

Thriving in 2025

Artificial Intelligence, Strategy & Leadership
in a Changing World

Business Leader Global Trends Report

Foreword

As we fast approach 2030, the pace of change in business has never been more dynamic or demanding for leaders.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is emerging as a critical trend of our era, challenging leaders to understand how to leverage it effectively & augment aspects of how they do business. Economic pressures & geopolitical uncertainty in 2025 will further intensify the need for efficiency, compelling businesses to focus on profitable growth.

This report explores the critical capabilities, strategies & insights leaders must embrace for success in 2025 & beyond.

A clear strategic plan & vision in 2025 will be more critical than ever to align teams, allocate resources effectively, embrace emerging opportunities & adapt swiftly to changing market demands. Leaders must prioritise just a handful of focus areas critical to the success of their vision.

Boosting business performance in 2025 will require a 'less is more' approach, as many organisations have struggled with project fatigue & productivity bottlenecks from pursuing too many new initiatives in recent years. These challenges will be compounded in 2025 by economic headwinds, AI technology acceleration & a continuing struggle to attract & retain good people. Leaders therefore need to ensure they stay agile & focused on key strategic priorities to avoid burn-out for them & their teams.

With so many shifts occurring, leaders will need to be more 'present' in their businesses during the year to effectively coach & guide their teams, get alignment, build trust, seize new opportunities, & drive the transformative changes essential for success.

Surrounding themselves with quality advisors to challenge, provide insight, coach & train them will help leaders boost performance & navigate this challenging 2025 business landscape.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Mason', written over a light blue background.

James Mason
Managing Director, Mindshop

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7 leadership performance barriers

7 leadership performance strategies

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Key Insights

Seven key leadership performance barriers & strategies have been identified from four surveyed topics:

1. trends
2. leadership performance
3. business performance &
4. people.

No matter where you are on your leadership performance journey, reflecting on these insights & data will help you make meaningful changes to your leadership capabilities to drive stronger results in 2025.

Complete the diagnostic at the end of this report for your own tailored leadership performance plan.

What are the biggest barriers & strategies you need to focus on in 2025?



7 Leadership Barriers

- ① Capacity bottlenecks: team, processes, operational cadence & focus.
- ② Poor time & priority management habits.
- ③ Ineffective technology adoption.
- ④ Poor energy levels & life balance.
- ⑤ Poor alignment of team priorities to business goals.
- ⑥ Inability to implement & drive change with the team.
- ⑦ Trying to do too much as a leader. Delegate, stop-doing.



7 Leadership Strategies

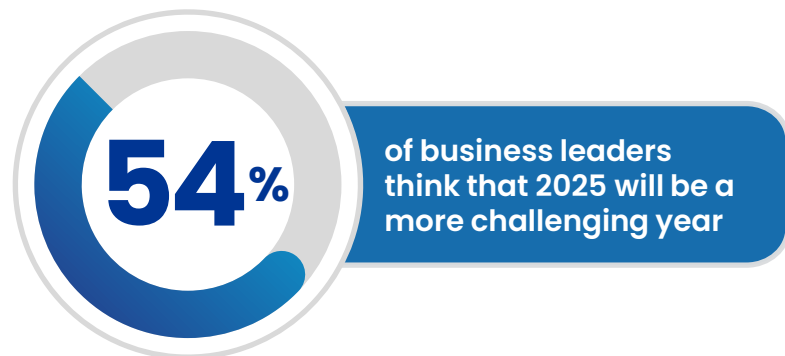
- ① AI embedded into product, service & operational strategies.
- ② Focus on profitable growth strategies. Less is more.
- ③ Challenging 'stale' strategies & visions. Reflect on 2024 by asking what worked & what didn't.
- ④ Be present as a leader to effectively guide & coach your team.
- ⑤ Being well read & curious about emerging industry trends & global best practice. Embrace a life-long learning mindset.
- ⑥ Build an authentic, high-performance culture.
- ⑦ Build strong communication & emotional intelligence capabilities.

Trends

As we hurtle towards 2030, **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** is a key focus for leaders, with most wanting to understand how it will augment offerings or drive efficiency across their business.

Variable economic headwinds in 2025 will drive businesses to look for efficiencies as they focus on profitable growth.

Leaders are also prioritising sustainability, net-zero goals, changing workforce dynamics, emotional intelligence, & agile leadership capabilities.



