State of Leadership Development 2015: The Time to Act is Now

Industry Perspective

Brandon Hall Group

Laci Loew
August 2015
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State of Leadership Development 2015:
The Time to Act is Now

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Executive Summary

Brandon Hall Group research shows that top-quality talent is immensely challenging to source externally. 55% of organizations told us they were struggling with a talent shortage, and 64% indicated their greatest talent challenge was attracting talent (2015 Brandon Hall Group Talent Gaps and Hiring Study).

For this reason, organizations are focused on growing internal talent to meet business needs, and, therefore, leadership development is a clear and continuing talent priority year-over-year. Nonetheless, 36% of organizations say their leadership development practices are still below average or poor, according to our 2015 State of Leadership Development Study.

Half of these organizations said their leaders are not skilled to effectively lead their organizations today, and a startling 71% said their leaders are not ready to lead their organizations into the future. Only 25% of organizations said they had a ready and willing successor identified for one out of 10 critical leader positions.

### Figure 1  Anticipated Shortage of Qualified Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Percentage</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current shortage</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next 1 – 2 years</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next 3 – 4 years</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next 5 + years</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We do not anticipate a shortage of quality leaders in our organization</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2015 State of Leadership Development Study (n=208)
Organizations are not only struggling with shortages of talented leaders. Today’s influx of Millennial leaders is creating a second and pressing challenge for organizations everywhere. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that Millennials already form 34% of the U.S. workforce; by 2020 the number will be 46% of the global workforce. Currently, 15% of Millennials are already in management roles, and more than half (53%) of Millennials aspire to become the leader or most senior executive within their current, or other, organization.

Millennial leaders will not be constrained by “how things used to be done.”

With their aggressive goals for movement and promotion come urgent needs and requirements for organizations to accelerate leadership development for Millennials.

As digital natives, Millennials expect instant access to information and knowledge, continuous learning and development experiences, constant attention, rapid progression, and perpetual feedback. The organizations with the most success in developing Millennial leaders will not be constrained by “how things used to be done.”
The Millennials have already started shaping a new world of work and leadership development and will continue for years to come. Irrespective of the long-term aims and ambitions of any organization, the ability to effectively develop Millennial leaders – starting now – will be a vital step to achieving it.

To gain insights about the details and influences of today’s workplace and workforce challenges on leadership development, we analyzed our survey results and interviewed several CEOs, chief talent officers, and other senior business leaders as well as HR and talent leaders. Four contemporary transformations underscore an organization’s ability to implement Level 4 leadership development, which we define as optimized leadership capacity that can transform and sustain business success. (Figure 3). The four levels of leadership development are explained in our Leadership Development Business Impact model (page 49).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transformation</th>
<th>What’s Out</th>
<th>What’s In</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leadership demographics</td>
<td>Boomers, Gen X leaders</td>
<td>Millennial leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprioritization of targeted development</td>
<td>Primary development focus on executives, high-potentials</td>
<td>Development focus on all leader levels, with special focus on accelerating development of Millennial leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning delivery</td>
<td>Traditional programs that build skills leader by leader</td>
<td>Ongoing immersion of leaders to build functional experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership analytics</td>
<td>Program completion metrics</td>
<td>Leadership skill requirements and capability forecasts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2015 Brandon Hall Group State of Leadership Development, (n=242)
Our LD research also validated two long-standing and standard practices influencing organizations’ ability to transform leadership development:

- Definition of leadership requirements before designing leadership development solutions
- Clarity about practices that yield the most effective leadership development

While core leadership development training programs are not necessarily being eliminated, by themselves they are just not enough to create leadership development that makes a business difference. The ongoing transformation of our workforces and workplaces are fervently influencing today’s leadership development decisions and actions.

Critical Calls to Action

The 2015 Brandon Hall Group State of Leadership Development Study – based on 242 verified responses from organizations around the world and extensive interviews with CEOs, chief talent officers, business leaders, and HR and talent management executives – revealed at least four critical calls to action to improve the business impact of leadership development.

Leadership Development Critical Calls to Action

1. Understand the New Leadership Workforce Demographics
2. Accelerate the Development of Millennial Leaders
3. Institutionalize ‘Just for Me’ Leader Learning
4. Use Predictive Leadership Analytics
By 2020, nearly half of all U.S. workers will be Millennials (Gen Y).

1. **Understand the New Leadership Workforce Demographics**

Our workforce has changed and more change is around the corner. With 10,000 or more Baby Boomers retiring each day, only 16% of today’s workforces are Gen Xers. By 2020, nearly half of all U.S. workers will be Millennials (Gen Y), according to the latest government data.

Two-thirds of Millennials admit that they are disenchanted at work and looking for a new job. Of those who stay, an overwhelming 91% say they plan to stay in their current jobs fewer than three years.
2. Accelerate Millennial Development

84% of organizations anticipate a shortfall in the minimum number of qualified leaders over the next five years. One-quarter of organizations said less than 10% of all critical leader positions have one ready and willing successor. Over the next one to two years, organizations say the top priorities for leadership development are closing leader-skill gaps (58%) and closing critical leader gaps across all leader levels (43%).

Millennials occupy 15% of management positions today. That number is expected to more than double in less than 10 years. Combined with the impending retirement of Baby Boomers, employers will continue to face big leadership gaps if imminent action is not taken. Starting now, fast-tracking Millennial leader development is the burning necessity for organizations everywhere in order to close both current and anticipated leader opportunity and performance gaps.

Today’s leaders – Gen X and Gen Y – are becoming digitally savvy or are already digital natives. They need to be virtually connected all the time, and expect learning experiences (not programs) that allow knowledge to flow everywhere, anywhere, all the time, just when needed, and “just for me” in a continuous and immersive fashion.

