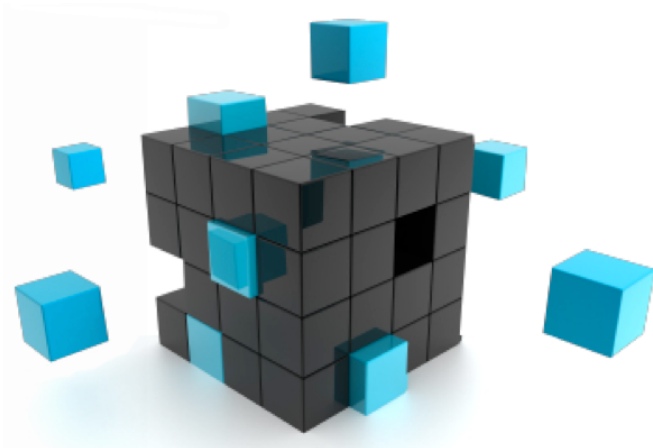


# Implementing Sustainable Front-line Leadership Improvement Systems

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# Abstract

This short ten page paper outlines the author's concerns about front-line leadership development in commercial and government enterprises. When it comes to translating a company's strategy into results, mid-level to first level leaders, those who oversee front-line operations, are important. Front-line leaders are the ones who are most responsible for a company's day-to-day relationships with customers and the bulk of employees.

Corporate feedback is usually that they are happy with the front-line leadership programs they have selected and implemented. However, the author's experience with clients and the leadership research he has read tell him that:

- management process is confused with leadership capability and leadership development programs mix both skill sets;
- the business impact and thus the value of effective leadership is not adequately quantified because leadership behaviour is not consistently measured nor correlated with business outcomes;
- single event personality profiles and 360 degree measurement tools are being employed to diagnose management and leadership deficiencies and determine development interventions;
- single event training methods deliver incremental and short-lived performance improvements when alternatives deliver sustainable leadership improvement and enduring quantum leaps in performance.

Leadership development is not just about training managers; it is about creating a sustainable culture of accountability and performance. Leadership development fosters a high-performance organisation. So, getting definitions and skill development right has critical consequences for business results. Researchers typically attribute productivity improvements of between 10% and 20% to leadership for manufacturing and mining industries. In sales and contact centres, effective leaders can make a productivity differences of more than 100%.

High-quality development programs for front-line leaders people have a reputation for being difficult to create and maintain. They're typically set up as short seminars, and trainees return to the workplace with little or no follow-up. As a result, the potential of these managers remains unrealised, the staff suffer and business results stagnate accordingly.

The tools being used to measure leadership behaviour, like 360 degree feedback and personality profiles provide a biased snapshot against subjective judgements rather than accurate measures against specific leadership behaviours that motivate teams and improve team performance. And they are used periodically, with select 'high potential' or 'problematic' leaders rather than widely to create a system of accountability for leadership behaviour and leadership development.

This paper discusses the definition and value of effective leadership, measurement issues, and potential solutions in sustainable front-line leadership development. One of the most influential engines to drive change and business performance improvement is a leadership development program that sets out to nurture leadership talent in a lasting way, that is entrepreneurial, and enterprise-wide.

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# Defining Leadership

This paper discusses what the author defines as front-line leaders and front-line leadership development. For the purposes of this paper front-line includes at least the first three levels of management. Some would say third level management includes middle management.

## Separating Leading and Managing

John Kotter said, "In more than four decades of studying businesses and consulting to organisations on how to implement new strategies, I can't tell you how many times I've heard people use the words 'leadership' and 'management' synonymously, and it drives me crazy every time." (Kotter JP, 2013)

Management is a set of business processes, like planning, budgeting, structuring jobs, staffing jobs, measuring performance and problem-solving, which help an organisation to predictably produce products and services as you have promised, of consistent quality, on budget, day after day, week after week.

Leadership is the soft skills required to influence, motivate and develop people in order to maximise individual and team performance. Leadership is not about being in charge or control. This is a mistake that undermines much of the academic study of leadership (Hogan R, 2012; Kotter JP, 2013).

