



Uplift 2024 Insights Brief

Uplift 2024 created space for thought leaders, researchers, and some of the top business minds to converge, connect, and discuss the issues and topics organizations face today. Distinguished speakers like Mindy Kaling, Tracee Ellis Ross, and James Clear shared insights and inspiring stories alongside leaders from organizations such as Chevron, Cisco, Hilton, Peloton, Texas Children's, the United States Air Force, and more.

The event shed light on the need for courageous leadership — a theme that has never been more relevant. Speakers explored topics ranging from courage and authenticity to GenAI, effective leadership, and the power of collaboration. This brief captures the essence of their insights, offering actionable strategies to embrace courage in your leadership journey and foster a culture that champions bold, authentic leadership and performance.

Courageous leadership insights



Key insights

Action

1

Embrace vulnerabilities and use personal challenges as opportunities to foster openness and mentorship within your team and organization. Leaders can transform personal adversities into powerful tools for building resilience and enhancing mission readiness — whether it's in the Air Force or an organization.

— Lt. Gen. Caroline Miller, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services at the United States Air Force

By encouraging leaders to share their challenges and personal stories, organizations can cultivate a culture of trust and openness, which not only enhances individual growth but also strengthens collective alignment and readiness.

2

Developing courageous leadership involves promoting self-identification with leadership roles, empowering individuals to express themselves authentically, and supporting a culture of learning from failure. Shift the focus to building resilience and confidence to foster a supportive environment where potential leaders feel equipped and encouraged to step forward and innovate.

— Patrick Fagan, Chief Talent and Human Resources Officer @ New York City Public Schools Department of Education

Encourage potential leaders to take on small leadership projects, so they learn to make decisions, learn from their outcomes, and develop their unique leadership style within a supportive framework. Regular feedback and reflection sessions can further enhance their ability to self-identify as leaders and foster a forward-thinking mindset.

3

Investing in personal and psychological growth is crucial; without genuine commitment to self-improvement practices, any external facade will quickly unravel. Grant yourself permission to bring out the best in people and invest in their psychological development — this is a crucial step for modern leaders who want to build and influence future generations.

— Rhonda Morris, Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at Chevron Corporation

Establish development programs that prioritize psychological well-being and personal growth. This involves creating supportive environments that encourage authentic self-improvement and offer tools and resources for employees to engage deeply with their own development, thereby building a more resilient and innovative workforce for the future.

4

Mindful leadership — the ability to pause and reflect on decisions in moments of inclusion, requires courage and a different type of leadership. If you want DEI to truly be embedded in the organization, you need to teach leaders how to brake when the speed is faster than ever.

— Dalana Brand, Chief People Officer at Peloton

Develop mindful leadership by teaching leaders how to effectively pause and reflect amid high-paced environments to ensure thoughtful, inclusive decision-making. Ask questions like, how skilled are my leaders at slowing down to ensure a pool of candidates is wide enough or that they're really taking time to develop and coach someone?

5

Empathy is deeply related to all forms of creativity. When we think about the history of empathy in art, it's been mostly about suffering. The other half is empathy about what makes life worth living. When we think about empathy, it's not just about understanding human suffering — it's about having empathy for human joy.

— Martin Seligman, Ph.D., Director of the Positive Psychology Center at University of Pennsylvania

Explore and express empathy in its full spectrum — recognizing not only the challenges but also the joys that colleagues experience. This approach can enhance workplace culture by promoting deeper connections and understanding among team members, contributing to a more supportive and engaged work environment.

Insights to reach peak performance



Key insights

Action

1 Deeply human skills like self-compassion for emotional regulation, problem-solving for complex challenges, and strategic planning are key drivers of peak performance, transforming managers into coaches who foster new mindsets and manage emotions. These skills, along with encouraging strong, unified team participation, are essential in navigating and prospecting the future effectively.

— Alexi Robichaux, BetterUp CEO

The job to be done is uplifting managers. To foster these deeply human skills, that aren't readily available in any upskilling tool, launch a targeted coaching program for managers that develops emotional intelligence, problem-solving, strategic planning, and promotes inclusive team participation.

