

Leading Transformation with 1:1 Personalized Development at WarnerMedia



Best Advance in Leadership Development, Silver



Background

WarnerMedia operates a portfolio of iconic consumer brands that includes HBO Max, Warner Bros., CNN, and others. The last several years marked a period of continual change: a corporate reorganization following an acquisition in 2018, a new CEO in May 2020, an evolving business strategy, including the launch of a direct-to-consumer (DTC) streaming service, and disruption of the workforce due to a global pandemic. The resulting business transformation in Q4 of 2020 included flattening organizational structures and broadening the scope and responsibilities of many leaders. Given the industry-wide pressures of operating in the pandemic and the ongoing desire to adapt and innovate, WarnerMedia wanted to provide additional support for its leaders.

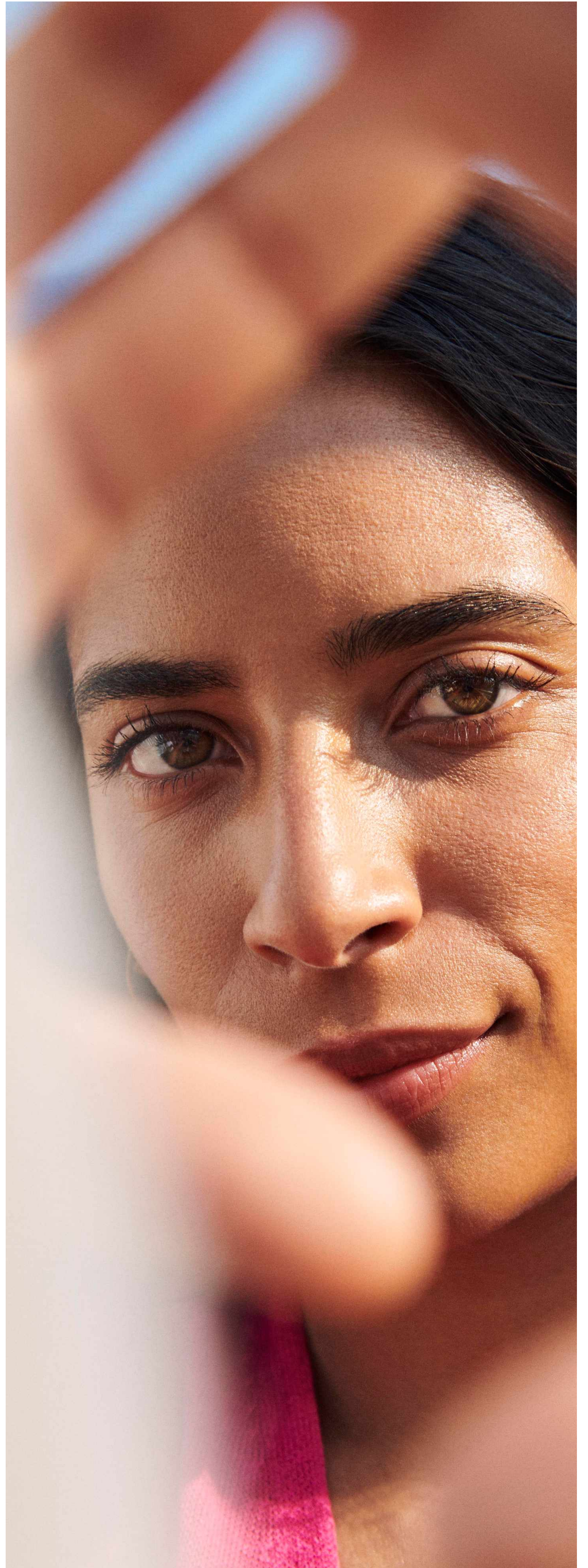
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As the industry continues to evolve, our leaders also need to be able to keep up with the pace of change and the innovations in the industry. That means being ready to adopt new mindsets and becoming more agile in the way that they work.”

— Tina Gupta,

VP, Talent Development and Employee Experience

BetterUp



Strengthen the coaching culture

Coaching is a large part of the culture at WarnerMedia. It forms a core component of the leadership development model, positioned as a mindset to empower others to find their own answers and a skillset that leaders and managers are trained to utilize to help grow and enable their employees to perform at their best. Coaching as a mindset and skillset is introduced through a variety of programs that are designed to accelerate performance for managers and leaders during times of transition.

WarnerMedia knew it needed a solution that would deliver greater outcomes than typically offered by a traditional learning program. The company sought a solution that focused on supporting the whole person to be their best, to help drive lasting and systemic change in mindsets and behaviors, while delivering personalized support at scale.

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By providing coaching at scale to our leadership population, we're allowing them to role model the behaviors that they receive from their one-on-one coaches.”