## Defining Effective Front-line Leadership

When one thinks about the intention of effective leadership, or the outcome from effective leadership, it is consistently 'better team performance.' Front-line leadership, therefore, can be defined in terms of the ability of the first three tiers of management to build and maintain high performing teams (Stevenson B, 2011; Hogan R, 2011). And leadership should be evaluated in terms of the performance of the team relative to the other teams with which it competes. This is rarely done (Hogan R, 2013).

People often think of leadership in terms of personality characteristics (e.g. charisma), traits, social influence and situational interaction, function, vision, values and behaviour (Kirkpatrick SA and Locke EA, 1991; Richards and Engle, 1986; House RJ, 1996; Vroom V and Sternberg RJ, 2002; Miner JB, 2005; Argyris C, 1976; Judge TA, Bono JE, Ilies R and Gerhardt MW, 2002; Zaccaro SJ, Klimoski RJ, 2001; Zaleznik A, 1992; Kotter JP, 1999). Effective leadership is not about attributes, or personality; it's about behaviour (Kotter JP, 1999, 2013).

There are very, very few organisations today that have sufficient leadership (Kotter J, 2013). Until we face this issue, understanding exactly what the problem is, we're never going to solve it. Unless we recognise that we're not talking about management when we speak of leadership, all we will try to do when we do need more leadership is work harder to manage. At a certain point, we end up with over-managed and under-led organisations, which are under-performing on assets and investor equity.

# The Business Impact of Leadership

While the popular press and business schools have long stressed the importance of good management processes and good leadership, empirical economists have had relatively little to say about leadership practices. A problem has been the absence of high-quality data that are measured in a consistent way across countries, industries and corporations.

In the last decade increasing empirical research shows front-line leadership has a profound impact on business results (Bassi L, McMurrer D, 2007). Effective leadership has become acknowledged as a proven key business driver (Mundlak 1961, Baily, Hulten, and Campbell 1992; Bartelsman and Dhrymes, 1998; Bartelsman and Doms 2000; Foster, Haltiwanger and Syverson 2005, Bloom N and Van Reenen J, 2007).

Companies that effectively lead employees enhance their own success and even survival (Bassi L, McMurrer D, 2007).

## **The Value of Effective Leadership**

Until recently, there simply weren't robust methods for measuring the bottom-line contributions of investments in leadership development for human capital management. That's changed since the late 1990's. And research findings increasingly link effective leadership and business success (Schein L, Kramer RJ, 2005; Bassi L, McMurrer D, 2007; Bassi L, McMurrer D, 2004).

Researchers, when benchmarking different locations in the one organisation or different but like organisations with high leadership effectiveness against those with low leadership effectiveness, report the following differences in results:

1. The average three-year compound annual growth rate in income for those with high leadership scores ranged between about 60% and 130% higher. The mean accident rates for plants with high leadership scores were between about 10% and 30% lower (Bassi L, McMurrer D, 2007)
2. People who feel their immediate manager cares about them are more productive, contribute between 25% and 40% more to profits, and are significantly more likely to stay with their company long-term (Buckingham M, Coffman C, 1999; Gallup, 2012)
3. The links between leadership, engagement, discretionary effort, productivity and profitability are proven, with highly engaged organisations delivering on average 9% more profit per employee and double the revenue growth of other organisations (Aon-Hewitt Best Employers, 2012)
4. High-performing workplaces with progressive leaders are up to 12% more productive and three times more profitable than their peers (Boedker C, Vidgen R, Meagher K, Cogin J, Mouritsen J, Runnalls JM, 2011)
5. Effective investments (i.e. that deliver improvement) in leadership development improve bottom-line financial performance, attract and retain talent, create organisational alignment, and increase organisational agility (Schein L, Kramer RJ, 2005).

These research papers claim that leadership capabilities have the highest correlation with profitability and productivity. Putting leadership development at the heart of major change programs can also be critical. (De Smet A, Lavoie J and Schwartz Hioe E, 2012) quote case studies where effective front-line leadership development was combined with change projects and it was credited with doubling the change project results and returns on investment.

Despite this, and the increasingly competitive global market, only 31% of Australian and New Zealand organisations are improving employee engagement levels. This would suggest that the majority of the widespread leadership development programs are not delivering leadership improvement.

