



The impact of coaching on leaders and teams

# MANAGERS MATTER

# Investing in leaders at all levels

In recent years, organizations have started to recognize the importance of investing in the development of leaders at the front lines. When you consider that up to 70% of an organization is led by a line manager, even small, incremental behavior changes have an outsized effect across your organization.

BetterUp research reveals three areas of growth for leaders that have significant ripple effects on their teams and organizations: **resilience, inclusion, and employee experience.**

When managers improve their leadership skills in these areas, the impact cascades down through their teams with clear, group-level benefits. Just as great leaders can create a multiplier effect, their less inspiring counterparts can negatively shift morale. When they are stressed or disengaged, or catastrophize and fear failure, they create conditions that get in the way of human performance. Yet managers are also the linchpin for sustaining team engagement and performance, especially in times of uncertainty. They need support to play this critical role.

Our data shows that when managers receive personalized coaching and development, they experience personal growth. Their teams experience the positive ripple effect on employee experience, performance, well-being, and other important business outcomes.



## Leadership growth

In this guide, we share the three leadership growth areas that make managers more effective and actionable ways to get started:

- 1 Building resilience
- 2 Fostering inclusion
- 3 Leading the employee experience

# 01 BUILDING RESILIENCE

Across our dataset, we see that highly resilient leaders have a multiplier effect on teams. When we asked the direct reports of highly resilient leaders to evaluate their teams, we found higher overall performance, more agility, and more innovation than in those who report to leaders with low resilience.

## Resilient leaders build resilient teams



## Why this matters

**Increases stress management:** In a state of high stress, it is extremely difficult to prioritize the needs of others. Personalized coaching gives managers time and space to process their own experiences, and develop mindsets that help them thrive amid unanticipated challenges. Stress is one of the first dimensions to improve with BetterUp coaching, creating the mental space needed to focus on other areas of growth.

**Boosts the behaviors that promote well-being:** Well-being and resilience are linked but also highly individualized. With the help of a coach, some managers realize they need to increase exercise to boost their energy levels. Others focus on regulating emotions to navigate the ups and downs of their day-to-day. Coaches support and propel these behavior changes through personalized conversations, intentional practice and reflection opportunities, and accountability.

When managers take care of themselves and strengthen personal resilience with a coach, they start to model resilience for their teams. Everyone hears and sees that: **1) well-being matters, 2) resilience is something everyone can grow in themselves, and 3) that resilience is foundational for the team’s ability to execute, innovate, and adapt.**

## How to take action

- 1. Find the hotspots in your organization:** Identify where leaders are thriving vs. languishing in your organization. What patterns do you see across business units, geographies, or leadership levels?
- 2. Recognize and encourage resilient behaviors:** In areas where leaders are thriving, identify what practices leaders are modeling that promote resilience.
- 3. Boost leadership resilience:** In areas where leaders are languishing, prioritize leadership development efforts focused on resilience in order to drive immediate impact for leaders and their teams.

Organizations that experienced the highest increases in workforce resilience showed higher levels of financial growth in the past year.



1. Based on a study of publicly traded BetterUp customers.

# 02 FOSTERING INCLUSION

After the social and political events of 2020, many organizations recognized a need to take bolder actions for inclusion. Beyond being a basic human need, belonging and inclusion result in tangible results like team performance, engagement, and innovation. Yet, even when managers believe that inclusion matters, they need ongoing support, not just training, to lead their teams more inclusively.

## Why this matters

**Enables vulnerability on highly sensitive and personal topics:** Reflecting on inclusion, assessing our own capabilities and failures as an inclusive leader, and identifying areas for change is difficult and vulnerable work. A trusted coaching relationship creates accountability and a safe space for the deep inner work needed to translate diversity and inclusion training into real actions.

**Creates highly personalized journey to change**  
Everyone's journey is shaped by very different past experiences. Some managers dig deep into uncovering biases, others spend time healing and developing self-compassion, and some reflect on team experiences of belonging and social connection. In parallel, many need support to better navigate challenges on their current teams. Coaches meet managers where they are to create a customized change journey.

Managers who learn to harness their power as an inclusive leader through coaching create more positive employee experiences, strengthen team dynamics, and guide their teams more effectively towards what they're trying to accomplish.

