

**10 Essential Skills for  
Effective Leaders**



## The workplace is evolving at a pace like never before.

With the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), substantial globalization and evolving expectations of employees, today's leaders must develop a range of capabilities to deliver on objectives and meet the needs of their workforce.

To maximize their impact, leaders need to find a balance between technical abilities and soft skills. Our guide is inspired by the [World Economic Forum's](#) 10 top skills for the future of work, which are mostly people-oriented capabilities. Read on to learn about these priority aptitudes and discover actionable ways to advance leadership practices to meet the needs of 21st-century organizations.

**“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”**

*- John F. Kennedy*

# The 10 In-demand Leadership Skills

While proficiencies around AI and big data will certainly be important, organizations such as the [World Economic Forum](#), [McKinsey](#) and [Deloitte](#) have repeatedly found that soft skills are fundamental to long-term success. As automation will support many technical aspects of job functions, it's the human-centric skills that will truly differentiate a leader's ability to guide others effectively. Prepare for the future of work by prioritizing:

Learning Agility

Emotional Intelligence

Communication

Collaboration

Critical Thinking

Innovation

Resilience

Motivation

Influence

Change Management



## Honing Your Skills: **Learning Agility**

*Learning Agility: A mindset and corresponding collection of practices that allow leaders to continually develop, grow and utilize new strategies that equip them for the increasingly complex problems they face in their organizations. ([Columbia University & the Center for Creative Leadership](#))*

With constant change and evolving expectations of leaders, it's important to build the capacity and willingness to regularly adapt practices, develop new skills and rethink past approaches.

**Companies with the greatest rates of high learning-agile executives produce 25% higher profit margins than their peers.**

*[Korn Ferry](#)*

# 3 Ways to Accelerate Learning Agility

## #1 – Adopt a Growth Mindset

In the spirit of [author Adam Grant's](#) writings, the ability to rethink and unlearn may be more valuable than traditional views of intelligence and ability in times of turbulence. Make a point to celebrate the act of leaving behind old practices that no longer serve you. Leaders who do so will find themselves better able to adjust to ever-changing responsibilities and cultivate an environment where employees feel encouraged to grow.



## #2 – Get Comfortable with Failure

When trying something new, it's unreasonable to assume that things will go perfectly the first time. Typically, before we can get "good" at something, we must accept that we will need to practice. The trick is persistence. Support yourself in building this habit by acknowledging opportunities to grow and identifying a positive learning that came from any unintentional missteps.



## #3 – Value Effort and Outcomes

Results are certainly important in business, and it may take some time to achieve the desired targets when starting something new or acquiring a skill. Recognizing the efforts that you put in and the incremental progress being made along the way will further a learning mindset. Setting this tone for staff will encourage them to embrace the idea that the work can be as important as the results.





## Honing Your Skills: **Communication**

*Communication: A process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs or behavior. A technique for expressing ideas effectively. ([Merriam-Webster](#))*

To work productively with stakeholders from various backgrounds, ages, cultures and perspectives, leaders must be effective communicators. Otherwise, they will struggle to advance initiatives, improve outcomes and engage staff to work toward common goals.

**1 in 5 business leaders claim to have experienced a loss of credibility due to poor communication.**

*[Grammarly](#)*

# 3 Ways to Improve Communication

## #1 – Boost Listening Capabilities

People are far more likely to listen to what leaders say when they feel heard. Advance your listening skills by seeking to understand, not just to respond. Practice active listening by rephrasing and paraphrasing what you hear to ensure clarity and avoid jumping to conclusions about what others mean or intend.



## #2 – Take a Holistic Approach

Individuals prefer to give and receive information in different ways. To reduce the disconnects that may occur, apply a holistic approach. Be mindful to explain the:

*Why? How? Who? What if?*

Doing so can more accurately address your audience's burning questions when delivering information. For more insights, [download our miscommunication eBook!](#)



## #3 – Address Intent-Impact Gaps

What we say is not always interpreted in the way we mean for it to be. That's what we call an intent-impact gap. Misunderstandings can cause tension and create opportunities to strengthen communication skills. When misalignments occur, pause and ask questions to cultivate understanding. Get curious about why statements were misinterpreted to identify ways to improve interactions in the future.





