THE CONNECTOR MANAGER

Why Some Leaders Build Exceptional Talent—and Others Don't

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PORTFOLIO
PENGUIN

CHAPTER 1

What Type of Manager Are You?

It is better to change an opinion than to persist in a wrong one.[1]

Socrates, Greek philosopher

THE WILD BOARS

On Monday, July 2, 2018, an elite cave diver reached the end of his dive line deep in the belly of an underground cave along the border of Thailand and Myanmar. As he swam up to the surface and poked his head above the murky water, he saw thirteen pairs of eyes staring at him out of the darkness. A wave of emotion washed over him as he realized he'd located the Moo Pa (Wild Boars) soccer team—a group of twelve young boys and their twenty-five-year-old coach who had been stranded after exploring the entrance of the six-mile-long Tham Luang cave when a flash flood struck ten days earlier.[2] The boys and their coach were huddled together in an elevated area known as Pattaya Beach, sheltering on a ledge surrounded by water more than a mile from the main cave entrance.[3] Cave divers navigated two miles of narrow, flooded passageways that separated the Wild

Boars refuge from the cave's main entrance. The whole world fixated on the international rescue effort and breathed a collective sigh of relief when the discovery revealed the best possible outcome: all thirteen Wild Boars were alive and well in the cave.

There was little time to celebrate, however, as the cave remained flooded and the boys were still stranded and needed to be rescued. While search-and-rescue operations are often urgent and risky, the Thai cave rescue effort was exceptionally so. The number of children missing (many who couldn't swim, let alone dive), the rapidly shifting weather conditions, and the sheer complexity of the underground maze of barely navigable caves required a team of diving experts to coordinate a rescue.[4] Efforts to pump water out of the cave began immediately as rescuers tried to take advantage of a break in monsoon rains. Regardless, a day of heavy rains would again flood parts of the cave with water so murky the divers would sometimes compare it to swimming through coffee.[5] The rescue took a fatal turn when a former Thai navy Seal, Saman Kunan, died during the mission to place oxygen tanks along the route to help access the boys. In the process, his own oxygen tank ran out—starkly illustrating how perilous any rescue involving diving gear can be.[6] Around-the-clock pumping paid off with parts of the cave made walkable, but extracting the boys still depended on their ability to breathe into scuba equipment despite having no diving experience.[7] After eighteen days in the cave, the boys and their coach were miraculously escorted to safety, with rescuers at times facing an eleven-hour round trip.[8]

The days and weeks of the rescue had tested the power of global collaboration to save the Wild Boar players and their coach from a potential watery grave. As the world watched with bated breath, several key actors performed as heroes: the Wild Boars themselves, remaining incredibly resilient in tough circumstances; the Navy seal who perished while ensuring that future divers would have replacement air tanks; and, of course, the Royal Thai Navy and other local and international volunteers from the United States, China, Great Britain, and Australia. However, one actor went largely unnoticed, despite playing a pivotal role in the Thai cave rescue: it was the governor of the Chiang Rai province, Narongsak Osottanakorn, who was responsible for coordinating the mission.

Few managers will ever have to deal with a life-and-death situation like the Thai cave rescue. But managers all over the globe *are* asked to operate in complex, urgent, and unfamiliar circumstances while achieving stronger and better results. The fundamental mandate of a manager is to solve an ever-growing number of complex problems and achieve extraordinary results *through other people*. The dynamics of the Thai cave rescue may seem exceptional when compared to your own work dynamics, but Governor Osottanakorn was fundamentally like many of us: a manager coordinating, motivating, and guiding a team. He was a manager able to navigate both downward and upward to communicate critical messages and secure and disperse important resources as quickly as possible. While Osottanakorn could have relied solely on the resources in his immediate reach, the Royal Thai Navy Seals, he chose another path. As we return to the governor later in our story, you will see it was his cool-headed assessment of the skills and abilities of the dive teams, along with his instinct for using the talent at his disposal to test alternative ways of extracting the boys, that allowed Osottanakorn to manage the practically impossible rescue.

THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF MANAGING

There are approximately 160 million managers on the planet today—people who need to drive performance and get work done *through others*.[9] And that last phrase—the "through others" portion of management—is typically wherein lies the rub. People are inherently imperfect, opinionated, and at times emotional. On a bad day, being a people manager can feel like herding cats. On a good day, managers are the critical bridge between the organization and its employees, translating organizational strategies into concrete action. But no matter whether you manage at a Fortune 100 corporation, a government agency, or a small business, or whether you have more good management days than bad ones, we've found that most managers today feel overworked, overwhelmed, and underappreciated.[10]

Of course being a manager has always had its challenges. The core of the job requires people managers to juggle a hefty load of responsibilities. These traditionally include onboarding new employees, communicating performance standards, identifying employee skill gaps, promoting on-the-job development, having career conversations, and many more. Managers are expected to absorb these responsibilities as part of their work, and this typically means managers are busier and more inundated with meetings than their peers. What's more, managers have always been on call for last-minute employee emergencies or work challenges. In short, a manager's day is not their own.

If that were not enough, three ongoing changes add multiple layers of complexity on top of managers' increasing workload.

First, *macroeconomic shifts make managing harder.* While managers traditionally may have been able to juggle their increasing responsibilities, a few key macroeconomic shifts have made it more of a *struggle*. Today we see a rise in trade tensions, massive political shifts throughout nations, and a slowing and more volatile economic cycle. As one manager put it: "As managers we are faced with the need to adjust more frequently than ever before as outside economic and political forces impact our company's strategy."

Second, *work is more interdependent.* During the Great Recession of 2008, most organizations flattened their structures, delayering to cut costs.[11] Managers' spans of control grew and permanently stayed that way—even after the economy began to grow again.[12] Today's typical manager has a team of nine employees, and those employees have more relationships throughout the business than most managers can keep track of.[13] Because today's companies are more matrixed, employees and managers alike must excel not only at getting things done quickly but also at getting things done with and for more people.

Third, *work is less predictable.* The average organization has experienced five enterprise-level changes over the past three years.[14] These may include, among others, an organizational or leadership change, a merger, or an acquisition. And these same organizations predict a pace of change that will only increase in the foreseeable future. Long gone is the "industrial revolution" model of work where people are assigned predictable work plans from a stable hierarchy and go about their individual tasks. Work today is more dynamic, with shorter time horizons, forcing managers to adjust plans and workflows constantly.

The downstream effect of these changes on managers is that they must now take on a broader and more complex array of responsibilities. Take, for example, a large South African gaming company that experienced simultaneous workforce and digital transformations. The company's growth ushered in an increasingly young and diverse workforce and a less tenured management layer. As Steve Howell, the director of the organization's learning and development function described to us, "Twenty or thirty years ago a slot machine at a casino was a mechanical device and it's now a computer. . . .We now rely ninety percent on technical capability. To be a good manager in gaming and even hotels you have to be technically proficient." In other words, managers at the casino were faced with the daunting challenge of learning new technologies themselves while simultaneously coaching their teams on these new skills.

IBM has faced similar challenges as it continues to transform its business portfolio. When we spoke to Jason Trujillo, vice president of Leadership and Learning Development at IBM, he told us half of the organization's revenue is coming from businesses that didn't even exist five years ago. This meant readying IBM's more than 350,000-member workforce for skills for the future and redesign how they work to drive innovation and client engagement. Such ongoing and large-scale organizational changes don't just affect the way business is done. They are also a driving force behind the massive and ongoing shifts in the skills employees need to succeed—and by proxy, the skills managers need to manage.

