Center for Leadership Studies and Training Industry, Inc. Similarly, half of organizations rated ineffective at leadership development do not offer any training on influencing behavior. (See Figure 1.)

Influencing behavior is not a one-time event, but a continuous process and investment that organizations should make in their employees. The ability to influence the behavior of others is a critical leadership skill that can enhance organizational performance and drive bottom-line results.

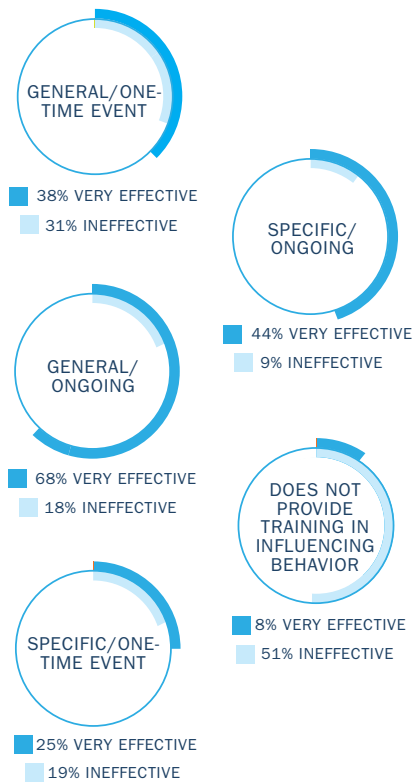
INFLUENCE TRAINING STRUCTURE

While influence training can benefit all functional areas across the organization, influence skills are most important to HR, sales, customer service and marketing departments. The level of interaction with customers, employees and vendors can attribute to the importance for effective communication skills.

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When looking at effectiveness ratings, the most effective delivery methods for delivering influence training are classroom-based instructor-led training, followed by coaching/mentoring, team building and experiential learning.

FIGURE 1. Providing Training on Influencing Behavior (by leadership training effectiveness)



It is not surprising that instructor-led training, coaching/mentoring, and team building were both the most frequently used and rated as most effective. However, other modalities such as shadowing were not commonly used (25%), but rated by 58 percent of respondents as an effective means to train leaders on influence. (See Figure 2.)

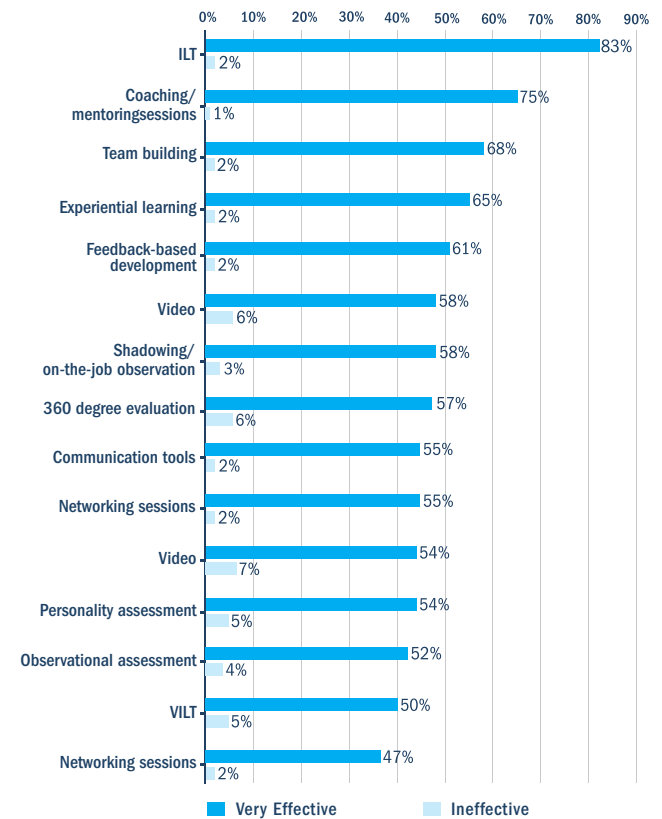
Using delivery methods that offer in-person, real-time moments to develop and hone soft skills, increases the likelihood that real behavior change will occur. Extending learning into the workflow reinforces the knowledge gained from formalized training programs and puts learning into action.

INFLUENCE ACROSS EMPLOYEE DEMOGRAPHICS

While there has been speculation that millennials have significantly different motivations in the workplace compared to older workers, the research suggests that influence is equally important to leading younger workers as their more experienced counterparts. Furthermore, there were relatively few respondents who indicated that influence was not important to managing across generations.

When leading employees separated by geographic and technological divides, influence training was found to be important to managing employees regardless of where they're located and where they come from, in addition to what age they are. Influence training has a place in all

FIGURE 2. Modality Effectiveness for Influence Training



functional areas across the organization, with the potential to affect true change.

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DRIVING BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Influence training can produce leaders who take a task-specific approach to effective communication and performance change through keen self-awareness and an understanding of the power dynamics associated with effective behavior change.

By incorporating influence training into leadership development programs, organizations are setting their leaders up for success – building a culture of trust and credibility, starting at the top.

For more information, read the full research report on "Influence in Leadership Development: Bases of Power in Modern Organizations."

