

Leadership Development for Millennials

# Developing Effective Leaders Using Bridge

Millennials have [now taken over](#) as the leading generation--projecting to grow to be 75% of the workforce by 2025. Far from being job-hoppers, they're [50 times more likely to plan a long-term future with your company](#) if you provide them with a high-trust culture with career development and leadership opportunities.

Millennial frontline leaders are key in creating the day-to-day experiences that bring out their teams' full potential. To lead this charge, millennial leaders need to consistently feel that they're informed, involved, and clear on expectations. As an HR leader, you can ensure managers are hitting these marks by measuring their

teams' experiences. When and where gaps exist, develop coaching and development programs to ensure that all managers have the skills to build a high-trust experience for all leaders, especially the essential front line.

But you need to act now—[86% percent of companies don't have deep leadership benches](#), and the new pace of work requires young talent to move up the ranks. This guide is your action plan, outlining the steps required to turn your millennials into the leaders you'll need to thrive in the future of work.

## STRATEGY 1

# Start with the Why

[Seventy-seven percent of millennials](#) stated their “ability to excel in their job is contingent upon deriving meaning from their work.” For starters, companies must uncover what a meaningful career actually means. The answer is different for every millennial on your team.

Easier said than done, right? Simply asking younger employees what they want to do or which skills they’d like to develop can only get you so far. It’s best to dig deep on the individual level, enlisting managers during 1:1 conversations to ask questions such as:

- How did you get to where you are today?
- What motivates you to do what you do?
- What does the pinnacle of your career look like?



“Being a manager” or any other job title doesn’t go deep enough. All leadership development activities should be linked to the aspiring manager’s career drivers and goals.

## STRATEGY 2

# Ensure the Must-Haves are Present

The modern workplace demands a modified approach to managing people. A combination of soft, technical, and behavioral skills are required for effective leadership.

Groom upcoming leaders with the skills they need to inspire their direct reports in ways managers never have before, with a focus on:

- Coaching
- Communication
- Empowerment
- Productivity and results
- Career development
- Vision and strategy
- Adaptability and responsiveness

The soft skills required are the hardest to train for but here are a variety of tools and techniques to develop the managers your company needs. Two of the biggest areas for development: Coaching and communication.

### STRATEGY 3

# Adopting a Coaching Mindset

Most new managers can't flip a switch and go from individual contributor to coach. Coaches don't do the actual work. They set expectations and an overall strategy, then let the player do what they've been paid to do.

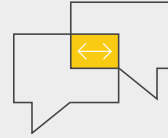
Help your future leaders develop the necessary goods as soon as possible, including how to:

#### **Delegate (and inspire) vs. dictate**

[Micromanagement](#) doesn't work for many reasons, including high turnover and low productivity. Help aspiring leaders learn how to set clear expectations and goals, then trust employees to manage their own methods for getting there.

#### **Establish and track goals**

No one likes not having a say in their work goals. Yet, only [30% of employees agree their managers involve them in goal setting](#). Train your millennials to collaborate on setting goals and assigning tasks to [keep employees 3.6 times more engaged](#). Development tools make it easy for both parties to create tasks, assign goals, and track progress at the individual and company level.



#### **Give and receive constructive feedback**

Establish positive feedback behaviors early on, training managerial prospects to:

- **Ask open-ended questions** - it's too easy to end a conversation with a quick yes or no. Managers must frame questions in ways that help employees reveal what's behind an issue or arrive at a conclusion. ("Yes, and?" is a go-to tool for digging deeper.)
- **Practice active listening** - waiting to talk is not listening. Teach managers to eliminate distractions and actually listen to what employees have to say (verbally and with tone and body language) to help guide conversations with direct reports.

#### **Connect with outside experts as needed**

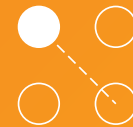
No new manager will have all the skills required to develop direct reports. By spending their time assessing needs, then facilitating the right connections for necessary development—mentorships, coaches, or even peers for microcoaching—these managers empower employees for greatness. Plus, ["connector" managers are proven to be the most effective](#).

