LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

THE EXECUTIVE EXPERIENCE

TRAINING INDUSTRY

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership development is a paradox in corporate training. While programs meant for leaders often command a healthy share of an L&D function's training budget, such programs also tend to serve the fewest number of employees. Why? As stated in Bass's "Handbook of Leadership," "Leadership makes the difference."[1] As such, it makes sense that L&D would invest resources into shaping the human capital that, in turn, shapes a company's strategy and direction. Over the last century, leadership research has evolved considerably.

[1] Bass, B. M., & Bass, R. (2008). The Bass handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications. New York: Free Press.

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On one hand, there has been a substantial amount of energy spent on exploring different models of leadership, including aspects of what makes a leader a "great leader," by examining the personalities and behaviors of leaders or looking at how leaders interact with their followers. On the other hand, there has been a deluge of training interventions that give inexperienced leaders the tools to manage effectively. Such interventions also provide experienced leaders with an expanded skill set for taking the helm of a business. In the wake of this march toward understanding and increasing the effectiveness of leaders, many leadership training providers and internal L&D departments have focused on what types of training to offer for the leaders who occupy the real estate at the top of organizational charts.

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But why are such training interventions necessary? Aren't leaders born and not made? Are some leaders climbing the ranks only to reach the top of the mountain and spit into the wind, because they didn't have "it" from the start? The truth is the opposite: Leadership is a process, rather than an innate quality. In fact, one of the earliest books on leadership, published by Henry Tralle in 1925,[2] noted that the personal attributes necessary to lead effectively require effort to cultivate and enrich over time.

What can make the development of senior leaders and company executives difficult is the wide array of knowledge, skills and abilities that come together in many combinations to drive business outcomes. The underlying problem is that for decades, L&D has been grappling with the notion that "the definition of leadership has no discernible boundaries, for leadership itself may be found in all walks of life, in all degrees."[3]

Even when a company has settled upon a working definition of what constitutes a leader, there is still the ugly truth that "there is no best way to develop managers."[4] That said, research has demonstrated repeatedly that leadership development has a positive impact on a company's performance.[5] This impact isn't limited to one area; a recent review of leadership training research showed that leadership development programs are effective across all four levels of the Kirkpatrick evaluation framework.[6] In other words, leadership training has a positive impact on learning, transfer and business results.

[2] Tralle, H. E. (1925). Psychology of leadership. New York, NY: Century.
[3] Blake, W. D., & Harriman, A. E. (1949). The selection and training of executives. Journal of Social Psychology, 29, 29-35.
[4] Digman, L. A. (1978). How well-managed organizations develop their executives. Organizational Dynamics, 63-80.

[5] M Akrofi, S. (2016). Evaluating the effects of executive learning and development on organizational performance: Implications for developing senior manager and executive capabilities. International Journal of Training and Development, 20(3), 177-199.
[6] Lacerenza, C. N., Reyes, D. L., Marlow, S. L., Joseph, D. L., & Salas, E. (2017). Leadership training design, delivery, and implementation: A meta-analysis. Journal of Applied Psychology, 102(12), 1686-1718.

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Why talk about leadership development if it appears to be working? According to Training Industry estimates, the average organization spends a minimum of about four percent of its training budget on leadership training. Extrapolating this average against a 2017 market estimate of $161.1 billion for both internal and external training resources in North America, the spend on leadership training falls out to approximately $6.4 billion. With such an investment, intended to serve the very stakeholders and decision-makers who affect both L&D budgets and the organization's strategic emphasis on training, it is incumbent upon organizations to deliver best-in-class training to these individuals. In other words, leadership training can't be an act of blind faith. Otherwise, it's a waste of time, resources and company culture.

To better understand this topic, Training Industry, Inc. conducted research exploring how organizations deliver training to senior organizational leaders and the impacts that training has on their jobs. Over the course of this report, we'll examine the responses of over 250 executives to a survey about their training experiences, how they relate to their roles and how these factors correlate with each other.

Leadership training can't be an act of blind faith.