## **The Cost of Ineffective leadership**

Studies have repeatedly shown that crucial leadership skills in today's organisations are insufficient for meeting current and future needs (Leslie JB, 2009; Gallup, 2012; Harter J K, & Schmidt F L, 2002). Yet a large number of companies appear to be very badly led, with ineffective monitoring, targets and incentives, and poorly led with disengaged employees (Bloom N and Van Reenen J, 2007). The statistics condemning the state of leadership and the consequential costs to staff and business are extensive. According to (McQuaid M, 2012).

- 54% of employees are unhappy at their jobs;
- 31% of employees polled feel uninspired and unappreciated by their bosses;
- 20% say their boss has little or no integrity;
- 60% say they would do better at their jobs if they got along better with their boss.

According to (Ouimet M, 2012) employees with bad leaders are among the least productive workers. The problem is not only extreme cases of bosses who bully employees. It turns out that even basic incivility or rudeness is enough to transform a model employee into a “negative and unproductive” nightmare. When comparing behaviour of staff with abusive bosses to those with non-abusive bosses:

- 30% slow down or purposefully make errors compared to 6%;
- 33% do not put in maximum effort compared to 9%;
- 29% took sick leave when not ill compared to 5%;
- 25% took more or longer breaks compared to 7%.

Front-line leaders typically alienate and disengage subordinates through a series of useless behaviours like bullying, harassing, exploiting, lying, betraying and manipulating (Hogan R, 2012). And when on average 60% of managers are reportedly “bad” and the bulk of the organisation is front-line staff, this means the front-line managers are disengaging half the organisation (Metaberbung 2012). Some argue front-line managers may have a greater impact on company performance than almost any other part of the organisation ( Mollick E, 2012).

Leaders often unknowingly trigger the “set-up-to-fail syndrome” (Manzoni J-F, and Barsoux J-L, 2002). How often? Up to 90% of all bosses treat some subordinates as though they were part of an in-group (reliable performers), while they consign others to an out-group. A manager categorises employees as “in” or “out,” based on:

- early perceptions of employees’ motivation, initiative, creativity, strategic perspectives;
- previous bosses’ impressions;
- an early mishap; and
- boss-subordinate incompatibility.

The result is that employees whom managers (perhaps falsely) view as weak performers live down to their expectations (Argyris C, 1993).

Despite the millions of dollars poured into 'leadership training' each year by Australian organisations, three out of every four employees report their boss is the most stressful part of their job, with most indicating they'd prefer a new boss over a pay rise when it comes to improving their satisfaction at work (McQuaid M, 2012).

## **Why Do Leadership Development Programs Often Fail?**

### **Competencies Identified by the Researchers**

The author has defined leadership as something quite separate from management. And so it seems appropriate to look at what leadership skills managers need. Unfortunately many of these skills are missed in ‘leadership’ training which delivers management capabilities. In the absence of appropriate training to develop critical skills and leadership perspectives, the front-line leadership gap in organisations will continue to widen.

Among the researchers there appears to be consensus about what skills are required for effective leadership (Leslie JB, 2009; Boedker C, Vidgen R, Meagher K, Cogan J, Mouritsen J, Runnalls JM, 2011; Lazear EP, Shaw KL, Stanton CT, 2012; Boyatzis R, 1982; Leslie J and Van Velsor E, 1996; and Shipper F, 2000; Pentland S, 2012; Hogan R, 2012; Dweck CS, 2006; Heslin PA, 2009; Dweck CS 2006; Heslin P A, Latham G P, and Vandewalle D, 2005; Heslin PA, Vandewalle D, Latham GP, 2006; Heslin, PA 2009). While terminology may vary, the themes are consistent. And when one drills down to the observable behavioural specifics

behind the academics' and business researchers' behavioural terminology there is very unambiguous alignment in their view of what competencies leaders need. Without getting into the detail in this paper (contact the author for the specifics) these are the skills the develop and sustain employee engagement.