Q. What statement best described business leaders' focus for 2025?

46%

Scaling Up

Accelerating business growth to capitalise on market opportunities

52%

Steadily Evolving

Consolidating current position or steadily evolving business performance

2%

Scaling Back

Pulling back due to market conditions or a strategic decision

Q. What are the top five trends leaders say they need to understand clearly moving towards 2030?

- 1 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Integration & Utilisation**
Understanding & effectively deploying AI, leveraging AI for business efficiency & ensuring ethical, practical implementation is key.
- 2 Sustainability & Net-Zero Goals**
Achieving carbon neutrality & embracing sustainability initiatives, adapting to environmental, social & governance (ESG) expectations.
- 3 Changing Workforce Dynamics & Flexibility**
Leaders must adapt to the evolving expectations of the next generation of workers, including flexible work options & the positive impacts of a diverse workforce. These will be key to attract & retain quality people balanced with high productivity.
- 4 Emotional Intelligence (EQ) & Relationship Building**
EQ is becoming increasingly valuable for managing teams, fostering collaboration & improving staff performance alongside a growth-oriented culture.
- 5 Agile Leadership & Organisational Adaptability**
The rapid pace of change, driven by technology, demographic shifts & economic uncertainty requires leaders to be agile & proactive, embracing change, rightsizing operations & maintaining focus on a small number of impactful goals.

Leadership

More vital than ever, **strong strategic planning & visioning skills** will allow leaders to effectively align teams & resources to market demand. A flexible, situational approach to leadership & life-long learning mindset is essential.

Effective communication, advanced problem-solving, strong coaching ability & being a 'present' leader are key for keeping teams focused on priority strategies & maintaining agility to adapt to change.

Organisations must also tackle the detrimental effects of having too many underperformers in their teams, leading to burnout among high-performing leaders.

Q. What are the top six courses business leaders would find most impactful to complete in 2025?

- ① Strategic Planning
- ② Leadership Performance
- ③ Effective Communication
- ④ Attraction & Retention
- ⑤ Coaching & Accountability
- ⑥ Change Success Mastery

Q. What are the top areas of focus for leaders to achieve high business & team performance in 2025?

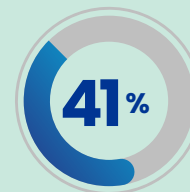
Clear strategy & vision for business or division **57%**

High emotional intelligence **22%**

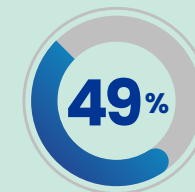
Good communication **20%**

Clear targets & KPI's **16%**

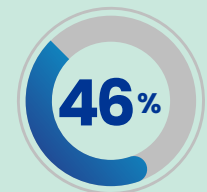
*Weighted percent of respondents that placed this option in their top 3.



are very good with time management & productivity levels



feel they are an effective coach & mentor to their team

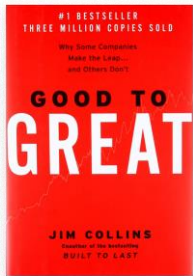


achieved leadership & professional development targets for 2024

Leadership

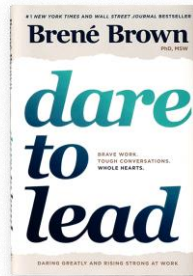
Q. What top six books do leaders recommend as essential reading for business & leadership performance in 2025?

①



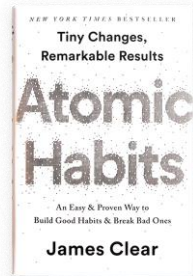
Good to Great
by Jim Collins

②



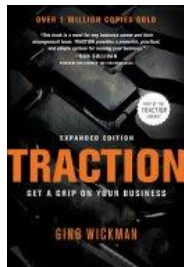
Dare to Lead
by Brené Brown

③



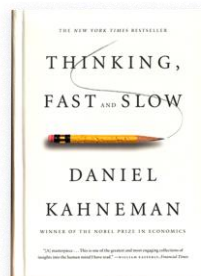
Atomic Habits
by James Clear

④



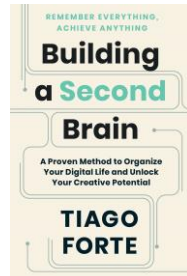
Traction
by Gino Wickman

⑤



Thinking, Fast and Slow
by Daniel Kahneman

⑥



Building a Second Brain
by Tiago Forte

Q. What top five tips do leaders have for improving capacity, productivity & time management in 2025?

① **Leverage Time Blocking & Time Boxing**

Plan your day in structured time blocks to focus on specific tasks & avoid distractions.

