



# 3 KEYS TO DRIVING PERFORMANCE IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE



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# INTRODUCTION





Organizations are facing a myriad of challenges in today's business market—from low engagement and motivation to high turnover and increased competition. Effective leadership is needed to overcome these challenges; however, leaders cannot shoulder this work alone.

As organizational structures flatten and more companies shift toward team-based work models, employees at all levels will emerge as leaders. **Organizations must build a culture of performance** where everyone is held accountable for their role in the leadership process.

This environment can unlock creativity, collaboration and innovation across the business, allowing people to reach their full potential.

In this e-book, we'll examine three keys to successfully drive performance in today's world of work:

- 1. Performance leadership:** Developing leaders to motivate and engage employees
- 2. Performance ownership:** Empowering employees to take ownership of their own development
- 3. Performance culture:** Building an environment that unlocks employee potential

Together, these three keys can help to build a high-performing organization that embraces change, empowers employee growth and allows creativity and innovation to flourish.

# KEY #1: PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP

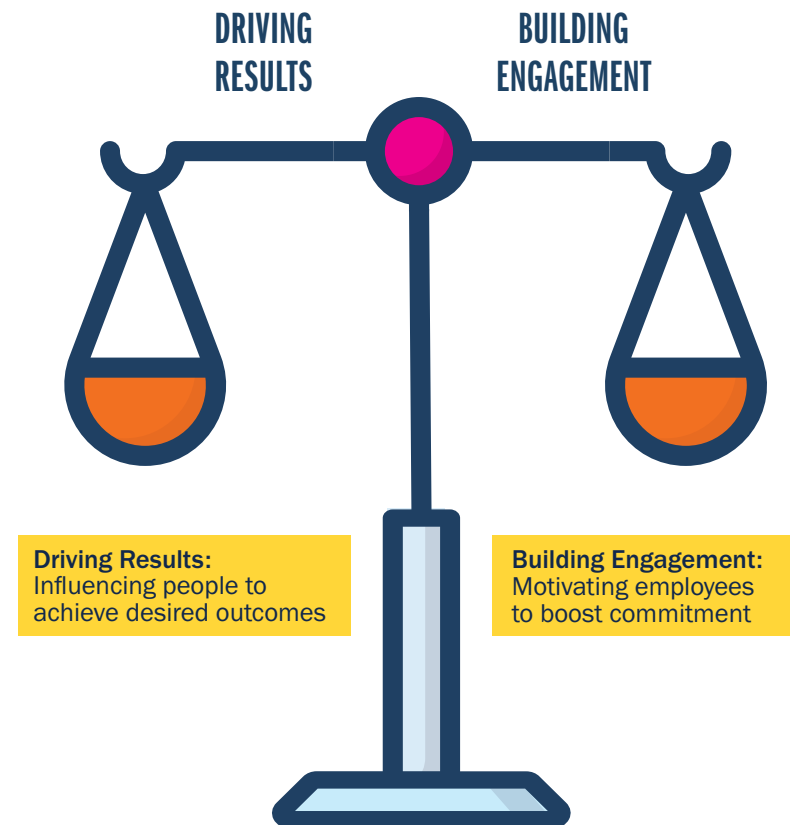


Leadership is **influence**—modern leaders must work to influence the right outcomes and behaviors on their teams and within the company. To enable high performance, organizations need to develop managers into performance leaders.

**Performance leadership** enables employees to perform at their best by setting clear goals, building motivation and confidence, providing feedback and coaching to achieve goals.

While the focus of performance management tends to fall on two critical areas—driving results and building engagement—the key to performance leadership is maintaining a balance between prioritizing productivity versus motivation.

For instance, an overfocus on engagement and ensuring employees are happy in their roles can lead to a lack of accountability and low success. However, putting too much emphasis on results with little to no concern for the organization's people or their mental health often leads to low engagement levels, which can result in poor productivity.



According to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace 2022 Report, employees who are not engaged or who are actively disengaged account for \$7.8 trillion in lost productivity, which is equivalent to 11% of global gross domestic product (GDP). Suffice it to say that organizations cannot afford to ignore engagement.

Finding a balance between success and engagement does not mean giving them equal attention all day, every day. There are times when it's necessary to emphasize deliverables, such as when a distribution center needs to get their shipments out before a big storm. Likewise, there are times when engagement takes priority over outcomes. Performance leadership emphasizes adaptability because it's important for leaders to match their leadership style to every situation by providing the necessary support and direction based on a person's current performance rather than making assumptions based on capability or potential.

