Leadership team development: What a best-in-class program should include

These days, making the investment in leadership team development is less about *why* than *how.* Businesses everywhere are realizing the far-reaching benefits of team leader development, and with [inspiring stories](#) of the power of having a leadership training program in place circulating, it's difficult to dispute the advantages.

In our own experience with clients alone, we've seen results like:

- 44% increase in trust in leadership
- 333% increase in sales volume
- 20% increase in upward mobility

…and that's just the beginning.

Based on our own research and experience working with thousands of clients globally over the last four decades, we've seen what works and what doesn't. In this blog post, we're highlighting what a best-in-class [leadership development program](#) should include if you're looking to drive lasting

results.

Key components of a best-in-class leadership team development program

When embarking on a leadership team development journey, it's most important to begin with a clear vision and objectives for what you want to improve upon and achieve. You'll likely want to look at this in two ways:

Setting clear [leadership development goals](#): Establishing goals helps determine what areas you need to work on, how to prioritize efforts, and how to define success. It also helps keep you on track, stay accountable, maximize your efficiency, and measure your progress when you know exactly what you're supposed to be doing. Make sure your goals are clear and defined and well-communicated so that everyone's on the same page.

Aligning objectives with the organization's strategic goals: This begins with thinking about what leadership skills and competencies are crucial to achieving our team's [strategic objectives](#). This ensures that your leadership team development efforts are directly contributing to the long-term success and sustainability of the organization.

When your objectives are in harmony, leadership development becomes a strategic tool for cultivating leaders who can effectively steer the organization toward its desired outcomes. Not to mention, it fosters a shared sense of purpose among leaders by creating a connection between all leaders and the broader mission.

Assessment and skill gap analysis

No organization is perfect, so an important step in leadership team development is identifying what your team is challenged by and where you can improve. Below are some common areas organizations struggle to find alignment.
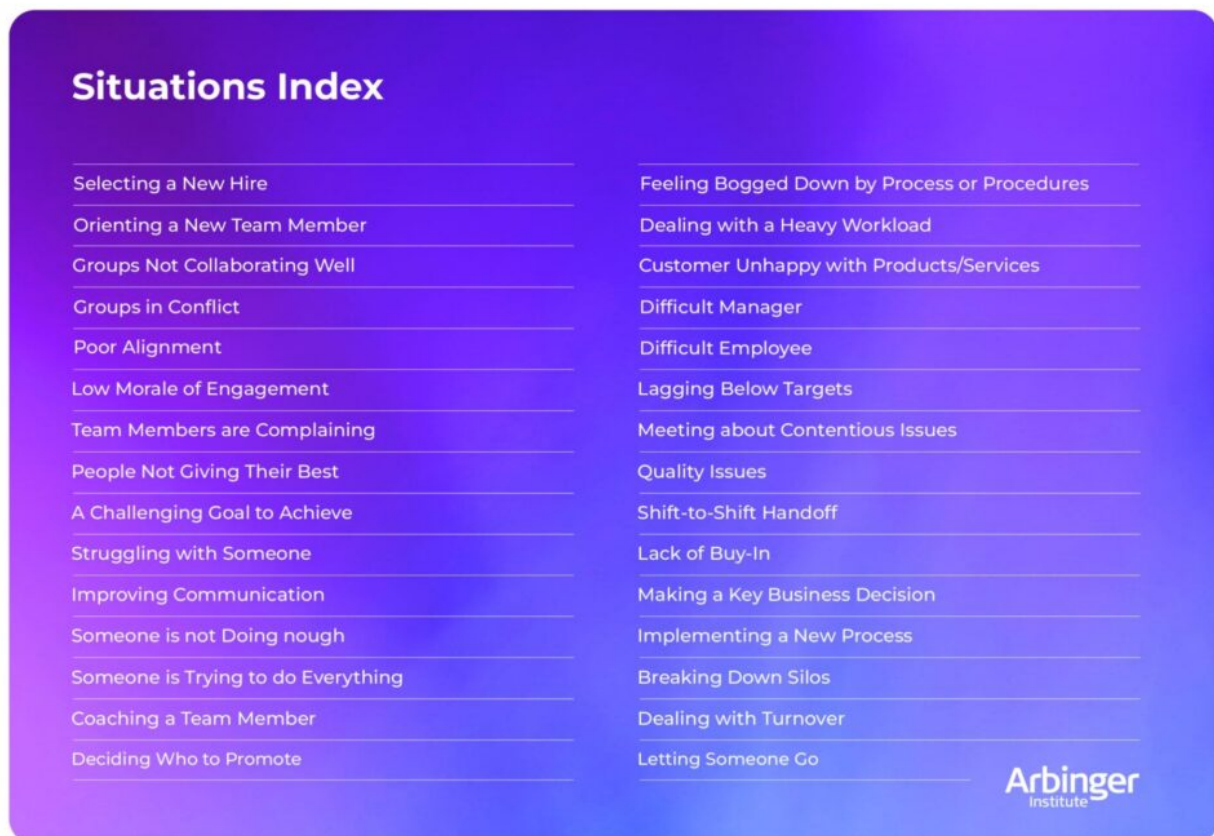
The good news is, these are all areas that team leader development can improve. (Really—we've seen it happen firsthand! We've shared some of our favorite success stories in [this playbook](#).)