## Honing Your Skills: **Critical Thinking**

*Critical Thinking: Disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, open-minded and informed by evidence. ([Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com))*

Even with the volume of information available today, it can be challenging to assess options in the face of so much uncertainty and change. Yet, leaders need to make informed decisions to drive successful outcomes.

**65% of employers say their  
companies need more critical thinking.**

[ATD](#)

# 3 Ways to Elevate Critical Thinking

## #1 – Evaluate Assumptions

Recognizing innate predispositions is an important step in identifying potential gaps in thinking. In addition to exploring personal preferences and tendencies, it's helpful to pause when receiving information to consider what elements are facts, opinions or feelings. Each of these factors can play a role in decision-making and identifying the distinctions will help leaders assess options more clearly.



## #2 – Seek Out Alternatives

Understanding other perceptions of a situation enhances decision quality. Get practice by asking about the points of view of team members who may have different experience levels, backgrounds, ages or thinking and behavioral preferences. In doing so, you will be exposed to other ways of seeing the same circumstance and are likely to discover options you may not have considered before.



## #3 – Ask Questions

Often, leaders find themselves in a position where they feel like they must have all of the answers. When important decisions must be made, it's often beneficial to ask questions rather than forge ahead instinctively. Get in the habit of seeking more data and trying to consider a challenge from all angles. Ask yourself to imagine the possible outcomes of multiple scenarios and reference tip #2 to support the process.





## Honing Your Skills: **Resilience**

*Resilience: The ability to respond adaptably to challenges. ([Center for Creative Leadership](#))*

Leaders are looked to in times of challenge and uncertainty to provide support and courage to those around them. By developing resilience, they can maintain a positive outlook and persevere when things are difficult.

**46% of executives are unprepared for today's challenges due to a lack of resilience.**

*[Forbes](#)*

# 3 Ways to Cultivate Resilience

## #1 – Practice Self-Care

To have the strength to navigate turbulent times, investing in one's own well-being can enable endurance. What that looks like will probably be different for every leader, and it is vital to engage in activities that uplift physical, mental, emotional and social health. Promoting self-care and demonstrating that it is valuable also stimulates a culture of wellness where employees feel supported in building up their own resilience.



## #2 – Give Yourself Grace

At Emergenetics®, we talk about the [Language of Grace](#), or the methodology of using positive thinking and vocabulary to drive results. Affirmative language helps people succeed by increasing their sense of well-being, affinity and security. Embrace positive psychology and simple changes in language to inspire a more durable mindset. Even adjusting phrases from “I can’t” to “I haven’t yet” will reframe the way you perceive your own potential.



## #3 – Set Realistic, Meaningful Goals

Identifying targets can boost resilience, especially when the objectives are attainable and align with a motivating principle. When working toward a long-term goal or change, get in the habit of setting small, achievable targets to help you and your team reach the bigger outcome. Little wins along the way will help you stay motivated to proceed onward and encourage others to do the same.





## Honing Your Skills: **Influence**

*Influence: The ability to impact business results by changing behaviors and inspiring others to take action. ([Tony Robbins](#))*

Leaders are unlikely to be inherently gifted in every area of business. That's why they need the ability to inspire and guide staff to channel their energy towards meaningful outcomes. Influence will empower the collective to achieve so much more than any individual could on their own.

**83% of employees believe that a strong sense of purpose and values in leadership positively impacts their work.**

*[Brimco](#)*

# 3 Ways to Expand Influence

## #1 – Focus on Purpose

While the idea of purpose has gained more traction recently as a priority for younger employees, it's always had a place in business as [every generation](#) values meaningful work. Practice making connections between everyday tasks and projects and the significance behind them. Creating ties to the bigger picture and the impact that each person has in their role will help you cultivate engagement and influence.



## #2 – Craft a Compelling Vision

A vision sets an aspirational direction that guides decisions. Learn to establish a clear picture of the future to inspire yourself and those you are working with. Start by designing a vision statement for your next project. Then, ask colleagues for their insights on any adjustments that would better engage them in contributing to this desired future state. Use this information to adapt the statement and then share it with all contributors. Make it a habit by repeating the process for every initiative you lead.



