IDEA REPORT
Building Brain-Friendly Leadership Models

NeuroLeadership
INSTITUTE

CONTENTS

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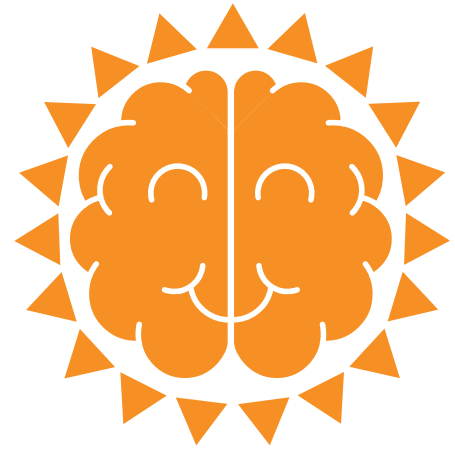Associate Consultant

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Building Brain-Friendly Leadership Models

NLI sought to understand how existing leadership models actually serve the people and organizations for whom they're built.

Leadership development is a billion-dollar industry, with archives of conflicting literature and thousands of complex models. Yet this work is often not creating desired behavior change where it matters most: developing more effective leaders.

Improving leadership needs to start with a clear definition of what a firm means by leadership itself. For decades, organizations have tried to determine the values, principles, behaviors, and mindsets that matter most to them and their leaders. They spend months and sometimes years to create leadership models that should serve as both an anchor, to steady the organization in trying times, and as a map, to guide it into the future.

This year, the NeuroLeadership Institute explored the following question: What makes a leadership model not just relevant, but useful for guiding leaders' behaviors and decision-making?

Over the past nine months, NLI researchers sought to understand how existing leadership models actually serve the people and organizations for whom they're built.

We found that leadership design teams typically spend a lot of time and energy on creating new leadership models, and at the same time, that many business leaders struggle to remember these models, let alone defer to them in times of need.

As a result, many organizations end up with relatively complex models that: lack a clear connection to the business objectives, do not mesh with existing talent systems, and seldom influence leaders' behaviors.

However, we also found that leaders will use leadership models, as long as they are brain-friendly by working with the brain's cognitive capacity, by sparking motivation to act, and by avoiding cognitive dissonance through their coherence with other objectives.

This report is a step toward explaining and building on our findings and outlines what considerations you will need to make to design a brain-friendly leadership model that leaders actually use.

It's very easy to have something that's intellectually sophisticated and robust, but actually doesn't have face validity with the leader. Can they access it quickly in a world of cognitive overload? And can they quickly get to a space where they're experiencing it?

Head of Leadership Development, Technology Company

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP MODEL

> *In order to guide behavior we should answer a key question: "What do leaders most need reminding about, most often?"*

Many organizations call the set of values and behaviors leaders are expected to adhere to their "leadership model," thereby referring to "sets of behaviors known to be directly linked to business outcomes"[1] which are often used as a basis for identifying, assessing, and rewarding individual leaders.

At NLI, we define these sets of behavior-focused leadership models as "a set of phrases that guide leadership behavior across an organization in a way that creates a common language, tailors talent strategy, and establishes cultural norms."[2]

Conventional Wisdom Versus Research

Conventional wisdom says...

leadership models should be exhaustive, detailed descriptions of key behaviors that embody the characteristics of good leadership.

Scientific research suggests...

what matters most is that models are essential, relatable, and thus easy to recall.

1   Developing Leadership Capabilities, McKinsey (2013), found at https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/operations/our-insights/developing-leadership-capabilities, 10/25/2019

2   Leadership Principles: to get actionable, you need to get memorable. NLI Point-of-View

How did we test our hypotheses?

To put our hypotheses about the characteristics of impactful leadership models to the test, NLI's industry research team interviewed 17 talent professionals and surveyed 568 leaders and individual contributors at different levels and across a wide range of industries both about their experience with designing leadership models and about the usability of their existing models.[3] From the subset of individuals who were involved in the creation of an organization's leadership models, we learned that organizations will often take great care to list all possibly important leadership behaviors. In short, they want to be exhaustive in the hope to optimally prepare their leaders for the future.

However, our data suggests that the great consequence of going exhaustive is that leadership models balloon to become much larger, more detailed, and more prescriptive than first envisioned. More often than not, teams realize the models are too complicated to roll out, may soon be outdated, and most important of all, become impractical for leaders to use.

Specifically, to explore people's views and usage of their current leadership models, we asked another

subset of survey participants — those that identified as being expected to demonstrate an organization's leadership model — to assess their models with respect to various characteristics (e.g. memorability, wording and detail, relevance, and their strategic and cultural alignment). Furthermore, we asked how often they apply the concepts outlined in their models across certain everyday business situations.

These included using them for guiding their actions and decision-making, and engaging team members across a variety of leadership situations such as team meetings, check-in conversations, performance conversations, and client interactions.

As shown in the table below (see Graphic: Model characteristics and application of leadership model), while all of the model characteristics we tested for are correlated with being used by leaders in some situations, the characteristics that were predictive of models leaders use in a higher number of scenarios meet three criteria: They are sticky[5], meaningful, and coherent.[6]

Graphic: Model characteristics and application of leadership model:[4]

If the model phrases are:	Leaders make better decisions at work	Leaders use the model as a guideline for engaging team members	Leaders frequently take action in accordance with aspects of the model	Leaders frequently make decisions based on the model	Leaders frequently apply aspects of the model in various situations
Sticky	+	+	+	+	+
Meaningful	+	+	+	+	+
Linked to strategy	+	+	+	+	X
Aligned with culture	+	X	+	+	X
Laying out expectations	+	+	X	X	X

Source: Survey, n=289, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

4   The + refers to positive and statistically significant ($p<0.05$) correlations between the model characteristics as tested across leader applications via multiple linear regression analyses. The X indicates a lack of correlation between these variables in the same models.