Thisi is also a good time to gauge relationships between leaders. In our guide, [The Leadership Gold Standard: A Blueprint to Culture Transformation from the Top Down](#), we dive deep into how relationships impact leadership and trickle down throughout organizational culture. While skillsets are important, having a team that recognizes and respects the humanity in their peers is how winning teams are born. A true [high-performing team](#) puts a premium on authenticity and

interpersonal relationships, knowing that building strong connections with others is the key to achieving goals together.

A focus on mindset

A leader's mindset drives what they do, why they do it, and the impact they have on the people they work with. When leadership training programs don't start with a leader's mindset, it doesn't address how leaders interpret problems and tackle opportunities within an organization.

Leaders don't just set the tone for an organization; they make the strategic decisions that are instrumental to organizational success or failure. Leaders with the mindset to see endless possibilities in their employees and partners are more likely to foster a culture of innovation and success.

You can watch this short video to learn more about how mindset impacts organizational results:

Customized curriculum

It's true that there's no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership development. And that's exactly why it's important to start out with a clear idea of what objectives you want out of your leadership development investment. This, coupled with analyzing your organization's challenges and goals, will help reveal where you need to place the most focus.

That being said, we believe there are seven core areas that make up a leadership development program. They are:

Develop accountable people: Research suggests that when we feel a sense of ownership over our work, it not only influences our feelings toward our organization; it actually makes us more helpful and generous toward others as well.

Foster a culture of helpfulness: As a leader, it's your job to foster a culture of helpfulness by encouraging employees to create more meaningful connections with those around them, and empowering them to work together in more productive and creative ways.

Nurture employee engagement: Statistically, disengaged employees have an 18% lower productivity rate, and on average cost a company $3,400 for every $10,000 the employee makes. So naturally, every leader wants to strive for an engaged workforce.

Transform conflict: Conflict at work can have far-reaching implications, affecting not only individual well- being but also team dynamics and overall productivity.

Build relationships: A true high-performing team puts a premium on authenticity and interpersonal relationships, knowing that building strong connections with others is the key to achieving goals together.

Recruit and retain top talent: Having the right people in your corner is crucial to achieving the results you desire—but attaining and retaining them is something that's easier said than done.

Take corrective action: Corrections aren't a punishment, they demonstrate your organization's commitment to upholding a standard, which in turn influences employee behavior and attitudes.

While moving through these steps, it's important to cater to the different learning styles on your leadership team.

We've found it most effective include a combination of the following learning techniques:

- Facilitator-led programming
- Breakouts and discussion groups
- Video examples and case studies
- Tools and worksheets
- Ongoing coaching sessions

Having multiple formats also helps keep your team engaged and really gives them an opportunity to reflect upon how the training and examples can be applied to their daily work and relationships.

Tools and takeaways

As we mentioned in the previous section, having a set of tools available—both during training and to take away afterwards—are critical for getting leaders to think about daily application to their work life.