## #3 – Build Relationships

Without strong, positive relationships in the workplace, it is difficult to influence others. After all, if people do not feel motivated and connected, why would they persevere or continue supporting the work? Spend time getting to know the coworkers you are leading and what matters to them inside and outside of the workplace. Be willing to also share your authentic self to create meaningful, lasting bonds.





## Honing Your Skills: **Emotional Intelligence**

*Emotional Intelligence: The ability to understand and manage your own emotions, as well as recognize and influence the emotions of those around you. ([Harvard Business School](#))*

With the increasing importance of soft skills and the need to lead diverse groups of employees, emotional intelligence (EQ) is essential. Greater EQ empowers leaders to understand their people, guide them through challenges and generate better results.

**Leaders who excel at listening and responding with empathy perform more than 40% higher in coaching, planning and decision-making.**

DDI

# 3 Ways to Exercise EQ

## #1 – Gain Self-awareness

Understanding oneself is an essential part of EQ. Elevate self-awareness by spending time exploring your beliefs and values. It can be helpful to use personality instruments to examine how you prefer to think and behave, your strengths and what energizes you. Acquiring a more objective view of your innate inclinations sets the foundation for an expanded understanding of others.



## #2 – Get Curious about Differences

No two people are the same, and every approach can bring something new and valuable when met with empathy and openness. Start by inviting curiosity when differences in opinion are raised and proactively learn about the various ways others prefer to approach their work and their world. Consider using personality assessments, engaging a coach or participating in mentorship to advance this exploration.



## #3 – Seek Feedback

Input from others can reveal blind spots that leaders may not be aware of. The insights help bolster your leadership style as well as how you communicate, motivate or manage situations. Using constructive feedback, leaders can identify areas of strength in their EQ as well as opportunities to adjust and improve their approach.





# Honing Your Skills: Collaboration

*Collaboration: Two or more people working together to create or achieve the same thing. ([Cambridge Dictionary](#))*

Employees are seeking out work environments where they feel valued and can make an impact. Leaders who effectively harness their employees' assets and unite them in pursuit of a common goal will both engage staff and realize impressive outcomes.

**97% of employees and executives believe a lack of alignment within a team impacts the outcomes of a task or project.**

*[McKinsey](#)*

# 3 Ways to Amplify Collaboration

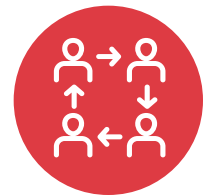
## #1 - Cultivate Belonging

When personnel know that their contributions matter, their input is valued and they can bring their full selves to work, they will be more likely to perform to the best of their ability. Set the tone by making space for ideas to be shared. Promoting feedback, actively listening to others' thoughts and demonstrating appreciation for distinct viewpoints will inspire a more collaborative environment.



## #2 - Embrace Team Building

When staff feel connected, it elevates their sense of belonging and encourages individuals to invest more effort for the good of the group. Leaders can cultivate this sense of support by prioritizing team building. In addition to activities designed to help colleagues get to know one another, be intentional about making personal connections with coworkers, learning about their interests and matching rapport with their work styles.



## #3 - Promote Shared Goals

The workforce will be more effective in aligning their efforts if they clearly understand their employer's objectives and how their work will contribute to targeted outcomes. Elevate your leadership skills by proactively discussing priorities and explaining how the individual and collaborative work staff is engaging in ultimately ladders up to the organization's goals.





## Honing Your Skills: Innovation

*Innovation: A product, service, business model or strategy that is both novel and useful. ([Harvard Business School](#))*

Innovation is necessary to keep pace with the changes in today's working world. Leaders must be creative while also nourishing a culture where people feel encouraged to adapt so they can stay ahead of the competition and stimulate growth.

**80-90% of executives report that innovation is a top priority, yet only 6% are satisfied with their performance.**

*[McKinsey](#)*

# 3 Ways to Increase Innovation

## #1 - Celebrate Risk Taking

There is no guarantee when innovating, and without ingenuity, companies will stagnate. Embrace small risks in day-to-day work and talk about the experiments you are engaging in. Being open about the process and the outcomes (both the unsuccessful and successful attempts) will make innovation more accessible and invite others in the organization to try new things.



