

# APEX DYNAMICS

*Building confident, accountable people managers who measurably lift performance, engagement and culture*

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## People Leader & Management Development Programme

### *Research Foundation & Evidence Base*

*Contemporary Organisational Behaviour Science & Psychology Supporting Extended Coaching Interventions*

*Supporting Documentation*

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### Evidence-Based Leadership Development

The research evidence is unequivocal: extended coaching interventions of 6-12 months produce measurable, sustained improvements in leadership effectiveness, team performance, employee engagement, and organisational outcomes.

The Apex Dynamics People Leader & Management Development Programme is deliberately designed to align with this evidence base:

- 10-month duration ensures sufficient time for behaviour embedding (6+ months in maintenance stage)
- Qualified external coaching by an experienced practitioner with 25+ years across elite sport, education, and corporate contexts
- Regular bi-weekly touchpoints (15 sessions) provide accountability and course correction
- Quarterly workshops (4 sessions) create shared language and peer learning
- Goal-focused individual development plans co-created with HR
- Pre- and post-programme assessment tracks measurable progress
- Metrics definition and tracking demonstrate organisational impact

For HR leaders and senior executives considering investment in leadership development, the PLMDP represents a **research-aligned, evidence-based intervention** with demonstrated ROI across engagement, retention, productivity, and performance culture.

This is not training. It is a **behaviour change system** grounded in contemporary organisational behaviour science and psychology.

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## 1. Executive Overview

This document provides the comprehensive research foundation and evidence base supporting the Apex Dynamics People Leader & Management Development Programme (PLMDP). It synthesises contemporary findings from organisational behaviour science, psychology, and management research to establish why extended coaching interventions of 10 months duration produce superior and sustained leadership development outcomes.

**Key Finding:** Coaching interventions consistently demonstrate positive effects on individual and organisational outcomes, with effect sizes ranging from moderate to large across rigorous meta-analyses. The 10-month duration aligns with established behaviour change science showing that 6-12 months of sustained practice is required to embed new habits into the maintenance stage.

### Purpose of This Document

To provide HR leaders, People & Culture teams, and senior executives with:

- Evidence-based justification for extended coaching programmes
  - Understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying behaviour change
  - Quantitative evidence of organisational impact and ROI
  - Scientific rationale for the 10-month programme duration
  - Confidence in investing in leadership development at scale
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## 2. The Science of Behaviour Change & Embedding

### The Stages of Change Model (Transtheoretical Model)

Developed by Prochaska and DiClemente, the Stages of Change Model identifies five distinct stages individuals progress through when adopting new behaviours:

#### 1. Precontemplation

Individuals are unaware of the need for change or resistant to it. No intention to change in the foreseeable future.

#### 2. Contemplation

Awareness of the problem and consideration of change, but not yet committed. Weighing pros and cons. This stage can last months.

#### 3. Preparation

Intention to take action soon (within the next month). Small steps may be taken. Planning and commitment building occur here.

#### 4. Action

Overt behaviour modification occurs. This stage requires considerable commitment of time and energy. Most visible stage but also most vulnerable to relapse.

#### 5. Maintenance

**The new behaviour is sustained over time.** This stage typically requires 6 months or more of sustained practice to prevent relapse into old patterns. Confidence grows, but temptation to revert remains.

### Critical Insight for Leadership Coaching

**Research demonstrates that individuals require extended support—rarely completing the journey from contemplation through action to sustained maintenance in fewer than 6 months.** [1][4]

Single workshops or brief training programmes may move managers from precontemplation to contemplation, or even to action, but they lack the sustained reinforcement required to reach and maintain the maintenance stage. This is why traditional 1-2 day training often fails to produce lasting behaviour change.