— **Tina Gupta,**

VP, Talent Development and Employee Experience

Coaching at scale solution

The proposed coaching program was designed to serve a high-priority subset of the manager population: highly motivated and engaged managers and directors who were going through expansion of responsibilities, leading key changes in the organization, or had been identified as top talent that would benefit from developing leadership capabilities.

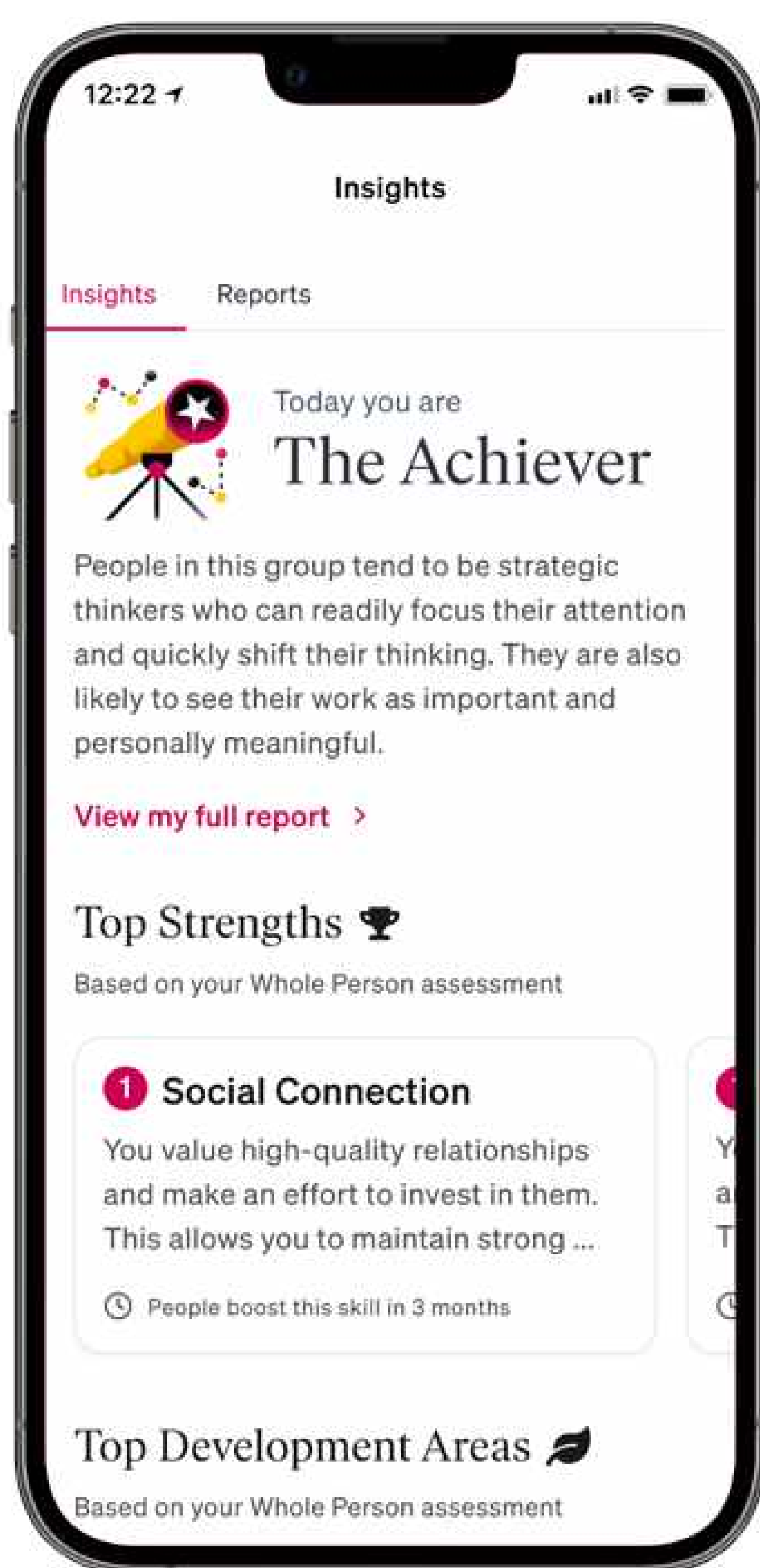
They would receive access to unlimited 1:1 coaching with a primary coach as well as a suite of specialized coaches for key focus areas, plus access to a library of micro-learning resources to reinforce learning in between sessions. To develop self-awareness and facilitate behavior change, WarnerMedia employees would be offered self-assessments, 360 feedback, and manager feedback through the BetterUp platform.

