SAFESTART® FORUM

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BEYOND THE OBVIOUS: HOW TO RECOGNIZE, GROW, AND KEEP TOP TALENT

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Beyond the Obvious: How to Recognize, Grow, and Keep Top Talent

We’re Not Lacking Leaders, We’re Leaving Them Behind



The Invisible Problem

As leaders ourselves, we are unintentionally creating leadership failure when we're not:

- Asking our employees for **feedback**
- Empowering our employees and offering **autonomy**
- Engaging our employees and showing them a path to the **future**

This causes our **high potential** employees to disengage or even leave!

Today's Goal

1. Quantify and qualify the cost of not addressing the issue
2. Practical tips to identify HiPo
3. Practical ways to empower
4. Practical ways to remove barriers
5. Move from Me to We succession planning

My Story

Who am I?

- Dad
- Director
- Community Coach
- Social Entrepreneur



This Isn't Just My Experience

Hundreds of career discussions and thousands of stakeholder conversations have shown me:

Work-as-described vs. work-as-completed: Leaders aren't asking for real **feedback** on what is actually happening.

Communication gaps: Employees don't feel **heard**, so they stop contributing.

Managers managing, not leading: Focus on tasks over people, **autonomy**, and trust.

Lack of development opportunities: No visible **future** = high-potential talent disengages first.

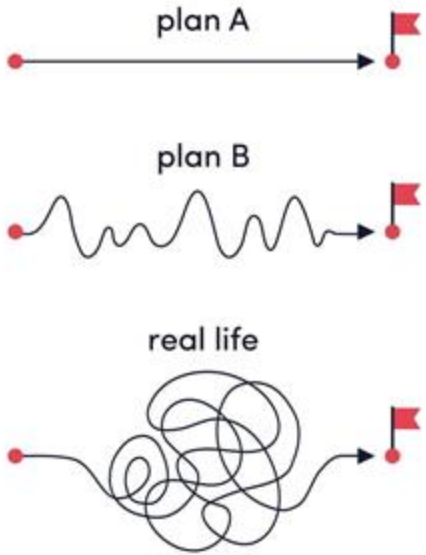
The Outcome

Disengagement becomes normalized. Only 23% of employees are engaged globally — disengagement is the default.

High-potential employees exit early. 42% of turnover is preventable, often tied to leadership and lack of communication.

Remaining workforce becomes a cost center. Disengaged employees can cost ~34% of salary in lost productivity.

You are a paying full salary for significantly reduced output



Gallup: 42% of Employee Turnover Is Preventable but Often Ignored

Morgan's Story

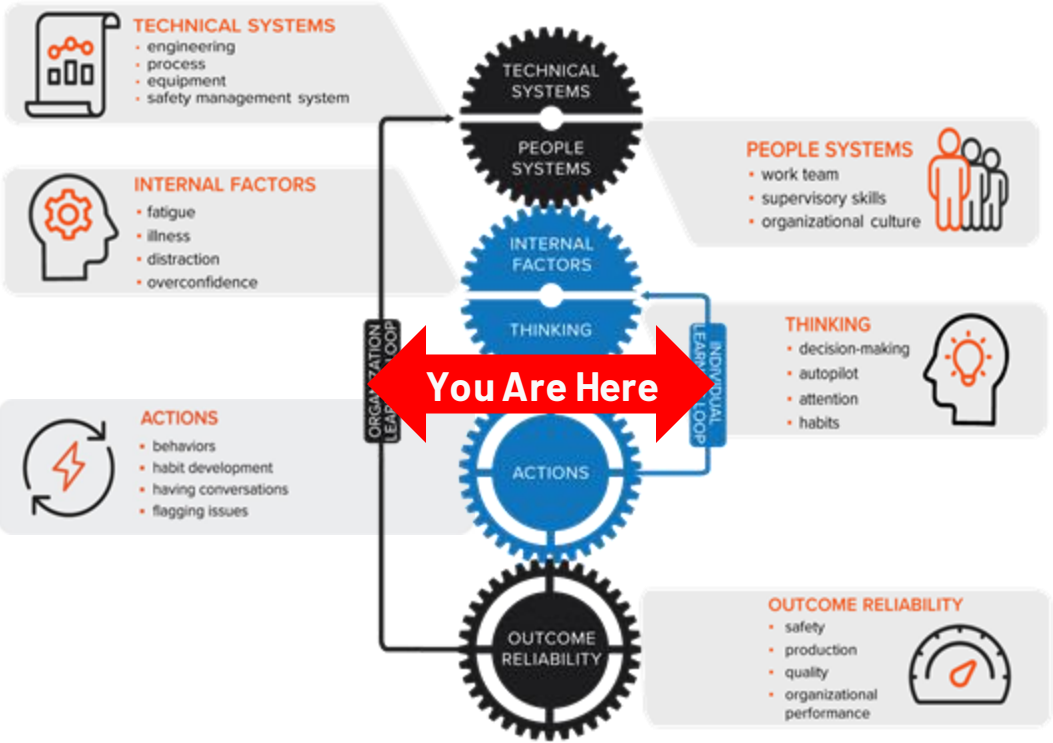
“ ”

In my previous role, **I often felt unsure of myself and hesitant to speak up**, and when I did, **I wasn’t given the tools to help**, even when I cared deeply about the work.

