



Do or Die?

We are frequently asked, “How do we stop our people from leaving”?

(Written by Mac Macdonald in April 2021 and updated in July 2024)

The title of this article may seem dramatic, but as you read further, you will understand why I chose “Do or Die.” What organisations do for their people or don’t do can result in the development or death of a workplace culture.

We are constantly trying to encourage organisations to drive the leadership and management development they offer their people **before** they need it. Get your rising stars trained to become great leaders and managers, and help current leaders and managers pass on best practices to their people through the examples they set.

Organisations risk losing their best people if they sit and do nothing other than depend on untrained leaders and managers to pass on their thinking around leadership and management that could be flawed or, worse yet, bad practice and damaging to organisational values.

Organisations should future-proof their skills and keep their best people with them before they become disengaged and look elsewhere for a better organisation. Keep your top talent!

Our thinking

I have talked with leaders about developing their people to keep them and prevent them from looking for other opportunities. We also talk about mitigating the risks that push people to look elsewhere in the first place. These are a collection of things emanating from the poor behaviour of untrained leaders and managers. So get ahead of the curve and provide them with professional development from a trusted organisation. Yes, like us. We will put you in touch with previous clients.



Some executives make the mistake of pressing the pause button on development because it’s too expensive or there’s no tangible ROI. But LaPD Solutions stays with you until you see the ROI. That’s one of our USPs.

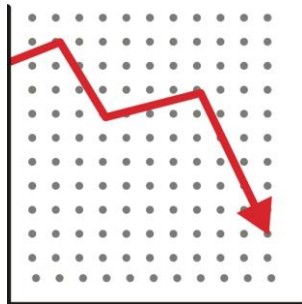
Investing time and effort now to develop your current and future leaders and managers will save you a huge amount of time and effort later. It will also save you money, avoid and reduce HR issues, retain employees, and create a happier, more engaged workforce.

This document is written in the hope that I affect your thinking that organisations need to develop their people regardless of the downturns or difficult times for the company.

I want to share our thinking on this matter, referencing other like-minded thinking as food for thought. I write this document to provide you with a few points to share in future discussions around this topic and help you realise that a continuous development programme is worth it.

Lessons from the past

In 2008, we suffered a financial recession, and the assumption was that all training was stopped to save money, which is incorrect. If there is a time to develop your people, it is when things are tough. I understand you may be thinking otherwise, but we should ensure that our people, especially those with high potential, who we want to be the future stars in our organisations, are developed (Reyes, 2011).



They must be made future-proof in the technical skills required to do their job **and** in the other essential skills of communication, leadership and management that will help them bring people with them without pushing or pulling them there. Fostering great relationships throughout your organisation (Emotional Intelligence) is the key to success.

You'd be mistaken if you thought that a recession and slashing training costs went hand in hand. Training, for the most part, did not nosedive. Forward-thinking organisations saw that their competition was increasing due to the recession, so they realised they had to be at the top of their game. They saw training as an opportunity to move ahead in such tough, competitive times (Booth et al., 1996).

Think about what helps an organisation pull together, work more collaboratively and honestly with each other and become far more effective. We, as do the Financial Executives Institute, believe that management and leadership training is paramount to riding the waves of the storm. This is especially true for the post-storm exit strategy (Institute, 1984). Given this was published in 1984, it begs the question of why so many people still think training should be cut in a downturn. Are we just doing what we've always done and, sadly, getting what we've always got? What happened to the insanity of doing the same thing and hoping for different results?



There is ample evidence to support the need to sustain training during a downturn and ensure our future managers and leaders have the interpersonal skills required for their roles. Even a parliamentary debate in the House of Commons concluded that we should learn from the European approach to continuing training during recession periods (Commons, 1997).

Think longer term (Now)!

While many organisations still look to cut training to save on cost, it can be argued that this is not in the best interests in the long term. Why? As this causes a drop in engagement, morale and performance, the last thing needed as competition increases and the road map out of the situation is planned (Buckley and Caple, 2009). Think about a sports team that is losing at halftime. Do they sit there licking their wounds or rally, motivate themselves, and go back into the storm for the win? Do they stop training after a poor performance or increase training in specific areas?