② **Master Delegation**

Delegate tasks effectively by trusting your team & clearly defining responsibilities, ensuring you can focus on high-value activities.

③ **Define Priorities & Focus on What Matters Most**

Identify your top three priorities daily, weekly, & monthly. Stay focused on these objectives & resist the temptation to tackle non-essential tasks.

④ **Utilise the Right Tools & Technology**

Adopt AI tools, time management apps, & proven frameworks (e.g., Pomodoro Technique, 4DX, Microsoft Copilot) to optimise processes & reduce repetitive tasks.

⑤ **Protect Focused Time & Eliminate Distractions**

Schedule uninterrupted focused time in your calendar, turn off non-essential notifications & minimise distractions from emails or chat apps.

“

Great leaders thrive by adopting a lifelong learning mindset, constantly mastering new skills, embracing fresh approaches & staying ahead of trends in today's ever-evolving market.

”



James Mason
Managing Director, Mindshop

Q. What top five tips do leaders suggest for leveraging AI & innovative technologies when leading in 2025 & beyond?

- ① Start Small, Experiment & Stay Curious**
Leaders emphasise starting with small, manageable initial projects (with a minimum viable product mindset) to gain buy-in from the wider team.
- ② Use AI as a Tool for Augmentation, Not Replacement**
AI should be used to complement human efforts by automating routine tasks, improving workflows & enhancing strategic decision-making.
- ③ Be Open-Minded & Embrace Change**
Adopt a forward-thinking mindset. Be open to thinking contrary to your traditional ideas.
- ④ Have a Clear Strategy & Understand the Impact**
Develop a well-defined plan for how AI & emerging technologies align with business goals. Know your key strategies to drive change.
- ⑤ Invest in AI Skills Development & Staff Training**
Leaders stress the importance of building knowledge & skills around AI usage, including training teams on how to effectively use & prompt AI systems.

Business

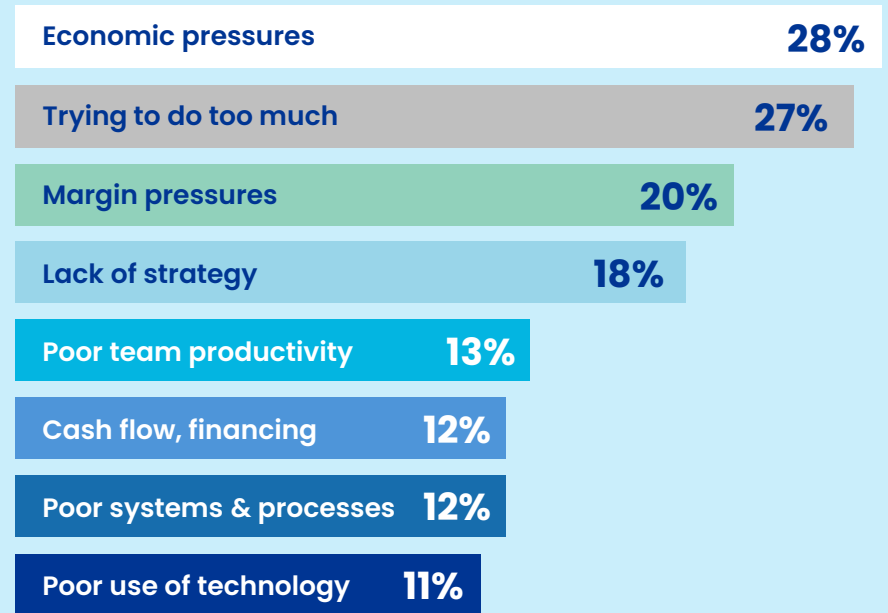
Driving business success in 2025 demands a sharp focus, doing less to achieve more.

In recent years, many organisations & leaders have been bogged down by an overload of initiatives, creating widespread project fatigue. As economic pressures squeeze profits & reveal productivity gaps, leaders must embrace a streamlined approach, prioritising only the most impactful strategies.

Building trust with teams & customers will hinge on resisting the lure of flashy, unnecessary projects that risk overcomplicating operations.