5   Based on satisfactory factor analyses, we created a composite variable to define "sticky" based on the survey item "easy to remember" and "not complicated and wordy".

3   For more information on the survey participant demographic see APPENDIX I (a and b)

6   Coherence was measured as being 'linked to strategic objectives of the organization'.

Three questions leaders ask themselves

Sticky

Meaningful

Coherent

Can I remember this?

Do I care about this?

Does it fit with what I am asked to do?
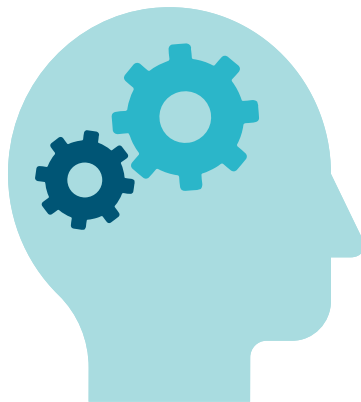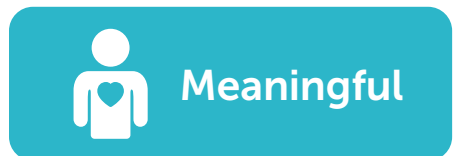
Source: Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

That is, leaders' responses indicated that if their models are easy to recall, relevant for the work they do, and make sense in the broader context of the organization's other pursuits, they will apply them in various situations.

> **Models that leave the biggest impact on leader behavior are *sticky*, in that they are memorable; *meaningful*, in that they are relevant to the user's actual work; and *coherent*, in that they make sense in the context of the organization's broader goals.**

In sum, leaders adopt concepts laid out in their organizations' leadership models most often when the models help answer three important questions:

- Can I remember it? (Leaders want to be able to recall the model)

- Do I care about this? (Leaders want to be motivated enough to use it in everyday situations)

- Does this fit with what I am asked to do? (Leaders want to find the model's content to be aligned with other objectives they're asked to pursue)

We found, however, that many leadership models do not live up to these brain-friendly expectations, and therefore, few are actually used or referred to consistently in organizations. In the next section, we'll explore why, exactly, the most effective models are sticky, meaningful, and coherent.

KEY POINT
Few leadership models are brain-friendly and hence, are used inconsistently in organizations.

Why Leadership Models Need to Be Sticky

If you want leaders to act in accordance with your leadership model, consider the brain's cognitive capacity and constraints to remember that model.

> When I was junior in talent management, I was all about the competency model, because I loved revelling in the complexity of it. I felt smart by understanding the complexity of it. And I realize now I was missing the point. The point wasn't to show how much I understood it. The point was to get others to know it as intimately as I could but with two minutes of effort versus the two hours of effort I was putting in for it.

Talent Management Leader, Petrochemicals Company

What matters is recall

Effective leadership models should intentionally factor in the brain's limited capacity for processing a vast amount of information at once so that people can effectively *use* the models to guide their behavior. The ability to quickly bring information to mind is "ease of recall," and it is essentially what we mean when we call a model "sticky"— you'll tend to have a harder time *forgetting* a sticky model, than remembering it.

Ease of recall matters when crafting a leadership model, for a couple reasons. First, employees already have a lot of information swirling in their heads. They have their own cognitively demanding tasks in front of them, and often the responsibility of managing other people, all of which eats up precious resources in the brain.[7][8]

Second, research has shown that the efficiency with which we can recall information not only predicts our willingness to engage with that information, but also

to act on that information.[9][10] The more information one gets to process in a short period of time the less likely they will do it, or do it effectively without errors.[11] Or, to put it another way,

If I cannot remember X, I will not use X.

The reality: Not all leadership models are "sticky"

NLI's industry research shows that many leadership models may be too long and comprehensive and ask leaders to remember a long list of core phrases and desirable behaviors to adhere to. For example, we learned that 41% of organizations use a model that relies on more than five core phrases (See Graphic: Number of core phrases in existing leadership models).

7   Roda, C., & Nabeth, T. (2008). Attention management in organizations: Four levels of support in information systems. In A. Bounfour (Ed.), Organizational capital: Modeling, measuring and contextualizing. Routledge (Advanced research series in management). Routledge, pp. 214-233.

8   Ophir, E., Nass, C., & Wagner, A. D. (2009). Cognitive control in media multitaskers. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 106(37), 15583-15587.

9   Alter, A. L., & Oppenheimer, D. M. (2008). Effects of fluency on psychological distance and mental construal (or why New York is a large city, but New York is a civilized jungle). Psychological Science, 19(2), 161-167.

10   Halford, G. S., Cowan, N., & Andrews, G. (2007). Separating cognitive capacity from knowledge: A new hypothesis. Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 11(6), 236-242.

11   Drew, T., Vo, M. L.-H., & Wolfe, J. M. (2013). The invisible gorilla strikes again: Sustained inattentional blindness in expert observers. Psychological Science, 24(9), 1848–1853. http://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613479386

Graphic: Number of core phrases in existing leadership models[13]

