

Why more organisations are extending leadership training beyond the management ranks - hcamag.com

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Executive Summary

This article reports on findings from an Association for Talent Development (ATD) report, sponsored by SIY Global, examining the organisational benefits of extending leadership development beyond traditional management ranks to include all employees, including individual contributors. The central argument is that leadership development programmes, historically concentrated among executives, directors, and managers, are increasingly being offered to the broader workforce. Key statistics cited include 79% of firms reporting improved organisational culture and 68% of learners experiencing improved job performance when leadership development is extended to all levels. The report attributes this trend to growing workplace complexity and the need for critical thinking, collaboration, and agility across all roles. The article concludes that inclusive leadership development strengthens both individual performance and organisational resilience, while also sustaining leadership pipelines. The findings suggest a structural shift in how organisations conceptualise leadership capability — moving from a positional to a distributed model.

Key Insights

1. Nearly 79% of organisations report improved organisational culture when leadership development is extended to all employees, not just managers.
2. 68% of learners experienced improved job performance as a direct result of participating in leadership development programmes.
3. Approximately 66% of organisations currently mandate leadership development programmes specifically for people managers, indicating the traditional concentration of such programmes remains dominant even as broader access grows.

Practical Takeaways

- Organisations extending leadership development to individual contributors report measurable benefits in both culture and performance, suggesting the practice has documented organisational outcomes beyond pipeline building.
- The observed trend toward inclusive leadership development is being driven by increasing workplace complexity, pointing to a contextual factor that organisations evaluating their own programme scope may find relevant.

Critical Analysis

The article draws exclusively from a single ATD report co-sponsored by SIY Global, a leadership development vendor with a direct commercial interest in promoting the expansion of leadership training to all employee levels. No independent replication or third-party validation of the statistics is referenced. The methodology behind the 79% and 68% figures — including sample size, survey design, geographic scope, and how 'improved culture' and 'improved job performance' were operationalised — is not disclosed in the article. This limits the interpretive weight of the specific numbers. The directional finding (that broader leadership development correlates with positive outcomes) is broadly consistent with existing talent development literature, lending it some face validity. However, the article reads primarily as a promotional summary of sponsor-funded research rather than an independent analysis, and no critical perspectives, counterarguments, or limitations are presented.

Organizational Practice

Organisations are described as structuring leadership development programmes primarily for people managers (mandated in approximately 66% of firms), executives, directors, and managers. A growing subset is extending these programmes to all individual contributors, framed as a response to increasing workplace complexity and a desire to build critical thinking, collaboration, and agility across all roles.

Strategic Implications

The data points to a possible structural shift in leadership development investment — from positional targeting toward distributed capability building. If the reported correlations between broad leadership access and cultural and performance outcomes are replicable, this may influence how organisations allocate L&D budgets and define leadership pipeline strategy. The trend also raises questions about programme differentiation and how organisations measure ROI when leadership development is decoupled from promotion readiness.

Validation Status: passed