The UK's commercial thinking has rarely been pushed as hard as it has in the last few years. But now is the time to ensure our best people do **not** see the organisation they are working for has withdrawn or has decided to employ that overused word "consolidate". Consolidators, beware, as other more resilient and optimistic organisations are pushing ahead with a confidence that will attract your best people to join them.

Don't risk losing great people. Look closely at the type of person that leaves and the type of person that stays. What are the reasons why those people are going or staying? A review of your performance management process may be long overdue.

While writing "the psychology of the recession in the workplace" the authors (Cooper and Antoniou, 2013) touch on three critical points that must be placed into our Do or Die thinking calculations.

1. Not having an organisational training and development programme available will result in a psychological impact that profoundly changes employees' attitudes and behaviours.
2. During a challenging economic period, employees are unconsciously or consciously expected to do more, step up, and go that extra mile more often for the company. When the company then reduces or even stops its development opportunities, this results in what feels like a violation of the psychological contract.
3. Conscientious employees see personal development as a **requirement** for their career objectives. When that personal development is removed, employees not only view this as a breach of their psychological contract, but those hoping to get into management or leadership positions lose all respect for the organisational values.



Psychological contracts are not contractual in the usually written employment contract, but more something employees believe is a fundamental contractual obligation to them and their colleagues. This has traditionally been brought about through regular communications, which set expectations that personal development is held in high regard by the organisation and will be available and supported by the L&D and HR teams (Griep and Cooper, 2019). Breaking this perceived contract will seriously impact attitude, behaviour, retention and engagement, so whatever you do, don't say it is off the menu for yet another year!

People, including Gen X, Y (millennials), and Z, want to work for an organisation that pushes forward and stands up for its people (not just words). They want an organisation that fights for growth, invests in its people to ensure future success, and proves it, especially during tough times and financial and economic downturns. Do not think for one minute that your slow, careful approach will win you favour among your people. People are smart enough to know when organisations ignore development to save money.

Show people you **care** and want them to stay. Help them set out a plan to stretch, grow, and succeed. If you delivered development programmes before, why stop them when that is exactly what your people and your organisation need to demonstrate belief in your people?



Organisations that continue to invest in their sales but drop the personal development of their people are shooting themselves in the foot. Again, people will see very clearly that you want to make a profit but not spend on your most important asset, your people.

Performance management



Yes, I know that nasty phrase has negative connotations for many managers and employees, but it is a necessary process. **When managed properly**, it will work wonders for your organisational culture as it will be inextricably linked to organisational objectives and values (Cardy and Leonard, 2014).

If you think performance management is seen as a tick-box activity and that most of your people are not actively and positively engaged in it, then that needs fixing, and fast. Ineffective processes like that erode organisational culture, help foster negative conversations, and, worse still, allow poor performers to get away with low output, becoming a weight around the necks of their colleagues. Managers and leaders must get it working again.

When it works the way it should, you will identify your stars, your “go that extra mile” people, and your less engaged people whom you need to help as soon as possible. Mental health can take a real downturn for many when morale is low. But if you care for those who need it, identify those not-so-engaged individuals and bring them development opportunities such as training to help them facilitate performance management well, things will improve quickly.

If you do not, their drop in productivity will need to be picked up by their colleagues. Others will resent their poor performance. Hard-working colleagues will ask themselves why team leaders, managers and senior managers allow this to continue unchallenged.

Do NOT accept underperforming colleagues at the cost of your engaged colleagues as this will drive away great people! Take responsibility and act appropriately. In the 2008 recession, organisations actively managed their poor performers out of the business as they were no longer willing to accept such poor performance (Roche et al., 2013). I would rather not see them managed out if they can be coached to improvement, but if they are unwilling to improve, then needs must.

If you know me, you will know I couldn't write a document without mentioning Emotional Intelligence (EI).

The tools EI can bring, such as our Moccasin Approach® (read more by clicking here), can gather all the above aspects into context and link them together in one singular approach.

Our Moccasin Approach can create a network of relationships across the entire organisation (yes, even internationally), by significantly improving honesty, transparency and communication.



It will not just allow but will insist on authenticity and help the organisation offer emotional security and safety for those who speak out. We call this **ES²**. **E**motional **S**ecurity is promised and guaranteed by the organisation, and **E**motional **S**ecurity creates **E**motional **S**afety).

Show your people you care and invest in them **now**.

“Don't think limits; think possibilities.”

~ Mac Macdonald ~



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