Coaching program design

BetterUp and WarnerMedia allotted four weeks to design and launch the new coaching program. The first step was to map the BetterUp Whole Person Model to the WarnerMedia Culture Framework. This ensured that the assessments and the coach briefings were aligned to the operational values of WarnerMedia. A pool of dedicated coaches was chosen and briefed on the new competency framework, the current organizational climate, and the leadership development program goals. HR business partners nominated 631 leaders for coaching, representing 11% of the manager population and making it the largest global program that WarnerMedia had supported to date.

Program launch

With an overall goal to cultivate a growth mindset and empower leaders to approach their new environment with agility and resilience, the coaching experience was designed to offer high-touch support. First, the participants completed a 15 to 20-minute self-assessment in the BetterUp app that evaluated areas of strength and areas for development. BetterUp then recommended three coach options that were most aligned to the individual's unique needs.



Once a coach was selected, the participant engaged in recurring weekly or biweekly 30 or 45 minute sessions that were supported by in-app resources such as exercises and continued reading for further development. Participants could message the coach directly. They also had on-demand access to BetterUp's extended network of coaches that specialized in areas such as Communication, Sleep, Nutrition, Working Parents, Resilience, and Diversity & Inclusion.

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Coaching enables managers to have breakthrough moments. We found that they are recognizing behaviors and trends that they've potentially had for years and years, but had never really been able to understand why they're not getting the outcomes they need or desire. By having a personal one-on-one coach—somebody who is not their manager or part of the organization—they feel they can really open up and dive deep in a safe way.”

— Tina Gupta,

VP, Talent Development and Employee Experience

Awareness - Growth - Reflection

The coaching experience led the participants through three phases. In the Awareness phase, assessments were used to identify strengths and growth opportunities, set goals, and align values – with the goal of providing actionable, behaviorally-based insights to the participant. In the Growth stage, the focus shifted to experiments designed to test assumptions, shift mindsets and practice new behaviors in order to grow towards the participant’s goals. Lastly, in the Reflection phase, the participant reflected on how they were embodying new behaviors and concepts acquired in the Growth phase, serving as the basis for the next cycle of development.

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It’s been an opportunity for our managers to say, ‘There’s this thing I’ve been doing, and I didn’t realize the impact it had on my team.’ By having these little breakthrough moments come together, we’re starting to see systemic change.”

— Tina Gupta,

VP, Talent Development and Employee Experience

BetterUp



Results

The measurement strategy was designed to capture engagement, satisfaction, behavior change, and manager feedback.

Engagement

Among the 631 participants:

95%

engagement rate

7,000+

collective hours spent on the platform by engaged participants

9,000

completed coaching sessions by engaged participants

2.4

average completed sessions per month

15

completed coaching sessions for the duration of the program

Satisfaction

Overall, the experience of coaching was highly satisfying to the majority of participants:

70%

of surveyed users felt that their sessions were life-changing or amazing.

95%

of surveyed members felt that their coach helped them make meaningful progress towards their goals (e.g., positively impact others within the organization, explore “managing up” skills, prioritize and effectively manage time, improve focus, increase resilience).

92%

of surveyed members felt that working with their coach made them more effective at their job.



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We've seen a marked change in both how people feel in terms of their engagement to the company and how prepared they feel to lead their teams through change.”

— Tina Gupta,

VP, Talent Development and Employee Experience

Behavior change

Compared to their initial assessment, after six months, participants self-reported an increase in their ability to actively think and align around long-term goals. They also built coaching muscles and improved resilience and stress management. Highlight metrics include:

- **25% gain in cognitive thriving**, demonstrating their ability to intentionally think about and plan for the future
- **15%+ gain in coworker coaching**. Coworkers were now more likely to demonstrate curiosity, ask others for feedback, and genuinely listen to others' perspectives as a result of their coaching experience. This promoted greater learning and agility in the organization.
- **16% gain in resilience**

Manager feedback

At the outset of the program, participants were able to opt-in to including their managers in their coaching journey. With 64% of managers actively engaged, they provided feedback on the participant's top areas of opportunity and focus as well as their perception of the participant's professional growth since starting BetterUp. Managers of participants reported growth (via the growth assessment) in the following areas within six months of coaching:

91%

Aligning others around a clear strategy

79%

Building relationships and internal partnerships

78%

Motivating and inspiring others

77%

Creating an inclusive work environment

BetterUp participant experiences



I've had my thinking around upper limits challenged and seen how to break through it; I've developed useful frameworks for challenging conversations; I've explored what success actually means for me and learnt the value in spending time visualizing and writing down my end goals."

"A goal of mine during my BetterUp journey was to grow my executive presence. I have made some notable milestones in this area by utilizing different techniques and learnings that have helped me grow my confidence in this area and have helped me achieve my goal of refining my executive presence."