### Behaviour Change Timelines: The 3-6-12 Month Framework

#### 3-6 Months: Establishing New Behaviours

Contemporary research shows that 3-6 months of coaching intervention establishes new behaviours and moves individuals from the action stage toward maintenance. During this period:

- New neural pathways begin to form
- Conscious competence develops (aware effort required)
- Initial resistance and discomfort decrease
- Early wins build motivation and self-efficacy

#### 6-12 Months: Embedding Habits into Maintenance

Sustained practice over 6-12 months embeds habits into the maintenance stage, where behaviours become more automatic and less cognitively demanding:

- Unconscious competence emerges (automatic execution)
- Behaviours integrate into identity and self-concept
- Relapse risk substantially decreases
- Confidence in sustaining change increases

[1][2]

## Marshall Goldsmith: Longitudinal Coaching Research

Marshall Goldsmith, one of the world's leading executive coaches, has conducted extensive longitudinal research on coaching effectiveness. His findings confirm that:

**12-18 months of systematic follow-up ensures continued progress and prevents relapse into old patterns. [3]**

Goldsmith's research methodology involves:

- Regular stakeholder feedback throughout the coaching engagement
- Measurement of leadership effectiveness before, during, and after coaching
- Long-term follow-up to assess behaviour sustainability

His data consistently shows that leaders who receive ongoing coaching support over 12+ months demonstrate greater and more sustained behaviour change than those receiving shorter interventions. The difference is particularly pronounced in complex leadership behaviours such as:

- Giving difficult feedback
- Managing conflict constructively
- Delegating effectively
- Building trust and psychological safety

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## 3. Meta-Analytic Evidence for Coaching Effectiveness

Meta-analyses aggregate results from multiple studies to provide robust, generalizable conclusions about intervention effectiveness. Three landmark meta-analyses published between 2023-2025 provide compelling evidence for coaching as an effective organisational intervention.

### 2025 Meta-Analysis: 78% Positive Effects (180,658 Participants)

A comprehensive 2025 meta-analysis examined coaching effectiveness across 180,658 participants, making it one of the largest aggregations of coaching research to date.

**Key Finding: 78% of coaching studies demonstrated positive effects** across multiple outcome domains [5]:

- Knowledge gain (understanding of concepts, frameworks, and principles)
- Attitude shifts (beliefs about capability, motivation, engagement)
- Behavioural changes (observable leadership actions and practices)
- Physical outcomes (stress reduction, health improvements)
- Psychological outcomes (self-efficacy, resilience, wellbeing)

This meta-analysis is particularly significant because it demonstrates coaching effectiveness across diverse populations, industries, and coaching modalities (executive coaching, team coaching, performance coaching, developmental coaching).

### **2023 RCT Meta-Analysis: Moderate-to-Large Effect Size (g=0.59)**

A rigorous 2023 meta-analysis published in *Academy of Management Learning & Education* examined only randomised controlled trials (RCTs)—the gold standard for establishing causality—to assess coaching effectiveness [6].

#### **Study Parameters:**

- 37 randomised controlled trials
- 2,528 total participants
- Only studies with control groups included
- Examined both leadership and personal outcomes

#### **Key Finding: Coaching produced a moderate-to-large effect size (Hedges' g = 0.59)**

This effect size indicates that the average person receiving coaching performs better than 72% of those not receiving coaching. For context:

- Small effect:  $g = 0.20$  (coaching better than 58% of controls)
- Medium effect:  $g = 0.50$  (coaching better than 69% of controls)
- Large effect:  $g = 0.80$  (coaching better than 79% of controls)

Statistically significant improvements were found in:

- Self-efficacy (belief in one's capability to execute actions)
- Goal attainment (achievement of specific objectives)
- Performance (objective and subjective measures)
- Wellbeing (psychological health and life satisfaction)

### **2023 Frontiers in Psychology Meta-Analysis**

A separate 2023 meta-analysis published in *Frontiers in Psychology* confirmed coaching's effectiveness as a performance-enhancing intervention, with several critical moderators identified [7]:

**Coach Qualification Matters:** Coaching delivered by credentialed, experienced coaches produces significantly larger effects than coaching by untrained managers.

**Duration Matters:** Coaching interventions spanning 6+ months produce larger and more sustained effects than shorter interventions.

**Goal Clarity Matters:** Coaching focused on specific, measurable goals produces better outcomes than general developmental conversations.

This meta-analysis provides direct support for the Apex Dynamics programme design: qualified external coaches, 10-month duration, and goal-focused individual development plans co-created with HR.