Having a leader now who takes the **time to listen, give the proper tools, communicate clearly and consistently**, and genuinely care about both the people and the workplace has **completely changed that for me.**

I now feel confident asking questions, sharing ideas, growing in my role, and even accepting constructive criticism. **Feeling supported and valued** on a daily basis has been incredibly motivating, and it’s reminded me what a healthy, positive workplace should truly feel like. It actually **makes me want to go to work**

The Human Factors Framework



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Who Are Emerging Leaders

Definitions:

emerging

/əˈmərjiNG/
becoming apparent or prominent.

leader

/ˈlēdər/
the person who leads or commands a group or organization.

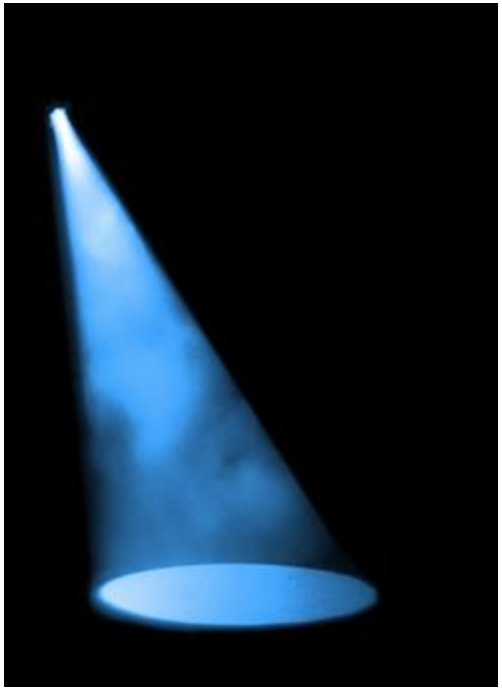
Emerging leaders are individuals whose **leadership potential** is becoming apparent **through their ability** to influence, communicate, and build trust with others.

Stop & Identify Them

Leadership Signal Spotting

Goal: Clarify how to identify emerging leaders by yourself. Think about your team AND other teams.

- Name 2 emerging leaders
- What specifically makes them stand out?
- How do they demonstrate those strengths?
- Who are their allies?



Being A Top Performer Is Not Enough

Research across sports psychology and management categorizes leadership into four functional roles:

Task, Motivational, Social, and **External.**

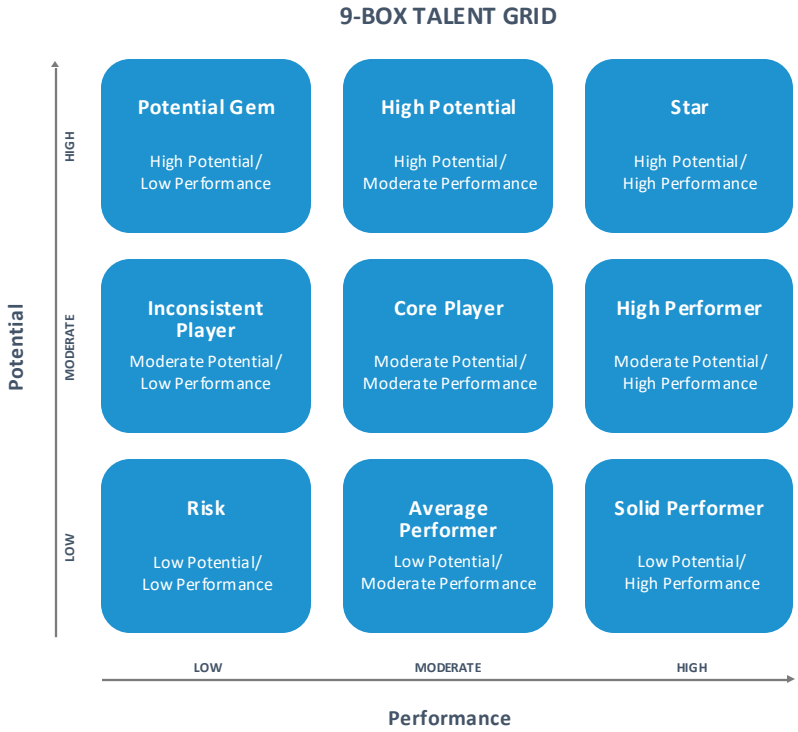
To fulfill these, a leader must possess:

- **Performance Credibility**
- **Emotional Intelligence (EQ) & Empathy**
- **Ethical Integrity & Crisis Composure**
- **Effective Communication**
- **Strategic Selflessness**



NIH: Athlete Leadership Development Within Teams

A Tool For Identifying Potential



Y-axis: indicates growth potential, referring to an individual's potential to grow within the ranks in a managerial or professional capacity.

X-axis: represents an employee's current overall performance, identifying whether the employee is currently below, meeting, or exceeding performance expectations.

