



AI is accelerating.
Leadership readiness
is lagging.

Executive Summary

Confidence is low that leaders can step up to the pressures and complexity of the moment. Across industries, organizations are clear on direction and are advancing rapidly with AI. Yet as complexity rises and pressure is sustained, confidence in leaders' readiness is extremely low.

The constraint on performance is human, not skills or technical knowledge. The biggest constraint on leadership performance is not knowledge – it is inner capacity. To operate with pressure and complexity, leaders need mindsets, not more skills; specifically the mindsets of adaptability, clarity, critical thinking, beginner's mind, and emotional intelligence.

Budgets are holding, but only half of those surveyed believe current development programs are delivering. Leadership development spend appears to be stable to slightly growing. However, only 52% of executives feel confident that current programs are preparing leaders for future challenges. Many are looking for evidence-based, research-backed approaches.

32%

of executives believe leaders are ready to sustain performance under complexity.

25%

of executives are confident that leaders can lead effectively in an AI-driven world.

52%

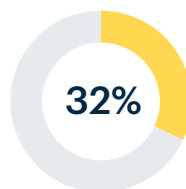
of executives are confident that current development programs are preparing leaders adequately.



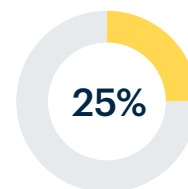
KEY FINDINGS

Confidence is low that leaders can step up to the pressures and complexity of the moment.

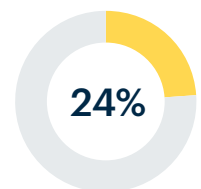
Share of respondents with high confidence that:



Leaders can sustain performance through complexity.



Leaders can thrive in an AI-driven world.



Leaders can lead AI agents.

Note: High confidence defined as scores of 7-10 on a 10-point scale.

The biggest constraint on performance is human, not skills or technical knowledge.

What we heard: the missing capability is not knowledge – it is inner capacity. 79% of respondents want leadership development to focus on mindsets or a balance of mindsets and skills.

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“The question isn’t strategy – it’s how leaders stay present in the noise.”

Executive, Tech Company

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“The mindset of being willing to be challenged – and welcoming that – is what will matter most.”

Executive, Pharmaceutical Company

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“If you don’t have the right mindset, it doesn’t matter what skills you build.”

Senior Leader, Professional Services Firm



Leadership
now hinges on
mindsets – not
more skills.

Across industries, the data points to the same conclusion: five mindsets are critical for leadership effectiveness in an AI-driven world:

1

Adaptability:

Leading when the rules keep changing

2

Clarity:

Finding signal in the noise

3

Critical Thinking:

Questioning AI, not deferring to it

4

Beginner's Mind:

Letting go of yesterday's expertise

5

Emotional Intelligence:

Staying human under pressure

"The skills will follow – but the mindset has to come first." Senior Leader, Professional Services Firm

Current
development
programs
are under-
delivering,
and executives
seek something
different.

Many existing leadership development programs are not up to the task of addressing the leadership capability gap.

Two-thirds of executives surfaced the need for evidence-based, research-backed approaches.



52% of executives feel confident that **current programs** are preparing leaders for **future challenges**.



64% of executives rate **data-driven, research-backed** leadership development as a high priority.

Note: High confidence defined as scores of 7–10 on a 10-point scale.



The five mindsets leaders need to lead with AI.



Adaptability

AI continuously reshapes roles and expectations. Leaders need the ability to adapt without losing direction – not rely on fixed playbooks.

“Everything is changing at once, and leaders have to move with it.”

Executive, Multinational Retailer



Clarity

AI increases speed and knowledge – not focus. Leaders need clarity to stay present, focus attention on what matters, and find the signal in the noise.

“When the pace of change is at such volume, how do you know where to put your attention.” Executive, Pharma



Critical Thinking

Critical thinking helps leaders avoid echo chambers – questioning assumptions, surfacing bias, and balancing machine insight with human judgment.

“We have to really debate and get after it – not just accept what’s in front of us.”

Executive, Tech



Beginner's Mind

What worked before quickly becomes outdated. Leaders who stay curious and open learn faster – and help their organizations evolve with AI.

“We’re most concerned about hubris – performing well can make leaders less hungry.” Executive, Pharma



Emotional Intelligence

As AI accelerates work and decision-making, emotional intelligence helps leaders recognize and regulate emotions – their own, others’, and the collective.

“One of the priorities is how to increase emotional intelligence in our leaders.”

Executive, Transportation





Thank you.