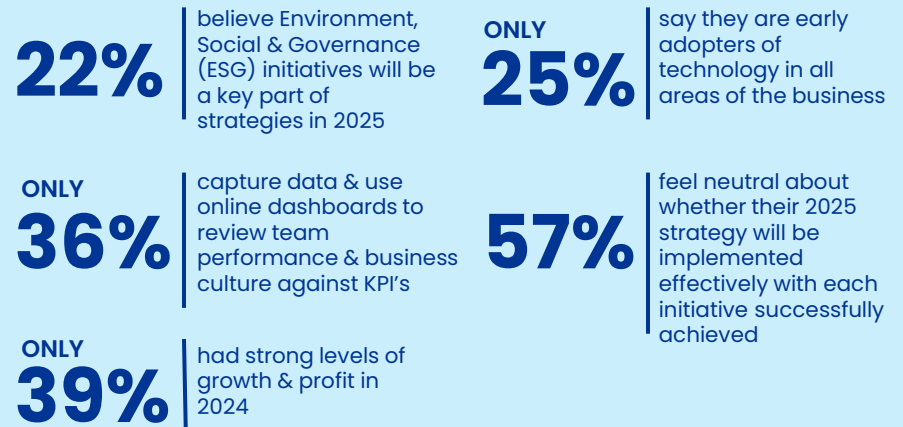
Business leaders must stay across the ever-changing geopolitical landscape & its impact on market & industry when planning.

Q. What do leaders think are the top barriers to business growth in 2025?



*Weighted percent of respondents that rated this factor in their top three barriers.

Q. What do leaders think about key business issues?



Q. What are business leaders' top five tips for driving a high-performance culture in 2025?

- ① Clarity of Vision & Goals**
Clearly define & communicate a shared vision of success, core values, & measurable goals (e.g., KPIs).
- ② Accountability & Feedback Loops**
Establish regular check-ins, hold everyone accountable & adjust strategies based on performance data. Leaders need to talk to key people more frequently, coaching & encouraging them to step up.
- ③ Effective Communication & Alignment**
Maintain high levels of communication & alignment through regular meetings, updates & feedback.
- ④ Focus on Team Performance & Psychological Safety**
Prioritise team success over individual achievements & foster a culture of emotional empathy, resilience & psychological safety.
- ⑤ Invest in People & Recognise Achievements**
Support team development through upskilling, coaching & recognition of achievements.

Q. What elements of a business strategy are fully or mostly in place for respondents going into 2025?

- ① Clear Vision, Goals or Targets for Revenue & Profit**
A clear vision & specific targets for revenue & profit provide a strong foundation for aligning efforts & measuring success. This clarity helps teams stay focused on achieving growth & profitability.
- ② Clear Understanding of Competitive Advantage in the Market**
Knowing what differentiates the business from competitors enables businesses to capitalise on their strengths, attract customers & maintain a competitive edge. This insight drives strategic decisions in product development, pricing & positioning.
- ③ Clear Funding, Finance & Cash Flow Strategies**
Sound financial strategies ensure businesses have the resources to support growth, weather downturns & manage daily operations effectively. Managing cash flow, securing funding & having clear financial plans are critical to sustaining business health.
- ④ Clear Operations Strategy, Including Product & Service Evolutions**
A clear operations strategy that includes ongoing product & service improvements ensures that businesses can efficiently meet customer needs, scale operations & stay competitive in a rapidly changing market.
- ⑤ Regular Accountability Loops With Advisor or Team**
Regular reviews of progress help ensure that strategies remain on track, allowing businesses to course-correct when necessary to stay aligned with their goals.

*Based on a weighted percent of elements rated mostly or fully in place in respondents' businesses.

Q: What were business leaders' top five areas for improvement when developing or implementing a business strategy?

① Clarity of Strategy & Goals

A clear strategy ensures that everyone in the organisation understands the overall direction & how their role contributes to achieving goals.

② Accountability & Leadership Development

Accountability drives follow-through & ensures that teams & individuals deliver on commitments.

③ Effective Communication

Communicating the strategy effectively to all stakeholders ensures alignment & buy-in.

④ Focus on High-Impact Objectives

Focusing on fewer but more impactful objectives prevents distractions from an overload of initiatives.

⑤ Cross-Functional Collaboration

Collaboration across departments & teams breaks down silos, fosters innovation & improves decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives.

Q: What top five shifts in marketing & sales strategies had the biggest impact on business performance in 2024 for business leaders?

① Leveraging Referrals & Partnerships

Referrals from existing clients, professional networks & industry partnerships quickly built trust with prospective clients & opened new customer channels.

