



GROWTH CULTURES

Research Summary

As organizations demand higher performance and innovation to keep up with competitors and maximize the use of AI, many leaders are turning to upskilling to match the pace of change. While extensive learning programs can help employees build new skills, they often fail to meet employees' desires for growth or to build the cultural elasticity (the ability to change quickly in the face of new challenges) that is needed in today's workplace.

Takeaway: When a growth culture is actively fostered in the everyday work experience, it becomes possible for organizations to achieve cultural elasticity and high performance. Leaders directly promote or hinder a growth culture. They can nurture personal growth in employees with robust support and community or limit it by focusing on skills trainings that feel arbitrary or extractive.

Our research shows that what employees need to grow and perform at their best runs deeper:

- Leaders must understand that learning does not automatically signify growth. Learning can feel one-sided and implemented for the organization's benefit, while growth feels more collaborative, continuous, and mutually beneficial for both the employee and the organization.
- Growth is an ongoing process, incorporating shared goals and community, where employees feel that leaders have their best interests at heart and want to invest in them for reasons beyond economic gains.
- Employees perform better when they feel seen, valued, and supported by leaders in a synchronized growth effort. This is what makes up a true growth culture.

Employees in workplaces with growth cultures are more likely to:

14x

Do great work

13x

Be innovative

31x

Be more engaged

Direct leaders have a big impact on creating growth cultures:

8x

When direct leaders work with employees on personal goals, employee engagement increases 8x

21x

Employees who have adequate support from their leaders on growth goals are 8x more likely to feel a sense of belonging and 21x more likely to feel a sense of community

7x

When leaders help employees find a sense of balance between feeling challenged and supported at work, employees are 6x more likely to promote the organization and 7x more likely to do great work



→ Get all the data and insights
on Growth Cultures in the
Global Culture Report



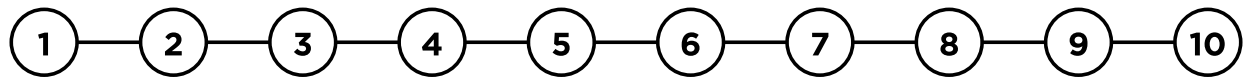
GROWTH CULTURES

Leadership Self-Assessment

On the next page, there are five pairs of statements describing contrasting leadership behaviors related to Growth Cultures. Select the number within each range that best reflects how your employees would rank your day-to-day leadership behaviors.

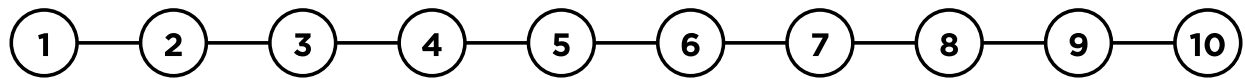
If your employees would strongly agree with the statement on the left, select a number closer to 1. If they would strongly agree with the statement on the right, select a number closer to 10. Select the number that best represents their overall perception of your day-to-day leadership behavior.

Growth Cultures Leadership Self-Assessment



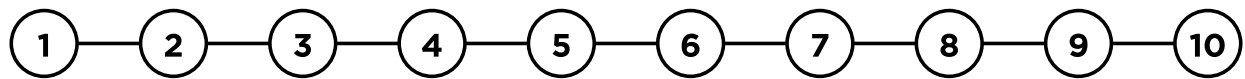
Focuses growth conversations only on organizational needs and performance

Treats growth as a partnership that supports both employee and organizational success



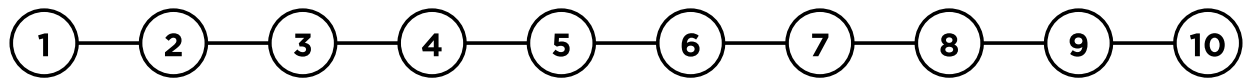
Rarely discusses employees' development goals or future aspirations

Regularly provides support for employees on their development goals and future growth



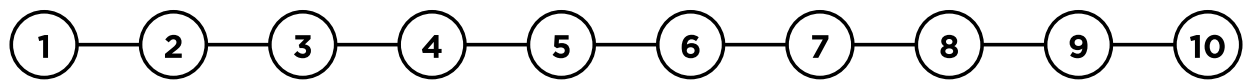
Provides little opportunity to apply new skills or take on new challenges

Creates opportunities for employees to apply skills and stretch into new challenges



Communicates expectations clearly but gives little support for growth

Balances high expectations with meaningful support and coaching



Treats learning as a one-time training event

Encourages continuous, holistic growth through ongoing mentoring, collaboration, and development

INTERPRETING YOUR RESULTS

After completing the assessment, add all five numbers to get your total score out of 50. Your score reflects how your direct reports are likely to experience your leadership behaviors.