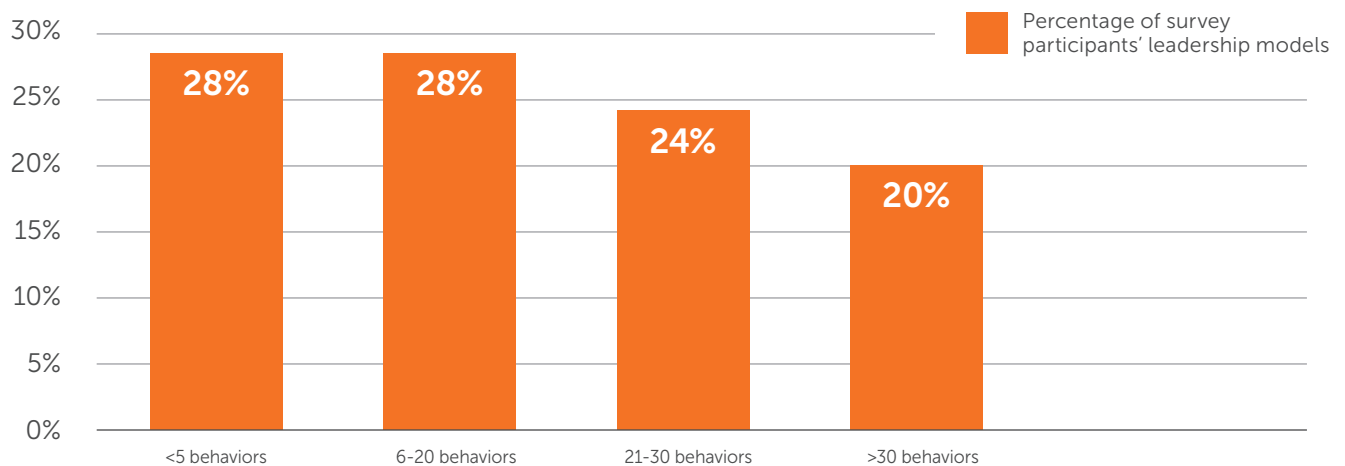|			
1-2 core phrases	2-4 core phrases	5 or more core phrases	Work in progress
9%	39%	41%	9%

Percentage of survey participants' leadership models
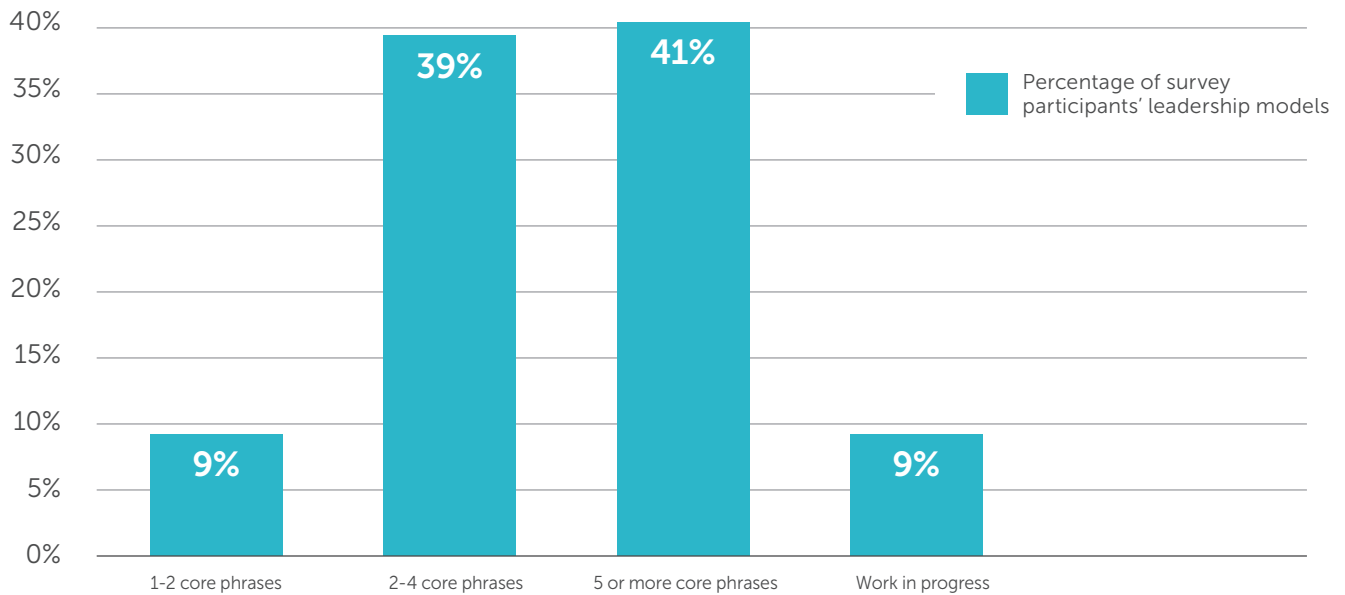
Source: Survey, n=279, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

Underneath each of these five core phrases are often further lists of specific behaviors that support the larger element of the model, sometimes resulting in sometimes adding as many as 6 to 30 new desired behaviors into the model, all of which leaders are expected to remember and abide by in everyday situations (See Graphic: Number of desired leader behaviors).

Graphic: Number of desired leader behaviors[14]

<5 behaviors	6-20 behaviors	21-30 behaviors	>30 behaviors
28%	28%	24%	20%

Percentage of survey participants' leadership models

*Source: Interview data, n=17, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019*

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12   These data are based on survey data with 279 additional individuals who have identified as having been involved in the creation of a leadership model. See APPENDIX I (b) for more information.

13   These data are based on 17 structured, 60-minute interview with senior HR and Talent Professionals in 2019.
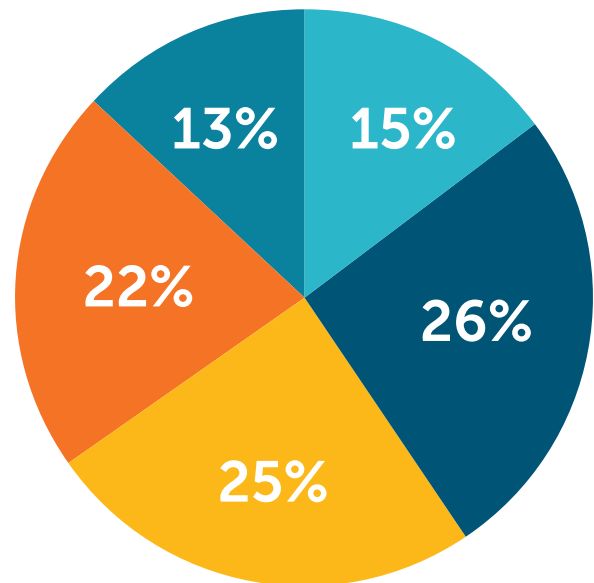
Graphic: Memorability of leadership models