② Incorporating AI in Marketing & Sales

AI improved productivity by providing actionable insights, automating repetitive tasks, fast-tracking content creation & tailoring messaging to prospective customers.

③ Focus on Tailored, Authentic Marketing

Customising marketing strategies & prioritising authenticity, built trust & connected more deeply with target audiences.

④ Adopting a Data-Driven Approach

Using data & predictive analytics in marketing & sales enabled teams to make informed decisions, target the right audiences, & measure performance effectively.

⑤ Dedicated Sales & Marketing Teams

Investing in new team members or reorganising roles brought expertise & focus to sales & marketing efforts.

People

Attracting & retaining top talent will remain a significant challenge for businesses in 2025 with only 14% of those surveyed feeling it will be easier.

Key obstacles to team performance included key leaders' lack of time & inadequate systems & processes.

Overcoming these requires clearly communicated goals & strategies, strong time & capacity management skills & embracing the right technology across the business.

Regular daily & weekly huddles are essential to maintain alignment.



agree that attracting & retaining good people will be easier in 2025



agree their team has high resilience levels & is reliable



agree they themselves have high resilience levels & good energy going into 2025

Q. What do business leaders think are the top three challenges when managing teams?

Lack of time **41%**

Systems, processes or technology used by the team **37%**

Lack of strategy & vision in the business **25%**

Q. What are business leaders' top three approaches to managing people for high performance?

Clearly communicated vision, goals & strategy **46%**

Regular daily or weekly huddles with the team **27%**

Being a coach to each team member with regular progress check-ins **24%**

Q. What three challenges do business leaders think are holding back team members' performance?

Poor time & capacity management skills **33%**

Poor systems & processes **31%**

Lack of leadership or management skills & capabilities **22%**

“

The biggest opportunity for a leader today is not competing for new customers, it's competing for new employees

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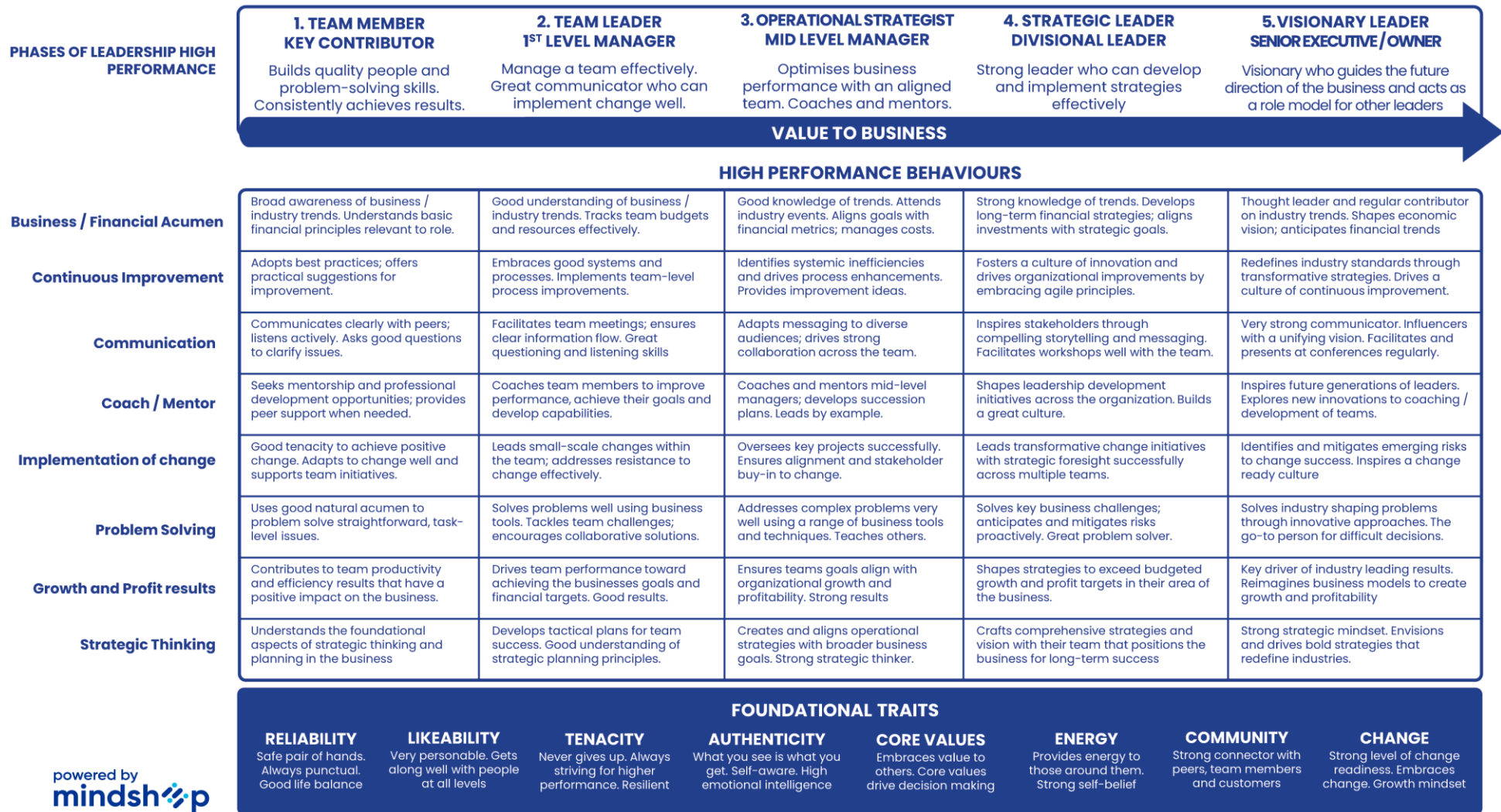