3. Institutionalize ‘Just for Me’ Leader Learning

Today’s leaders – at all levels – and particularly Millennial leaders, demand a lifelong learning experience supported by on-demand and easily-searchable micro-content shaped and prescribed for their specific learning and knowledge needs.
The true focus of development, regardless of generation or leader level, should be on encouraging the learners to question and explore, to experience and innovate; not on forcing them to consume a canon of pre-designed training modules within a fixed curriculum delivered as a one-way transfer bound by the classroom’s time and place.

56% of organizations still depend largely on formal classroom training. It is time to rethink and transform your leadership development delivery strategy. While Brandon Hall Group’s research data points to ongoing effectiveness of the classroom experience in leadership development, it is no longer enough for any organization anywhere.

In addition to classroom learning, Level 4 organizations have reoriented their leader development approach to the social, mobile, video, and network-enabled “just for me experience.” This also includes mobility assignments to build leader experience, on-the-job development, participation in cross-functional teams, coaching/mentoring, and a host of on-demand mobile, social, and video-based micro-content.

Our leaders’ appetite and demand for learning extends far beyond the traditional classroom training programs. Yet, core programs are the leadership development solutions in which most of us have invested, are investing, or are thinking about investing.

The challenge is here – the emerging workforce has new expectations about organizational investment and the approach to their learning, leader development, and career moves.
4. Use Predictive Leadership Analytics

89% of organizations said using predictive analytics to anticipate “what-if” leadership requirements is important or very important, yet only 7% of organizations have full predictive capability.

Organizations are still not applying predictive analytics to their most important assets – their leaders.

This is not the case in Level 4 organizations, which have embraced leadership analytics as a means of competitive advantage. The starting point is understanding the difference between, and importance of, two types of leadership data: Leadership metrics and leadership analytics.

Leadership Metrics Inform What is Happening Today

To unfold this story, indicators like the following are captured and shared with stakeholders:

- Percentage of leaders completing new supervisor training
- Percentage of turnover in the VP sales role over the last five years
- Number of high-potential leaders promoted
- Number of mid-level leaders in third-world country plants
- Number of high-potential leaders promoted
- Number of mid-level leaders in third-world country plants
Leadership Analytics Enable Forecasting of “What-If” Leadership Planning

• What if 50% of our Gen X leaders retire in the next three years? What leadership skill gaps will be created?
• What if 50% of our Millennial leaders hired in the last 12 months leave in the next three years? What is the cost of replacement?
• What is the opportunity cost?
• What is the business continuity risk?
• How many Millennial leaders in position today can be expected to leave if not promoted in the next 15 months?

Leadership analytics help organizations with statistically sound, real-time decision-making regarding “what-if” leadership scenarios and forward-looking leadership requirements. Leadership analytics help organizations plan for, and mitigate, leadership gaps – opportunity and performance – before they disrupt business performance.

Level 4 organizations invest in predictive leadership analytics because they enable the measurement of the business impact of leadership and leadership development decisions, and also help optimize and prescribe future leadership development investments.
Our Research: 5 Key Findings

In addition to the four leadership development transformations unfolding right now in organizations everywhere, and their associated critical calls to action, our research revealed five key findings of notable interest.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure 5</th>
<th>Key Findings: Brandon Hall Group’s 2015 Leadership Development Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Requirements for great leadership are vital, yet infrequently defined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A deficit of leaders with high-quality skills is a global concern.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Developing leaders as effective coaches is the single greatest opportunity for improving employee performance excellence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Targeted and quality development for all leader levels is still an opportunity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Leadership development spending is expected to rise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2015 Brandon Hall Group

1. Leadership Requirements: Vital, but Infrequently Defined

Level 4 leadership development requires alignment between actions essential for executing on business goals and the capabilities of the organization’s leaders to execute on those actions. Alignment, therefore, is improved or hindered based on the organization’s accurate identification of the capability, skill, and experience requirements essential for high-performing leaders. Less than 50% of organizations acknowledge the critical importance of identifying leadership requirements, and only 8% have taken the time to actually define them.
Only 10% of organizations feel that their efforts to build leadership capability support business goals.

It makes sense then that only 10% of organizations feel that their efforts to build leadership capability support business goals.

Improving alignment between achievement of business goals, and leaders’ skills to drive achievement of those goals, starts with the creation of a business strategy, followed by a leadership strategy, followed by a leadership development strategy.

It’s important to know the distinctions:

- **Business strategy.** The organization’s plan of business goals.
- **Leadership strategy.** The organization’s plan for placing leaders in key job roles by defining the skills, knowledge, and experiences required to reach current and future business goals.
• **Leadership development strategy.** The organization’s plan for formal and informal development of leaders at all levels to ensure they, individually and collectively, have the essential skills, knowledge, and experience to lead the organization successfully now and in the future.

40% of organizations don’t have a leadership strategy, and 36% don’t have a leadership development strategy. Of those that have one or both, 54% said their business strategy and leadership development is aligned to only a small degree or not at all.

A significant cause of misalignment between execution of business strategy and leadership capability is lack of business leader accountability for leadership development. 17% of organizations have assigned primary accountability for leadership development to executives and other business leaders. Leadership development is a business imperative, not a talent challenge. If anyone other than the CEO and other senior business leaders owns it, at best, it becomes a disparate collection of training programs rather than a strategy purposefully designed to ensure achievement of today’s and tomorrow’s business goals.

**2. Deficit of High-Quality Leaders is a Global Concern**

While leadership development earns a top spot, year-over-year, on organizations’ talent priority lists, 36% of organizations globally still don’t have leaders with the skills needed to successfully lead their organizations. 51% of organizations said their leaders are not at all ready, or only somewhat ready, to lead organizations today, and 71% said their leaders are not ready to lead their organizations into the future.
One likely cause of ill-prepared, unskilled leaders is ineffective leadership development solutions. Content does not necessarily drive development of critical leader skills, and delivery modalities are not keeping pace with leaders’ preferences for learning.