A NEW MANAGER MANDATE

Above and beyond the stress managers experience in grappling with their own shifting responsibilities, they also need to respond to employees who are concerned about their skills becoming irrelevant. In fact, with the changes resulting from digitalization and organizational transformation, employees cite the need for better upskilling as their top concern. In one of our recent surveys, when we asked more than seven thousand employees throughout the world what they needed to aptly manage change, the top two responses were "need more upskilling" and "need to be able to work faster."[15] As technology takes further hold of companies' workflows, artificial intelligence and new technologies are not only changing the capabilities employees need, but they are also transforming how companies operate. When we surveyed employees about the skills most critical to their success today and then asked how effective they felt at performing those same skills, 70 percent told us they haven't mastered the skills they need for their current jobs (see figure 1).[16]

Stop and think about this statistic. This essentially shows that a large portion of your staff are not sufficiently equipped to be successful in their jobs. It's critically important to prepare employees with the skills they need for today *and tomorrow*—we call this measure *skills preparedness*. Skills are the currency

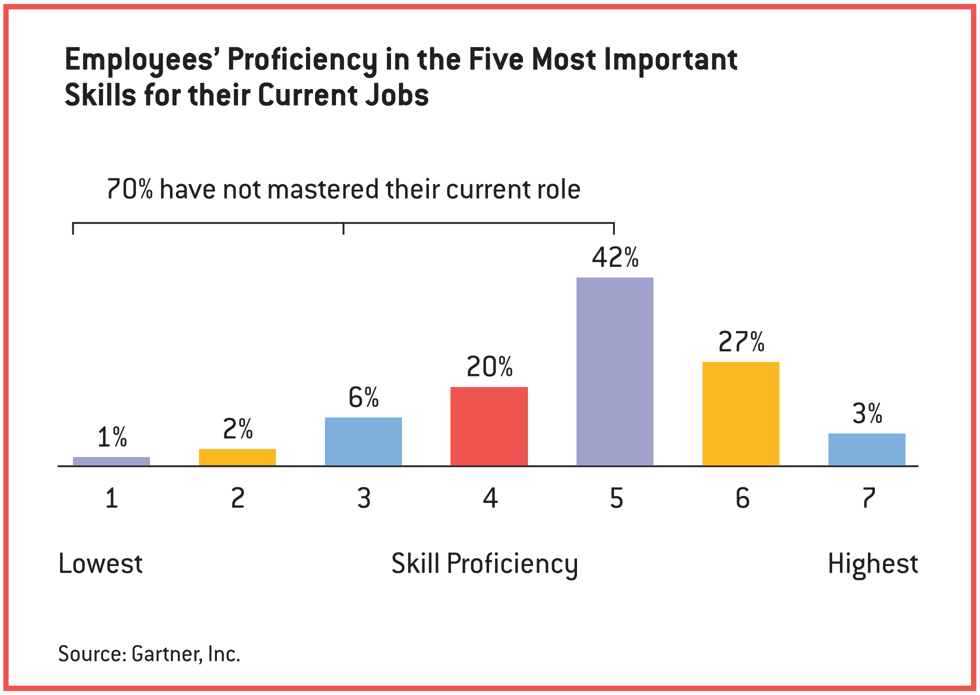

Figure 1: Employee Proficiency in the Five Most Important Skills for Their Jobs

employees use to do their jobs and define their future roles. When employees have high skills preparedness, organizations perform better. In fact, boosting employee skills preparedness helps organizations close talent gaps with internal talent more quickly. Employees with high skills preparedness perform up to 45 percent better, display up to 51 percent more discretionary effort, and are up to 45 percent more engaged than employees with low skills preparedness.[17]

Why does employee skills preparedness matter for managers? The snowballing effect of digitalization on work and changing employee skill needs translates into a *new manager mandate*: to act as a central source for upskilling employees in real time to meet current and future skill needs. Corporate communications and trainings pass through managers, making them conduits for implementing change, so it shouldn't be a surprise that there's one task in particular that is gaining tremendous focus in most organizations globally: *providing continuous coaching and development*. And this focus makes sense given how our research shows that coaching and development have more impact on an employee's performance than other manager activities, such as good project management or strategic communication.[18] We also find that providing feedback to employees improves their performance when employees consider and act on the feedback.[19]