### Create a safe and transparent environment

[Transparency is linked to high performance among leading companies](#), and it's what your workers want. Help young managers learn how to be as transparent as possible with direct reports about what is going on with the company, as well as individual performance or behavioral issues. Before any authentic conversations can take place, there must be psychological safety and trust.

### Hold employees accountable (including themselves)

Less [than half of employees in one Gallup study agree their managers hold them accountable](#) for their performance goals. Probably because accountability requires awkward conversations. Train managers to hold direct reports responsible for goal attainment, but also have the self-awareness to hold themselves accountable, too. Employees who are held accountable are 2.5 times as engaged.



**“The best managers lead with strategy and vision and allow people to figure out the tactics and way forward on their own.”**

— Troy Anderson, Director of Talent Management, Bridge

## STRATEGY 4

# Communication IRL is Required

One of the most crucial skills a manager can possess is communication. And millennials need a lot of love in this area, as [68% of them report avoiding face-to-face convos with coworkers](#).

Having tough convos are the name of the game. But most of your aspiring managers won't be born with the tools and techniques required. Start managers off on the right foot with how to conduct an effective 1:1:

- Kick things off on a positive note with, What recent work are you most proud of?
- Lead with the employee's talking points / agenda items
- Give and request feedback
- Prioritize outcomes over tactics
- Keep a focus on positive, strengths-based feedback whenever possible
- Discuss day-to-day work and career growth opportunities

Self-awareness is the secret sauce. No matter how much they huffed or puffed as an individual contributor, managers must learn to maintain constant awareness and regulation of their emotions in front of direct reports.

## 4 Conversations, 4 the Win

Managers need to get comfortable with asking employees lots of questions. Enlist your management material to master the conversations that will dominate their role, day in and day out.

### Conversations: Get to Know Every Direct Report

Foundation conversations establish the baseline managers need to have maximum impact. From identifying personality types and strengths, to uncovering skills and development goals, foundation convos are crucial for effective management.

Sample foundation questions include:

- How did you get to the role you have now?
- When you picture your ideal career, what does it look like?
- Do you have a plan to get there?
- What motivates you to do your best work?
- How do you like to give and receive feedback?
- Do you prefer to work independently, or in a group?

In addition to asking questions, new managers can use a range of tools to get insider intel on their performers, including:

- [Career Drivers](#) cards
- Personality tests
- Strength assessments
- [Employee directory](#) profiles

### Connection Conversations: Making Work Relationships Work

Trust and authenticity are the mainstays of solid manager-employee relationships, and connection conversations are a great way to build both. Train upcoming managers on taking an active interest in their direct reports (while avoiding lawsuit-inducing questions).

Typical questions managers could ask include:

- What are your hobbies?
- Do you like sports?
- How's your work-life balance?
- What can I do to make your life at work better?

Due to the distractions and prying ears of #officelife, these convos should take place at a local coffee shop or some other location where both parties can let their guard down.



### Progress Conversations: Enabling Productivity + Engagement

Checking in on the tasks at hand will be a huge part of any new manager's workload. Enter progress conversations. These conversations will (usually) be the easiest to have, as topics are top-of-mind and most pressing.

However, managers shouldn't be so transaction-focused that they let the relationships slide.

Teach upcoming leaders to:

- Allow the employee to arrive at the conclusion
- Hold employees accountable while leaving emotions out of it
- Track and set goals together
- Celebrate milestones

Sample progress questions include:

- How do you feel about your workload?
- Do you have what you need to get your work done?
- Are any project deadlines at the risk of being missed?
- How can I help you be more effective?
- Anything else you'd like to discuss?

### Development Conversations: Move Forward with Meaning

Employees want to chat with their leaders about career growth on the regular—monthly or at least quarterly. And the best leadership development is employee-led and manager-driven.

The good news is, your wannabe managers should already be familiar with having career drivers and other types of conversations with their own leaders. All they have to do is flip the script, with a little help (and structure).

**Instead of leaving new managers to wing it, embolden them with tools that enable structured conversations, including:**

- A high-level checklist for career discussions
- A framework for uncovering their career drivers
- Shared agendas for 1:1s
- Scripts to guide conversations

Get creative in the tools you can provide to help managers conduct emotionally charged or complex conversations with as much structure as needed.