Our leadership model is easy to remember

- Definitely — 17%
- Probably — 22%
- Not sure — 23%
- Not really — 27%
- Definitely not — 11%
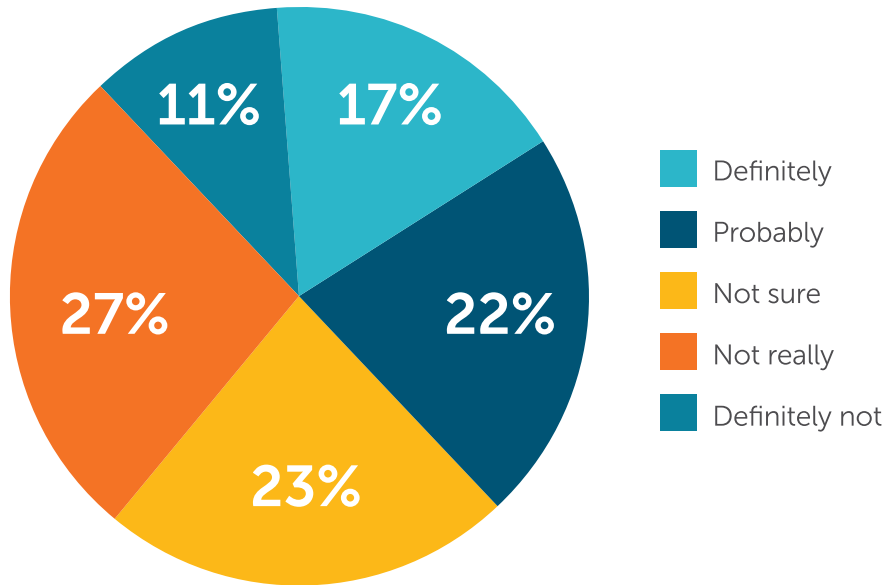
Source: Survey, n=289, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

Graphic: Language used in leadership models

Our leadership model is complicated and wordy

- Definitely — 15%
- Probably — 26%
- Not sure — 25%
- Not really — 22%
- Definitely not — 13%

Source: Survey, n=289, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

What we glean from further results is, essentially, a breakdown in our ability to process the sheer volume of information. When we asked leaders and employees to assess how memorable their model was, 61% of respondents reported that they weren't sure, or said for certain that the model wasn't really memorable.

Only 17% said their models were "definitely easy to remember"

(See Graphic: Memorability of leadership models)

Lastly, we asked leaders to assess the language used in their leadership models and found that 41% rated their models as "probably" or "definitely" complicated and wordy, perhaps making it more difficult to remember certain items in models (See Graphic: Language used in leadership models).

What the science says

When it comes to processing information, understanding cognitive capacity is key.

Our ability and capacity to be effective at high-level thinking processes, such as deciding, understanding, evaluating, and allocating attention, rely on the optimal functioning of our prefrontal cortex (PFC), the brain region that sits right behind our forehead. Among other responsibilities, the PFC supports working memory, the cognitive system that temporarily allows us to hold multiple, often varied, pieces of information at once, such as a phone number or shopping list.

The difference between us being able to process information and losing grasp of it at a given moment is the sheer volume of that information. Humans can only hold four or five pieces of information in working memory at a time before we're prone to error.[14] [15] Given that each piece of information can be of varying size and complexity, and the fact that processing these many pieces of information requires a significant amount of energy, we may start to feel overwhelmed and depleted.

It's no coincidence, then, that exhaustive leadership models that over-tax employees' working memory are essentially setting people up for failure.

Despite its importance, our data show that only a small fraction of leadership models offers this ease of recall. So, how come?

One reason, research suggests, is that humans have a loss aversion bias[16] that boils down to the perception we unconsciously have that "losses loom larger than gains."[17] When faced with a decision that has both potential upsides and downsides, we naturally anchor on the potential negative consequences more than on the benefits, and consequently attempt to avoid those at the cost of acquiring the benefit. In matters of life or death, this impulse of "better safe than sorry" serves us well.

However, in designing leadership models, loss aversion can lead organizations to fear leaving anything out, so they simply include everything, just in case. The irony, however, is that including everything actually creates an even larger problem, which is that *everything* is way too much to process, becomes overwhelming to grasp, let alone to remember. Instead, they may defer to their typical habits, which are often influenced by bias.

KEY POINT

The irony is that including 'everything' creates an even larger problem which is that people can't process it and may defer to typical habits, often influenced by bias.

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14   Cowan, N. (2008). What are the differences between long-term, short-term, and working memory? Progress in Brain Research, 169, 323-338.

15   Miller, E. K., & Buschman, T. J. (2015). Working memory capacity: Limits on the bandwidth of cognition. Daedalus, 144(1), 112-122

16   Tom SM, Fox CR, Trepel C, Poldrack RA., (2007). The neural basis of loss aversion in decision-making under risk. Science. 2007 Jan 26;315(5811):515-8.

17   Kahneman, D., & Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk. Econometrica, 47, 263-291

Clear and sticky language with a sticky model

There are benefits to having a clear and sticky language for anything we want to be able to recall and act on. The easier an idea is to remember the more likely it is that it will help us guide our behavior.

