

## Significance of Leadership Training for First Time Managers

**\*Ashish Parnani**

### **Abstract**

Of all the things that have changed over the last few centuries, and particularly the massive amount of change experienced during the last 100 years, the one constant that remains is for great dynamic leadership. Whether it is for leading nations, organisations, teams or even in relationships effective and efficient leadership is sought by all. In business, since everyone is a potential customer, we meet contrary people regularly. So, not just to survive, but to be a viable and successful business person demands us to have the skills to be able to deal with all sorts of people. In order to bring the transforming innovation, development and excellence in Business Management, first there is a need to bring transformation in Leadership. A Leader is not the person who is a surviving individual in the organization, but a growing individual who helps others to grow.

**Keywords** - Leadership, First Time Managers, Training

### **Introduction - Leadership Challenge**

Of all the things that have changed over the last few centuries, and particularly the massive amount of change experienced during the last 100 years, the one constant that remains is for great dynamic leadership. Whether it is for leading nations, organisations, teams or even in relationships effective and efficient leadership is sought by all. Insufficient leadership ability is part of the problem. The shift in focus from development of the individual heroic leader, to the unfolding, emergent realization of leadership as a collective activity is intentional—and very, very important.

### **India and Leadership**

India's phenomenal growth has resulted in the creation of a new business environment characterized by new strategy, structure, systems and innovative approaches. The biggest challenge that organizations are facing in this environment is that of survival which depends on its ability to succeed. With the high rate of growth and entry of new and diverse industries, there is a need to design potent corporate management systems and processes. Successful corporate transformation depends on the articulation of a concise and compelling vision in the business success model which would require organizations to develop global leaders across all levels.

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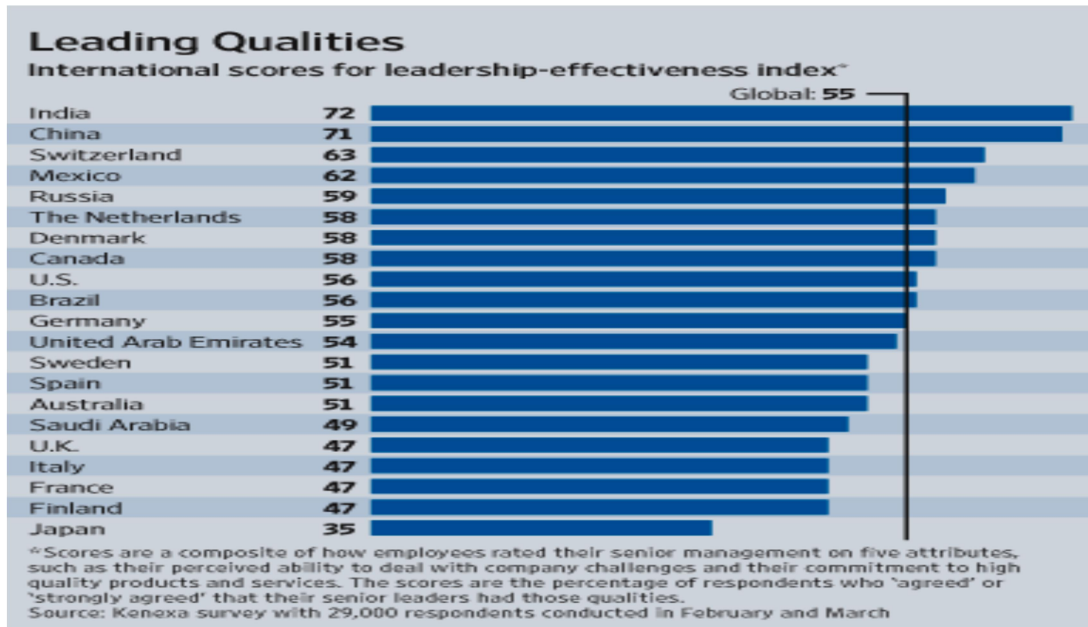


Fig. 1 Leadership Effectiveness Index

The people who have studied history and remember the Movie *Titanic* may know that it wasn't the iceberg that caused the ship to sink but the failed Leadership. The *Titanic's* ill-fated voyage was Captain E.J. Smith's retirement trip. He was headed for the easy life. All he had to do was to reach New York. God only knows why he ignored the facts, why he disregarded seven iceberg warnings from his crew and other ships. The *Titanic* still rests on the bottom of the ocean, but we can resurrect the truth by learning and applying a few lessons to help us become better, dynamic and more powerful Leader.