Nakisa: Most companies fail at succession planning. Here's how to succeed

The Cost If They Become Disengaged



Lost productivity

Less focus, lower output, and missed opportunities.



Higher turnover rates

Employees take their expertise elsewhere, leaving gaps and additional replacement costs.



Dissatisfied Customers

Inconsistent services, delayed response times, and weakened relationships



More absenteeism

Increased unplanned absences disrupt teams and slow progress.



All of which can add up to millions in hidden expenses.

LinkedIn: Calculating the Costs of Employee Disengagement

The Cost If They Leave

The cost of turnover increases with role complexity

- Up to **50% of salary** for entry-level roles
- Up to **~400% of salary** for high-level / specialized roles

Investing in development significantly reduces attrition risk

- Employees with development opportunities are **12x more likely to stay**

Many employees leave without meaningful leadership conversations

- **45% of voluntary leavers** say no leader discussed their satisfaction, performance, or future in the **3 months before leaving**

Gallup: 42% of Employee Turnover Is Preventable but Often Ignored

MGR Workforce: Employee Retention: What Employee Turnover Really Costs Your Company | SHRM: Hold On to Your High-Potential Workers

Consider this...

We’ve identified emerging leaders.

What advice would you give to their boss?



Confronting The Known Barriers

What barriers might get in the way of this high-potential employee from getting to the next level?

- Lack of psychological safety
- Whirlwind (urgent vs important)
- Risk aversion/comfort
- Bureaucracy
- No succession planning
- **We don't tell or ask**



Confronting The Unknown Barriers



Bias isn't a character flaw. It's human nature.

Assumptions become invisible barriers when they decide who gets a chance.

Jennifer's Story



"**Ideas only count if they came from them,** and speaking up often means getting shut down. My career feels like it depends on staying on their good side...

When a position that interested me was posted, one that would make me a peer to my leader, **I immediately expressed my interest and asked for guidance on how to prepare. Unfortunately, I didn't receive any.** … After the position was filled, someone from Sr. Leadership asked why I hadn't shown my interest. That's when I realized my supervisor hadn't submitted my name at all.

While that was pretty disappointing at the time, **it showed me that I don't have to rely on my immediate supervisor to be my only mentor, I found an entirely new network outside of them. This network is currently helping me prepare for the next time this type of position is posted, and encouraging me along the way."**

Missing Opportunities

If one of your quiet high-potential employees left tomorrow, what would you regret not giving them the chance to do?

Stretch Assignments	Visibility Opportunities	Decision-making opportunities

- Where can emerging leaders step in?
- What low-risk responsibility could you delegate next month?

The Leadership Gaps

18%

Of managers demonstrate strong talent for managing others

50%

Of employees know what is expected of them

40%

Of employees agree that their boss holds them accountable for their performance goals

50%

Of employees leave their job due to poor leadership

With the odds stacked against them, your sponsorship can change someone's direction.

Forbes: The Real Crisis In Leadership | Gallup: The Most Expensive Mistake Leaders Can Make

Consider This…

If our manager won the lottery tomorrow, **what would fail?**



Now What?

We have opportunities identified for our emerging leader, **now what?**

- **Invest in training them:** And keep investing!
- **Provide psychological safety**: Give them room to make mistakes and learn.
- **Debrief tough moments**: Reflection accelerates leadership growth.
- **Be specific**: Ambiguity multiplies waste.
- **Build the plan together**

Why It Matters

“Global research and advisory firm Gartner confirms that 60 percent of new managers fail within the first 24 months, largely due to a lack of training in leadership and management skills.”

Wharton Executive Education: Managing to Fail? Why New Leaders Need Training

Succession Planning

Why don’t companies have succession plans?

- **Difficulty identifying a successor**
- Focus on daily responsibilities
- Succession not seen as urgent
- Reluctance to step back
- **Complex process**
- Assumptions about internal talent
- Limited development planning
- No clear transition timeline
- Emotional attachment to the role
- Fear of internal conflict
- **Unclear performance benchmarks**
- Poor knowledge transfer
- **Overconfidence in continuity**
- Insufficient board or stakeholder involvement

Failing To Plan Is Planning To Fail

Consequences of not having a succession plan

- Operational risks
- Financial consequences
- People impact
- Lost growth



Resource: Me To We Succession Planning

For Leaders: A Succession Plan is a living conversation, not a static document. Involve your high-potential employee early in the development plan.

Includes:
- Identify critical roles and the risks of losing key talent.
- Define the capabilities the business will need tomorrow, not just today.
- Build a pipeline of potential successors and contingency plans.
- Reduce organizational risk through proactive planning.

For Individuals: Most people think succession is about being "next in line." It's not. It's about removing all reasonable doubt that you can already do the job.

Includes:
- Create an opportunity for explicit conversation
- Understand strengths, development gaps and readiness.
- Create meaningful growth opportunities through experience, exposure and learning.
- Establish shared accountability between leaders and employees.

Succession Planning Template

A Recap

- Providing opportunity (stretch + visibility)
- Prospect development (training + clarity)
- Retention & protection (psychological safety & sponsorship)


Now, who are you going to take under your wing?



Thank You!

Do you have any questions?

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