**Sample development conversations:**

- What are you most proud of lately?
- Are you being challenged in ways that get you closer to your goals?
- What would you like to learn in the next three months?
- Any new projects pique your interest?

**Structured Career Conversations Made Easy**

At Instructure, we created a set of Career Drivers cards that make it simple for managers to have structured, yet meaningful development conversations. Employees complete a card-sorting exercise to prioritize their career motivators, and discuss how well each one is currently being fulfilled.



**Confidence + Confidence = MVP Managers**

The social and behavioral skills required to be effective leaders won't happen overnight. Use multiple methods to develop millennial managers, including:

- Frequent practice through simulation and role-play
- Peer assessment and feedback
- Targeted coaching
- Self-reflection and model response
- Formal and self-guided learning

STRATEGY 5

# Today's Leadership Development: Urgent, Multi-Faceted, and Ongoing

Developing the next generation of leaders should already be happening in your organization. There's simply no time to wait for the right time. Get managers up to speed as quickly as possible with the 4 Es of Leadership Development:

## The Four E's of Leadership Development

Education	Experience	Exposure	Evaluation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Goal setting, feedback</li><li>• Development coaching</li><li>• Understanding people and teams</li><li>• Product, service, and operations</li><li>• Business, financial, and industry knowledge</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Various functional roles and technical skill</li><li>• Project, initiative, and program leadership</li><li>• Leading teams and managers of teams</li><li>• Leading a business, P&amp;L, growth, turnaround</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mentors, coaches, and advisors</li><li>• Senior and executives</li><li>• Global roles and international assignments</li><li>• Customers, partners, ecosystems</li><li>• Growth, recession, turnaround</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct feedback on personal style, traits, strengths, and weakness</li><li>• Self-reflection and self-improvement ideas</li><li>• Striving to improve and self-correct</li><li>• Internal growth, constant striving to be better</li></ul>





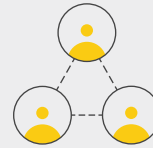
### Education

Of course, any leadership development program will have an educational element. But that's where the dev stops for most organizations. Learning through education can only get wannabe managers so far. Provide instruction and coaching on high-level concepts like goal-setting, industry ins and outs, and the like. But don't hesitate to let leadership trainees dive in.



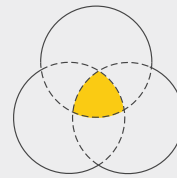
### Experience

Take your millennials from scenarios and simulations to the real world, allowing them to lead short-term projects, manage small teams, and even try on various leadership roles and functions within the organization.



### Exposure

Connecting with fellow leaders for social learning is invaluable. Allow your up and comers to observe other managers in action. Exposure to how seasoned leaders handle situations and solve problems can help them avoid learning everything the hard way.



### Evaluation

Once your managers-in-development think they've honed the skills required, it's time for the real education to begin. In addition to their newfound managerial duties, your millennial leaders should still take part in ongoing coaching, mentorships, and feedback activities to help them become even more effective.

There is no program end date for the development of your current and future leaders—millennial or otherwise. Continuous learning is the only way your company can adapt to whatever the future throws at it.

However, new managers can't evolve with instruction alone. Utilize education, exposure, experience, and evaluation through:

- Conversations
- Coaching
- Mentorships
- Role-playing and practice
- Formal and self-directed learning paths
- Connections

## BRIDGE

The [Bridge Employee Development Platform](#) is designed to empower your company on all fronts, while keeping your people front and center. Learn more at [instructure.com/bridge](https://instructure.com/bridge). See Bridge in action on your terms—[schedule a demo or free trial](#).

**“Leadership development today is much more like what happens in the military: we have to ‘throw people into the water’ and ‘teach them to swim.’ I believe the most effective companies now promote people into leadership before they’re ready, and then give them the tools and support to learn on the job, innovate with new ideas, and grow into their jobs in place. The idea of ‘waiting until someone is ready’ just doesn’t let the organization keep up.”**

— Josh Bersin, HR analyst and industry thought leader