3. Developing Leaders to be Effective Coaches is Critical

We asked what are the most critical priorities for improving leadership capabilities over the next one to two years. The top answer (57%) was developing leaders to be effective development coaches.

This data point was corroborated in our 2015 State of Performance Management Study in which 64% of organizations cited “improving leaders’ ability to give in-the-moment feedback,” as a top-three priority for improving employee performance. Essential leader skills rated as having the greatest mastery gap are shown below.
4. Development at All Leader Levels is Still an Opportunity

The majority of organizations (83%) said that targeted development for all leader levels is important or very important, yet a mere 5% have implemented solutions for all.

Even for those with solutions at all levels, most identified their mid-level leader and individual contributor solutions as ineffective and in need of redesign — in terms of content and delivery. Content needs to match business goals and delivery needs to be less formal, replacing traditional classroom-based training.
Considering the broad span of control of most mid-level leaders and the volume of individual contributors with the potential to move into supervisory roles, it would serve organizations well to focus on the effectiveness of the development solutions for these two leader levels with learning experiences, not training programs. The time to act is now to develop continuous learning experiences for all leader levels.

Of particular interest in the survey results was the low number (20%) of organizations that highlighted Millennial leaders as a critical talent segment to prioritize for development over the next one to two years. Our study and analysis of all data points, quantitative and qualitative, across our human capital and talent management research believes this miss is a “deal breaker.”

We firmly believe organizations that do not accelerate development of Millennial leaders will find themselves quickly giving up competitive position and possibly sacrificing the opportunity to ever make up the loss. The time to act is now on accelerating development for Millennial leaders.
5. LD Spending Expected to Rise

While leadership development was ranked third in investment among all talent processes (behind only learning and development and talent acquisition), it was cited by more than half (52%) of organizations as the single talent process that will receive the greatest increase in talent budget allocation over the next 12 to 24 months.

CEOs, other senior business leaders, and HR and talent leaders describe their plan for increased investment as requisite to implementing Level 4 leadership development in four different areas:

- Quality development for all leaders
- Accelerate development of Millennial leaders
- Redesign existing development from traditional classroom-based programs to leader-driven learning experiences
• Acquire predictive data capability to enable future-oriented leadership requirements and decision-making

Regarding predictive capability, 34% of organizations plan to increase their budget for leadership analytics. Leadership analytics knit together leadership data with other talent data and thus allows forecasting of critical answers to what-if leadership scenarios.

Level 4 organizations, while comprising less than one-third of organizations, are applying these key findings and executing on the critical calls to action. They are methodical in defining business-critical goals, assessing current leadership requirements, forecasting future requirements, and accelerating the implementation of a learning experience targeted for all leader levels and, specifically, younger leaders. Their new approach to leader development puts the leader at the center of the learning experience. Their practices are considerably different than those of their lower-performing peers. In studying their approach to leadership development, we discovered they orient their leadership development around specific practices.
Leadership Development Leading Practices

In carefully examining our study data and in reflecting deeply on our discussions with senior leaders about how they develop Level 4 leaders, we discerned 10 leading practices of leadership development – seven long-standing and three new.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7 Long-Standing Practices</th>
<th>3 New Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Implement a leadership strategy defining leadership requirements.</td>
<td>8. Use predictive leadership analytics to gain critical “what-if” leadership requirements information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Engage executives and other senior business leaders to govern leadership decisions and actions.</td>
<td>9. Perpetually align leadership strategy with business goals for keen insight on the influence of demographic changes and other changing external influencers on leadership requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Define leadership gaps and leaders’ skills and experiences gaps.</td>
<td>10. Accelerate development for Millennial leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Implement a leadership development strategy developing leaders at all levels.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Develop leaders’ capabilities and build their requisite experience by engaging them in immersive learning experiences and mobilizing them into temporary and lateral, even downward, role/job assignments to build functional experience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Continuously coach and mentor leaders to optimize their performance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Integrate leadership development data with other talent data and embed an accountable leadership culture to sustain leaders’ optimized performance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2015 Brandon Hall Group State of Leadership Development (n=242)
Implementation and continuous execution of these leading practices yields better business results – results so compelling that any organization aspiring to win simply cannot ignore. To offer organizations guidance about how to implement these practices, we developed the Brandon Hall Group Leadership Development Framework.

**The High-Performance LD Framework**

Executing on today’s leadership development critical calls to action and applying insights from our research enable Level 4 leadership development, a competitive differentiator. To get there, we suggest a data-based framework for how organizations can design and implement effective leadership development. Brandon Hall Group has developed a framework that will provide a guide for organizations looking to improve the business impact of their leadership development and ultimately achieve what we call High-performance (Level 4) Leadership Development.

The Brandon Hall Group LD Framework is comprised of three key components:

- **The contextual frame.** Considers the influences of culture, governance, measurement, and technology on Level 4 leadership development
- **The process frame.** Outlines a four-phase continuous approach to achieve Level 4 leadership development
- **The success levers.** A collection of eight factors that, taken collectively, accelerate an organization’s efforts to implement Level 4 leadership development.
Figure 13 High-Performance Leadership Development Framework

CULTURE

Phase 2: Assess
- Define Leadership Capability
- Build Leadership Excellence

PHASE 1: Align
- Identify Leadership Requirements

PHASE 2: Assess
- Define Leadership Capability
- Build Leadership Excellence

PHASE 3: Develop
- Enable Leadership Performance Gains

PHASE 4: Optimize
- Embed a Leadership Culture

PHASE 5: Sustain
- Enable Leadership Performance Gains

MEASUREMENT

TALENT AND BUSINESS RESULTS

External Influencers
Stakeholder Experience
Change Mgmt
Scalable
Agile
Global
Social
Mobile

SUCCESS
LEVERS

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The Contextual Frame

The contextual frame consists of four key elements: Culture governance, measurement, and technology. An understanding of these four elements is a critical first step for organizations implementing any framework because they dictate the environment in which talent systems and technology operate. These elements remain constant across each of Brandon Hall Group’s high-performance frameworks, though their impact and influence varies from one function of human capital management to another. In this section, we describe the impact and influence of these four elements on leadership and leadership development.