45–50 | Role Model

You consistently demonstrate behaviors that help employees grow, feel valued, trust leadership, and contribute ideas. Your challenge is to sustain your strengths and help others develop similar capabilities.

25–34 | Opportunity for Growth

Employees may experience mixed signals. Your intentions may be positive, but your day-to-day actions may not consistently reinforce the desired behavior. Focused attention in this area can significantly improve the employee experience.

35–44 | Strong Foundation

Employees likely experience you positively in this area most of the time. However, certain situations, competing priorities, or inconsistencies may prevent these behaviors from becoming a defining leadership strength.

< 25 | Immediate Development Priority

Employees may frequently experience behaviors that limit engagement, trust, innovation, or development. Improving in this area is likely to have a meaningful impact on team performance, wellbeing, and culture.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Which of my scores most closely reflect the leader I aspire to be?

Which specific behaviors contribute to those strengths?

Which area received my lowest score? Which daily leadership behaviors might explain that result?

Which leadership behavior would my team most want me to improve?

What makes that behavior important to them?

What is one behavior I could stop, start, or strengthen over the next 30 days that would have the greatest positive impact on my team's sense of growth?



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Exercise 1: Start/Stop/Strengthen

What might you **START** doing to build a stronger growth culture on your team? What should you **STOP** doing so you can truly amplify your team's potential? How might you **STRENGTHEN** areas where there is opportunity to be even more effective? Think through each of these and make a plan for how you will take action this month, this quarter, and this year.

START: Incorporating the six elements of growth into everyday practices. Take the time to understand each employee's growth goals and make a plan to support them. Empower employees to apply new skills and learn from teammates and set high, healthy expectations while providing meaningful support.

START: Positioning growth as a team effort. Employees grow best when they grow together. Give employees opportunities to learn from and collaborate with one another and use peer-to-peer recognition to celebrate when they reach growth goals.

STOP: Defining growth as one-time learning opportunities to build a specific skillset that benefits the organization. Instead, provide time, on the clock, for your employees to learn from one another and to learn new skills in areas they are interested in, so they can meet their personal growth goals.

STOP: Limiting growth opportunities by offering them to only a select few or waiting until employees ask for growth. Be proactive: understand your employees' growth wishes and help create a tangible growth plan. Identify mentorship opportunities across the organization.

STRENGTHEN: The balance of wellbeing and work performance. Have honest conversations about growth and wellbeing. Set performance goals that feel challenging but also include ways you and the organization will support them.

STRENGTHEN: Feelings of being valued at work. Honor employees' unique contributions and growth through recognition. Celebrate both their professional and personal growth milestones from promotions and work anniversaries to major life events and continuing education.



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Exercise 2: Guided Reflection

To create a team growth culture, ask yourself:

Empathy

Do I see and understand my employees' growth needs?

Communication

Have I welcomed frequent and honest conversations about growth?

Community

Do I foster a connected, growth-oriented environment?

Support

Do I consistently help employees work towards their growth goals?

Opportunity

Have I ensured growth opportunities for everyone?

Balance

Do I advocate for wellbeing in addition to performance?



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Exercise 3: Put It Into Practice

Review this scenario during your next team meeting. As you work through the discussion questions, make sure your team knows that you welcome their thoughts. Take notes so you can reflect on their feedback, make a plan, and then follow up. This demonstrates trust and accountability. After the meeting, set aside some time to work through the Leader Self-Reflection questions on your own.

As part of the ongoing effort to meet increased demand, Caroline is asked by leadership to implement new technologies and processes to the current manufacturing workflow to further improve efficiency. This means more trainings and upskilling for her team, in addition to the regular recertifications and trainings they already do. After reviewing the request in detail, Caroline is concerned that the demand for new tech doesn't take into account the insights of the people who understand the workflow best—her team. In addition, mandating more skill training without employee input feels like an unnecessary burden on her people. She's worried that the team will see this initiative as the company trying to extract more from them, rather than a growth opportunity for team members.

TEAM DISCUSSION

How should leaders balance the organization's need for skill training and the employee need for professional and personal growth?

What steps can Caroline take to ensure trainings are an investment in her people and not just another task that only benefits the company?

How can Caroline celebrate her team's growth in a meaningful way?

LEADER SELF-REFLECTION

What can you do to support your employees’ growth?

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Describe a time when you asked your team to share their insights on a new process or product. What was the outcome and what impact did it have on the team’s growth?

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Write three steps you can take to start building a growth culture on your team.

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