Senior executives are asking managers to coach even more to help employees and organizations keep up. In fact, when we surveyed human resources (HR) executives and asked how much managers should coach today, they estimated that they should be spending a whopping 30 percent of their time coaching and developing employees.[20] That's a pretty hefty ask. In a global environment characterized by everyday upheaval, can managers really be a step ahead and a measure *more* involved with each direct report? John Wilson, group talent and leadership manager at NFU Mutual, put it well when he expressed the challenge to us in an interview, saying, "Over time, expectations of managers have grown significantly. They are asked to lead and advocate change, run business as usual, satisfy increasing external regulation AND coach and develop their teams. So, from a manager's perspective, understanding how best to prioritize their time is increasingly difficult." When we looked at how much time managers actually spend coaching, it was a mere 10 percent of their time—a much different picture from what business leaders envisioned.[21] The ask on managers to coach and develop more comes from a genuine interest in helping employees adapt to the dynamic demands of work, and enhance the overall talent and financial performance of their businesses. But the gap between the perceived amount of time managers should spend coaching and the amount of time they actually spend coaching is a problem.

To make matters worse, as firms worldwide invest significant amounts of time and money in developing managers to provide more feedback and development conversations, manager quality is actually stagnating. In fact, almost half of the managers we surveyed say they don't have the confidence to develop the skills employees need today.[22] Not only that, but as managers' job expectations continue to increase, the time they have available to develop their staff declines. Fifty-five percent of managers we surveyed considered performance management too time-consuming.[23] Not surprisingly, when we share these data points with our HR executives, they often tear into an energetic monologue around the role of the manager in developing teams and employees that generally boils down to "Well, that's the job." And, of course, the best business minds have understood for decades that people management takes time and attention. Here's how the 1957 *Harvard Business Review* article titled "An Uneasy Look at Performance Appraisal" describes the expectation around formal performance management: "There is one unavoidable cost: the manager must spend considerably more time in implementing a [performance management] program.... It is not unusual to take a couple of days to work through the initial establishment of responsibilities and goals with each individual. And a periodic appraisal may require several hours rather than the typical 20 minutes."[24] This expectation of manager coaching (still valid today) is compounded when we consider that with rare exceptions, people managers also have their *own* individual work to perform. So how do today's managers cope with all these growing and shifting demands, and what do the most successful managers today do differently?

THE RESEARCH

As leaders in Gartner's Human Resources Research & Advisory practice, both authors of this book experienced firsthand the growing interest in the topic of manager development among our clients. Manager development has always been hard, so at first we were skeptical that there was anything *new* to say. We became convinced that management really was shifting, however, when a series of events affected our own roles. It was early 2017, and we woke up one morning to an email announcing the sale of our previous firm to Gartner. It was an acquisition that no one at the firm had anticipated, and the news meant our company would double in size. The first few days after the acquisition was announced were filled with ambiguity—and some anxiety among employees, including us. As managers, we immediately found it harder to navigate conversations. We each faced discussions with employees who were emotional and worried that their roles might change. Despite feeling similarly uncertain ourselves, we both wanted to be a steady presence for our teams. Navigating our own doubts and fears while assuaging the concerns of team members put our management skills to the test.

At the same time, we reflected on how the acquisition affected our coaching responsibilities. For Jaime's part, he went from managing several teams to managing a large business that required a new set of collaboration and communication skills. For Sari's, she also began managing more diverse employees throughout different continents with a variety of backgrounds, skill profiles, and career aspirations.

Managing employees effectively really *is* harder in today's work landscape. Our next step was to test the conventional wisdom of what it means to be a manager. The central question in our research was, *What are the best managers doing to develop employees in today's workplace?*

After assembling the research, we embarked on an extensive study. We needed a large, global, diverse data set to uncover insights that had the promise of transcending industry, geography, and manager tenure. As part of that, we launched surveys of more than nine thousand employees and managers worldwide, representing eighteen different functions working in twenty-five industries in six different regions. Our survey goal was to assess manager approaches to employee development (for example, frequency and quality of these coaching interactions) and to determine their impact on employee performance. We define performance at Gartner as the outcomes employees achieve by doing their individual tasks and assignments, by contributing to others' work, and by using the contributions of others. We call this measure *enterprise employee contribution*.[25]

Part of the objective for the surveys was to collect as much quantitative and qualitative information as we could around

