

# What Does the **Next Generation**

## Want From Their Leaders?

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Next-Generation: New or early-career professionals ages 18 to 30, spanning Gen Z and younger Millennials.  
This research captures what they expect from the leaders above them and the kind of leaders they aspire to become.

**6 needs. 6 gaps.**

## NEED

# More Trustworthiness

## THE GAP

Trust in managers dropped from 46% to 29% in just two years (2022–2024). The erosion is not happening because leaders have bad intentions. It is happening because pressure reveals the distance between stated values and actual decisions.

**46% → 29%**

Manager trust, 2022–2024

## SOURCE

Neal, S., Rhyne, R., Paese, M., & Watt, B. (2025). Global Leadership Forecast 2025. Development Dimensions International. <https://www.ddi.com/research/global-leadership-forecast-2025>

## NEED

# A Leader Who Sees Their Potential

## THE GAP

What the next generation wants most from their leaders comes down to three things: giving and receiving feedback well, building high-performance teams, and managing risk effectively. Most leaders were never taught to deliver on any of these consistently.

## 3 Things

Feedback · Teams · Risk

## SOURCE

Kansal, R., Boroff, K., Caputo, A., & Johnson, B. (2024). The future of leadership survey: 2024. In the Lead, Fall 2024. Seton Hall University Stillman School of Business and Buccino Leadership Institute. <https://www.shu.edu/leadership/news/the-future-of-leadership-survey-2024.html>

## NEED

# A Leader Worth Following Long-Term

## THE GAP

77% of organizations report insufficient leadership depth across levels. Most firms are producing performers and calling them leaders. The people below them can feel the difference and the ones with options leave first.

**77%**  
of orgs lack leadership depth

## SOURCE

Neal, S., Rhyne, R., Paese, M., & Watt, B. (2025). Global Leadership Forecast 2025. Development Dimensions International.  
<https://www.ddi.com/research/global-leadership-forecast-2025>

## NEED

# To Be Led by a Human, Not a Function

## THE GAP

McKinsey identifies the defining leadership traits of the future as:

1. servant leadership
2. continuous learning
3. humility
4. grit
5. levity
6. stewardship

None of those are technical skills. The competitive advantage in leadership is increasingly human.

## 6 Traits

None of them are technical

## SOURCE

Sternfels, B., Pachtod, D., Strovink, K., & Howard, W. (2024, October 22). The art of 21st-century leadership. McKinsey & Company.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/the-art-of-21st-century-leadership-from-succession-planning-to-building-a-leadership-factory>

## NEED

# A Leader Who Is Growing Too

## THE GAP

Despite massive investment in leadership development, only 1 in 5 people are satisfied with what their organization offers largely because the approaches are disconnected from actual work. Employees do not want their leaders at another offsite. They want leaders who bring what they are learning into the room.

**1 in 5**  
are satisfied with their org's  
development

## SOURCE

Neal, S., Rhyne, R., Paese, M., & Watt, B. (2025). Global Leadership Forecast 2025. Development Dimensions International.  
<https://www.ddi.com/research/global-leadership-forecast-2025>

## NEED

# Leaders Who Understand the Psychology of Work

## THE GAP

Work is becoming more automated. Most leaders were trained to manage work, not design environments. They focus on direction, accountability, and output and underinvest in the psychological conditions that actually drive performance: motivation, belonging, and psychological safety.

## The Shift

From managing work →  
designing environments

## SOURCE

Edmondson, A. C., & Bransby, D. (2023). Psychological safety comes of age: Observed themes in an established literature. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 10, 55–78. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-120920-055217>