The point is that L&D Departments, HR Departments and L&D vendors know what skills to teach. So, why are the results from leadership development programs so often universally dismal? The author has observed a wide array of leadership development programs. And the sad thing is most of them don't develop better behaving leaders. This observation is compelling when considered in the light the average front-line leadership development investment for US companies in 2012 was \$2,700 per leader and \$3,915 per leader for companies with mature development programs (Bersin & Associates, O'Leonard K and Loew L, 2012).

The author sees three root causes for the problem. The wrong competencies are being offered in leadership programs, ineffective single event traditional classroom training prevails and both before and after learning leadership behaviour is measured rarely with the wrong tools.

### **The Wrong Competencies Delivered by the Typical Leadership Programs**

One of the very popular front-line leadership development programs here in Australia is Certificate IV in Front-line Management (BSB40812 <http://training.gov.au/Training/Details/BSB40812> ). Let's look the program within the frame that BSB40812 is a reputable example of a leadership programs, it is widely employed by industry, and that the content is representative of leadership training.

Let's compare the content of BSB40812 with the competencies researchers have identified for effective leadership - i.e. The ones that develop employee motivation and engagement. The course description states that it provides entry level skills and knowledge for:

1. supervision and management;
2. operational skills;
3. assistance to build teams;
4. excellent customer service skills; and
5. leadership skills (which are qualified as 'those required to take responsibility for the effective performance of your team').

The title for the course and the five bullet summary imply you that the course content primarily 'management 101.' Bullet five holds the promise for some leadership. To satisfy course requirements one completes the four mandatory core units and selects six elective units from 26 options, to give ten units total. Inspecting the detailed unit descriptions and learning outcomes reveals that the courses provides much less in the way of skill development that addresses leadership than one would hope. Less than 5% of the unit, sub-unit and element descriptions relate directly to leadership development.

This course delivers a high-quality standard and a recognised management qualification. But 95% of it is irrelevant for developing the effective leadership capability which will improve motivation and team performance. In this respect it is like many other alleged 'leadership development' programs.

### **Even When the Competency is Right Single Event Training Fails**

The traditional model of leadership development focuses on training as an event, not a process. It is well documented that the half life of single event conventional training is less than six weeks and that after three months adults retain only 10% of what they have heard in lecture-based training sessions (Equation Research, 2004). Another study by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD, 2010) reported that only 13% of participants applied the learning in the workplace and 3% of training led to an impact on the organisation. Such results contribute to failed training investments.

Some argue that when it comes to leadership, the training industry has been broken for years because you don't train leaders you develop them – an important distinction lost on many. The terms training and development have somehow become synonymous (like management and leadership) when they are not. One leadership development practitioner says "Leadership training is alive and well, but it should have died long, long ago." (Myatt M, 2012)

Leadership training is often a rote, one directional, one dimensional, one size fits all, authoritarian process that imposes static, possibly irrelevant, information on attendees. The majority of training takes place within a monologue (lecture/presentation) rather than a dialog. Kolb (1984 and 1991) showed that adults can't learn merely by listening to instructions; they must also absorb the new information, use it experimentally, and integrate it with their existing knowledge. When people learn by doing (e.g. role plays, simulations, case studies), 65% of the learning is retained. And when they practice what they have learnt in the workplace for a number of weeks, together with real time observation and coaching from their manager or a coach, almost all of the learning is retained (Rackham N, 1979 and Whitmore J, 2009). Accordingly, effective leadership capability training programs should be filled with interactive simulations and role-plays to ensure time spent in the training room is most effective.

Organisational psychologists (Argyris C, 1977; Tichy N and Cohen E, 1998) have shown people assimilate information more thoroughly if the goals, values, frameworks and mind-sets that underlie behaviour can be altered through examination and questioning in the learning process. They call this approach double loop learning. In conventional single-loop learning, mindsets are taken for granted and learning occurs within the individual's existing system constraints. Consider what happens when you train an employee in presentation skills but don't address their belief presenting or public speaking is terrifying. How well will they employ their new skills when they are frozen with stage fright? Ignoring the underlying mindsets of managers during learning and development is bound to lead to failure and is unacceptable when there are training and coaching processes that can shift mindsets.

