What trumps technology, innovation, and data when it comes to what’s critical to plant leaders’ success? *Interacting with employees.* Improving the quality of leader interactions with employees was rated the most critical need for plants to achieve success over the next five years.

Which of the following are the most critical needs for your plant’s leaders based on your objectives for the plant over the next five years?

**DDI Plant Leadership Series**

The *DDI Plant Leadership* five-part series presents findings from the MPI Manufacturing Study, including survey questions developed exclusively for Development Dimensions International that focus on plant leadership and talent development.
Automation and technology have dramatically changed the manufacturing landscape. Manufacturing jobs have evolved, too, for team members and plant managers. Today’s leaders must guide teams with more agility, better collaboration, and improved problem-solving skills to meet customer demands.

Minds are replacing muscle, and manufacturers are focused on improvement:

- Three-quarters of executives say that process improvement is important to their plant’s success over the next five years
- 71 percent have a continuous-improvement program in place
- 66 percent follow a lean manufacturing approach,¹ and
- The percentage of manufacturing employees with graduate degrees rose by 19% between 2000 and 2012.²

Workers with more technical expertise require leaders who can create an engaging environment — and are capable of creating a vision and coaching for success.

Not surprisingly, plants where the quality of leadership is “very good” or “excellent” spend far more time in high-quality interactions with employees (coaching, influencing, team-building) than in managing tasks (planning, coordinating, decision-making). Check out the differences between plants at both ends of the leadership spectrum:

- Very good or excellent leaders: 42 percent more time in high-quality interactions.
- Poor, fair, or good leaders: 20 percent more time in high-quality interactions.

Quality leadership engages employees and drives better results. Quality leadership engages employees and drives better results (stay tuned to this DDI series for the dramatic results that quality leadership can deliver).

What are you doing to develop leaders at all levels with the skills to coach, influence, engage — and drive high performance in the new manufacturing economy?

² Mark Levinson, Congressional Research Service, June 2013.