Culture

Culture and leadership are two sides of the same coin, and neither can be understood by itself. Organizational culture influences leaders’ ability to effectively lead, and impacts leadership development practices. Likewise, effective leaders must constantly consider their organizational culture when identifying future leaders, developing them, and retaining them in the organization.

Our research revealed four different cultures and their correlation with leadership development impact levels:

- **Competing (Level 1).** Results-driven and competitive, externally and internally
- **Controlling (Level 2).** Highly structured and formal; predictability rewarded
- **Collaborating (Level 3).** Open and friendly; teamwork and participation are paramount
- **Creating (Level 4).** Dynamic, entrepreneurial. Innovation and risk-taking are embraced
At organizations with higher levels of leadership development impact, overall cultures are more creative and collaborative. Cultures at lower impact organizations tend to be more competing and controlling.

Our research on leadership and culture validates a clear progression that shows leadership defining and driving culture. From this perspective, one can extrapolate that effective leadership utilizes development of future leaders as one tool to affect and manage the organizational culture. Thus, there are clear links between leadership, culture, and leadership development.
Governance

Governance is the structures, processes, and values that enable organizations to make credible, well-aligned, efficient decisions about organizational culture, leadership strategy, core leadership development programs, resources, technology, measurement of the business impact of leadership development, investment in leadership development, and continuously improving leadership development.

Organizations that make the most efficient, effective, and responsible decisions regarding leadership development are more likely to be the place of choice for employees and customers alike.

Figure 15 A Sample High-Performance Leadership Development Governance Structure

Level 4 organizations implement a governance council for leadership and leadership development decisions (as well as for decisions regarding other integrated talent processes).
Most organizations have an opportunity to improve the impact of their leadership development by institutionalizing governance; almost half (47%) of all organizations do not have leadership development governance in place.

Governance moves an organization from offering a portfolio of stand-alone leader development programs to transforming organizational capability through an integrated offering of development solutions for all leader levels based on analytics. The integrated solution builds a group of leaders that comes together collaboratively and intentionally to achieve business goals, to better serve the organization’s customers and stakeholders in an ongoing and sustainable fashion.
Measurement

High-performance leadership development produces leaders who continuously coach, mentor, and develop other leaders. Commitment to an embedded culture of leader development prompts a healthy talent pool of strong leaders at all levels. Many CEOs, however, cite lack of qualified leadership as the most significant constraint on business growth. In fact, 81% of organizations indicated that their leaders were not at all or only somewhat effective in developing leaders. More than half (51%) of organizations said their leadership was not ready to effectively lead their organizations today, and that number shot up to 71% when asked how ready their leaders were to lead their organizations into the future.

While a robust succession planning strategy is a key ingredient to combating the challenge, it is not enough. Level 4 organizations take the time to create a measurement strategy that reviews assessment results showing gaps in leadership requirements, capability, and experiences and reports on the business impact that leadership development offers at the individual, team, and organizational levels.

Measuring the impact of leadership development is a complex science and requires a dedicated resource, although not necessarily full-time. Accordingly, few organizations do it, and even fewer do it well – even though 42% of organizations highlighted continuously measuring the impact of leadership development as a top-three priority for improving the effectiveness of leadership development.
Too often, organizations spend too much time collecting data and invest much too little time analyzing it and reporting trends to all stakeholders in preparation for continuous improvement.

Organizations that have success in measurement adopt at least five leading practice measurement principles:

- **Outline the expected change.** This initial action includes defining:
  - Which leaders to target
  - Specific development and experience they require
  - Capabilities they will gain and at what levels of proficiency and experience
  - How those capability gains will be applied to business goals
  - The results that should be expected

- **Define and baseline the metrics to be assessed.** Selecting the metrics to be base-lined and monitored before implementing the leadership development strategy is requisite. Further, those with the most success in measurement strategies intentionally select just a few (five or less) metrics. Too many metrics becomes unwieldy to continuously collect and monitor and invariably then they get set aside. Select metrics that are meaningful to your organization and ensure that your shortlist encompasses leading indicators (typically non-financial), as well as key performance indicators (business metrics).

- **Focus on data analysis, not data capture.** Too often, organizations spend too much time collecting data and invest much too little time analyzing it and reporting trends to all stakeholders in preparation for continuous improvement. Technology streamlines the data collection process, affording organizations more time to invest in data analysis.
• **Measure with mixed methods.** While quantitative questionnaire and survey data will indicate whether business outcomes were achieved, qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and document review are often necessary to determine whether the outcomes resulted from the leadership development, particularly in the absence of a comparison group. Every leadership development initiative has objectives that are simply too abstract to quantify. For these, one-on-one interviews and focus groups can provide anecdotal evidence of business impact and reveal areas for improvement.

• **Mature the measurement strategy over time for continuous improvement.** Like leadership development itself, measuring the impact of leadership development is a continuous journey. Build the rigor of your leadership development measurement strategy incrementally and methodically.

**Technology**

Technology plays an important role in leadership development. It is a significant force in today’s organizations, shaping how leaders lead and how they are developed. It is changing how leaders and employees communicate with each other across business units, across the organization, and across the globe.