## **Sustainable Effective Leadership Development**

(Young DP, 1993; Bersin & Associates, O'Leonard K and Loew L, 2012; Young D, Dixon M, 1995; McCauley CD, Hughes-James MW, 1994; ) report that the better performing organisations with more mature leadership programs use the "70-20-10 model" where learning is a process. Seventy percent of learning about a leadership job was through practice and on-the-job experiences; twenty percent was through other people by exposure to coaching, feedback, networks and expertise; and ten percent was through formal education-based learning interventions.

Effective leadership training and development must deliver leadership (not management) skills. And it must incorporate action plans and commitments made by the participants (together with their managers) about what they will practice back in the workplace to embed the learning. And it must measure leader behaviour change and team results improvement.

The problem is that after training, come the first day back at work, very few keep their commitments to change. The time and energy required to do something additional, or even to do something in a new way, don't exist in busy leaders' day-to-day schedules. Ironically, this is particularly the case in the days following training programs, when most people are playing catch-up from their time away.

It is unreasonable to expect that most managers will genuinely practice new mind-sets, skills and behaviours back in the workplace if nothing formal has been done to lower the barriers to practice and to reinforce doing so. This failure to formalise and create the space for practice back in the workplace, and to measure that behaviour change is occurring, dooms most leadership training programs to deliver dismal returns.



For many companies, however, the traditional one off training event, with no follow up coaching, no measurement of behaviour change on the job, no measurement of business impact and no determination of ROI (or whether the training delivered the outcome for which it was purchased) is still the norm. Some say solution to the leadership training problem is to scrap it in favour of development (Myers M, 2012). The author proposes sustainable leadership development - learning becoming more than a one-off event, a mix of effective e-learning, interactive training, development through on-the-job coaching and mentoring, and regular leadership behaviour measurement to provide feedback on progress.

## Measuring the Impact of Leadership Programs

Organisations are not always effective at measuring the effectiveness and return on investment for their leadership programs. Some make no attempt to measure leadership behaviour or business outcomes at all. A common approach is the Kirkpatrick survey (Kirkpatrick, 1995) which measures the classroom experience and intention to apply on the job. One of the most effective measures is looking at both the on-the-job behaviour changes and the improved results delivered by managers after they've been through a development program.

As part of leadership training and development it is important to create on-the-job assignments that link directly to the accountabilities of participants. Business must require leaders to put into practice new mindsets and skills in ways that are "hardwired" into improving the KPI on which they are assessed. These assignments should have quantifiable, outcome-based measures that indicate levels of competence gained, and certification that recognises and rewards the commercial results attained. With this approach one can measure the business impact of deploying the learning (operationally and financially) and quantify an ROI for the investment in leadership training and leadership development. Failure to do so generates appropriate reluctance to invest training and development - because the people funding it from their budgets do not see results that help them reach their objectives. So, they wisely invest elsewhere, where they can track cause-effect relationships and results.

## Measuring Effective Leadership

How do you measure leadership? Or more specifically for our purposes, how do you measure effective front-line leadership behaviour? If it's true that generally there's a lack of leadership capability amongst our front-line managers (and a great deal of evidence quoted earlier in this paper suggests there is), then having a way to measure front-line leadership activity and effectiveness is critical. Without leadership measurement we can't know whether we have a problem or whether we are improving. Without measurement we can't provide feedback. And in the absence of feedback front-line managers will assume that they're doing okay, when in fact they're not.

One of Australia's most successful companies, Atlassian, has a staff engagement rate of 87%. To measure the engagement levels of staff Atlassian takes a poll to measure the pulse of employees multiple times per week. Contrast this with the average company that may poll on engagement once per year and survey leadership effectiveness once in a blue moon. And as there is no follow up survey likely, there is no incentive to improve. Atlassian's managers understand that they will be polled regularly so they are more likely to improve their leadership of people. One firm found that regular polling of managers' ability had higher ROI than hundreds of thousands of dollars in leadership training (Telstra Productivity Spectator, 2011).

### The Shortcoming of Multi-Rater Feedback Instruments

Since the early nineteen nineties multi-rater, or 360-degree, instruments have become popular for leadership evaluation. These instruments are designed to collect information from different sources (or

perspectives) about a target manager's performance. The different sources of information (the raters) are self, the supervisor (or boss), the peers, the direct reports of the target manager, internal and/or external customers as raters.

