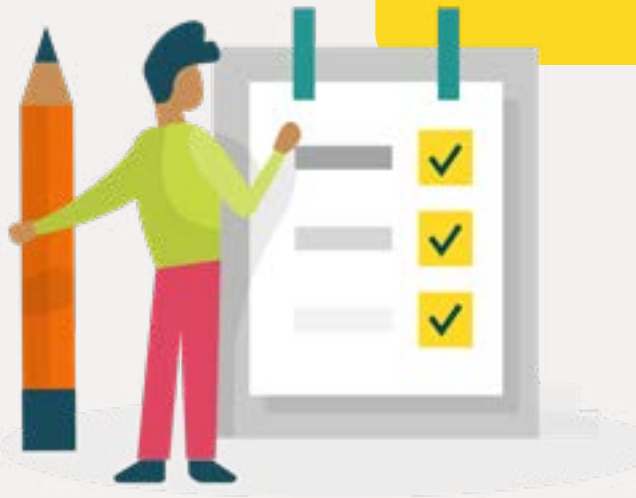


A Practical Guide to **Identify the Skills Managers Need** to Lead Through Change



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If you're a leader right now, you know the **only constant is change.**

What are leaders saying they need to deal with change?

New ways of training

Build Modern Leadership Capabilities

87%

65%



New systems, shifting org charts, tighter timelines, staff reductions. It's a lot to hold, and it feels like it's all happening at once.

In a workplace where disruption has become the norm, it's time to rethink what strong leadership looks like.

The tools that might've helped us in the past are no longer serving: In fact, 87% of leaders say they need new ways of training to adapt to the changes happening in the workplace. And while 65% want to build modern leadership capabilities, most aren't clear where to start, and it shows.

Organizations are losing hours, dollars, and people.



What's needed now are new skills that help people navigate complexity with clarity, connection, and confidence.

That might sound like a lot, but there's a structured way to begin: **skills mapping.**

It's a tool to help you get clear on what capabilities your managers need, identify where the gaps lie, and prioritize development where it will make the biggest difference.

What's getting in the way?

In most organizations, learning investments can't keep up with the current pace of change— they're cut in tight budget cycles, fragmented, overly complex, or too far removed from the work.

Leaders' skills aren't evolving alongside the new demands of their roles, and the impact of that is showing up everywhere:

- 14.5% of the workweek is lost to the fear of making mistakes.
- Employees spend 8.7 hours a week just motivating themselves to be productive.
- Organizations lose \$6,650 per employee annually, decoding unclear communication from managers.



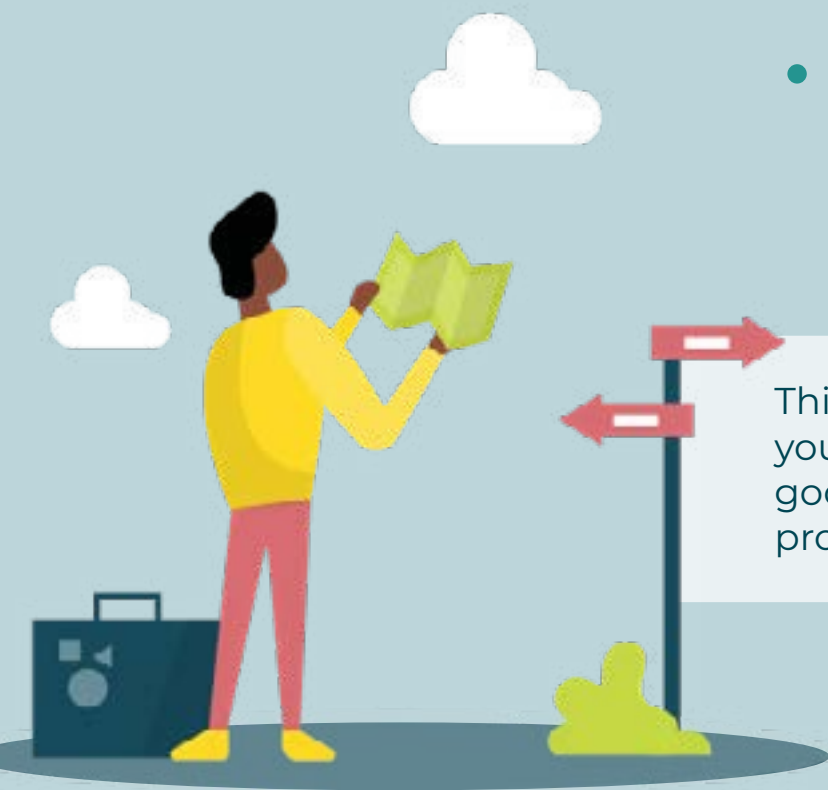
Before you start skills mapping

Take **one important pre-step** before you jump in:

Make sure you align with your senior leaders to get clear on your organization's strategic objectives:

- What's your future direction?
- What skills will be most important to stay competitive and adaptable?

This step matters because without it, you risk building capabilities that look good on paper but don't drive real progress.



How to **map skills** and **spot gaps**

You're ready to begin! Here's a simple practice to get you started:

1. Clarify your focus:

Choose 2-3 core capabilities your organization is doubling down on.