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## 4. Organisational Outcomes: Performance & Productivity

### 70% Improvement in Individual Performance

Research aggregated by Lume (2025) from multiple studies demonstrates that coaching programmes yield:

#### **70% improvement in individual performance [8]**

This performance improvement manifests across multiple dimensions:

- Task performance (quality, accuracy, speed of work completion)
- Contextual performance (helping others, taking initiative, going beyond role requirements)
- Adaptive performance (responding effectively to change, learning new skills)
- Leadership performance (influencing others, setting direction, building teams)

### 50% Improvement in Team Performance

**Up to 50% improvement in team performance** when managers receive coaching on leadership and team management skills [8]

Team performance improvements include:

- Team coordination and collaboration
- Collective problem-solving and decision-making
- Psychological safety and speaking up
- Innovation and creative solutions
- Achievement of team objectives

### 17% Boost in Productivity (Gallup Research)

Gallup's extensive organisational research has established that:

**Organisations with high employee engagement—fostered by well-coached leaders—see a 17% boost in productivity. [8]**

This productivity improvement is driven by:

- Reduced absenteeism (engaged employees are present and punctual)
- Higher discretionary effort (going above and beyond minimum requirements)
- Better quality work (fewer errors, rework, and defects)

- Faster completion times (focused effort without distraction)
- Knowledge sharing and collaboration (helping colleagues succeed)

## Managerial Coaching Skill & Team-Level Outcomes

Research by Kim and Kuo (2021) published in *Human Resource Management Journal* examined how managerial coaching skill affects team performance [9]:

**Key Finding: Managerial coaching skill positively correlates with team-level knowledge acquisition and performance, especially when managers possess high learning goal orientation.**

The mechanism works as follows:

- Managers with coaching skills ask better questions (not just giving answers)
- They facilitate team problem-solving (building capability, not dependency)
- They create psychological safety for experimentation and learning
- They provide timely feedback focused on development, not judgment
- They recognise and leverage individual and team strengths

Additional research on Generations Y and Z confirms these patterns hold across younger cohorts, with managerial coaching skill becoming increasingly important for engaging and retaining millennial and Gen Z employees [10].

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## 5. Employee Engagement & Psychological Capital

### Coaching Leadership & Employee Engagement

Tang et al. (2024) published research in *PLOS ONE* examining the synergistic effects of coaching leadership, organisational learning culture, and employee engagement [11].

**Key Finding: Coaching leadership significantly enhances employee engagement across three dimensions:**

#### 1. Vigour

High levels of energy, mental resilience, willingness to invest effort, and persistence in the face of difficulties.

#### 2. Dedication

Strong involvement in one's work, experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge.

### 3. Absorption

Being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in work, where time passes quickly and one has difficulty detaching from work.

The study found that coaching leadership creates a developmental environment where employees:

- Feel supported in their growth and development
- Experience autonomy and empowerment
- Receive regular, constructive feedback
- Have clarity about expectations and performance standards
- See clear connections between their efforts and outcomes

## Psychological Capital: The Hidden Mechanism

Psychological Capital (PsyCap) is a higher-order construct comprising four positive psychological resources:

### 1. Hope

Persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals in order to succeed.

### 2. Self-Efficacy

Confidence in one's ability to mobilise motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to execute specific tasks.

### 3. Resilience

Bouncing back from adversity, uncertainty, failure, or even positive change and progress.

### 4. Optimism

Making positive attributions about succeeding now and in the future.

**Leadership coaching increases psychological capital**, which directly results in [12][13]:

- Higher job satisfaction
- Lower turnover intention
- Reduced burnout and exhaustion
- Improved wellbeing and mental health
- Enhanced innovative work behaviour
- Greater thriving at work

## 20% Higher Retention Among Coached Employees

**Employees who receive coaching are 20% more likely to stay with their current employer** (BetterUp research) [8]

The retention mechanism operates through:

- Perceived investment in development (employees feel valued)
  - Enhanced capability and confidence (reduced performance anxiety)
  - Stronger relationship with manager (relational attachment)
  - Increased engagement and meaningful work
  - Clear career pathways and growth opportunities
- 

## 6. Turnover Reduction & Retention Economics

### 14.9% Lower Turnover Rate

**Companies investing in ongoing coaching and development experience a 14.9% lower turnover rate** compared to those that do not (American Management Association) [8]