These 360-degree feedback tools can be helpful in evaluating individuals' areas for development, however, they have shortcomings (Van Velsor E, Leslie JB, Fleenor JW, 1997; Billet MT, Qian Y, 2005, Gilovich, Thomas, Griffin D, Kahneman D, 2002):

1. they attempt to be all things for all; an assessment and recruitment tool; a tool for executives, middle managers and front-line managers; and as a result they fail for all;
2. they survey non-specific capabilities (behavioural clusters rather than specific behaviours) and rely upon subjective judgement rather than observable fact;
3. where they require self assessment this is distorted by self attribution cognitive bias;
4. they mix feedback from different sources (managers, peers, sub-ordinates and customers) that can be incompatible (these multiple perspectives are often claimed as a strength of 360 surveys);
5. to ensure validity and reliability the surveys usually include hundreds of questions that take an unacceptable amount of time to complete; and
6. they are expensive to implement; so typically they are used intermittently (annually at best) and do need feed into a process of measure, assess, plan, act, and loop back to measure.

Two other things that commonly stand out as warning alarms are the size of the questionnaire and the norm group used for comparison. The author has seen instruments with nearly 300 questions. Most managers would find the amount of time required to complete such a survey is unacceptable. In the multi-rater context 'norm group' means the group of managers whose scores are stored in the vendor's database and are output as the comparison group on every individual feedback report. The norm group can distort the scores if leaders are not compared to managers similar to themselves across such dimensions as job level, organisation type, and demographics (for example, ethnicity and gender).

## **How To Measure Leadership Effectiveness**

In order to measure leadership effectiveness you need to define what you mean by leadership, and the specific leadership behaviours relevant for that definition, your business and the job titles being measured. The soft skills required to influence, motivate, coach and develop people in order to maximise their performance are demonstrated in specific on the job behaviours and team results. So, there are multiple leadership effectiveness measures which can be grouped into the following categories:

- What productivity and performance outcomes are achieved by the leader's team?
- What is the engagement measure for the leader's team?
- What does the leader do (what behaviour do they demonstrate) to influence, motivate, coach and develop people?

The most readily available measure of a front-line manager's leadership effectiveness is their work group's operational and financial performance measures. The advantage of these measures is that they are commonly available from the ERP or General Ledger system and the data is available daily, weekly and monthly. The data is a clear indicator of the success of the work group, and by extension, the success of the front-line manager leading the team. However, in the short term, success of a team can be affected by a range of contributing factors beyond the control of the team's leader. So, you need more data.

The leadership activities of front-line managers play a pivotal role in triggering discretionary effort. So, another measure of effective leadership discretionary effort in team members. Discretionary effort is difficult to measure - and rarely tracked in organisations. Two other measures give us indication of discretionary effort. One is operational productivity discussed in the previous paragraph. The other is

employee motivation, which can be measured using employee engagement surveys. But engagement is usually measured annually, so one waits a long time to measure and link the results of any change in leadership behaviour. However, it can be assessed regularly using automation and simple on-line surveys. The other issue is that employee engagement results need to be linked to the manager. In one common annual employee engagement survey less than 10% of the statements directly refer to the person's immediate manager - most refer to the organisation. Employee engagement surveys will need modification to (at low cost) frequently produce data that measures the level of leadership activity and capability of individual managers.

However, team productivity, performance and engagement alone are not a useful measures for improving the leadership capability of your front-line managers. They provide results but omit information on what the leader has done and has not done to deliver the results. Without this activity or behaviour information it is impossible to track and develop the leadership capability.

You need specific data about your managers' leadership behaviour - so you know exactly what they are consistently doing. The people who can tell you this are their direct reports. While 360° feedback is becoming more common, it is rare for a front-line manager's supervisor and colleagues to consistently observe how that manager interacts with their people. So, their survey responses are unlikely to add value.