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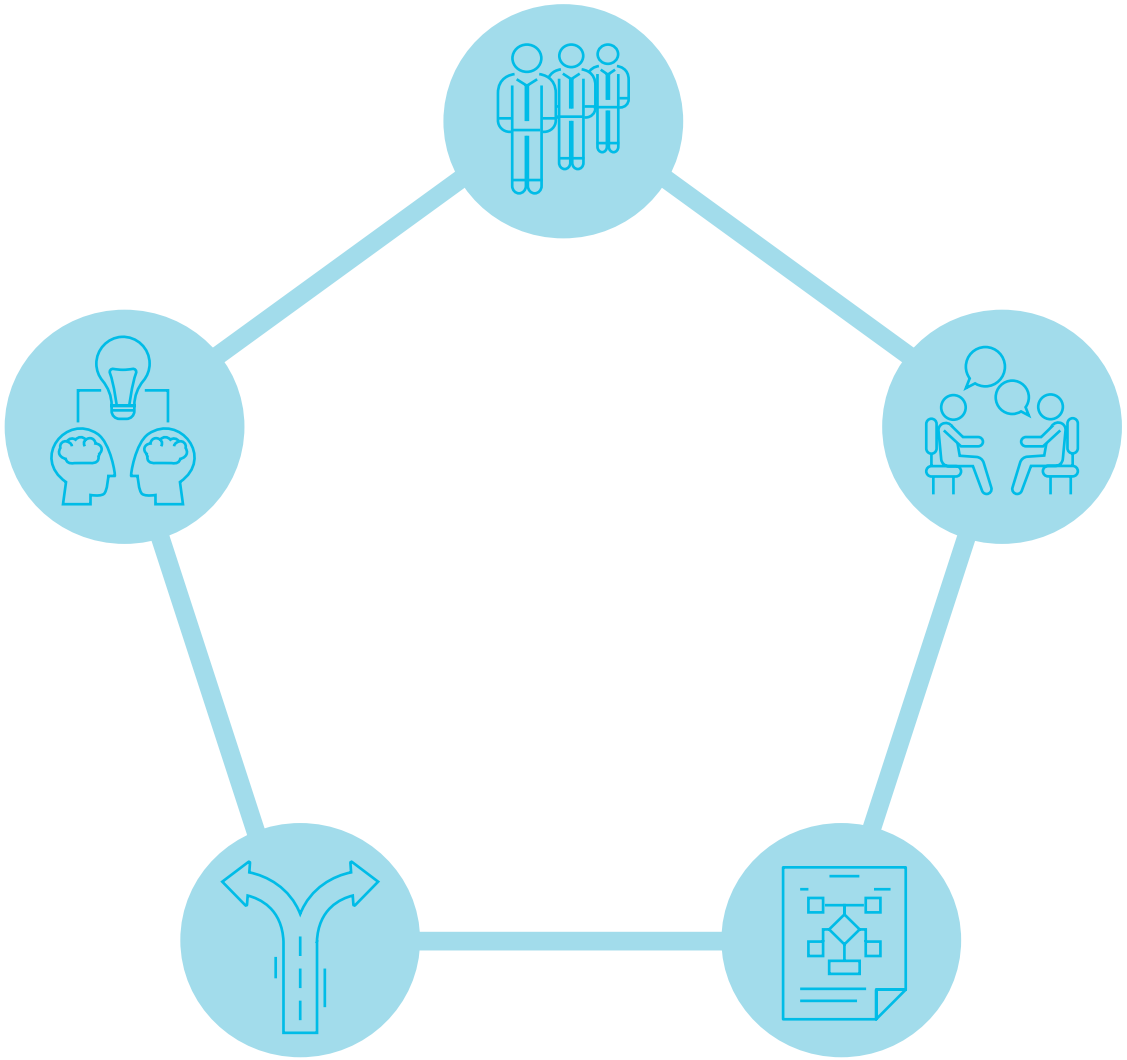

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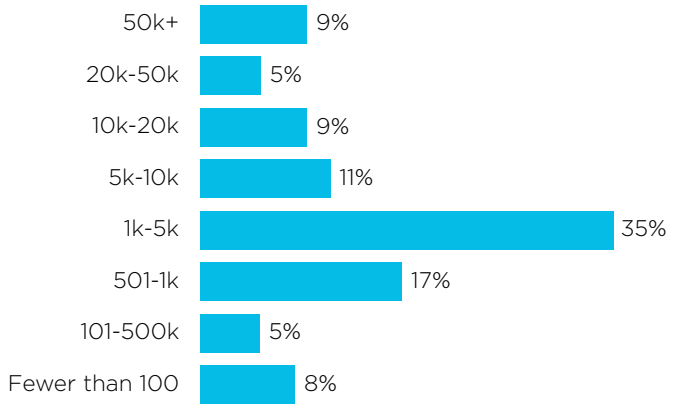
TRAINING INDUSTRY, INC. RESEARCH PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

All research findings described within this report are based on Training Industry, Inc. research data collected in 2017 and 2018. The following are general demographics of the 264 participants whose data comprise the majority of the insights in this research.

Below are general demographics of participants in this research.

Company Size

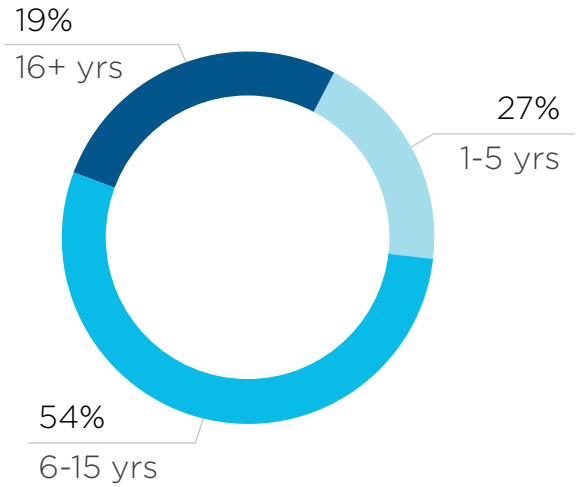


Top 7 Industries

(representing 75% of respondents)

1 | Technology
2 | Banking/Finance
3 | Construction
4 | Business Services
5 | Government
6 | Health Care
7 | Manufacturing

Job Tenure



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New insights create new ways for L&D to do business. Training Industry, Inc. provides data-driven analysis and best practices for the corporate training professional by capturing the perspectives of learning professionals, learners and training companies across a diverse array of industries. Our informational resources are shared with hundreds of thousands of monthly website visitors and email subscribers.

The Training Industry, Inc. research team of experienced analysts relies on rigorous survey practices, including targeted sampling and advanced analytics. These practices are based on validated principles of measurement to answer both qualitative and quantitative questions across a variety of research designs, including market research, buyer personas, learner impact analysis, competency models and organizational assessment tools. Our expertise and audience reach allow us to provide learning professionals with in-depth market intelligence and thought leadership insights to reveal where the corporate training market is now and where it is headed in the future.

Our research harnesses the collective wisdom of learning professionals and their unique perspectives on the business of training to inform our continuing professional development programs, including events, classes, certificates and the Certified Professional in Training Management (CPTM™) certification program. We circulate these insights throughout the training market using content marketing, including webinars, infographics, email marketing, and our award-winning magazine and website.

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