This reduction is particularly pronounced among:

- High-potential employees (those most at risk of competitive poaching)
- Mid-career professionals (those seeking development opportunities)
- Frontline managers (those experiencing the stress of first-time leadership)

### The Economics of Turnover

**Losing a senior employee and replacing them can cost up to twice that employee's annual salary**—a substantial burden that compounds across multiple exits [8]

Turnover costs comprise:

#### Direct Costs:

- Recruitment advertising and agency fees
- Interview time (multiple stakeholders, multiple rounds)
- Background checks and assessments
- Onboarding and induction programmes
- Training and development for new hire

#### Indirect Costs:

- Productivity loss during vacancy period
- Reduced team performance (disrupted relationships and workflows)
- Knowledge loss and institutional memory
- Increased workload and stress on remaining team members
- Time to full productivity for replacement (6-18 months depending on role)
- Risk of additional departures (turnover contagion)

## \$1 Trillion Annual Cost of Voluntary Turnover

Voluntary employee turnover costs U.S. businesses an estimated **\$1 trillion annually** (Gallup research) [14]

The primary driver of voluntary turnover is poor management:

- 75% of employees leave managers, not companies (Gallup)
- Lack of development and coaching is a top-3 exit driver
- Unclear expectations and feedback deficits accelerate exits

**Implication: Effective coaching mitigates this risk by building more capable, supportive, and developmental managers.**

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## 7. Leadership Development & Authenticity

### Authentic Leadership: The Largest Effect on Effectiveness

Research by Lai and Palmer (2023) examining the effects of executive coaching on leadership behaviours, attitudes, and performance found that:

**Coaching-related increases in authentic leadership behaviour have the largest total effect on leadership effectiveness** [15]

#### What is Authentic Leadership?

Authentic leadership comprises four dimensions:

##### 1. Self-Awareness:

- Understanding one's strengths, weaknesses, values, and impact on others

##### 2. Relational Transparency:

- Presenting one's authentic self (as opposed to a fake or distorted self) to others

##### 3. Balanced Processing:

- Objectively analysing relevant data before making decisions, soliciting views that challenge deeply held positions

##### 4. Internalised Moral Perspective:

- Being guided by internal moral standards and values rather than external pressures

### Why Coaching Develops Authentic Leadership

Coaching creates the conditions for authentic leadership development through:

- Reflective practice (examining behaviour patterns and their consequences)
- 360-degree feedback (understanding how others perceive you)
- Values clarification (identifying core principles and priorities)
- Behavioural experimentation (trying new approaches in safe practice)
- Accountability and follow-through (sustained behaviour change)

### Change-Oriented Behaviour & Self-Efficacy

The same research found that leaders who receive coaching demonstrate enhanced:

**Self-Efficacy:** Confidence in their capability to lead effectively, handle difficult situations, and achieve goals

**Change-Oriented Behaviour:** Willingness to challenge the status quo, advocate for innovation, and lead organisational transformation

**These leadership capabilities cascade to improved team outcomes:**

- Teams led by coached leaders show higher performance
  - Greater innovation and creative problem-solving
  - Enhanced psychological safety and voice
  - Better adaptability to change
- 

## 8. Return on Investment: Economic Evidence

### 86% of Companies Recover Their Coaching Investment

**86% of companies report that coaching recoups initial investment**, with many organisations seeing returns that far exceed programme costs [8]

This high recovery rate reflects:

- Measurable improvements in productivity and performance
- Reduced turnover and recruitment costs
- Enhanced employee engagement and discretionary effort
- Faster problem resolution and decision-making
- Better customer outcomes and satisfaction

## 5:1 to 7:1 Average ROI (ICF Global Coaching Study)

The International Coaching Federation's global research consistently finds that organisations report **average ROI of 5:1 to 7:1** on leadership development programmes incorporating coaching.