Manager feedback



[Leader] is more confident and more positive. He seems more comfortable voicing his opinion and taking a leadership role within the team. He has adapted to all the changes thrown at our teams in the last couple of months with poise and positivity."

Lessons learned

The BetterUp coaching program gave WarnerMedia ample evidence that supporting the Whole Person™ in a personalized way could drive organizational performance. It also demonstrated the benefit of investing in leaders during the toughest moments, enabling them to become more agile and positively oriented toward the future. The positive impact of the program spread by word of mouth, laying the foundation for the second cohort of nearly 1,000 managers. Additionally, the aggregate data from BetterUp coaching conversations helped WarnerMedia understand themes and areas of concern to address in its internal talent strategy.

All in all, WarnerMedia has found a way to strengthen its coaching culture at scale, which will continue to ripple throughout the organization as more and more managers receive coaching and then feel empowered to turn and coach their fellow employees and peers.

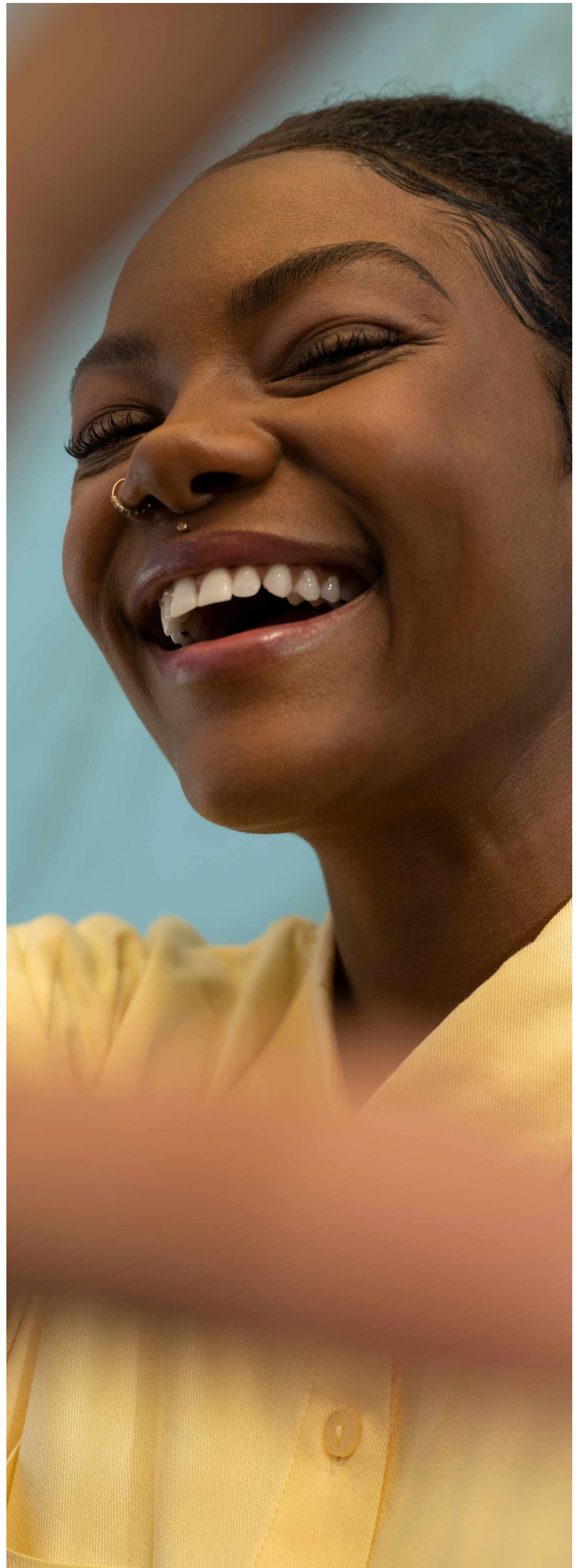
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Our partnership with BetterUp has enabled us to scale our approach to leadership development.”

— Tina Gupta,

VP, Talent Development and Employee Experience

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WarnerMedia summary

Business context

- Large organization experiencing rapid transformation due to industry disruption and changes in leadership.
- Coaching embedded in leadership strategy, seeking to build resilience in times of change.

Program design

- Offered unlimited 1:1 coaching to a subset of the manager population nominated by HR business partners.
- Coaching program designed to lead participants through awareness, growth, and reflection stages.

Results and lessons learned

- 95% engagement and satisfaction levels.
- Significant gains in cognitive thriving, coaching culture, stress management, and resilience.
- Managers reported high levels of growth in participant's leadership abilities.
- Enabled the company to scale its coaching culture and drive systemic change.

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