

UNLOCK THE POWER OF HUMAN

Five Surefire Ways to Connect Strategy to Leadership Development

In today's rapidly evolving workplace, it's time to unleash the full breadth of capability and creativity your people bring, not just what's in their job description. What will it take? Rather than a one-size-fits-all approach to leadership development, we believe you must connect your people development to your organization's strategy and design learning based on people's needs. Knowing and acting on what people need at the strategy level – what we call **empathy 2.0** – will **unlock the power of human** for your organization.

Based on our 30 years of experience helping clients navigate talent challenges, these five proven actions ensure your talent development supports your strategic initiatives and engages the people who choose to work alongside you, even as they grow.



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1. Strategize first, then focus.

Organizations traditionally focused on broad, perpetual development to build individual competency and capability over time. This long-term approach is important to personal development, but it doesn't keep pace with change in the business. Let your strategy determine the core skills your people need most right now, and augment your overall leadership competency model to focus on a select few that drive the strategy. This is the time to discern which skills will have the greatest impact. Once you've isolated those skills, go after them hard in 12- to 18-month cycles with custom content focused on what matters most to help your people grow themselves and the business.



Key to success: Interview your executive team and high-potential talent to uncover which core competencies will make a major difference in successfully executing your business strategy. This will help you determine your highest priority for the next 12 to 18 months.

2. Get specific.

Think beyond broad competency categories and descriptions. The trouble is that they can mean anything to anyone. To accelerate skill building and support the strategy, identify the most meaningful core behaviors and embed them into daily routines and practices. Getting to specific behaviors also allows you to measure when, where, and how often your people are practicing high-performing behaviors, so you can adjust and accelerate your approach as needed.



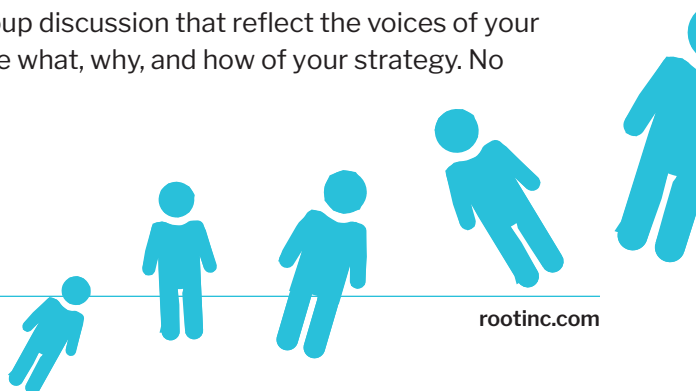
Key to success: After you've identified a select few competencies, explicitly describe specific behaviors for each and be clear about what they look like in action. These behaviors will become the basis of your talent development program.

3. Make it real and authentic.

Now that you have the connection to the strategy and a clear focus, make it real for people! Always begin with the why, what, and how so learners can easily connect the dots between what the business is talking about and how they can help achieve it. Deepen this connection by getting a senior leader to share the information, either in person or via a short video in a workshop or microlearning. Making the strategy real and authentic increases relevance, allows people to personally connect to it, and makes the learning more memorable and actionable.



Key to success: Create a high-impact program that is actionable, relatable, and speaks directly to your people. Craft stories, visualization, data, and group discussion that reflect the voices of your talent and customers and help everyone embrace the what, why, and how of your strategy. No more boring learning!



4. Don't neglect the basics.

While it's critical to go after specific skills that help propel your strategy, don't abandon the basics of leading people and leading change. Core leadership skills such as delegating, sharing the big picture, coaching, building relationships, setting expectations, and rewarding and recognizing people are required for project leaders, team leaders, managers, and thought leaders if they're to thrive in their roles. These are the fundamentals from which all strategy-specific skills are built. For example, building team resilience may be critical to realizing your strategy, but it will be a struggle if leaders don't know how to first build trust. This focus is best delivered at key moments in career growth, such as first-time manager programs, high-potential leader programs, and leading change programs that are either independent from or complement your focus on strategy.



Key to success: Don't let basic development fall to the wayside. Use tried-and-true methods and customize your content to support your talent – from individual contributors to new managers and change leaders – at each career stage (for example, after hiring, with key promotions, and when shifting teams).

5. Put people first.

This one is harder than it sounds. Putting people first when it comes to leadership development requires that you take into consideration and design solutions based on what people really need to adopt new skills and behaviors. Don't succumb to the pressure of "getting it done." Instead, recognize that by using a people-centered, empathy 2.0 approach you are making change stick – change that is critical to your strategy and current business goals.



Key to success: Consider the learner's need for learning to be a journey rather than an event. Design time for practice in the flow of work, collaboration with trusted peers, and reflection on their own and with their next-level leaders.

What are you waiting for? It's time to cultivate your people, bridge the gap between your talent development and business strategy, and see real results. Start a conversation with Root's talent experts to accelerate change in your organization and help your talent rock your strategy.

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