



Your Talent Development Strategy Playbook

A Guide to Aligning Your Development
Plan With Business Priorities



Is Your Talent Development Plan Reactive or Strategic?

All too often, talent leaders face an exhausting uphill battle trying to gain support for learning & development initiatives. Similarly, HR Business Partners (HRBPs) may only get pulled in by BU leaders to partner when there are pressing performance issues.

The result? HRBPs are relegated to a reactive “order taker” role, instead of providing value to the business as a proactive strategic partner who drives talent development strategies.

It doesn't have to be that way! When we look at HR and talent leaders who are successful in gaining resources and support for talent development initiatives, we see a common theme.

The winning approach: Leaders who align talent development efforts with business strategy.

How Talent Leaders are Making an Impact

This is not just an abstract strategy; HR and talent leaders are using this approach with incredible success. Here are insights from talent leaders who rely on this best practice to make an impact within their organizations:

Scott Day, VP of HR, PayPal

Align development with global scaling objective.

“We have a stated business objective to democratize financial services on a global scale and reach 1 billion customers. In order to reach this goal, we are developing leaders who can enable transformation and support the pace of change. As such, we are isolating what’s unique about PayPal, clarifying those aspirations and expectations, and equipping our managers and leaders to get there.”



Becky Porter, SVP & Global Head of Talent Development, Capital Group

Shift from process orientation to strategic orientation.

“It was important for us to look at our talent practices and clarify how each aligned with our long-term strategy and business plans. By taking the focus off of HR process steps, we were able to clearly define the outcomes and value we were delivering.”



John Foster, Chief People Officer, TrueCar

Transform development strategy to enable business transformation.

“Our company, TrueCar, is working on a transformation to become a complete consumer experience for buying a car online. Consumer empathy is driving change efforts, and our people development strategies have been adjusted to support this goal. We are investing in leadership and change management support to help build cross functional relationships, improve communication, and align efforts. This has changed our employee onboarding program, manager development program, and leadership development initiatives.”



Your Guide to Aligning Talent Development With Strategic Goals

This playbook will walk you through how to connect your business goals to talent development, create champions for development across your organization, and drive transformational growth for your team members.

Here's the process...



STEP 1

Start with your business objectives



STEP 2

Identify key stakeholders



STEP 3

Surface talent or skill gaps



STEP 4

Align talent development methods



STEP 5

Build champions and expand your impact



STEP 6

Regularly revisit and update your plan

STEP 1

Start With Your Business Objectives

Connecting your organization's strategic goals with specific teams and business units is key to understanding where learning & development can make the biggest impact – and ultimately lead to executive and organizational buy-in.

Begin by entering your organization's **Top Business Objectives** in your talent development strategy worksheet on page 9.

STEP 2

Identify Key Stakeholders

Which stakeholder groups are especially critical for achieving each business objective? Are there certain business units, functions, or teams who are especially important in delivering on this objective?

Return to your strategy worksheet and complete the **Stakeholders** column for each objective.

STEP 3

Surface Talent or Skill Gaps

What are the immediate talent gaps and most pressing development needs for reaching your identified business goals? And which needs or capabilities are surfacing that will be essential to address long-term?

Return to your strategy worksheet and complete the **Talent Gaps** column, considering what the gaps are at each level.

Business Objective Examples:

- ✓ Grow revenue by X%
- ✓ Expand globally to X countries
- ✓ Hire X people in the next year
- ✓ Launch XYZ new product
- ✓ Increase retention by X%
- ✓ Improve employee engagement scores by X
- ✓ Prepare for Q4 IPO
- ✓ Strengthen inclusive culture
- ✓ Develop a succession plan

Talent Development for the “Forgotten Middle”

When it comes to making the tough decision about where to invest in talent development, your mind might immediately go to senior leaders at the top of your organization. Or you might be thinking of those who are brand new to a management role.

But that leaves out one key group: the “forgotten middle”.

These are the mid-level leaders whose teams are directly contributing to key company objectives in their day-to-day. **They manage a large portion of your employees and are the future of your company.** Their development needs are more complex than a typical manager training program can deliver, and yet there often isn’t enough budget for them to receive traditional executive coaching.

When you invest in their development, you not only increase the performance, engagement, and retention of individual leaders, **but you also multiply the positive impact on your organization as they, in turn, coach and develop their teams.**



Empower mid-level leaders within your organization by offering development opportunities to:



Engineering managers to develop soft skills, helping them foster a collaborative, productive environment.



High-potential employees to own their career growth and identify stretch opportunities that tie to business needs.



Sales managers who were promoted based on great sales performance and now need to develop strong leadership skills.



STEP 4

Align Talent Development Methods

How do you plan to address the talent gaps you have identified in your planning worksheet, especially as they apply to mid-level leaders? Consider all of the development methods available and assess which methods will be most effective for addressing each one.

Keep in mind that you can often leverage multiple methods and combine them strategically for higher ROI. For instance, you might provide coaching to activate the insights from a 360 assessment.

Return to your strategy worksheet and complete the **Development Methods** column.