A sticky model can influence and nudge our behavior in three major ways:

1 Non-Conscious Priming	2 Conscious Self-Calibration	3 Continuous Sharing
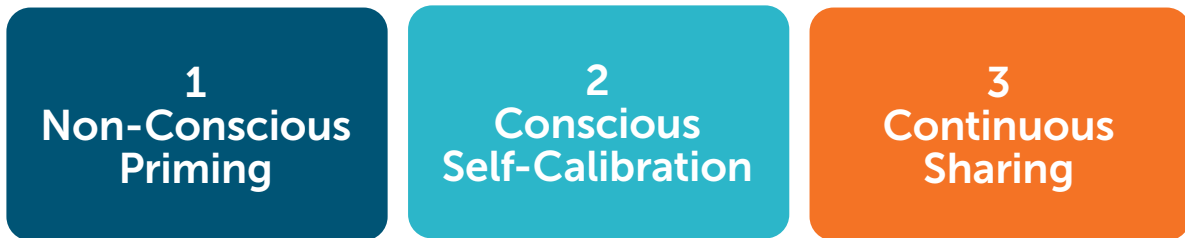
1. Non-Conscious Priming
If your model is adopted as a set of easily recognized goals, the brain can then non-consciously prime, or trigger, a set of behaviors aligned with pursuing that goal and adapting it to different situations.[18] For instance, if one goal is "Create clarity," you can more quickly and easily notice moments when you and others speak and act with a lack of clarity.

2. Conscious Self-Calibration
If you remember the goal "Create clarity," you can actively adjust your thinking and behavior on the go by asking yourself, "Am I creating clarity now?" to stay on course.

3. Continuous Sharing
When a model is easy to recall, it is much easier to use it broadly, allowing you to share it with others across different contexts outside of its primary use, such as for designing products, or interacting with customers.

18   Bargh, J. A., Gollwitzer, P. M., Lee-Chai, A., Barndollar, K., & Trötschel, R. (2001). The automated will: nonconscious activation and pursuit of behavioral goals. Journal of personality and social psychology, 81(6), 1014–1027. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3005626/

Why Leadership Models Need to Be Meaningful

Meaningful models will motivate leaders to use them.

> When you start to develop the leadership model, you get a lot of people having questions as far as their belief of: Will this really help? Does this really help anyone? And I think that if most of us are honest, in the dark moments, we ask ourselves: Is this actually helping people be better? Because if not, then all I've done is codify something that everyone already knows and experiences and lives. So, why does it matter?

Leadership Consultant

What matters is the motivation to act

Even if a leadership model is easy to recall, there's no guaranteeing it will lead to behavior change. It must also carry some meaning for the person, otherwise it edges more into the realm of pop music or trivia — information we can't get out of our heads, but ultimately does little for us.

We can think of meaningfulness as the motivation to serve a greater purpose beyond one's career, promotions, salary, and other external incentives. Some have also argued that meaningfulness can serve as a business advantage, to help organizations outperform their competition.[19] However, our data suggests that leadership models are not always motivating people to act upon them, and one of the reasons for this lack of adoption may be that they lack the meaningfulness for individuals' application on the job.

The reality: Not all leaders find their existing models to be meaningful enough to act

When we asked leaders more directly about their model's meaningfulness, nearly 40% said they weren't sure, or they felt it was not meaningful, and just 27% said the model was "definitely" meaningful (See Graphic: Meaningfulness of leadership models).

Graphic: Meaningfulness of leadership models

Our leadership model is meaningful for my everyday job as a leader

- 27% Definitely
- 34% Probably
- 19% Not sure
- 16% Not really
- 5% Definitely not
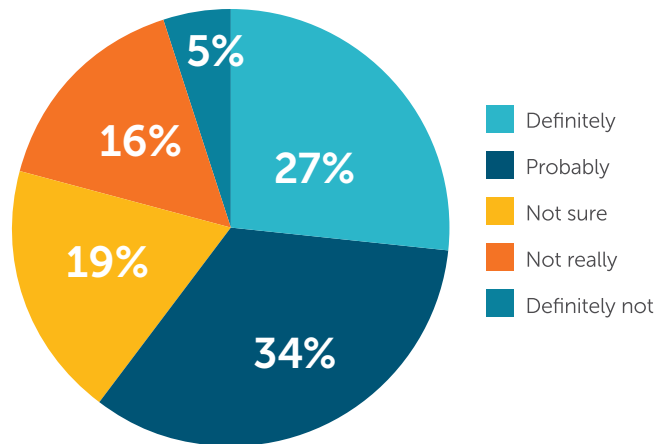
Source: Survey, n=289, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

19   Kofman, F. The Meaning Revolution: The Power of Transcendent Leadership. Random House, 2018
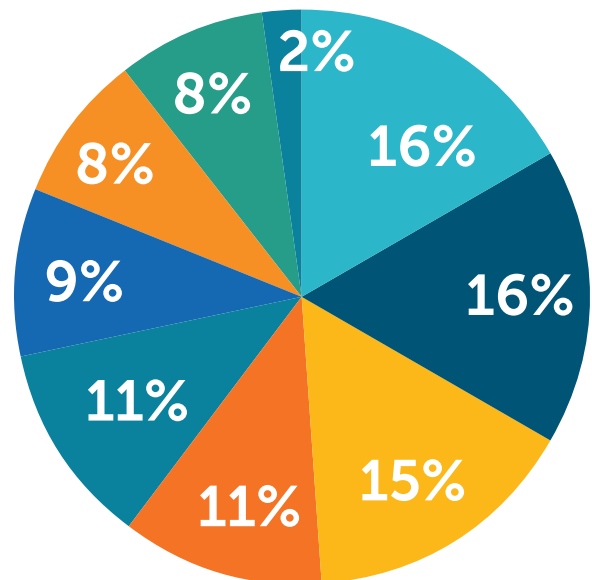
> We need to experience the leadership framework at a really sort of emotional level, you know, like, 'Oh my God, I've been doing that wrong. I need to do this differently.'

Head of Leadership Development Technology Company

Graphic: When leaders use aspects of their leadership model

In the past week, I applied aspects of the leadership model in the following situations:

- Team meetings — 16%
- Peer interactions — 16%
- Employee interactions — 15%
- Check-in conversations — 11%
- Feedback conversations — 11%
- Goal setting conversations — 9%
- Performance conversations — 8%
- Client interactions — 8%
- Other — 2%

At the same time, we also found that

(21%) said they never take action in accordance with their model.