## How to take action

- 1. Focus on all managers, not just high potentials:** Is your organization relying on critical few leaders to drive whole scale change? Accelerate transformation and make inclusion everyone's responsibility by empowering and supporting managers at every level.
- 2. Measure inclusive mindsets and behaviors:** Diverse representation across your organization is easily quantifiable but measuring inclusive mindsets and behaviors can be difficult. Seek validated, science-based benchmarks and indices to baseline and track progress over time. Calibrate these measures against employees' perceived or "felt" inclusion.
- 3. Provide personalized development:** Inclusion training is often the first step but rarely drives outcomes beyond awareness. Amplify your training efforts with personalized coaching to enable the journey from knowing to doing, and ultimately, being more inclusive.



2. After 3-4 months of coaching with BetterUp.

# 03 LEADING THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE

Did you know that employees rarely have higher engagement levels than their manager? Leaders set the tone and create the environment for the entire team. If you want employees to have positive experiences, it is critical to crack the nut of engaging managers throughout the organization.

**Managers have a highly positive experience when they:**

- ① Have a sense of purpose
- ② Feel energized and dedicated
- ③ Lead authentically
- ④ Approach situations with optimism
- ⑤ Feel connectedness and belonging

## Why this matters

The coaching relationship is well-positioned to help managers cultivate high employee experience for themselves and learn how to create them for their teams.

**Empowers change at the team level.** Coaches help managers see the positive side of challenging situations and find a sense of control in their leadership. Modeling this learned optimism with their teams helps everyone become better equipped to navigate change.

**Provides support in the flow of work.** Personalized coaching makes employee experience an ongoing focus, not an isolated annual event. As managers enter difficult conversations or step out of their comfort zones, coaches provide a safe space for processing, reflection, and identifying what might be done differently next time.

**Creates accountability across the organization.**

Managers have a lot on their plates — competing demands, fires to fight, goals to crush. Working with a coach provides much-needed accountability and regular check-ins to make progress.

## How to take action

**1. Go beyond engagement:** Shift your view of employee engagement towards a holistic employee experience that includes meaning and purpose, belonging, authenticity and optimism. Help leaders connect with these important dimensions and get comfortable talking about them with their teams.

**2. Reframe the role of managers/leaders:** Are your leaders compliance-focused, seeing performance and engagement as annual HR events? Empower leaders to develop and coach their team members, and make them accountable for the job satisfaction of their teams.

**3. Create space for peer coaching and sharing:** Connect managers with each other to share challenges and practices for empowering and developing team members.

**We tracked two groups of employees through the COVID-19 crisis:**

Employee experience

**+7%**

With coaching

**-3%**

Without coaching

Through change and challenge, coaching helps members stay more engaged and find a deeper sense of belonging within the organization.<sup>3</sup>

# Scale personalized development to all managers

BetterUp partners with the world's leading enterprise companies to build leaders who can thrive and inspire in our constantly changing world of work. Combining science, coaching, and leading-edge technology, companies can now scale highly personalized development to sustain the mindsets and behaviors that enable leaders at all levels to lead high-performance teams.

## Science-backed approach

Our evidence-based methodology and program design incorporates insights, techniques, and activities from the latest scientific research. BetterUp's approach to organizational resilience is informed by industry experts including Martin Seligman, BetterUp Science Board Advisor and the father of Positive Psychology.

## Coaching for all

A personalized approach enables the development of mindsets and behaviors that unlock growth, well-being, and productivity amidst times of chaos or uncertainty. BetterUp offers a suite of coaching modalities, including dedicated coaching, resilience specialists, and Coaching Circles, to help organizations scale the right mix of support.

## Leading-edge technology

Growth is reinforced with online resources for in-the-moment support, driven by machine learning and AI technology. In real-time, organizations track drivers of employee experience across the organization through BetterUp's People Analytics Dashboard.



## Get in touch

BetterUp offers technology-enabled, scalable coaching backed by science and made possible by the world's largest network of certified BetterUp Coaches. Get in touch to learn more about how BetterUp can help your people reach their fullest potential.

[Schedule a demo](#)