This means:

- For every \$1 invested, organisations receive \$5-\$7 in value
- Payback period typically occurs within 12-18 months
- Value continues to accrue beyond the programme conclusion

### Sources of ROI

- Productivity gains (faster work completion, higher quality)
- Retention savings (avoided turnover costs)
- Revenue increases (better sales performance, customer retention)
- Cost reductions (fewer errors, rework, and waste)
- Innovation value (new products, processes, or services)
- Cultural improvements (reduced conflict, higher collaboration)

## Programme-Specific ROI: The Apex Dynamics Case

For the \$25,000 investment in the full PLMDP (11-15 managers):

### Retention ROI:

Preventing the loss of just 2-3 mid-level employees (replacement cost: \$80,000-\$150,000 each) recovers the investment **multiple times over**.

### Productivity ROI:

A cohort of 15 managers leading teams of 8 (120 employees) achieving a modest 5% productivity improvement (valued at \$3,000 per employee annually) generates **\$360,000 in additional value**—a **14:1 return**.

### Engagement ROI:

Organisations with high engagement see 17% higher productivity, 41% lower absenteeism, and 24% lower turnover (Gallup). Even **fractional improvements** across these metrics deliver substantial financial returns.

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## 9. Managerial Coaching Skills & Team Performance

### The Manager-as-Coach Paradigm

Contemporary management research has shifted from viewing managers primarily as directors and controllers to seeing them as developers and coaches. This paradigm recognises that:

- Knowledge work requires autonomy and initiative (can't be micromanaged)
- Competitive advantage comes from continuous learning and adaptation
- Engagement and retention depend on developmental relationships
- Managers lack time for traditional command-and-control supervision

### What Are Managerial Coaching Skills?

Managerial coaching skills include:

#### Asking Powerful Questions:

- Open-ended questions that stimulate thinking rather than simply giving answers

#### Active Listening:

- Fully attending to the speaker, demonstrating understanding, and exploring beneath surface-level statements

#### Providing Constructive Feedback:

- Specific, timely, balanced feedback focused on development rather than judgment

#### Facilitating Reflection:

- Helping employees examine their experiences, extract lessons, and apply learning to future situations

#### Goal Setting & Accountability:

- Co-creating clear, challenging goals and following through on commitments

#### Empowerment & Autonomy:

- Delegating meaningful work and allowing appropriate decision-making authority

## Evidence: Coaching Skills Drive Team Performance

Research consistently demonstrates that managerial coaching skill positively predicts:

- Team-level knowledge acquisition (collective learning)
- Team performance (quality and quantity of outputs)
- Team innovation (generation and implementation of new ideas)
- Team adaptive performance (responding effectively to change)

The relationship is particularly strong when:

- Managers possess high learning goal orientation (growth mindset)
- Organisational culture supports development and experimentation
- Teams have psychological safety (can speak up without fear)

[9][10]

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## 10. The 10-Month Duration: Scientific Rationale

### Why Not Shorter? The Problem with Brief Interventions

#### 1-2 Day Workshops:

- Create awareness and motivation (contemplation stage)
- Provide knowledge and frameworks
- Inspire initial commitment
- But: Lack of sustained reinforcement is required for behavioural change
- Relapse to old patterns within 2-4 weeks is typical

#### 3-Month Programmes:

- Move participants into the action stage
- Establish some new behaviours
- Build early confidence and competence
- But: Insufficient time to reach the maintenance stage
- High relapse risk when programme support ends

## Why 10 Months? Aligning with Behaviour Change Science

The 10-month duration is deliberately structured to align with established behaviour change science:

### Months 1-3: Establishing Foundation

- Initial coaching sessions focus on:
  - - Self-awareness and feedback (360 assessments, behavioural profiling)
  - - Goal setting and development planning
  - - Introduction of key frameworks (5 Diamond Pillars)
  - - Early behaviour experiments and practice
- First quarterly workshop establishes shared language

### Months 4-6: Building Competence

- Mid-programme coaching emphasises:
  - - Application of skills in real work situations
  - - Troubleshooting barriers and resistance
  - - Deepening capability in challenging areas
  - - Peer learning and shared problem-solving
- Second quarterly workshop reinforces concepts

### Months 7-10: Embedding and Sustaining

- Final months focus on:
  - - Habit formation and automaticity
  - - Relapse prevention strategies
  - - Integration into identity and self-concept
  - - Planning for ongoing development post-programme
- Third and fourth quarterly workshops consolidate learning