And just 28% said they use the model in critical manager-employee situations, such as feedback, goal, and performance conversations (See Graphic: When leaders use aspects of their leadership model).

In combination, these results suggest that existing, often traditional leadership models that provide very specific recommendations for leaders' behaviors often may not be as helpful as hoped helpful for leaders doing their everyday jobs.

Source: Survey, n=289, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019. Percentage indicates survey respondents who use their leadership models in the listed situations.

What the science says

For humans to feel motivated to take action, we rapidly and repeatedly evaluate two different aspects of the intended outcome: expectancy and value. Expectancy is the assumption that things will turn out for the better, in concordance with our goal. Value is the quality of that outcome being meaningful in the first place. We can think of motivation, therefore, as a product of expectancy and value. Each time we're presented with a potential moment to act, we assess how much we care about the goal and how confident we feel that we can succeed at performing a behavior tied to that goal.[20]

The strongest motivation comes when both value and expectancy are high. It's when we are deeply passionate about a particular goal and feel optimistic that we can produce a positive outcome. When it comes to leadership models, effective outcomes stem from leaders knowing in no uncertain terms what they are expected to do, and why, and feel they can do it successfully. The moment one of these components is missing or is not satisfactory, it shifts how people evaluate a situation and what behavior they perform as a result.

Expectancy

Value
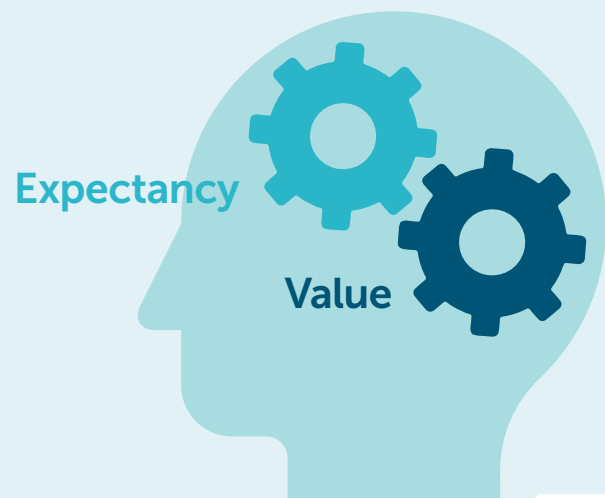
KEY POINT

Each time we face a moment to act, we assess how much we care about the goal and how confident we feel that we can succeed at performing a behavior tied to that goal.

20   Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). "Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research ". Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Why Leadership Models Need to Be Coherent

Reconciling conflicting messages is mentally draining.

> What is our leadership model about? What is it trying to deliver? Someone needs to be able to answer that question very concisely in like, no more than 10 seconds. Our leadership model is all about creating leaders who thrive on chaotic environments, exhibit maximum flexibility, and are lifelong learners.

Management Executive, Banking Sector

### What matters is the explicit link to other objectives

Employees and leaders strongly anchor their understanding of what is expected of them on what they perceive as the business needs at any given time.

Leadership models seldom exist in isolation from other objectives and expectations that are communicated to leaders. For example, two thirds of the companies we spoke to employ multiple other, additional models, which leaders and employees were expected to use on a regular basis.

These additional models ranged from value statements and mission statements to business principles, role expectations, and management and job competency models (See Graphic: Companies with various frameworks and models). While having multiple models isn't necessarily a bad thing, trouble arises when the models don't make sense with one another.

Graphic: Companies with various frameworks and models

How many organizations have additional models/frameworks for leaders to adhere to?

Additional business/culture/mission frameworks	76%
Leadership model only	24%
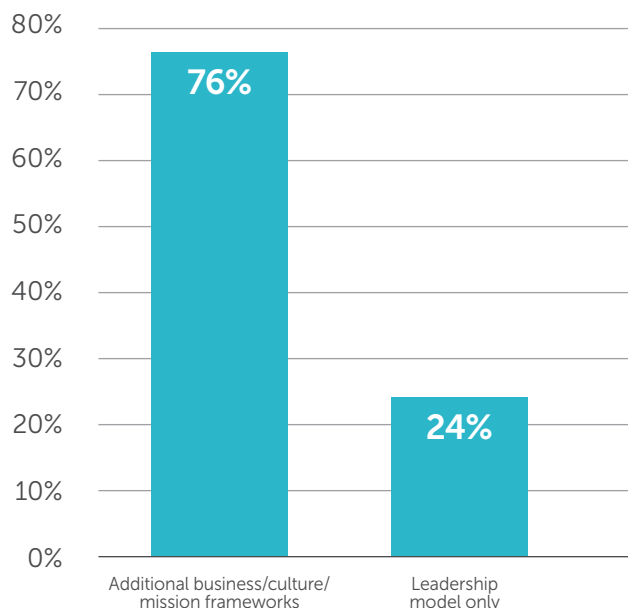
Source: Interview data, n=17, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

Which brings us to the final component of effective leadership models: coherence. In the literature, coherence is defined as a state of a system of ideas and behaviors in which all of the components form a consistent, unified whole.[21]

The content of leadership models will be perceived as being coherent with other company expectations when the behaviors outlined in the model make sense and align conceptually with what is communicated via other channels across the organization.

> **Coherent leadership models align with other company expectations communicated via various channels across the organization.**

Coherence contributes to the effectiveness of leadership models, our research suggests, because even if each individual model is sticky, and the expectations are meaningful, leaders may still be left wondering what they are supposed to do if a given model disagrees with one or more other set of competencies, values, frameworks, and expectations.

The reality: Not all leadership models are coherent with other objectives

Leadership development should be based on a leadership strategy, which in turn is guided by the overall business strategy.[22] Therefore, we asked survey participants to what degree their leadership models are linked to both their business strategy and their organizational culture.