It is an expectation of Millennial leaders who have grown up on technology and it is arming organizations with new talent demand-and-supply forecasting tools and leadership requirements insights that never before existed.
Leadership development is the intersection point of technology and human potential. Technology is influencing leadership and leadership development decisions in at least four significant ways:

- **Changing the delivery strategy of LD activities and programs.** According to our [2015 Learning Management Systems Trends Study](#), 85% of organizations are using an LMS to manage leader, and other employee, learning. While those same organizations still use in-person, instructor-led training most frequently to deliver development, more organizations are looking to self-paced eLearning, virtual classrooms, video learning, social/collaboration/networking platforms, online performance support tools, and other technology-assisted methods. These technology-driven learning leadership development delivery mechanisms are making up a larger piece of the learning mix today than ever before.

- **Forcing leaders’ technological savvy.** Survey respondents and global leaders we interviewed consistently expressed that technological savvy will be a key competency for the leader of the future. While “technologically savvy” is not the leader competency with the greatest gap, more than a quarter of organizations indicated it as such. Leading virtually is today’s standard. Development in virtual capacities, communication with geographically dispersed teams and telecommuters, networks with peers in other countries, and responding to the increasing demands of a knowledge-based economy are the norm for future leaders. The traditional leadership profile is not enough to sustain successful leadership in the current and future business environment. The missing piece lies in the ability to utilize and strategically manage technology.
### Figure 17: Learning Delivery Mechanisms (5-point scale): Use vs. Effectiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Delivery Mechanism</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Effectiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-person, instructor-led classroom</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eLearning modules</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job exercises</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal peer-to-peer learning</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coaching/mentoring</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference calls</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual synchronous classrooms</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry conferences/events</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video learning</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-based performance support</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published books or research</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>0.78</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social/collaboration tools</td>
<td>3.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recorded webinars</td>
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<td>0.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-recorded instructor-led training</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online performance support</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-person academic institutions</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online academic institutions</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile learning delivery</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2015 Brandon Hall Group 2015 Training Study (n=361)
• **Facilitating the capture and analysis of LD impact data.** Organizations are creating talent data at unprecedented rates. One of the challenges is mining data to inform how leadership development indicates business impact, or not. Nearly all of today’s LMS providers provide tools that facilitate the capture and analysis of leadership development impact data. Today’s effective leaders embrace technology to facilitate and drive understanding of the impact that leadership development is having on their business results. That understanding is salient to accelerate business growth.

• **Enabling “what-if” insights to inform forward-looking leadership requirements.** High-performing organizations combine leadership development impact data with business intelligence, real-time analytics, and predictive modeling to create unique information assets. These assets are often referred to as big data. Predictive analysis and big data empower organizations to determine patterns and forecast future “what-if” leadership requirements and performance outcomes. With this information, organizations can create future headcount forecasts and leaders’ skills requirements for every part of the organization.
36% of organizations surveyed in Brandon Hall Group’s research say their leadership development practices are still below average or poor. The underlying cause is that many companies treat leadership development as a collection of sporadic training programs typically confined to just a few select leader levels. They fail to offer targeted and integrated development to leaders at all levels, ignore the experience-building component of development, and neglect to place leaders into lateral or even downward positions to grow requisite functional and regional experience.

Their investment in building the leadership pipeline is shortsighted, and is one of the first-line items to be eliminated when organizational revenue is less than targeted.

As organizations mature their leadership development to Level 4, they replace their ad hoc leader training approach with continuous investment and an ongoing process of integrated development that yields optimized leadership capability. Level 4 organizations implement leadership development as a continuous process.
Figure 18  5 Key Phases of Leadership Development

Phase 1: Align
- Identify Leadership Requirements

Phase 2: Assess
- Define Leadership Capability

Phase 3: Develop
- Build Leadership Excellence
- Enable Leadership Performance Gains

Phase 4: Optimize
- Embed a Leadership Culture

Phase 5: Sustain
- Employee Engagement

Source: Brandon Hall Group 2015
An understanding of these phases is an essential second step for organizations implementing high-performance leadership development as they shape a formalized and continuous process of leading-practice leadership development. In this section, we describe the five phases of leadership development and their associated leading practices.

**Phase 1: Align on Leadership Requirements**

The first step in implementing Level 4 leadership development is defining organizational leadership requirements. Leadership requirements reflect the number of leaders and capabilities (skills, knowledge, and experiences) needed at each level and each part of the business to achieve current and future business goals. Requirements information is documented in what is typically called a leadership strategy.

**Figure 19**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations with Defined Leadership Strategy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="chart.png" alt="Bar Chart" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2015 Brandon Hall Group State of Leadership Development (n=61)
Leadership development is a business imperative, not a talent challenge; therefore, the CEO and other senior business leaders (not HR or other talent leaders) should assume ownership for it. In that spirit, senior business leaders should hold regularly scheduled governance meetings. Governance meetings ensure that decisions on leadership requirements are being made in alignment with the organization’s business strategy.

Keeping tight alignment between changing business goals and leadership decisions means an organization not only defines today’s leadership requirements, but also forecasts “what-if” leadership requirements.

For example:

- What if we expand globally in the next year or so? What are the implications on how many leaders we need and at what levels with what capabilities and in what regions?
- What if we merge with Company X in the next three to five years? What are the leadership and leadership development implications?
- What if we lose a critical mass of our Baby Boomer leaders in the next 12 to 15 months due to retirements? What are the leadership and leadership development implications?

Forecasting leadership requirements in response to “what-if” scenarios requires organizations to leverage HR analytics and predictive modeling.

After documenting leadership requirements essential for meeting business goals, an organization is ready to assess their existing leadership capability.
Phase 2: Assess Leadership Capabilities

Given the severe consequences of any type of leadership gap, organizations are keen to understand the current leadership pool – the numbers of leaders and their mix of capabilities and experiences – and how “current state” leadership health aligns with requirements for achieving business goals today and tomorrow.

