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# Bersin & Associates Leadership Development Maturity Model®

## About the Author



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Much more than training, leadership development is a complex process for systematically and strategically developing the skills, knowledge and behaviors of leaders, which require organizational support and alignment with other talent management functions.<sup>3</sup>

## Understanding the Maturity Model

Through our research, we have determined that there are four levels of organizational maturity as they relate to leadership development (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> Each level of the Bersin & Associates Leadership Development Maturity Model is described as follows.

Figure 1: Bersin & Associates Leadership Development Maturity Model®<sup>2</sup>



Source: Bersin & Associates, 2006.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, *High-Impact Leadership Development 2009: Market Overview and Executive Summary*, Bersin & Associates / Kim Lamoureux, November 2009. Available to research members at [www.bersin.com/library](http://www.bersin.com/library) or at [www.bersin.com/hild](http://www.bersin.com/hild).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



In addition to improving leadership training programs, this Leadership Development Maturity Model will help you create an enterprisewide understanding and adoption of leadership development strategies.<sup>6</sup>

The majority of companies have relatively immature leadership development strategies – only 26 percent of companies are at Maturity Levels 3 and 4.<sup>7</sup>

## Level 1 – Inconsistent Management Training

At Level 1, organizations have little or no management support. They provide a catalog of courses that are not built around a strategic plan, are not progressive by level and do not cultivate skills sets in any specific areas. Managers are on their own for development and training at these organizations, and either “sink or swim.”

## Level 2 – Structured Leadership Training

Organizations at Level 2 begin to focus on and address the development of leadership skills. A core set of competencies<sup>4</sup> has been defined. The program curriculum is structured and designed to build skills sets based on the defined core competencies<sup>5</sup>. Senior executives are beginning to embrace leadership development as a strategic imperative.

## Level 3 – Focused Leadership Development

A company can be classified at Level 3 of the Maturity Model when the intent is not to develop individual leaders but, rather, to develop the organization. Culture-changing events occur and the focus is on preparing for the future. A blended-delivery approach is applied, and senior executives promote and participate in leadership development activities.

## Level 4 – Strategic Leadership Development

At Level 4, senior management support is exemplary and leadership development is viewed as an integral part of the overall talent management system. Program content is aligned with strategic priorities and is delivered by means of a truly comprehensive learning format.

<sup>4</sup> “Competencies” refers to a set of clearly defined skills, behaviors and knowledge that are used to evaluate, assess and develop people.

<sup>5</sup> “Core values” are higher-level competencies (e.g., quality, customer service) that are often defined by the CEO, and used universally to evaluate and coach every employee in the company. Typically there are only a few of these (five or fewer) and they are widely marketed throughout the organization.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, *High-Impact Leadership Development 2009: Market Overview and Executive Summary*, Bersin & Associates / Kim Lamoureux, November 2009.

<sup>7</sup> For more information, *Leadership Development Factbook® 2009: Benchmarks and Analysis of Leadership Development Spending, Staffing and Programs*, Bersin & Associates / Kim Lamoureux and Karen O’Leonard, October 2009. Available to research members at [www.bersin.com/library](http://www.bersin.com/library) or for purchase at [www.bersin.com/ldfactbook](http://www.bersin.com/ldfactbook).



## Key Components of Leadership Development

Each level of the Bersin & Associates Leadership Development Maturity Model® is based on an assessment of six key components or best practices of leadership development, as follows:<sup>8</sup>

1. Maintain strong executive engagement;
2. Define tailored leadership competencies;
3. Align with business strategy;
4. Target all levels of leadership;
5. Integrate with talent management; and,
6. Apply a comprehensive program design.

In addition to these six best practices, other key points about the Maturity Model that should be noted include the following.

- Organizations will typically fall into one of these four categories or may find that they are straddling more than one level, given the maturity of the different components within each level.
- Organizations can move from one Maturity Level to another, either upward or downward.
- Financial resources do not determine the Level of Maturity a company can achieve.
- Company size does not impact an organization's ability to reach or attain higher Levels of Maturity.
- It is not necessarily wrong to be in a lower Level of Maturity; however, each successive level will produce better results.

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<sup>8</sup> For more information, *High-Impact Leadership Development 2009: Trends, Best Practices, Industry Solutions and Vendor Profiles*, Bersin & Associates / Kim Lamoureux, November 2008. Available to research members at [www.berin.com/library](http://www.berin.com/library) or for purchase at [www.berin.com/hild](http://www.berin.com/hild).

Forty-three percent of organizations with strong executive engagement target all levels of leadership.<sup>9</sup>

## The Best Practices of Leadership Development

As we just discussed, six best practices directly contribute to the success and achievement of building a high-impact leadership development strategy. These following best practices have been proven to:

- Drive improved business results;
- Increase the quality of the leadership pipeline;
- Improve the teamwork, engagement and retention of leaders; and,
- Increase overall employee retention.

### 1. Maintain Strong Executive Engagement

Senior management engagement is the most critical component for success and impacts every other best practice that is necessary for high-impact leadership development (such as applying a comprehensive learning strategy, targeting all levels of management and talent management integration).

### 2. Define Tailored Leadership Competencies

Competencies are the foundation for talent management systems, and they form the basis for leadership development efforts and activities. Defined competencies enable companies to develop strategies and programs that align with building the necessary skills for leaders to drive organizational performance.

### 3. Align Leadership Strategy with Business Strategy

Aligning leadership development activities with the business strategies and goals of the company is critical for building skills, knowledge and experiences of leaders that are relevant and essential for the company's success. To do this requires a clear understanding of the strategic priorities and key business levers for the long-term success of the organization.

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<sup>9</sup> For more information, *High-Impact Leadership Development 2009: Trends, Best Practices, Industry Solutions and Vendor Profiles*, Bersin & Associates / Kim Lamoureux, November 2008.

## 4. Target All Levels of Management

Effective leadership development is not about training individuals – the primary objective should be the development of a leadership team capable of moving a company forward and meeting key strategic objectives. To do this, every layer of management has to be equally prepared.

## 5. Integrate with Talent Management Processes

Everything that occurs in talent management has an impact on leadership development – from recruiting to learning and performance to career development. Leadership development and creating the necessary bench strength within a company require that companies focus on every aspect of a leader’s lifecycle within the company. All processes for assessing and developing leaders need to feed one another.

## 6. Apply a Comprehensive Program Design

Leadership programs are unique from one organization to another. Some are classroom-only and some are exclusively online. Programs at the most mature organizations contain a cadre of different learning and delivery media and activities.

## Summary

Given the complexities of executing strategic leadership development programs, companies continue to struggle with a number of challenges. The companies that struggle with leadership development the most do not have support or involvement from senior management, and learning is not a focus at the enterprise level.

The companies that have solid leadership development programs:

- Have strong executive engagement;
- Consider learning a priority;
- Have established programs for each level of management; and,
- Have leadership development woven into the company’s overall talent management system.

**The companies that struggle with leadership development the most do not have support or involvement from senior management, and learning is not a focus at the enterprise level.**

However, we have found that many companies which do leadership development well are still struggling with:

- The application of the learning back on the job;
- Holding people accountable for development;
- The mobility of participants and time away from work; and,
- Ensuring alignment with the business strategy.



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## About This Research

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