2 Addressing organizational silence and fostering inclusion are essential to prevent groupthink. By encouraging self-reflection and authenticity, and by leveraging individual strengths in leadership, organizations can create a culture where diverse perspectives are valued and critical thinking is enhanced.

— Digna Carballosa, Director, Talent Services Division at NASA

Encourage leaders and team members to identify and address their blind spots, cultivate authenticity, and actively use their unique strengths. Additionally, fostering open communication forums and regular feedback sessions can help mitigate organizational silence and encourage diverse viewpoints, effectively reducing the risk of groupthink.

3 To cultivate adaptability and resilience, leaders need to emphasize the need to learn, unlearn, and relearn and encourage people to use fear and resistance as catalysts for personal and professional growth. Leading with inquiry and prioritizing developmental fosters an environment where continuous learning and overcoming challenges are integral to success.

— Dean Gialamas, General Manager at Los Angeles County Internal Services Department

Ask leaders to actively engage their teams through thoughtful questioning and ensure the availability of resources needed for continuous development to cultivate a culture where challenges consistently ignite growth.

4 Leadership plays the critical role of aligning individual roles with the overarching mission to boost organizational performance. By making each member aware of how their specific duties contribute to the broader objectives, leaders can effectively increase engagement, accountability, and effectiveness across an organization.

— Lt. Gen. Caroline Miller, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services at the United States Air Force

Communicate the connection between individual responsibilities and the organization's goals. Bring this up in 1:1 meetings and interactive workshops with your team to help employees visualize their impact on the overall mission, fostering a more engaged and motivated workforce.

5 In the ever-changing and turbulent environment of modern work, five essential meta-skills are critical for high performance: resilience, mattering, social connection, prospection, and innovation. These skills help individuals navigate complexities and drive forward-looking thinking and creativity.

— Gabriella Rosen Kellerman, Chief Innovation Officer at BetterUp

Focus training on the five meta-skills via resilience building, creating initiatives that reinforce the value of each individual (mattering), facilitating opportunities for meaningful social connections, encouraging forward-thinking (prospection), and fostering an environment that rewards innovative thinking.

Key insights

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6 In an era of shrinking resources with the pressure to scale success, leaders own defining what this looks. **Evaluating and prioritizing work has never been more important to deliver high performance and make work sustainable for people.**

— Kelly Jones, Chief People Officer at Cisco

As a team, go through every line of work and think about what is driving the most business value. Take some things out of the bucket and focus on the biggest bang to operate at maximum efficiency.

7 **The most effective recruitment strategy is fundamentally a retention strategy.** Focus on nurturing and retaining the talent already within your organization by focusing on culture first and ensuring the work environment is engaging and meets their needs.

— Linda Aldred, Executive Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer at Texas Children's

Define what the cultural currency is in your department to increase commitment and hang on to the people you already have. Start initiatives that make your organization a compelling place to work.

8 **High employee engagement is intrinsically linked to high organizational results, driven primarily by authenticity and a genuine belief in the mission rather than short-term, mercenary approaches focused on financial incentives.** When an organization wholeheartedly adopts a mission-driven culture, it establishes a solid foundation for sustained success.

— Dan FitzSimons, Chief Revenue Officer at Pure Storage

Embed a mission-driven ethos throughout your organization by focusing on authenticity and core values rather than short-term financial gains. Ensure clear communication of the mission, consistent behavior from leadership that aligns with the mission, and strategic reinforcement through organizational practices.

9 **There is a linear relationship between employee well-being and financial performance, including stock price.** The business case for employee well-being is irrefutable.

— Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, Ph.D., Professor of Economics & Behavioural Science and Director, Wellbeing Research Centre

Prioritize and invest in well-being across your organization. Investing in comprehensive employee support not only enhances workforce morale but also boosts the company's bottom line and shareholder value.

10 **The successful adoption of AI within organizations hinges on cultivating a culture of curiosity and experimentation via a mindset of play,** allowing employees to explore and leverage the full capabilities of these tools.

— Laszlo Bock, BetterUp Advisor

Promote a playful and exploratory mindset towards AI, to facilitate effective integration and unlock the full potential of their workforce.

Build critical skills and leadership capabilities for transformation.

Learn more →