- Manager perspectives on the work environment, including how they spend their time, their spans of control, and their development interactions
- Employee perspectives on their own development and the effectiveness of their manager across common development activities, and
- Business leader perspectives (from more than two hundred public and private sector organizations) on organizational characteristics, budgets and priorities, performance management strategies, expectations and development support for managers

While our survey made it clear that managers are tasked with too many different asks, we decided to focus our survey analysis on what managers actually do when they are coaching. To analyze these activities, the team ran several statistical analyses across eighty-nine manager behaviors to develop their staff in an attempt to identify different approaches to management. We tested how often managers meet with employees, what they do during their conversations, the type of advice they provide, and many more activities.

What we found was surprising. The survey didn't just tell us that some managers are vaguely 'good' while others generally fall short. Rather, it surfaced distinct manager behaviors that we could broadly categorize into four different types of managers, each with a different impact on their employees' performance. This was the first major conclusion from our research: *every manager at any level falls into one of four distinct profiles.* Think of these types as the dominant approaches managers take when they coach and provide feedback to their staff. There is a continuum between the manager types: individual managers may fall into one type or another, depending on context. However, what we found in our analysis of the data and interviews is that every manager has one dominant approach that they apply most consistently, almost naturally. You can determine your own dominant approach in our thirteen-question What Type of Manager Are You? quiz on page 000.

Fascinated to learn more, we dug deeper into the data to get to know the manager types. The more we analyzed our data, the more we felt like sculptors chipping away at stone to reveal the fully formed figures. As we got to know these four manager types better, another key finding surfaced for us: all four occur in almost equal measure, in near perfect fourths, across industries, geographies, and workplace demographics such as generations. Each type of manager is someone (or many people) you know, and more important, one of these types is you.

THE FOUR MANAGER TYPES

Just as you have a go-to breakfast or a well-worn favorite pair of shoes, you also have a predominant management style that you lean on in your daily approach to employee development. Think about these types as the comfortable coaching habits that managers fall into. We've categorized them into the Teacher, Always On, Cheerleader, and Connector manager types. Let's review some formal definitions and give some examples (see figure 2).

