BARYONS

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

AN EXECUTIVE BRIEF FOR LEADERS WHO INVEST IN MANAGER DEVELOPMENT

Why leadership development does not automatically become consistent decisions

What happens between formal development moments, when managers make real calls with competing priorities and unclear authority.

Leadership development | Decision rights | Consistency

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Programs build language. Weeks test it.

Leadership development gives managers a shared language and better habits. Consistent application depends on what happens afterward, when priorities compete, authority is ambiguous and real decisions arrive between formal sessions. That is where a development investment turns into the decisions people experience.

69%

OF HR LEADERS SAY LEADERS AND MANAGERS ARE NOT EQUIPPED TO LEAD CHANGE (2024)[1]

70%

OF THE VARIANCE IN ENGAGEMENT ACROSS BUSINESS UNITS IS ACCOUNTED FOR BY THE MANAGER[2]

Gartner found 69% of HR leaders say leaders and managers are not equipped to lead change.[1] The survey asked HR leaders across many organizations, including those with strong programs, and it covers change in general. It suggests that even well-developed managers can find it hard to apply what they learned when the situation shifts. That matters most where a company has invested heavily, because the investment shows up in the decisions that follow it.

Programs usually report participation, completion and satisfaction. Those are useful signals of the investment. They do not show whether managers in different functions interpret the same expectation the same way when a real call arrives on a Tuesday, with a deadline attached. Completion data describes individuals. The cross-team pattern is a separate question.

WHAT THIS BRIEF COVERS

1. **Why learning and application diverge.** The mechanism, and why it appears.
2. **A hypothetical example.** One lesson, two functions, two calls.
3. **Five checks between sessions.** Usable this week, with no new training.
4. **Where Baryons fits.** What it adds to development, and the limits of what it does.

A QUESTION TO TAKE INTO THE NEXT LEADERSHIP REVIEW

Which leadership expectation would two of your functions apply differently this week?

Why development does not travel on its own

Between leadership sessions, managers still have to make the call.

A program teaches principles in a room where the trade-offs are clear. Back at work, the same principles meet competing priorities, unclear decision rights and situations no case study covered. Each manager closes those gaps with their own judgment, which is what development intends and where consistency gets tested.

WHERE APPLICATION VARIES

- **Priorities compete.** A manager taught to delegate still has to decide what to do when the deadline and the development goal pull apart.
- **Authority is ambiguous.** Programs teach how to decide. They rarely settle who decides a given cross-team question.
- **Escalation norms differ.** One function escalates early; another absorbs issues to show ownership. Both are applying what they learned.
- **Practice fades between sessions.** With little shared practice, each manager's version of a skill moves toward their own habits.

WHY IT HAPPENS IN WELL-RUN COMPANIES

Companies that invest in development tend to promote managers who take initiative. Those managers apply what they learn quickly and confidently, in their own context. That is valuable, and it means differences in application spread before anyone compares notes.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

A meta-analysis of team cognition found that shared understanding of the work explains differences in team performance beyond motivation and behavior.[3]

Gallup research finds managers account for 70% of the variance in team engagement.[2] The finding is about engagement, not development programs, and it does not show what any one program achieves. It does explain why consistency among managers matters: their everyday decisions are much of what employees experience as leadership, whatever the program taught. Shared language across managers is a strong start. Shared decisions are the next step, and consistency is what lets a team expect the same situation to get the same answer.

Participation shows the investment. Consistent decisions show where it has landed.

03 · HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE

One lesson, two reasonable calls

HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE. NOT A BARYONS CUSTOMER.

Expectation: give your team ownership of decisions

A 350-person engineering services firm runs a strong manager program. Every director completes it, and the sessions on delegation are rated highly.

Afterward, the delivery director gives team leads full authority over client scope. The finance director, applying the same lesson, delegates approvals but asks to see every exception. When a scope change touches budget, the two teams apply two different rules to the same request.

The client hears two answers in one week. Both directors applied the program faithfully. Nobody had agreed which decisions the lesson covered, so each director drew the line where it made sense for their own function.

What the example shows. The development worked. The gap sat in the decision rights around it, which the program taught people to use but could not define for this company.