We found surprising discrepancies across respondents. For example, only 28% of leaders said their models are "definitely" linked to overall business strategy, and 34% said their models are "probably" linked (See Graphic: Leadership models linked to an organization's strategic objectives).

In addition, few leadership models were found to be coherent with an organization's cultural objectives either: Only 29% of leaders say their leadership models are "definitely" aligned, and 37% believe the model is "probably" aligned (Graphic: Leadership model alignment with culture).

## Graphic: Leadership models linked to organization's strategic objectives

Our leadership model links to the organization's strategic objectives

- Definitely
- Probably
- Not sure
- Not really
- Definitely not
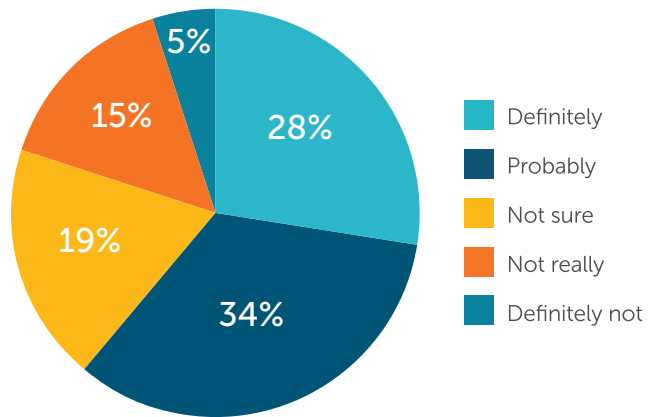
Source: Survey, n=289, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

Graphic: Leadership model alignment with culture

Our leadership model aligns with our culture

- Definitely
- Probably
- Not sure
- Not really
- Definitely not
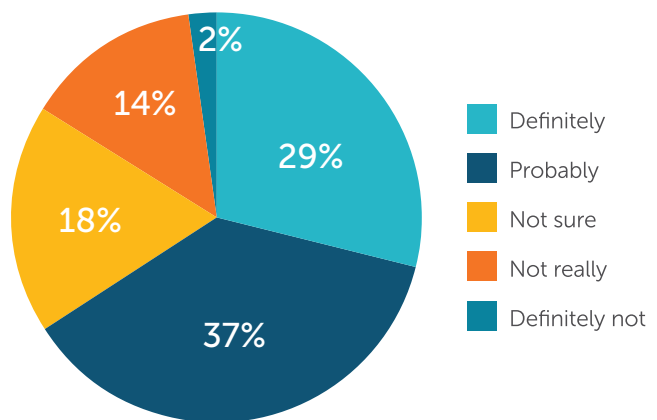
Source: Survey, n=289, Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

21   Chesebrough et al.,NeuroLeadership Institute Journal, Volume 8, February 2019

22   https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/got-a-strong-leadership-strategy/

What the science says

Coherence supports structural integrity of ideas where each new component fits within and strengthens the whole. A lack of coherence leads to us experiencing cognitive dissonance — the mental discomfort when beliefs, expectations, values, or actions don't fit together.[23]

This leads us to being conflicted about which actions to take.[24] To reconcile that conflict, we may rationalize the discomfort, we may try to redirect our thoughts, or we may try to avoid the behavior in question altogether. As a result, we are likely to spend a lot of time and mental energy, leading us to feel overwhelmed and mentally taxed.

This has consequences in our context: If a leadership model is not simple to recall and it clashes with existing schemas, it will likely create cognitive dissonance in the minds of the leaders. To relieve the psychological stress of processing the contradictions and complexity, leaders may instead fall back on their tried-and-true behaviors in the unconscious effort to keep mental resources in check.

KEY POINT

Cognitive dissonance caused by contradictions and complexity may cause leaders to fall back on tried-and-true behaviors.

23   (Festinger, L. (1962). "Cognitive dissonance". Scientific American. 207 (4): 93–107)

24   Harmon-Jones, E; Harmon-Jones, C; Levy, N (2015). "An Action-based Model of Cognitive-dissonance Processes". Current Directions in Psychological Science. 24 (3): 184–189.

HP Case Study Example

A tech giant facing a major change embraces stickiness, meaningfulness, and coherence to spark behavior change.

Graphic: HP's Leadership Model

Imagine the future
Aim for extraordinary
Make bold moves
Simplify the complex

Inspire the team
Connect, coach, empower
Find meaning in work
Partner to win

Make it happen
Anticipate, learn, adapt
Do what matters
Amaze the customer

Source: "HP Case Study: Growth Mindset and Leadership Principles Reignite a Culture," NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

In 2015, the tech giant Hewlett-Packard Company separated into two entities: Hewlett Packard Enterprise and HP Inc. With more than 50,000 employees migrating to the new firm, HP leadership faced a crucial question: What kind of culture would these 50,000 people create?

A company-wide survey produced some guiding priorities, such as keeping HP's spirit of collaboration and dedication to innovation while ditching frustrating bureaucracies. But as HP Chief Human Resources Officer Tracy Keogh says, "As we came into a brand-new environment, we had the opportunity to change people's thinking to drive outstanding performance."

To make good on its business goals, HP knew it needed to embrace adaptability, teamwork, and execution.

HP partnered with the NeuroLeadership Institute in September 2016 to implement a program that started with the creation of a new leadership model and then drove a growth mindset through the organization. The thinking partnership included learning sessions of one to two hours that helped leadership teams better understand growth mindset as it applied to their work. It also gave people tools to put growth mindset to use on a regular basis.

NLI's work with HP to develop a formal set of leadership principles helped enable all employees to embody the new culture, in addition to offering habits that support those principles. After testing over 300 principles company-wide, HP eventually landed on **Imagine the future**, **Inspire the team**, and **Make it happen**. The terms reflect HP's mission to use a growth mindset, collaborate, and execute, without burdening people's brains with an overflowing list of values (See Graphic: HP's Leadership Model).