	HIRING	TRAINING	ASSESSMENTS	MENTORING	COACHING
 USE WHEN	You need to acquire more team members with specific skill sets.	You have the right team, but you need to align on a framework or build individual skills.	You need to uncover blindspots and identify strengths and development areas.	You're looking for leaders to share experience, provide inspiration, or instill your culture and values.	You need to develop strategic or interpersonal skills, build agility, and activate sustained growth.
 WATCH OUT FOR	Time to recruit and onboard	Ability to apply and sustain	Need to turn insights to action	Capacity and neutrality	Approach to selection

What existing talent management processes do you need to integrate into your plan, and how might you configure them for leverage? As an example, your People Partners might systematically use IDPs to identify strong candidates for coaching, training, or mentoring.



Individual Development Plans (IDPs)



Performance Reviews



Succession Planning

STEP 5

Build Champions and Expand Your Impact

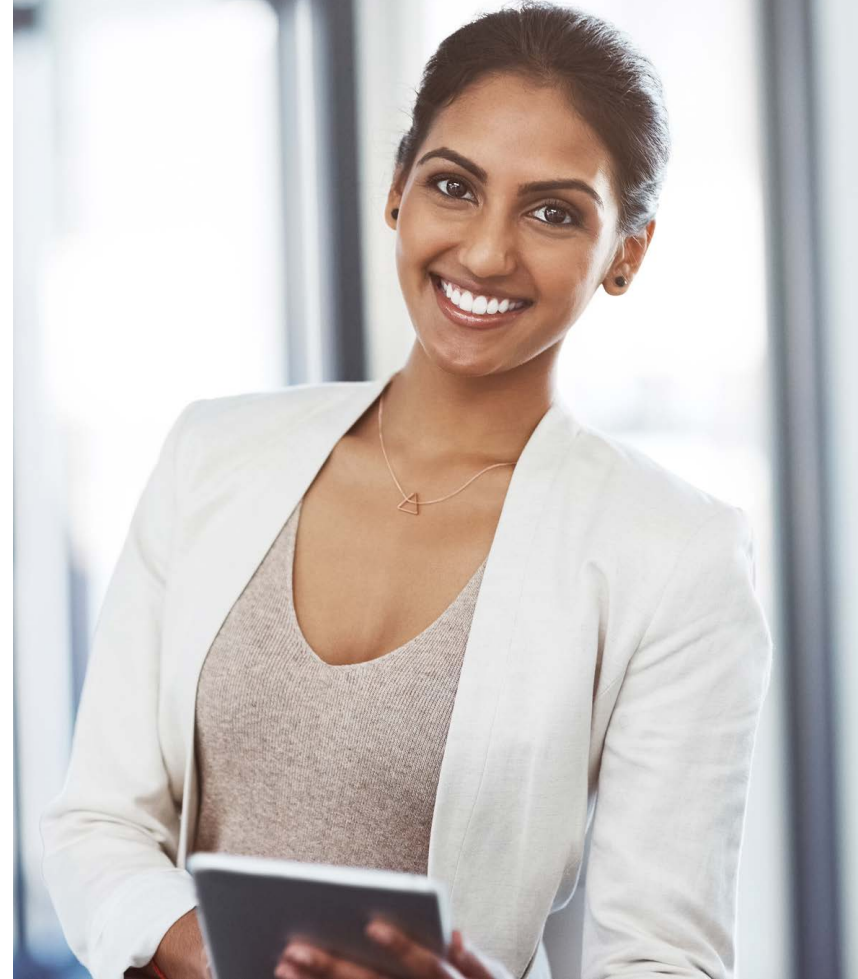
As you align your development plan with business goals, you can often unearth more budget. Instead of relying solely on your central L&D budget, gain buy-in from your business units and leverage their budgets to expand your reach and impact.

1. Reviewing the Stakeholders section of your strategy worksheet, who are three “people-first” leaders who are committed to developing their people and could become champions within key departments or teams?

2. Based on your understanding of business objectives and talent gaps, how might you approach them? And what might be a starting point that is within reach?

3. Consider building a Development Task Force with one exec or purposeful manager from each business unit. Gather their collective input, harness their support and endorsement, and ultimately involve them in your leadership development strategy.

Who would be the leaders from each BU that you would want to include?



STEP 6

Regularly Revisit and Update Your Plan

Finalizing your initial plan is only the start! Take time to regularly reflect on successes, challenges, and shifting business objectives to stay aligned. **Revisit and update your plan based on strategic needs.**

Talent Development Strategy Worksheet

TOP BUSINESS OBJECTIVES For the next year, what are your organization's top business objectives? Be specific about metrics!	KEY STAKEHOLDERS Which business units, functions, or teams are especially critical for achieving this objective?	TALENT GAPS Across levels, what skill or capability gaps do you need to address to reach your identified objectives?	DEVELOPMENT METHODS Which development methods (e.g., training, assessments, mentoring, coaching) best align with your strategy?
Objective #1		Executives: Mid-Level Leaders: Frontline Managers: Individual Contributors (ICs):	

TOP BUSINESS OBJECTIVES	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	TALENT GAPS	DEVELOPMENT METHODS
Objective #2		Executives: Mid-Level Leaders: Frontline Managers: ICs:	

TOP BUSINESS OBJECTIVES	KEY STAKEHOLDERS	TALENT GAPS	DEVELOPMENT METHODS
Objective #3		Executives: Mid-Level Leaders: Frontline Managers: ICs:	