An effective approach is to develop a specific, short 180 degree survey for each management level in your organisation, rather than one size fits all. Front-line managers operate in a diverse range of settings such as retail stores, contact centres, distribution centres, field forces, back-office processing, manufacturing and mining. While the practices of effective front-line leadership are common, the actual translation of those into everyday leadership activity is affected by the type of work team members perform, the physical environment and the geographical distribution of the team.

Survey only the direct reports of the leader you plan to assess, and possibly the leaders themselves. This ensures feedback from one category of respondents - the manager's direct reports (which can be compared with the manager's self assessment and a benchmark you build up over time).

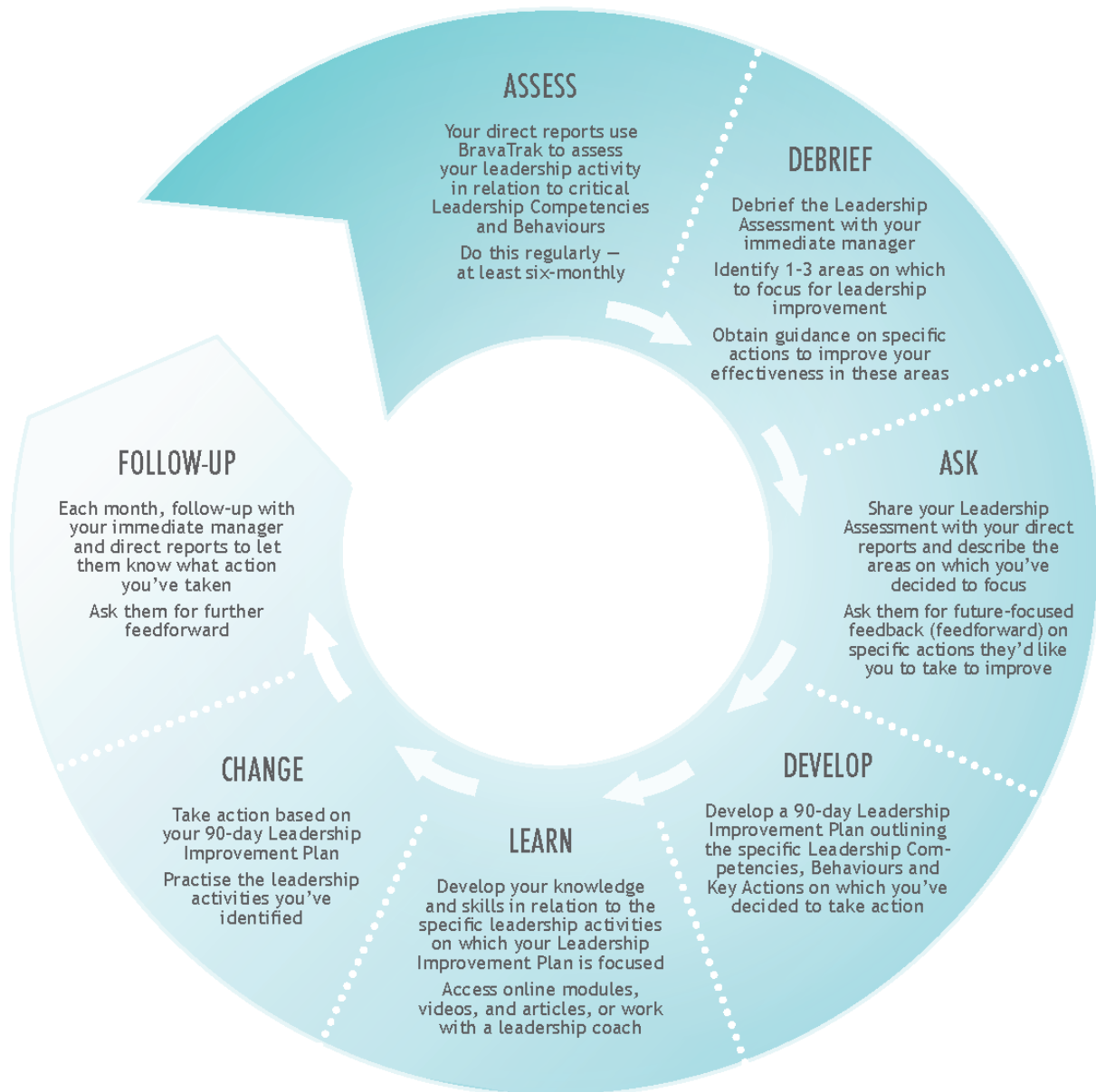
Within the survey one can include statements (questions) that identify the specific observable behaviours that are important for your organisation's definition of effective leadership for the relevant leadership level. Keep the list of behaviours as short as possible. Less than 30 normally translates into a survey that takes 10 minutes to complete and is low cost to implement and easy to repeat. The survey result will identify the areas for improvement and the behaviours or skills required - and so can lead directly to an action plan for improvement.