*The Largest room in the world is the room for improvement.*

-Anonymous

### LinkedIn Research on L&D Managers

According to the LinkedIn study that surveyed 4,136 employees and 844 Learning and Development managers across Australia, India, Japan, and Singapore, 82 percent Indian managers feel that the skills needed to succeed are changing rapidly. The report also found that 45 percent Indian employees left organizations because of lack of Learning and Development (L&D) opportunities.

LinkedIn has recently launched the 'Future of Skills 2016' report for the Asia Pacific region. The study identifies that with ongoing transformation, tech skills dominate the list of rising skills, but non-tech skills such as Social Media Marketing, Compliance, and Human-centered Design also stand out. In India, the top three skills that are witnessing a rise are Robotic Process Automation, Compliance, and Continuous Integration. In fact, critical thinking has emerged as the most sought-after skill in the age of AI and automation. The LinkedIn survey also states that 61 percent of Indian professionals believe that soft skills are needed for career progression. Ruchee Anand, Head of Talent Solutions and Learning Solutions - India at LinkedIn shares, "Our research points to how talent drives business, and skills drive talent today. Certain skills are becoming less in-demand as different skills are needed to succeed, therefore upskilling talent is key for organizations to meet their business goals. Paying

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attention to skills is also crucial in recruitment, as previous job titles may not always be an accurate measure of a professional's capability and adaptability strengths in this new world of work."

Iterating on the L&D landscape in India, the report highlights that while employees and L&D professionals, both, have recognized the need for learning, 60 percent of employees in India feel that time is the most significant barrier they face in pursuing their L&D goals, while 37 percent feel it is the cost factor that acts as a hindrance. From organizations' point of view, 46 percent feel lack of engaging learners act as a barrier to deliver successful L&D programs, while 44 percent of organizations admit that adapting training for first time managers is a challenge.

### **Rainmakers Study for New Managers**

According to a recent 10-year study conducted by Rainmaker Thinking, Inc. (based on interviews with over 10,000 employees and executives at more than 700 different organizations). The day-to-day communication between supervisory managers and direct reports has more impact than any other single factor on employee productivity, quality, morale, and retention.

Immediate supervisors are now the most important people in the workplace. This applies to "immediate supervisors" of any job title and at every level of an organization, from first-line team leaders to senior executives, that is, leaders. This book is for them, and for those preparing to move into leadership roles.

### **Leadership Requires**

- Having a clear and consistent vision and mission (i.e., the chosen direction), communicated effectively.
- Guiding people toward the vision, to be effective in accomplishing the mission.
- Influencing people to willingly follow that direction.

### **Organisation's Role in Training for New Managers**

*"Before my promotion, I was a good-to-excellent chemist. Now, I'm an okay chemist and an okay manager."*

That's how one first-time manager described the letdown of being promoted from individual contributor to being a formal team leader. He is finding that the skills and attributes that made her successful before aren't very helpful for leading others, and she isn't sure what to do differently.

Another recently promoted manager is now responsible for direct reports who used to be his peers. Making the transition from friend to boss is proving harder than he expected.

Both these scenarios are predictable challenges for first-time managers. Far too often, the leader and the organization take for granted just how difficult that transition is from technical or functional expert to a leader of people.

The numbers prove it:

- 20% of first-time managers are doing a poor job, according to their subordinates
- 26% of first-time managers felt they were not ready to lead others to begin with
- Almost 60% said they never received any training when they transitioned into their first leadership role.
- No wonder 50% of managers in organizations are ineffective.

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What can organizations and senior leaders do to help these new leaders and strengthen the leadership pipeline? The 3 key things based on our research, time training first-time managers in the classroom, and firsthand experience.

1. **Be honest about the challenges and show support** - Many first-time managers feel alone, as if they are the only ones to struggle with taking on a management role. They are probably too self-conscious to admit they are having a hard time, as if that would prove they didn't deserve the promotion.

