



LEADING OTHERS SERIES **PEEPLCOACH** TIPSHEET NO: 19

Only 20% of employees globally are engaged at work, the lowest level since 2020 (Gallup, 2026 State of the Global Workplace). 70% of the variance in team engagement is directly attributable to the manager. And manager engagement itself has dropped 9 points since 2022, meaning the people responsible for developing your talent are now no more engaged than the people they lead.

For senior leaders, that is a problem hiding in plain sight. Talent pipelines are not built by HR programs alone. They are built, or broken, by the daily behaviour of leaders. Here are 5 things the best leaders do differently.

1. SUPPORT PEOPLE BY CHALLENGING THEM, NOT PROTECTING THEM

The leaders who shape careers do not offer passive, comfortable support. They identify capability, back the person publicly, and then push them into stretch territory that feels uncomfortable. The combination of high support and high challenge is what builds confidence and competence at pace. If your high-potential people are not occasionally nervous about what you are asking of them, you are probably not developing them fast enough.

TOP 5 TIPS FOR BUILDING SUSTAINABLE TALENT PIPELINES

2. RECOGNISE THAT CAREER GROWTH IS NOT JUST UPWARD

Not everyone wants the next rung. Some of your strongest performers want to go deeper in their current role, not higher. Treating lateral mastery and technical depth as a legitimate career path, not a consolation prize, is one of the simplest ways to retain and engage people. Build development conversations around what excellence looks like for that individual, not what promotion looks like in the org chart.

3. MAKE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING A REAL, STRUCTURED CONVERSATION

In organisations with a strong operational drumbeat, development conversations get crowded out by today's priorities. The fix is structural. Every leader should have a documented development plan for every direct report, and it should be referenced in regular one-to-ones, not just at review time. Without a plan, you are relying on chance meetings. With a plan, you have something to measure against and something to come back to when the operational noise gets loud.

4. ALIGN REVIEWS WITH DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Performance reviews and development plans should not be parallel processes. The output of every review – the gaps identified, the strengths to leverage, the next stretch – should feed directly into the development plan that sits underneath it. If they don't connect, your review process becomes an annual ritual, and your development planning runs on assumptions. The leaders who get this right treat the review as the diagnosis and the development plan as the prescription. One should never exist without the other.

5. TEACH RADICAL SELF-RESPONSIBILITY

Leaders are responsible for creating opportunity. People are responsible for taking it. The strongest development cultures are built on a clear two-way contract: the organisation invests, and the individual owns their growth. That means setting the expectation early that your people will identify what they want to develop, ask for what they need, and find opportunities inside and outside their immediate role. Leaders who do everything for their people produce dependency. Leaders who teach ownership produce future leaders.

Visit us online at peoplcoach.com, Call 1800 PEEPLC or email us at hello@peoplcoach.com

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