Dr Chris Mason
Founder, Mindshop

Q. What were business leaders' top five tips for attracting & retaining good people in 2025?

- ① Cultivate a Strong, Positive Culture**
Build & maintain a culture rooted in clear, authentic values, mutual respect & accountability. Quickly address misalignments or toxic behaviours.
- ② Prioritise Work-Life Balance & Flexibility**
Work-life balance has become a key factor in job satisfaction & retention. Employees are more productive, engaged & loyal when their personal needs are respected.
- ③ Provide Clear Vision & Personalised Growth Plans**
Clearly communicate your organisation's vision & how new hires fit into it. Offer personalised career development plans tailored to individual goals & strengths.
- ④ Focus on Leadership & Communication**
Practice consistent, transparent communication through regular one-on-one meetings & team updates. Show genuine interest in employees' feedback & progress.
- ⑤ Be Competitive & Creative in Compensation & Benefits**
Pay slightly above market rates & explore creative ways to reward & recognise employees, such as performance bonuses, additional time off, or unique perks.

Journey to Leadership High Performance



Journey to Leadership High Performance

Your Business Leader High Performance Behaviour Map

Below is a model that outlines your current stronger and weaker behaviours and foundational traits against the five phases of leadership high performance. You will notice an indicator of where you felt you are NOW and WHERE you want to be at a time in the future. These behaviours indicate the leadership capability areas you need to focus on improving in the years ahead. The foundational traits are the elements that act as a stable backbone to guide your leadership journey to Phase 4 - Strategic Leader.



Leadership High Performance Behaviour - Heat Map

Your goal should be to have the vast majority of the behaviours and foundational traits highlighted below as green. In achieving this you then have a fantastic platform to either stabilise your success at the current leadership performance phase or move to the next phase you desire.

PHASES OF LEADERSHIP HIGH PERFORMANCE	1. TEAM MEMBER KEY CONTRIBUTOR	2. TEAM LEADER 1st LEVEL MANAGER	3. OPERATIONAL STRATEGIST MID LEVEL MANAGER	4. STRATEGIC LEADER DIVISIONAL LEADER	5. VISIONARY LEADER SENIOR EXECUTIVE/OWNER
	Buils quality people and problem-solving skill. Consistently achieves results.	Manage a team effectively. Great communicator who can implement change well.	Optimises business performance with an aligned team. Coaches and mentors.	Strong leader who can develop and implement strategies effectively.	Visionary who guides the future direction of the business and acts as a role model for other leaders