Organizations should know leader gaps in critical positions and segments with three time horizons in mind:

- **Long-term.** In closing these gaps, organizations are positioning themselves to meet business goals over the next three to five years or so.

- **Mid-term.** In closing these gaps, organizations are positioning themselves to meet business goals in the next one to two years.

- **Short-term.** In closing these gaps, organizations are positioning themselves to meet business goals in the next three to nine months.

To identify gaps throughout any of these three time horizons, organizations use assessments to accurately identify how many leaders they have and then to understand their current capabilities and experiences.

Only after achieving insights on gaps can organizations create a plan for closing gaps. This plan is the organizational leadership development strategy.
NOTABLE INSIGHT

In the past, most organizations have tended to focus on leadership development at only senior levels or on the high-potentials. Over the next one to two years, organizations plan to prioritize the development of more junior-level leaders.

Phase 3: Develop Capabilities at All Levels

84% of organizations said they currently have, or anticipate in the next several years, a shortage of qualified leadership talent. In attempts to mitigate the shortage, nearly the same number (83%) said it was important or very important to develop leaders at all levels. Yet only 5% have fully implemented targeted development for all leader levels. The best organizations define a leadership development strategy uniquely targeted for each leader level.

It is supervisors and mid-level leaders who manage most of the people and have the most impact on the execution and delivery of the products and services of our organizations. In the past, most organizations have tended to focus on leadership development at only senior levels or on the high-potentials.
Figure 21: Critical Competencies for Today’s Leaders

- Coaching-in-the-moment: Gap exists 43%, Considered essential competency 9%
- Social intelligence: Gap exists 32%, Considered essential competency 10%
- Emotional strength: Gap exists 36%, Considered essential competency 12%
- Innovator: Gap exists 31%, Considered essential competency 10%
- Agility: Gap exists 32%, Considered essential competency 11%
- Visioneer: Gap exists 29%, Considered essential competency 13%
- Change agent: Gap exists 31%, Considered essential competency 14%
- Manages global business: Gap exists 25%, Considered essential competency 15%
- Networker: Gap exists 19%, Considered essential competency 16%
- Technologically savvy: Gap exists 27%, Considered essential competency 17%
- Awareness: Gap exists 22%, Considered essential competency 17%
- Inclusive: Gap exists 26%, Considered essential competency 17%
- Team builder: Gap exists 29%, Considered essential competency 18%
- Manages complexity: Gap exists 24%, Considered essential competency 19%
- Acumen: Gap exists 23%, Considered essential competency 17%
- Data analysis: Gap exists 28%, Considered essential competency 24%
- Collaborator: Gap exists 25%, Considered essential competency 22%
- Critical thinker: Gap exists 26%, Considered essential competency 23%
- Can-do optimist: Gap exists 27%, Considered essential competency 22%
- Communicator: Gap exists 30%, Considered essential competency 24%
- Problem solver: Gap exists 39%, Considered essential competency 11%
- Integrity: Gap exists 50%, Considered essential competency 8%

Source: 2015 Brandon Hall Group State of Leadership Development (n=171)
Over the next one to two years, organizations plan to prioritize the development of more junior-level leaders. This development includes coaching in-the-moment to develop strengths, acting in a trustworthy fashion, creatively resolving challenges, communicating regularly and transparently, being sensitive to others’ needs and expectations, building high-performance teams, and using social tools, mobile Devices, and applications to collaborate and network.

While just 16% of organizations said they have a well-functioning process in place to assess leadership capability in these critical, and other important, competencies, another 27% said they are in the process of defining a process and plan to implement it near-term. With proper assessment and understanding of leadership skill gaps, organizations can focus on development and experience-building interventions to close capability gaps and build leadership pipelines. These interventions are referred to as core leadership development programs or solutions.

The most effective core leadership development solutions engage leaders in targeted and experiential development opportunities and mobilize them into temporary and lateral, even downward, job assignments to ensure requisite experience building.

Building future leaders’ exposure through sponsorship, leaders teaching leaders, and networks – social or other – are other key developmental tools. Allowing leaders to choose participation in cross-functional teams, engage in coaching conversations when most beneficial, and partner with a mentor to get just the right guidance when most needed, are high-performance approaches to supporting the modern learner’s approach to leader-generated learning.
Teaching leaders how to think differently, question data, and create mental models to apply their experiences to their work is upending traditional behavior-based development methods. Allowing leaders to consume learning in a “just for me, just enough, and just when I need it” fashion is the new and recommended delivery model. Today’s best leader learning is all about creating a continuous learning experience guided by each leader’s learning choices, not sending a leader to a pre-scheduled classroom session.
Phase 4: Optimize Leaders’ Ability to Perform

Even high levels of mastery and proficiency of critical leader competencies is not enough to evolve Level 4 leadership development. Level 4 organizations drive higher levels of performance by setting expectations, holding people accountable for getting results, and embedding a culture of high performance. This means hitting metric targets and revenue goals, not only from an individual leader perspective but from a team perspective, and organizational perspectives as well. In high-performance cultures, achieving targets is desired and exceeding them in a sustained fashion is expected.

Enabling others is a key ingredient to getting sustained results. Five key activities are highly effective in enabling leader performance:

- Set leaders’ performance goals in alignment with business goals.
- Coach continuously offering frequent in-the-moment feedback to develop strengths.
- Mentor to support goal achievement by leveraging strengths.
- Build consensus and the capacity of others to engage and lead new processes.
- Reward outstanding performance and recognize contributions frequently.