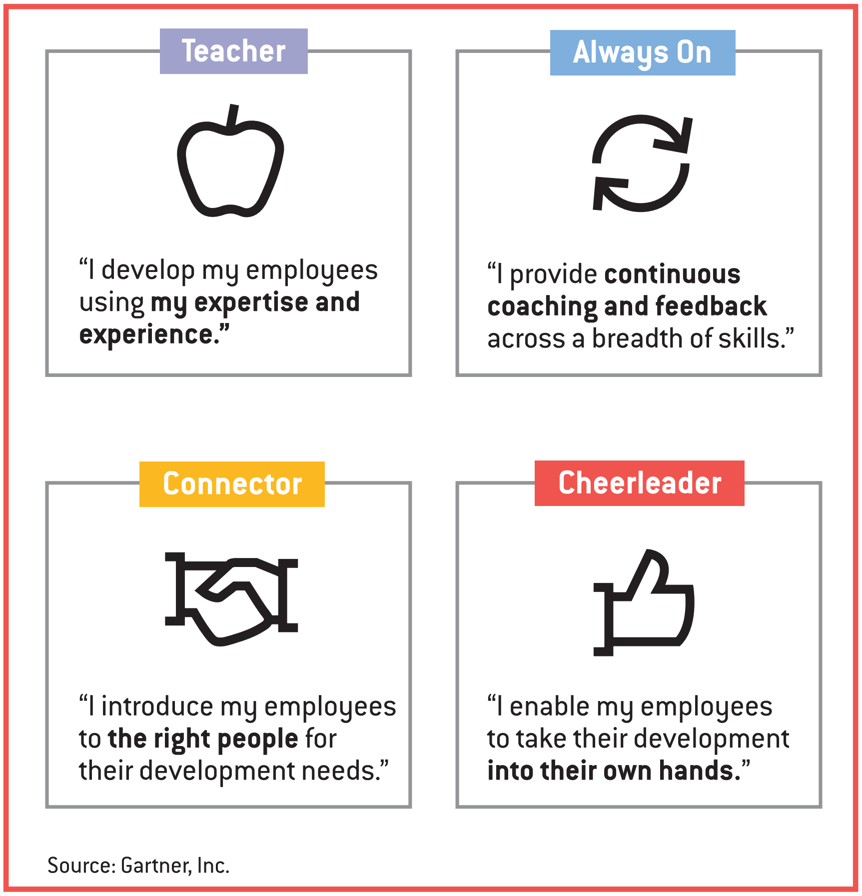

Figure 2: The Four Manager Types

TEACHER: *A manager who develops employees through personal expertise and experience, provides advice-oriented feedback, and directs employee development.*

When Tim Che* signed on as a software developer at a relatively small but rapidly growing technology company in Seattle

* We employ pseudonyms for certain names to protect individuals’ personal and professional information.

in the early 2000s, he was genuinely eager to wake up and go to work each morning. Che's passion for solving user challenges in his programming brought him to great early success with the firm, especially as he lived through a boom in his particular subindustry. Over the past fifteen years, Che has worked in a fast-paced, agile team development environment, and the team has excelled at creating flawless user-experience designs.

When Che reflects on his accelerated career path, he points to his technical excellence as the primary reason for his continued success. He even suspects that this passion for creating vibrant and highly functional app interfaces was one of the core reasons for his promotion to team manager two years ago, sharing that "when I got promoted to lead my (now) team of eight developers, I think my boss really saw me as the rising star developer on the team. I had the technical abilities to create flawless app elements, and she wanted me to bring my peers up to the same standard that I held in my own work."

Like Che, Teacher managers develop employees based on their own expertise and experience, providing advice-oriented feedback and directing their employees' development. They were often star individual contributors themselves before they became managers, and they carry a legacy of deep subject-matter knowledge with them into management. In this way, Teacher managers like Che continually create and re-create their own legacies, leaving behind a bit of themselves with each employee they manage.

ALWAYS ON: *A manager who provides continuous, frequent coaching, drives employees' development, and gives feedback across a breadth of skills.*

For Maya Coles, a project leader at a major design firm, the Always On manager type holds true. She is dedicated to her team, constantly thinking about ways she can help each employee and provide answers to challenges that arise. As an example, during one critical initiative, Coles spent considerable time and energy giving the team ongoing advice and direction. The project involved numerous moving parts, from the design of a prototype to conducting market research, and the creation of a product line that would launch a whole new business unit for the organization. Because the project was so broad, members of Coles's team had diverse and varying skill sets—some beyond Coles's own capabilities.

As the project unfolded, even when she didn't have technical expertise, Coles was able to see across the team as well as into each employee's work, and she saw herself as the best source of ongoing feedback and coaching. While Coles's method was certainly more time and energy intensive than her peers' coaching methods, she was compelled to put as much of herself into her team's performance as possible. This was a new endeavor for everyone, so Coles wanted to serve as the "rock" for the team. As she puts it, "My plan of attack: simply give employees the necessary, continuous feedback to guide their development to specific areas."

Coles's approach reflects the frequent, informal feedback style that best characterizes the Always On manager. With change as the only constant, continuous feedback can provide grounding insights and help employees make necessary course corrections. By providing this ongoing informal feedback and coaching to their employees, Always On managers share an intense focus on and commitment to helping their employees grow and improve at work. Always On managers are similar to Teachers in that they drive employee development themselves—they are a primary and recurrent source of support for their direct reports, bringing *continuity* to the table.

CONNECTOR: *A manager who introduces employees to other people for coaching and development and creates a positive team environment while providing targeted feedback to employees.*

Brianne Hoffman, a team manager in the digital marketing department of a global luxury goods company, is an example of a Connector manager. Having started her career at the company within its New York City department store as a beauty counter clerk, Hoffman has had an interesting and diversified career trajectory. Eventually working her way up through the sales function and even completing a brief stint abroad, she made the switch to marketing just five years ago and was quickly promoted into team management. Hoffman is well known for her creative campaign ideas and her ability to execute, but she considers herself a new entrant into the digital marketing space.