04 · EXECUTIVE CHECKS

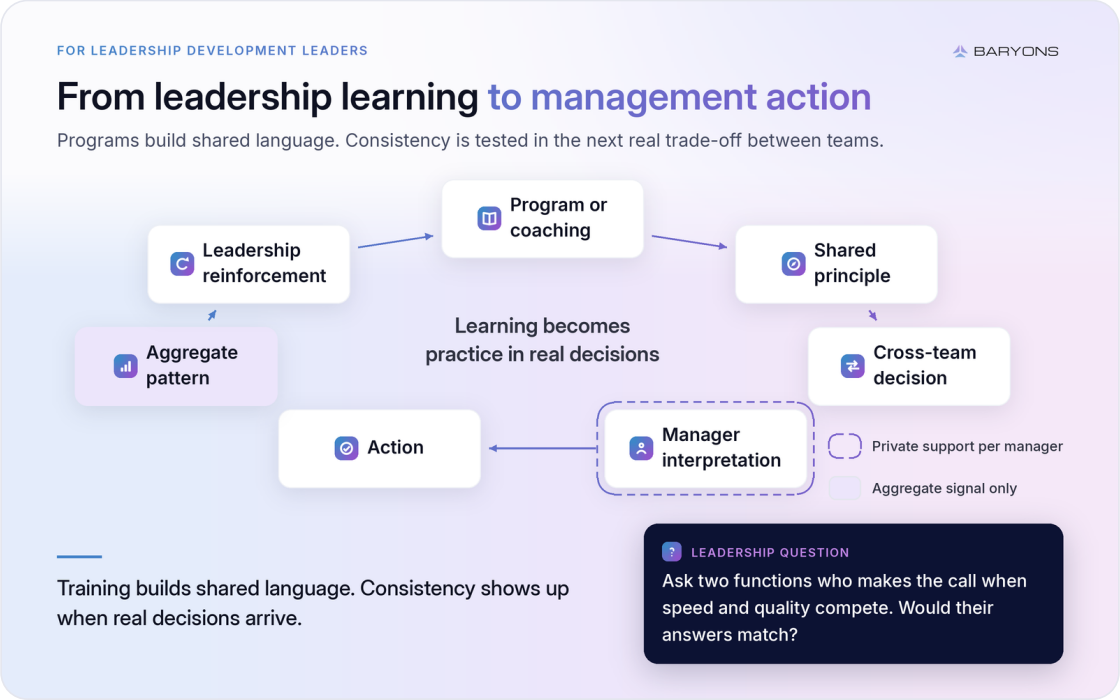
Five checks between sessions

Each check takes a few minutes and needs no new training. Ask managers in two functions separately, then compare. A difference points to a next step, which may not be more training.

1. **Ask what matters most this month.** Ask managers in two functions the same question, and compare what each would protect.
2. **Ask who decides when priorities compete.** Different names point to a decision right to clarify rather than a skill gap.
3. **Ask when an issue should be escalated.** Different thresholds mean the same problem surfaces at different times.
4. **Trace one lesson into one decision.** Pick one expectation from the program and ask how each manager applied it last month.
5. **Choose the right response.** Decide whether each difference needs clearer decision rights, coaching or a shared conversation.

What Baryons contributes alongside development

Baryons complements leadership training, coaching and learning systems. It does not replace a program, its providers or the people who run it. It gives managers a private place to work a real call through between sessions, and gives leaders an aggregate read on the questions that keep recurring across teams.



From leadership learning to management action. Illustrative.

- **Private guidance between sessions.** People get private guidance grounded in approved company priorities, in conversations of a few minutes by phone or web. Each person's conversation stays theirs.
- **Built for the ordinary week.** A few minutes, a phone call, and a Baryon that shows up with an agenda and remembers. Baryons is designed to be rolled out to a team together.
- **Aggregate signal for leaders.** Each week, Team Resonance returns the patterns across a team, with no names in any section: what is resonating and where friction sits, so leaders can respond while a gap is still inexpensive.
- **No new system.** No new meeting and no integration project. Deployment is a participant list and a phone number. Baryons does not need access to email, meetings or task systems.

What this brief does not claim

- The Gartner and Gallup figures describe broad workplace research. They are not specific to development programs and do not show that any one company has this gap. Both come from surveys, not from a review of manager decisions.
- The example is hypothetical. It is not a Baryons customer, and its details are invented to show the mechanism.
- Research on shared understanding shows a link with team performance. It does not show that any one practice or tool will change results in a given company.
- Baryons does not evaluate programs, and it works alongside existing providers and coaches. Leaders never receive individual scores or conversations.

A NEXT STEP

Pick one expectation from your current program.

Ask managers in two functions the first three checks this week. If their answers line up, you have your confirmation and a useful baseline for the next cohort. If they do not, and a focused discussion would be useful, we would be glad to have it at baryons.com.

SOURCES

References

1 **Gartner Survey Finds Leader and Manager Development Tops HR Leaders' List of 2025 Priorities for Third Consecutive Year.** Gartner, press release (survey of HR leaders, July 2024), October 15, 2024. https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2024-10-15-gartner-survey-finds-leader-and-manager-development-tops-hrleaders-list

2 Beck, R. J., and Harter, J.. **Why Great Managers Are So Rare.** Gallup, March 25, 2014. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/231593/why-great-managers-rare.aspx

3 DeChurch, L. A., and Mesmer-Magnus, J. R.. **The cognitive underpinnings of effective teamwork: a meta-analysis.** Journal of Applied Psychology, 95(1), 32-53, 2010. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017328

Team Resonance is a Baryons feature.