Optimizing leader performance requires constant monitoring and evaluation in order to measure any changes in the performance gaps or expansion of the high-performing areas as a result of the process. Monitoring is done on an ongoing basis so that changes can be made as needed. Leadership should develop a measurement plan that is integrated into talent processes to serve as an ongoing feedback device for leaders to measure changes in performance and quality.
Phase 5: Sustain Leaders’ Performance by Embedding a Leadership Culture

Leadership culture is a part of organizational culture. Leadership culture is a system of norms and assumptions that guide how managers and leaders lead, or fail to lead. To embed a leadership culture, leaders must adopt new roles, cultivate behaviors that ensure people are engaged, and focus on driving business results. Leadership culture exists when people, processes, and technology work in harmony to ensure operational excellence and sustain transformational and long-term business growth.

Integrating leadership data and analytics with other talent process data and holding leaders accountable to model expected behaviors and achieve performance targets are catalysts for embedding a leadership culture. Leadership cultures are shaped by high levels of empowerment, teamwork, collaboration, and regular constructive conversations among leaders, employees, and peers.

Creating a leadership culture often requires facilitating the following processes:

- Creating alignment between business and leadership strategies
- Merging corporate cultures that may exist as silos in various parts of the business
- Changing organizational culture to better enable leadership culture
- Fostering cross-functional leader collaboration
- Integrating talent data points to expose harmony between LD, succession management, and performance management
- Leadership culture plays a pivotal role in determining whether an organization is agile enough to keep in line with the pace of change in its business environment.
The 8 Success Levers

Organizations invest in high-performance leadership development for a single purpose – to drive business results. Level 4 leadership development is not about developing the skills of individual leaders, and it is not about the next cool training program. It is building a group of leaders that has the capabilities and experience to meet business goals and sustain organizational performance in the face of continuous and tumultuous change.

For that to happen, certain enablers – which we call success levers – should be leveraged. Brandon Hall Group has identified eight that consistently drive high-performance leadership development.

1. **External Influencers.** A host of new issues and trends exist in the external business environment that impact organizations’ performance, whether in terms of risks, opportunities, or both. These include legislation, economic influences, globalization, and workforce demographics.

2. **Stakeholder Experience.** Stakeholders play important roles as advocates, sponsors, partners, agents of change, designers, and consumers of leadership development. Understanding the needs and expectations of all involved in the leadership development process bridges the path to achieving business goals. It is inconceivable that organizations can significantly improve the impact of their leadership development without a clear understanding of what stakeholders want.
3. Change Management. Implementing high-performance leadership development requires a rigorous commitment to change management. Organizations evaluate five considerations:

- **What type of change is required?** Filling an opportunity gap or filling a performance gap?
- **Where should the focus of change originate?** Top-down or bottom-up?
- **What is the scope of the change required?** Incremental or radical?
- **What is the required pace of change?** Episodic or continual?
- **Where is the change required?** At all leader levels or only a subset?

4. Scalable. Level 4 leadership is designed, implemented, and measured in a fashion that targets all leaders with business-driven solutions while still allowing for unique business unit, location, and/or functional needs.

In high-performance organizations, it is common to see the leadership strategy and 80% +/- of leading practices and success levers standardized across the enterprise with flex in the other 20% to accommodate unique business unit, locational, and/or functional needs.

5. Agile. In the context of leadership development, agile means an approach to leadership development that is flexible and easily reshaped when the needs and priorities of the business dictate. Creating a learning experience rather than a training program is an example of agile development. It is far easier with less cost and effort to reshape experiences to which leaders will be exposed than to redesign, repilot, redeploy, and remeasure the impact of a traditional in-person classroom based program.
6. **Global.** In most organizations today, leaders need to be effective in multiple areas of the world. Leading in the U.S. looks different than in Asia Pacific or Europe or an emerging country. To implement effective global leadership development, organizations must first set business goals and link leadership development to the skills and experiences required of successful leaders in each region.

7. **Social.** Social tools are at the heart of today’s most effective leadership development strategies. Social tools connect today’s diverse, distributed, virtual, Millennial, and global leaders. Tools like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook help acquire, develop, mobilize, and engage leaders. Our research shows that leaders who use social media help raise their brand’s profile, instill confidence in the organization’s leadership team, and build greater trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intent among customers.

Social technologies also serve to help leaders share knowledge and expertise for improved business outcomes, coordinate talent initiatives more effectively, generate creative solutions through the power of peer networking, resolve complex problems, and improve overall operating performance.

During our executive and senior business leader interviews, more than 90% indicated that senior leaders that engage on social media are better prepared than their peers to lead organizations in today’s technology-driven world.
8. Mobile. Leadership development enabled by mobile devices and applications enable efficiency and productivity. Today’s leaders are very mobile, with flexible work schedules. High-performance organizations seek ways to take advantage of mobile technology to drive leaders’ productivity and engagement. Organizations that are making investments in mobile leadership development capabilities perceive mobile as an integral enabler of leader acquisition, communication, knowledge sharing, and networking.

Executing the leading practices of leadership development in a continuous fashion as suggested by our framework, yields better business results. We offer an explanation of how to show the business impact of leadership development in the Brandon Hall Group Leadership Development Impact Model.

Brandon Hall Group’s Leadership Development Impact Model

Based on our year-over-year study of business impact, the Brandon Hall Group Leadership Development Impact Model illustrates 4 levels of leadership development effectiveness.

Each level, from 1 to 4, has increasing impact on business results as higher-level organizations execute leadership development in accordance with leading practices and are transforming their approach to leadership development at a quicker rate than others.

The percentages at each impact level indicate the number of organizations performing at that level. Over the last two years, there has been some progress in the number of organizations improving the effectiveness of their leadership development.
Overall, however, organizations generally believe their leaders continue to struggle to meet the needs of the business. 35% of organizations have ineffective leadership development practices, another 34% have practices of average impact, and just 31% have effective leadership development.