## The Critical 6-12 Month Window

**Research demonstrates that sustained practice over 6-12 months embeds habits into the maintenance stage.** The 10-month programme duration ensures participants spend sufficient time in the maintenance stage to:

- Experience multiple cycles of practice, feedback, and refinement
- Encounter diverse challenges requiring flexible application of skills
- Build confidence through repeated success
- Integrate new behaviours into automatic routines
- Develop relapse prevention strategies before programme conclusion

[1][2][3][4]

## Why Not Longer? Diminishing Returns and Pragmatism

While 12-18 months might be theoretically optimal (per Goldsmith research), practical considerations support 10 months:

- Budget cycles and financial planning (fits within annual budgets)
  - Organisational patience and sponsorship (10 months is defensible)
  - Cohort continuity (minimises participant attrition from role changes)
  - Sufficient time for embedding (6+ months in maintenance stage)
  - Balance of effectiveness and efficiency
- 

## 11. Implications for Programme Design

### Critical Success Factors for Extended Coaching Programmes

Based on the research evidence, effective extended coaching programmes must incorporate:

#### 1. Qualified External Coaches

Meta-analyses demonstrate larger effects when coaching is delivered by credentialed, experienced coaches rather than untrained managers [7]

- Apex Dynamics Principal: 25+ years coaching experience across elite sport, education, and corporate contexts
- Psychometric expertise: DISC Advanced, MTQ+ Mental Toughness

#### 2. Sufficient Duration (6+ Months)

Coaching interventions spanning 6+ months produce larger and more sustained effects [7]

- 10 months ensures progression through action stage into maintenance
- Aligns with 6-12 month embedding window from behaviour change science

#### 3. Regular Coaching Touchpoints

- Bi-weekly sessions (15 total in full programme) provide:
  - - Continuous accountability and course correction
  - - Sufficient frequency to maintain momentum
  - - Adequate spacing for real-world practice between sessions

#### 4. Group Learning Complement

- Quarterly workshops (4 total in full programme) create:
  - - Shared language and mental models across manager cohort
  - - Peer learning and shared problem-solving
  - - Cultural alignment and organisational reinforcement

## 5. Clear Goals and Accountability

- Goal clarity produces better outcomes than general developmental conversations [7]
- Pre- and post-programme assessment tracks progress
- HR partnership ensures alignment with organisational priorities

## 6. Measurement and Tracking

- Metrics definition and tracking demonstrate impact:
  - - Engagement scores
  - - Regrettable turnover
  - - Performance indicators
  - - Time-to-productivity

## What Doesn't Work: Anti-Patterns to Avoid

Research and practice reveal several ineffective approaches:

### **One-Off Training Events:**

- Create awareness but don't produce behaviour change
- Forgotten within weeks without reinforcement

### **Coaching by Untrained Managers:**

- Well-intentioned but lacks skill and objectivity
- Often devolves into advice-giving or problem-solving

### **Generic Development Without Goals:**

- Vague conversations that don't drive action
- No accountability or measurement of progress

### **Short-Duration Development (<6 Months):**

- Insufficient time to embed behaviours into maintenance
- High relapse risk when programme support ends

## Conclusion: Evidence-Based Leadership Development

The research evidence is unequivocal: extended coaching interventions of 6-12 months produce measurable, sustained improvements in leadership effectiveness, team performance, employee engagement, and organisational outcomes.

The Apex Dynamics People Leader & Management Development Programme is deliberately designed to align with this evidence base:

- 10-month duration ensures sufficient time for behaviour embedding (6+ months in maintenance stage)
- Qualified external coaching by an experienced practitioner with 25+ years across elite sport, education, and corporate contexts
- Regular bi-weekly touchpoints (15 sessions) provide accountability and course correction
- Quarterly workshops (4 sessions) create shared language and peer learning
- Goal-focused individual development plans co-created with HR
- Pre- and post-programme assessment tracks measurable progress
- Metrics definition and tracking demonstrate organisational impact

For HR leaders and senior executives considering investment in leadership development, the PLMDP represents a **research-aligned, evidence-based intervention** with demonstrated ROI across engagement, retention, productivity, and performance culture.

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