



Written by [John Faulkes](#)

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Mobile Leadership

A key to success for life science in the coming decade



Part 6 – Seeking sponsorship for development activities

Key takeaways in this article

- **Build internal alliances** with various improvement groups – and develop common ground
- Establish a **jointly agreed set of capabilities**
- Build a business **benefits-led case** for development activities

We have been attempting to develop impactful leadership in our society for decades. It's been a mixed experience. A recent survey by Skillsoft found that just 22% of organisations believed they had an adequate leadership culture (see figure 1 on next page).

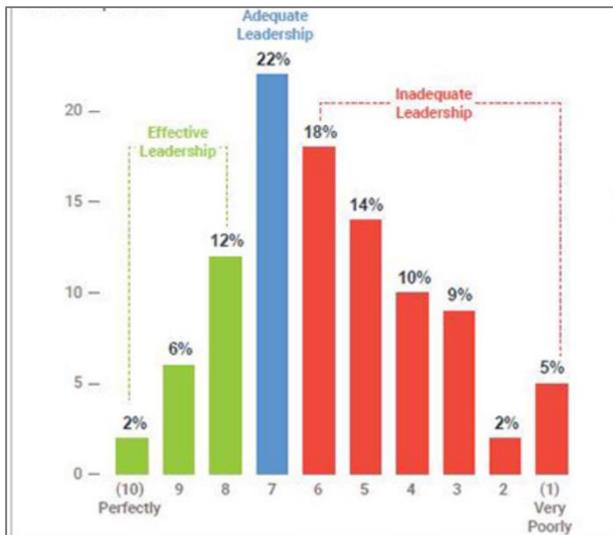


Fig 1

This relates to general people leadership skills. If this is discouraging, you may take little solace in the reality that ‘Mobile’/ cross-functional leadership tends to receive even less consideration and attention in our organisations.

So why, despite years of thinking around this challenge, have we such a long way to go?

We mentioned in part 3 of this series that a problem is **culture and governance** being slow to modernize. It’s a ‘chicken and egg’ dilemma:

- Aspiring leaders might take a ‘why bother’ attitude when they are not empowered to make a real difference. At the same time, senior managers complain about a lack of entrepreneurial drive in project teams.
- Also, top management may view the investment in the development of these sort of leadership skills as reward for high performance, or as a personal benefit, rather than a critical cog in the company’s productivity.

Often there is a disconnect between improvement agencies: The Project Office has a critical interest in matrix systems, technologies and data – but insufficient understanding of human development. HR / L&D understand the human issues but may be focused on traditional leadership – performance management, selection, and so on, and not ‘switched on’ to the cross-functional situation.

In a large organization we often find many more initiatives underway beyond these two, sponsored perhaps by different divisions and often developing overlapping remits!



So how can we increase attention and commitment to the development of mobile leadership?

First and foremost, **reach out to other work streams** in the organization to see what common perspectives and objectives that you have.

At least build a **united approach between L&D and the project office** or similar product development function. Establish joint goals - take time to brainstorm what impact, style, behaviours you want from your cross-functional leaders.



Jointly build a set of capabilities for the cross function leader, that could be used to communicate best practice, necessary skills – and be used for assessment and development planning.

Highlight especially **what is different** about the cross-functional role. Your organization probably has frameworks for traditional management and leadership skills already. Don't attempt to set up anything in competition.

Remember that people in the business are *not* going to be impressed by the brilliance of a super comprehensive analysis. Rather they will appreciate something as **simple and direct as possible** that will lead to managers being able to measure performance.

Identify the best leaders in your business – the good role models. Involve them in the above definition of these capabilities. At least also get feedback from some top managers.

Build a **compelling business case**, for investment in development and training activity. To be successful this needs multiple strands:

- A clarification of the special capabilities needed in this environment – with some sample observation data illustrating the gap between ideal and current reality; an invitation for top management to participate in further definition
- Best practice and thought from the wider world – how are the leading organisations deriving productivity gains from effective cross function working – and how are they developing their leaders?



- Proposals for the most achievable mix of activities that will bring about positive development

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How can your organization develop in this area?

- What are the best models for leader development that you could learn about and take advantage of?
- Realistically, what are the costs and commitments of making real change?
- How can you get a real shift in leader capability, when your people are incredibly busy?

[Contact VPA](#) - we can help you with these questions!