But first-time manager leadership training can help. When new leaders attend [in house or external leadership development program](#), they will be changed individual and more confident as new managers.

One way to help first-time managers not feel so alone is to tell them they are supported, and to show it, too. Help them anticipate challenges and understand the learning curve. Help them shift away from the mindset that success is "all about me" to the new reality that success is about working with and through others. Communicate with them and give them feedback on how they are doing. Let them know they are doing important work and give formal recognition when they do great work.

This type of support does make a difference: *The research shows that when people feel support from their senior managers and organization, they have higher job satisfaction, higher commitment to the organization, and are less likely to want to leave their organization.*

2. **Tailor development to specific needs** - When the organization provide training to their first-time leaders whether in house or with external partners they have to be sure that the content is relevant to them, and not just in the generic way that everyone can use to improve their ability to communicate or develop [their core leadership skills](#).
3. **Create learning networks for first-time managers** - Professors Wendy Murphy and Kathy Kram call these "mentoring circles," where 1-3 mentors are teamed with 4-8 mentees. First-time managers (the mentees) would be able to share stories of success or failure, talk about what they have learned from experience, and be a support system for one another.

If there is a cadre of willing mentors able to lead those circles, great. But even if there are not formal mentors at the head of each of these circles, giving time and space for these new leaders to get together and act as peer mentors to each other can go a long way in making them feel supported and valued by the organization.

### Developing Leadership Skills

1. **Understand that there are different types of leader** - There are as many different types of leadership styles as there are personalities. For example, think of three shepherds.
  - a. The first opens the gate and walks through, allowing the flock to follow, this shepherd leads from the front.
  - b. Another stands behind the sheep and pushes or guides them through, demonstrating a supportive leadership style.
  - c. The third moves from front to back and sometimes to the middle of the flock, demonstrating an interactive leadership style.
2. **Get some training** - If the training budget in the business or organisation permits, a leadership

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course will help to gain a fuller understanding of what leadership is, and, by extension, how it will work the business. Courses usually range from business theory to developing strategy, to understanding business risk. Having well-developed commercial awareness and a good business education will not only give confidence, but will also help to command respect from others in the organisation.

3. **Build self-awareness** - The leadership style is the means by which one communicate. The more self-aware you are, the more effectively it will work for you. This means knowing:
  - a. What is your like?
  - b. What your preferences are?
  - c. What your goals are?
  - d. How you are motivated to achieve them?
  - e. How other people perceive you and your goals?

Numerous tests and questionnaires can be used to help to explore the personality and preferences; they are widely available online as well as from books, consultancies, and other sources. Surveys are also useful, and business schools have valuable data on expected leadership behaviours. Managers can combine information from all these sources to establish a benchmark for yourself.

4. **Use it or lose it** - Some leadership positions require new managers to set the objectives for others to follow. In these situations, scheduling, consultation, and the team building are essential to success. Leaders often need to work as intermediaries between two groups those wanting the results (boards, investors, and so on), and those who will deliver them. Establish good communication channels with both parties that allow everyone to have the information they need at the right time.

The nature of the team first time managers work with depends very much on the organisation and the type of work manager do. For example, work with one small 'core' team all the time, or manager could need to build different teams for each different project to work on, selecting from across the business key people with the right skills to tackle the task at hand.

If the new manager thinks to put a team together from scratch, try to select a group of people that contains a good balance of competent managers and energetic, loyal team members. Teams need consistent, positive energy levels to sustain momentum, so it's critical that to choose a team based on the mix of talent required, rather than on friendships or office politics. If first time managers are trying out new systems or approaches, they must surround themselves with the right people, create a framework for support, and document the process so they can later evaluate what they have done.

### **Conclusion**

This research article highlights the challenges in Indian Leadership due to which people who are being promoted to the managerial level for the first time in their career are not developed rightly. The author suggested and shared data and the practical initiatives if done on regular basis by the organisation and the first-time managers, the performance will surely grow. This study also emphasised on the importance of training intervention for the first-time managers with the help of LinkedIn research and Rainmakers study. The manager for the first can influence and impact several lives if given enough opportunity for Leadership based training and implications.

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