## #2 - Cultivate Psychological Safety

Psychological safety is indispensable to creativity. In a secure environment, employees know they can speak up, voice concerns, share mistakes and take risks without fear of punishment or humiliation. Be willing to voice ideas that are “a little out there” and encourage staff who express differing perspectives or hesitations. When you demonstrate openness to diverging viewpoints, it will unlock new thoughts and stimulate ideation.



## #3 - Seek Out Cognitive Diversity

Teams with cognitive diversity tend to be [more innovative](#). That's because varying problem-solving styles often surface an assortment of ideas and distinct ways to approach challenges and opportunities. Use assessments to help you identify the cognitive make-up of your team or organization and proactively assemble project teams that offer varied viewpoints.





# Honing Your Skills:

## Motivation

*Motivation: A person's willingness to exert physical or mental effort in pursuit of a goal or outcome. ([APA](#))*

Leaders who are gifted at boosting the motivation of those around them will be far more effective in navigating the future of work. The capacity to inspire allows them to connect in a meaningful way, so their colleagues are moved to address the many opportunities, changes and challenges they will face with enthusiasm.

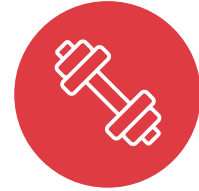
**Productivity and efficiency improve by 20%  
when employees are motivated.**

*[Gallup](#)*

# 3 Ways to Advance Motivation

## #1 – Apply an Asset-based Approach

Employees tend to be [more energized and engaged](#) when they use their strengths at work. To channel this motivation, find ways to celebrate and use the assets of staff. Psychometric assessments can reveal the gifts and motivators of individuals across the organization. Recognizing what tasks will give colleagues energy can empower leaders to reframe assignments and help personnel (and themselves) apply their talents on the job.



## #2 – Improve Coaching Skills

When workers receive constructive feedback that inspires them to problem solve and take initiative, it has an encouraging effect. Flex your coaching muscles by asking questions. When faced with a challenge, invite employees to pause and identify potential solutions. Help them refine their choices and remove obstacles when needed. That way, team members build autonomy and mastery, stimulating their own drive.



## #3 – Celebrate Personnel

Recognition has consistently been shown to be a [major contributor to employee engagement and motivation](#). Make time in your schedule to acknowledge the successes and accomplishments of others. These actions can be small in nature – such as delivering simple thank yous or shoutouts on a chat channel – or they may involve bigger gestures – like company awards or all-hands celebrations.





## Honing Your Skills: Change Management

*Change Management: The process of guiding organizational change to fruition, from the earliest stages of conception and preparation, through implementation and, finally, to resolution. ([Harvard Business School](#))*

Change is simply part of life, and these days, transformation is everywhere. Strong communication skills (as explored in a [previous section](#)) are imperative to change management. Additionally, leaders must be able to guide and support others through the process.

**43% of employees said if leaders did more to understand change resistance, it would invite more collaboration.**

*[Oak Engage](#)*

# 3 Ways to Champion Change

## #1 - Develop Trust

In times of uncertainty, it can feel stressful to pursue the unknown and adapt behavior. Creating trusting relationships will help staff navigate the uncertainty with greater assurance. Leaders can better establish confidence by getting to know coworkers, setting reasonable expectations, clarifying the objectives and crafting a unifying vision. For more tips, [explore our guide!](#)



## #2 - Boost Buy-in

People are more likely to resist change if they do not feel involved in whatever is taking place. Leaders may amplify their change management skills by learning to promote buy-in for various ideas and concepts. To strengthen your ability to manage change, listen to staff, provide space for them to air concerns and acknowledge their feedback as you shape the next steps.



## #3 - Take Accountability

Leaders can influence change management by modeling the way. When adopting a new technology, process or strategy, be vocal about what you have done to make the transition part of your daily routine and be accountable if missteps are made. Addressing these challenges will make it easier for personnel to get back on track if they are struggling with the change as well.





# Optimize Your Leadership Practices

If you're ready to maximize your leadership style and grow the soft skills you need to be successful in the future of work, Emergenetics can help!

Our proprietary assessment will provide insights into the strengths you bring to the workplace as well as help you build empathy and appreciation of the distinct gifts of others. Using our tools and workshops, you will uncover tactics to better communicate, collaborate, engage and motivate those around you to achieve results.

## Learn more about our solutions!

[Explore our proprietary workshops to support your leaders](#)