And finally repeat the survey three times per year so that leaders know that they will be accountable for improvement after each survey. Measurement that tracks specific effective leadership behaviour is highly actionable. The author can speak from long experience. For many years we wanted to use this type of measurement approach for our clients. Neither we nor our partners could find any such measurement tool so our partners Brava developed the BravaTrak front-line leadership survey tool that has proven to be the key to enabling our clients to consistently improve the leadership activity, and develop sustainable leadership capability in their front-line managers.

## **Implementing Sustainable Leadership Development**

The BravaTrak tool is part of the sustainable leadership assessment and improvement process developed by Brava and described in the flow chart on the next page. Over the last 15 years, whenever we have used the BravaTrak tools we have observed a direct correlation between the leadership behaviour survey results and

team results. Where leader survey results are in the lower quartile they are consistently well behind plan; where in the middle two quartiles they tend to range between 95% and 100% of plan; where in the top quartile they are consistently well above plan.



[Source: Brava Ltd, Copyright 2013]

The advantages of a tool that measures actual front-line leadership activity is that specific, individualised, 90-day Action Plans can be developed and agreed immediately after the survey data is available. Front-Line managers have their own clear specific leadership improvements to work on. And measurement can be three times a year, which means that leadership and results improvement can be measured in months rather than years. With effective leadership measurement, organisations can provide feedback to their people managers.

This sort of data isn't used in isolation. It is best employed in conjunction with the engagement, productivity and performance measures for each manager's work group, and the front-line leader's immediate supervisor's observations of management and leadership activity.

With this sort of measurement system across a business unit it is possible to observe the trends of strengths and weaknesses. This allows targeted interventions, such as coaching for individuals and training to address common issues. And this drives fast and lasting leadership improvement. Unfortunately it is rarely employed and leadership interventions become scatter gun exercises with low ROI.

## Conclusion

The research into what makes for a consistently high-performing workforce is clear: effective leaders foster happy employees who produce significantly more than unhappy ones over the long term. They routinely show up at work, they're less likely to quit, they deliver discretionary effort go above and beyond the call of duty, and they attract people who are just as committed to the job. Moreover, they're not sprinters; they're more like marathon runners, in it for the long haul. Thriving employees have an edge; they are highly energised and they know how to avoid burnout.

It is therefore worth developing effective front-line leadership capability in your organisation. This entails investing the time to understand the difference between managing and leading. And separating the training and development for the two. Leadership is primarily about effective relationship, communication, motivation, coaching and training. Defining leadership also entails determining the answer to the question "What does effective leadership look and sound like in our organisation?" The answer is likely to be a common set of capabilities and a differentiated set of capabilities for each leadership level. And the answer will form the basis of blended learning and coaching you employ.

You then need to determine how to measure these demonstration of these capabilities - in terms of team results team engagement and leadership behaviour, for each manager. Once you start measuring leadership behaviour you've got an understanding of where your strengths lie (as a team) and as individual managers. And you know where you need to drive improvement. Development and action plans can be established and within 90 days the next measurement cycle will report progress and where to go next. This is the foundation of sustainable leadership development.

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Geoffrey (Geoff) Wade (BSc, BE, GCNLP, MBA) is the Founder of Onirik. Onirik is a team of professionals who focus on business value and measurable outcomes, as the reason for our clients to listen to Onirik. Onirik helps their clients get fast and lasting quantum leap improvements in revenue and margins. Onirik helps clients implement the practical applications of research in the field of duplicating the talent of experts and expertise, effective leadership and brain plasticity.