Effective leadership team development should inspire a [shift in mindset](#), which also means a different way of doing things. This [leadership toolkit](#), for example, features some of the tools offered through Arbinger's [Outward Leadership](#) program. They're designed to operationalize common workplace scenarios so that leaders can approach difficult conversations, meetings, or situations in a more outward and empathetic way.
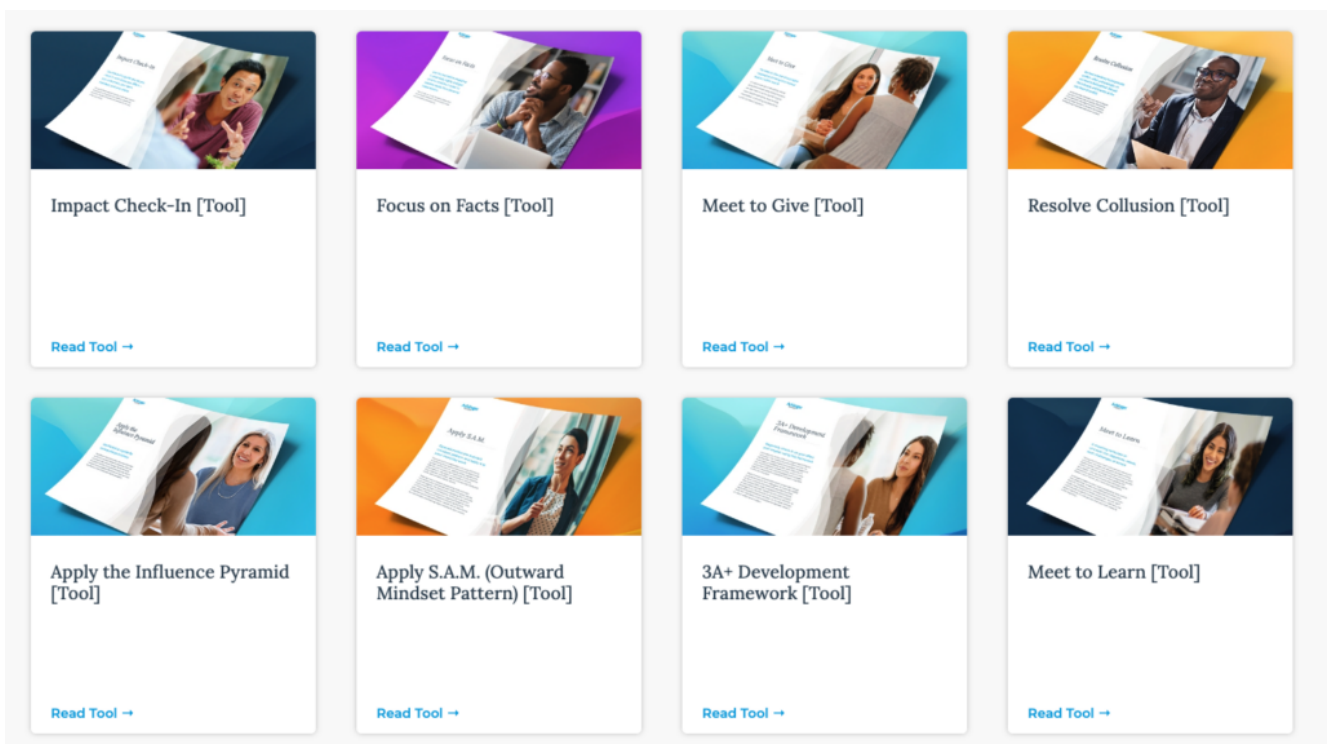
Measuring the ROI of leadership team development

As you invest in leadership development, it is important to build a success plan to connect training to strategic goals. Success metrics vary by industry, but here are some general
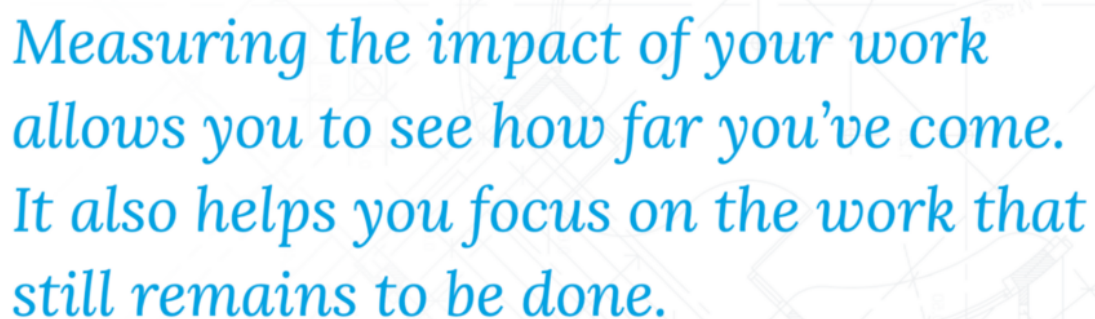
guidelines for measuring both organizational health metrics and the KPIs (key performance indicators) that track the success of your efforts:

Organizational health metrics

The four key areas you should be measuring to gauge the success of your leadership team development are:

- Trust
- Collaboration
- Alignment
- Communications

These metrics are typically obtained through periodic surveys and individual or group interviews. We recommend getting a pulse check before, during, and after implementing the steps in this guide for a true indicator of change.

Measuring the impact of your work allows you to see how far you've come. It also helps you focus on the work that still remains to be done.

Key performance indicators

Key performance indicators (KPIs) are quantifiable measures used to evaluate the success of an organization, employee, or team in meeting objectives for performance. While some KPIs like job satisfaction or psychological safety apply to all roles and industries, many will be unique to your organization.

Some areas you may want to consider including in your success

plan are:

- Revenue growth
- Operational efficiency
- Budget reduction
- Job satisfaction
- Turnover and talent retention
- Employee engagement and satisfaction score

Conclusion

While there's not a singular "right way" to structure team leader development, one thing is certain: in order to inspire real and lasting change, you have to go beyond simply telling your leaders what you want them to do. Instead, focus on challenging your leaders' existing way of thinking, which in turn will change how they see themselves and those around them. This shift in mindset is the root of real change—and where you're going to see long-term results.

To learn more about transforming culture from the top down, check out our guide: **[The Leadership Gold Standard: A Blueprint to Culture Transformation from the Top Down](#)**.