	HIGH PERFORMANCE BEHAVIOURS				
	1. TEAM MEMBER KEY CONTRIBUTOR	2. TEAM LEADER 1st LEVEL MANAGER	3. OPERATIONAL STRATEGIST MID LEVEL MANAGER	4. STRATEGIC LEADER DIVISIONAL LEADER	5. VISIONARY LEADER SENIOR EXECUTIVE/OWNER
Business / Financial Acumen	Broad awareness of business / industry trends. Understands basic financial principles relevant...	Good understanding of business / industry trends. Tracks team budgets and resources...	Good knowledge of trends. Attends industry events. Aligns goals with financial metrics...	Strong knowledge of trends. Develops long-term financial strategies; aligns investments...	Thoughtful leader and regular contributor on industry trends. Shapes economic vision...
Continuous Improvement	Adopts best practices; offers practical suggestions for improvement.	Embraces good systems and processes. Implements team-level process improvements.	Identifies systemic inefficiencies and drives process enhancements. Provides...	fosters a culture of innovation and drives organizational improvements by embracing...	Redefines industry standards through transformative strategies. Drives a culture of...
Communication	Communicates clearly with peers; listens actively. Asks good questions to clarify issues.	Facilitates team meetings; ensures clear information flow. Great questioning and listening.	Adapts messaging to diverse audiences; drives strong collaboration across the team.	Inspires stakeholders through compelling storytelling and messaging. Facilitates workshop.	Very strong communicator. Influences with a unifying vision. Facilitates and presents and...
Coach / Mentor	Seeks mentorship and professional development opportunities; provides peer...	Coaches team members to improve performance, achieve their goals and develop...	Coaches and mentors mid-level managers; develops succession plans. Leads by example.	Shapes leadership development initiatives across the organization. Builds a great...	Inspires future generations of leaders. Explores new innovations to coaching / development of...
Implementation of change	Good tenacity to achieve positive change. Adapts to change well and supports team initiatives.	Leads small-scale changes within the team; addresses resistance to change effectively.	Oversees key projects successfully. Ensures alignment and stakeholder buy-in to...	Leads transformative change initiatives with strategic foresight successfully across multiple...	Identifies and mitigates emerging risks to change success. Inspires a change ready culture.
Problem Solving	Uses good natural acumen to problem solve straightforward, task-level issues.	Solves problems well using business tools. Tackles team challenges; encourages...	Addresses complex problems very well using a range of business tools and techniques...	Solves key business challenges; anticipates and mitigates risks proactively. Great problem solver.	Solves industry shaping problems through innovative approaches. The go-to person for difficult...
Growth and Profit results	Contributes to team productivity and efficiency results that have a positive impact on the business.	Drives team performance toward achieving the businesses goals and financial targets. Good...	Ensures teams goals align with organizational growth and profitability. Strong results.	Shapes strategies to exceed budgeted growth and profit targets in their area of the...	Key driver of industry leading results. Reimagines business models to create growth and...
Strategic Thinking	Understands the foundational aspects of strategic thinking and planning in the business.	Develops tactical plans for team success. Good understanding of strategic planning principles.	Creates and aligns operational strategies with broader business goals. Strong strategic thinker.	Crafts comprehensive strategies and vision with their team that positions the business for long ...	Strong strategic mindset. Envisions and drives bold strategies that redefine...

FOUNDATIONAL TRAITS							
RELIABILITY	LIKEABILITY	TENACITY	AUTHENTICITY	CORE VALUES	ENERGY	COMMUNITY	CHANGE
Safe pair of hands. Always punctual. Good life balance	Very personable. Gets along well with people at all levels	Never gives up. Always striving for higher performance. Resilient	What you see is what you get. Self-aware. High emotional intelligence	Embraces value to others. Core values drive decision making	Provides energy to those around them. Strong self-belief	Strong connector with peers, team members and target customers	Strong level of change readiness. Embraces change. Growth mindset

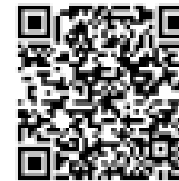
Weakness Neutral Strength

Extract of an example diagnostic results report

Where are you on your journey to high performance as a business leader?

What are your leadership performance & capability gaps?

Take the Mindshop Business Leader Performance Diagnostic to get a tailored Leadership Performance Roadmap & One Page Plan for success in 2025 & beyond.



Business Leader High Performance Diagnostic <https://loom.ly/OeYpnCo>

About the Research

Mindshop

Mindshop is the leading business advisory solution empowering thousands of accounting firms, consultants, & coaches worldwide.

Founded in 1994 in Melbourne, Australia by Dr Chris Mason, Mindshop has now grown to support thousands of business advisors & business leaders across thirteen countries.

mindshop.com

Research

Data for this report was gathered from a survey that was conducted by Mindshop during November 2024 of over 200 senior business leaders & Mindshop advisors across 13 countries.



**For support contact
your Mindshop advisor.**



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in a Changing World

**Business Leader Global
Trends Report**

powered by
**mindsh

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