Ask: What capabilities matter most for success in this moment of change?

Take action: Align with key stakeholders and write down your top three.

Example

1. *Change leadership*
2. *Collaboration*
3. *People development*

2. Break it down:

Define what “good” looks like in practice. For each capability, identify the specific behaviors that signal strength or that something is missing.

Ask: How do we know when someone is doing this well?

Take action: Create a short list of “look-fors” and “watch-outs” for each behavior.

Example:

Capability:

Change leadership

Focus behavior:

Giving timely, honest feedback when people are struggling to adapt to change.

Look for:

- *Offering feedback in real time, not waiting for the review cycle*
- *Balancing candor with care ("This isn't easy, but I believe you can handle it.")*

Watch out for:

- *Avoiding or delaying feedback*
- *Softening the message so much that the real issue gets lost*

3. Get feedback:

Use self-assessments, peer input, or manager conversations to identify strengths and gaps in the desired capabilities.

Ask: Where do people think they're strong? What aren't they seeing?

Take action: Run a lightweight pulse or feedback session with one team to start.

Example:

Invite managers to reflect on:

When was the last time you gave feedback that felt uncomfortable.

What helped or got in the way?

4. Look for patterns:

What skills are leaders confident in? Where do they hesitate? That's your roadmap.

Ask: What trends are emerging across teams or levels?

Take action: Prioritize your learning and development efforts based on the consistent gaps.

Example

You notice that people across departments are struggling with giving feedback?

- *Create a peer learning group to explore what giving/receiving feedback looks like in their roles.*
- *Revisit progress in six months.*

Now your skills map is starting to take shape. And yet, it's at this point, trying to bring what you identified in the process to life, that many organizations find themselves stalled.

Where organizations get stuck

It's a familiar story: organizations painstakingly map capabilities and then post them in a performance framework where they collect dust. With limited time and resources, even the best plans can get lost in the flow of daily work.

To build real leadership capability, you need more than clarity on the **“what.”** You need a bridge to the **“how”**—a clear line from the capabilities that matter, to the behaviours that bring them to life, to the development experiences that reinforce them.

A capability without observable behaviors stays abstract.

When any part of that chain is weak, the efforts won't take shape or stick.

A behavior without reinforcement never becomes a habit.



Get to the **root** of the gaps

The challenge isn't just the frameworks—it's the human dynamics underneath them.

Think about the challenges your workplace is facing right now:

Burnout, stalled decision-making, disengagement, feedback gaps, and resistance to change.

Despite all the structural shifts and new tools, success at work still hinges on one thing: people. And when the human side of leadership is unclear or unsupported, the cracks show up everywhere.

To make leadership capabilities real and repeatable, start with the behaviors that bring them to life, like:

- Creating psychological safety
- Having coaching conversations
- Staying open in moments of tension
- Listening before jumping into solve
- Helping others navigate ambiguity
- Encouraging ownership without micromanaging



These aren't nice-to-haves, they're the foundation of **effective leadership**. And with limited time and capacity, the real question is: **where do you begin building them?**

Curiosity is an amplifier skill

Curiosity is what we call an amplifier skill:

A practical habit that strengthens and accelerates the development of every other leadership capability. It doesn't replace your frameworks or goals. It's a foundational skill that makes them work.

The type of curiosity we're talking about is **Coach-Like Curiosity**: the ability to slow down the rush to action, stay curious just a little longer, and resist the urge to fix or advise right away.

It's a habit that anyone can build; one that centers around new ways of connecting with people and work, which can be transformative in the moments that matter most.



When curiosity is strong, here's what it does:

- ✓ It resolves conflict by diffusing tension and inviting perspective.
- ✓ It improves problem-solving by focusing on the real challenge.
- ✓ It supports change by surfacing concerns and reducing resistance.
- ✓ It fuels collaboration and innovation by helping people feel heard.
- ✓ It stops micromanagement by encouraging ownership.
- ✓ And above all, it builds clarity—about what people want, what's getting in the way, and how to move forward

In short, **curiosity** helps people reflect, ask for feedback, experiment, and stay open, all the conditions that make skill development last.

So if you're serious about closing skill gaps, start with curiosity. It's the habit that unlocks all the others.



Equip your managers to lead through anything

The workplace isn't slowing down. Leaders are being asked to do more, with less, and often without a clear map. People feel stuck between old tools that don't fit and new demands they're not sure how to meet.

That's where skills mapping offers a way through the noise, helping you name what matters most and make a plan to build it.

But clarity alone isn't enough.

Capability takes root when leaders also have the space, support, and habits to act in the moments that matter.

That's where curiosity comes in.

It helps people pause, reflect, experiment, and stay open in the face of uncertainty.



Because leadership isn't built in theory, it's built in moments of tension and change. Help your people to meet those moments with confidence, together.

Ready to create a resilient workplace?

You've mapped the skills.

Now it's time to build the habits that make them stick.

At **Box of Crayons**, we give managers and their teams the skill of Coach-Like Curiosity so they can build strong, innovative, and resilient teams ready to meet whatever change comes next.



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