Over the past two years, HP Inc. has seen remarkable progress in both its culture and business. "It's been an amazing journey," Keogh says. Team members leave meetings asking "Did we inspire the team?" and put "Make it happen!" in their email signatures. According to internal company data, employee engagement jumped 22% between 2016 and 2018.

On the business side, HP has seen its stock grow substantially over the last two years, along with double-digit revenue growth year over year. The company is leading both the commercial PC and printer markets, which, as Keogh points out, are industries in secular decline. Meanwhile, HP Inc.'s focus on growth mindset and innovation helped it to reel in 77 awards at the 2018 Consumer Electronics Show and raise its overall market cap to more than $30 billion.

TIPS FOR DESIGNING YOUR BRAIN-FRIENDLY LEADERSHIP MODEL

Sticky	Meaningful	Coherent

Designing an effective leadership model is far from a straightforward process. In most organizations, design teams tend to be intentionally exhaustive, rather than focus on the essential elements. The result, oftentimes, is a complex model that only a few leaders, if any, are able to remember and meaningfully apply in their roles.

Our research shows that leaders who perceive their models as sticky, meaningful, and coherent with other objectives are more likely to use their organization's leadership model as a guide for decision-making and team engagement. Being able to remember the model, knowing why the components matter, and understanding how the model links back to organizational objectives are all key precursors to leaders acting in a way that matches what is expected of them.

Models that are sticky, meaningful, and coherent may also be easier to implement, inform learning strategies, and enable real behavior change to support the overarching strategies of the business.

Here are three tips for the design of brain-friendly leadership models:

1. Keep the brain – and its limitations - in mind when brainstorming the number of model values (supporting stickiness).

2. Make the model your own instead of copying and pasting from existing models (supporting meaningfulness).

3. Ensure alignment between the leadership model and your business strategy (supporting coherence).

To partner with NLI on the design of your organization's brain-friendly leadership model, or simply to learn more about our leadership consulting practice, contact us at:

North America
northamerica@neuroleadership.com

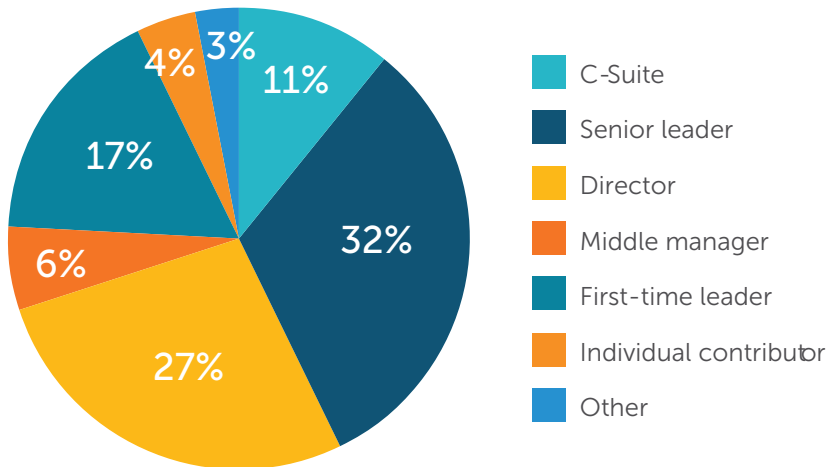**Europe, Middle East, and Africa**
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APPENDIX

Survey demographic (a): 289 survey participants identified as "being expected to demonstrate their organization's leadership model"
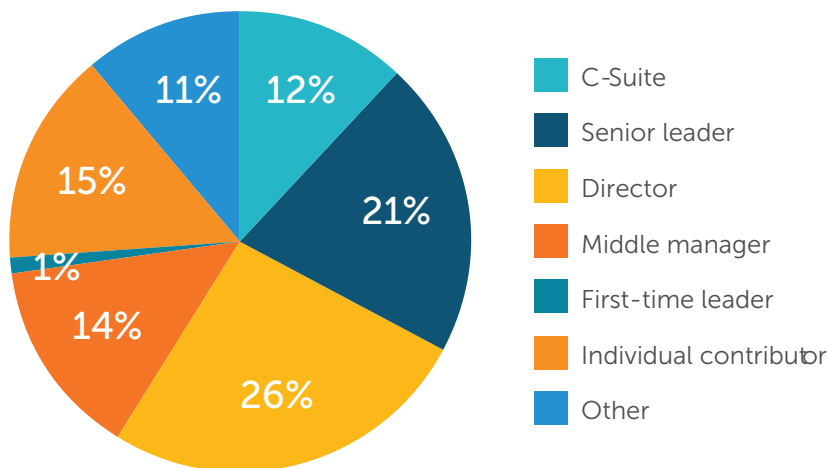
Expected to demonstrate a leadership model

Legend:
- C-Suite
- Senior leader
- Director
- Middle manager
- First-time leader
- Individual contributor
- Other

Values: 11%, 32%, 27%, 6%, 17%, 4%, 3%

Source: Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

Survey Demographic (b): 279 survey participants identified as having been "involved in the creation of an organization's leadership model"

Involved in the creation of an organization's leadership model

Legend:
- C-Suite
- Senior leader
- Director
- Middle manager
- First-time leader
- Individual contributor
- Other

Values: 12%, 21%, 26%, 14%, 1%, 15%, 11%

Source: Industry Research, NeuroLeadership Institute, 2019

ABOUT US

The NeuroLeadership Institute (NLI) synthesizes neuroscience research into actionable insights to help organizations be more effective. Our offerings span three practice areas: Culture and Leadership, Performance, and Diversity and Inclusion. NLI partners with leading companies and organizations in all sectors across the globe, with operations in North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, South America, and Africa. Visit us at www.neuroleadership.com.