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# KEY #2: PERFORMANCE OWNERSHIP





“ Organizations must empower and motivate their employees to take ownership of their development and outcomes.



Performance isn't solely the manager's responsibility. Employees must take ownership of their own development to truly succeed. According to a [Microsoft trends report](#), 87% of employees feel highly productive in their role; however, only 12% of their leaders agree. This means that most employees assume they're meeting company expectations and achieving goals but lack the insight to improve upon their skills.

With performance ownership, employees are equipped with the necessary skills to own

their performance and initiate conversations for constructive feedback. Performance ownership empowers individuals to gain alignment and take accountability for their performance in connection to organizational objectives. It places the employee in the driver's seat of their own development.

To cultivate performance ownership in the workplace, organizations must empower and motivate their employees to take ownership of their development and outcomes. This can be accomplished by teaching them to identify and

communicate performance needs to those who can provide the direction and support needed to close the gaps through agile coaching and feedback.

Secondly, learning leaders must give individuals and managers a framework to initiate these conversations. This requires establishing a common language.

# FINDING A COMMON LANGUAGE

Introducing a common language for having these critical performance conversations enables healthy dialogue in the workplace. [The Situational Leadership® Model](#) accomplishes this by creating a shared understanding of key terms, such as “ability” (and how it differs from “capability”), “willingness” and different levels of Performance Readiness®. Having a common language helps remove the biases and charged emotions that often come up during performance conversations, which clears the path to achieving same-page status on expectations.

Equipping employees with a framework for assessing their own performance and communicating their needs in terms that their leader easily understands makes it easier to ask for (and receive) help when they need it. This accelerates development timelines and is especially beneficial when onboarding new employees because it reduces their time to autonomy.

When the entire workforce is equipped to advocate for their performance needs combined with leaders who can adapt their leadership style to meet the needs of others, it enhances the way people communicate about tasks and improves the overall performance of an organization.



# KEY #3: A CULTURE OF PERFORMANCE



**Empowering employees to own their performance** and giving managers the skills to embrace their role as a performance leader cultivates a culture of performance inside your organization. A culture of performance is a psychologically safe environment in which employees feel engaged and motivated to express themselves through their work.

Everyone in the organization is held accountable for their role in the leadership process and is empowered to seek the guidance and support they need to perform well. Here are a few benefits of working in a culture of performance:

- » Enhances psychological safety and trust in the workplace
- » Unlocks creativity, collaboration and innovation
- » Helps people reach their full potential with opportunities for continuous coaching and feedback.

Fostering psychological safety in the workplace through common language, accountability and trust is the ultimate key to driving performance and overall success.



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# CREATING A FRAMEWORK FOR THE RIGHT CONVERSATIONS

Leadership is driven by the dialogue and conversations employees have with one another throughout the organization. Asking the right questions is a great step toward building trusting relationships and a performance culture.

## Powerful questions for leading performance:

- » “Now that I’ve explained the specifics of this task, can you repeat back to me what you heard to make sure we’re aligned?”
- » “What would improve your confidence on this task?” “What are your biggest concerns on this task?”
- » “I’m glad you’re excited to work on this task. What do you know about it?”
- » “What do you need, if anything, from me?”

## Powerful questions for owning performance:

- » “I’m not sure where to start. Can you provide more specifics about the process?”
- » “This is completely new to me. Are there any examples I can reference?”
- » “I’m excited about this opportunity, and I have some ideas. Is it a good time to share my thoughts and get your feedback?”
- » “I’m not sure our standard approach will work this time. What do you think of these alternative solutions?”
- » “I have a lot of experience with this. How should I keep you informed?”



# MOVING FORWARD





To remain competitive in today's business market, organizations must foster a culture of performance—a culture that enables leaders and employees with the skills to improve performance outcomes. Leadership is a two-way street and employees at all levels of the organization must take responsibility for achieving desired results.

By following a framework that establishes a common language, organizations can cultivate a psychologically safe environment that drives performance and long-term business success.



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# ABOUT US



## THE CENTER FOR LEADERSHIP STUDIES

For more than 50 years, The Center for Leadership Studies (CLS) has been at the forefront of leadership training and organizational development. CLS is the global home of the [Situational Leadership® Model](#)—the most successful and widely adopted leadership training model available. Using this research-based model as the foundation, our influence-focused courses enable leaders to engage in effective performance conversations that build trust, increase productivity and drive behavior change.

Learn more at [situational.com](https://www.situational.com).

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