The organizations at Level 4 have truly embedded leadership development as part of their culture and execute leadership development in alignment with all eight leading practices. For their ongoing effort, their business results are nothing short of impressive and build the business case for additional investment in leadership development to achieve better effectiveness.
For most organizations – the 69% that are not Level 4 – the next decade will be make or break. The time to act on leadership development transformation is now.

**Conclusion**

For every organization everywhere, leadership excellence continues to be nothing short of mission-critical year over year. This year, only 18% of organizations said their leaders are “very effective” at meeting business goals.

Only 16% have a well-functioning process for measuring leadership capability. A staggering 81% said they are not very effective at developing their leaders, regardless of the generational demographic.

These statistics are bleak. The good news is the opportunity they present – to close leader shortages and leader skill gaps.
Organizations most effective at closing gaps will:

- Transform leadership development from training programs for some to learning experiences for all
- Accelerate development for Millennial leaders

We recognize these actions are no easy feat for anyone. To offer some analytics-based guidance in this perspective, we shared:

- **Our insights** on today’s leadership development requirements
- **Critical calls to action** for improving the business impact of leadership development
- **Our proprietary framework and leading practices** for guiding decisions and operationalizing actions to transform leadership to higher impact – Level 4 leadership development
- **Data on the impressive levels of business impact** organizations expected after transforming leadership development to Level 4

Level 4 leadership development requires serious, long-term organizational commitment from all stakeholders, particularly CEOs and other senior business leaders. In return for the long-term investment, Level 4 leadership development makes a measurable impact on business and ensures that organizational performance is optimized and sustained, even in the face of tumultuous change and an ever-changing world around us.
Brandon Hall Group’s Research Methodology

**Evaluation of Business and Talent Landscape**
We study current trends to hypothesize about how they might influence future events and what effect those events is likely to have on your business.

**Quantitative Surveys**
To test our hypothesis, we gather empirical insights through formal and informal surveys completed by Executives, Chief Human Resources Officers, VPs of Talent and other business leaders as well as HR, Learning and Talent Leaders and employees.

**Qualitative Interviews**
To check assumptions generated from surveys and to add context to the empirical survey data, we talk to Executives, Chief HR Officers, VPs of Talent and other business leaders as well as HR, Learning and Talent Leaders and employees.

**Expert Resident Knowledge**
Our quantitative and qualitative findings are shared within our internal research community and rapidly debated in peer review sessions to test validity and practicality.

**Scholarly Reviews**
We study and analyze renowned academic research comparing and contrasting their findings to our own and again engage in rapid debate to ensure our findings and analysis stand the tests of business usability. New perspectives are shaped and added as appropriate.

**Market Testing**
We fortify and validate our initial findings, leading practices and high impact processes within the analyst environment, our own Advisory Board and select other clients and prospects that offer fair assessment of the practicality and usability of our findings, practices, and processes. Again we add new perspectives as appropriate before readying the research for publication.

**Emergent Trends**
After studying and analyzing all collected data, we see and document patterns emerging within high performing companies. We create initial drafts of our findings, leading practices and high impact processes.

**Analytics-Based Reports and Tools**
After verifying our position internally, in alignment with scholarly research, and the market and completing rigorous peer reviews, our position is documented and published, made available to our members, in the form of reports, tools and online searchable databases.

Source: Brandon Hall Group 2015
Our Research Methodology’s 4-Tiered Approach

Our 2015 State of Leadership Development Study results were developed after collecting data and analyzing the leadership practices, leader development activities, and business results of Level 4 organizations and their lower-performing peers. Our research methodology is a 4-tiered approach:

1. **Empirical Data.** In March-May 2015, we surveyed more than 500 organizations from 34 countries and 31 industries and collected 242 responses from organizations ranging in size from less than 25 employees to more than 100,000 and with revenues from $50 million or less to $5 billion or more.

2. **Qualitative Interviews.** The empirical data provided the foundation for interviews with solutions providers, senior HR and talent leaders, executives, business unit leaders, and employees at all levels.

3. **Refereed-research.** Our empirical and qualitative research results served as the backdrop for a review and comparison analysis between our research results and those of refereed published research from academic and business institutions.

4. **Resident knowledge.** Finally, we drew upon more than 150 years of collective knowledge within our own resident analyst community.

Our multi-tiered, multi-month global study isolated the leading practices of those organizations that gain the greatest business impact from their leadership development.

We analyzed the timing, target audiences, processes, stakeholders, metrics, and business results associated with those practices. Our examination enabled us to formulate our unique framework and a process-driven approach to Level 4 leadership development.
About Brandon Hall Group

Brandon Hall Group is a HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and Workforce Management.

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 20 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

At the core of our offerings is a Membership Program that combines research, benchmarking and unlimited access to data and analysts. The Membership Program offers insights and best practices to enable executives and practitioners to make the right decisions about people, processes, and systems, coalesced with analyst advisory services which aim to put the research into action in a way that is practical and efficient.

The Value of Membership

The Brandon Hall Group Membership Program encompasses comprehensive research resources and an array of advisory services. Our Membership Program provides:

• Cutting-Edge Information – Our rigorous approach for conducting research is constantly evolving and up-to-date, providing your organization with current and future trends, as well as practical insights.

• Actionable Research – Your membership includes advisory services and tools that are research-driven and provide you a breakthrough approach to addressing immediate challenges and opportunities inside your organization.

• Customizable Support – Whether you are an executive or entry-level practitioner, our research and analyst insights can be leveraged at an individual level and across the entire organization. We realize that every organization has unique needs, so we provide multiple analyst and research access points.

• Community of Peers – We realize the value of connecting with your peers and being part of a community that is focused on continuous improvement. Your membership provides you with personal connections to fellow professionals.

• Unlimited Access – Every member of your team has the ability to utilize research, best practices, and advisory services when they need it most.

To learn more about Brandon Hall Group, please call us at (561) 865-5017 or email us at success@brandonhall.com.