Hoffman's is a self-described "constant newcomer" who readily admits "I don't know" when employees ask questions that go beyond the scope of her knowledge or skill set. Hoffman knows when she's not the best source of expertise for her digital marketing team, and she is careful to focus her feedback and coaching within her wheelhouse: understanding the firm's customers. In the cases where Hoffman feels less well positioned to coach or advise, she turns inward to the rest of the organization and makes coaching connections for her employees. She knows from personal experience just how much knowledge and expertise lie across the firm. We see Connectors regularly leveraging employees on the team for peer-to-peer development and cultivating trust on their teams to create more skill-sharing opportunities, just as Hoffman does.

CHEERLEADER: *A manager who takes a hands-off approach to development, gives empowering positive feedback, and enables employees to take development into their own hands.*

The Cheerleader manager type is exemplified by Jack Cecil, the team leader overseeing several teams of corporate recruiters at a FinTech company based in the UK. While other leaders (like Teachers and Always On) might obsess over the details of overseeing such an important arm of the firm, Cecil's laid-back

Cheerleader approach means that he encourages his teams from the sidelines. Cecil believes they will thrive despite (or perhaps because of) his hands-off coaching approach. After all, his teams of recruiters are measured against their "time to fill" (or the number of days it takes them to find a qualified candidate for a position), so Cecil knows they are extrinsically motivated to perform.

Cheerleader managers take a more passive path to development, focusing on providing positive encouragement and allowing their direct reports to learn by doing. In Cecil's instance, he reasons that recruitment specialists thrive on customer interface: they learn something new in every conversation they have with a prospective candidate. That's certainly how he himself became a great recruiter. Moreover, as the FinTech industry evolves rapidly, Cecil's own expertise will quickly go out of date.

Cecil is known for inspiring his team without micromanaging them. When he holds team meetings or has one-on-one employee conversations, he sets a tone that empowers and encourages his teams. Overall, Cheerleaders take a positive and hands-off approach to coaching and development.

A CLASSIC HORSE RACE

With the four manager approaches to coaching and development fully fleshed out, our research team went to work to determine which manager types perform better than others. We weren't just looking to classify manager types—we wanted to know which manager was golden.

When we presented the four types of managers to business leaders and asked them which type they were aiming to build in their organizations, the Always On (Maya Coles's) approach rose to the top. In fact, in our survey of human resources executives, a majority of respondents told us they were investing in driving manager-led "continuous and frequent" coaching and feedback at their firms.[26]

Beyond internal manager trainings, this strategy also permeates recruitment approaches as executives look for managers with Always On attributes. Scanning job descriptions for manager positions in the United States to understand the top skills companies were recruiting for yielded some intriguing trends. Our analysis of all job descriptions across industries and management levels in the United States between 2016 and 2018 found that the market need for "leadership and coaching" increased by more than 15 percent with an emphasis on providing continuous feedback and development.[27] This preference was reinforced by employees themselves.

With a growing percentage of millennial employees in a diversifying workforce, employees today broadly call for more manager guidance, *not* less. Our research shows that new generations of employees are asking for more feedback—one millennial encapsulates the idea like this: "It's important for me to be in touch with my manager, getting frequent guidance and coaching on my work and career." But the call for more coaching and development feedback goes beyond millennials to apply to a large portion of today's overall workforce. Deloitte Human Capital Trends confirms that "regular feedback empowers people to reset goals continuously, change projects and feel rewarded for their work, not just their job."[28] The message we heard from business leaders, HR professionals, and junior staff was clear: *The Always On approach leads to better management and the best employee performance outcomes.*

But was this impression backed up by our research? As we analyzed the data from employees and managers, a different story began to emerge. Pitting the employee performance of those coached by Cheerleader, Teacher, Connector, and Always On manager types against each other yielded two very surprising conclusions that were counter to our own hypotheses, shown in the data in figure 3.

Conclusion 1: Always On Managers Don't Boost Employee Performance—They *Degrade* It: Our data showed that the Always On approach doesn't rise to the top for improving employee

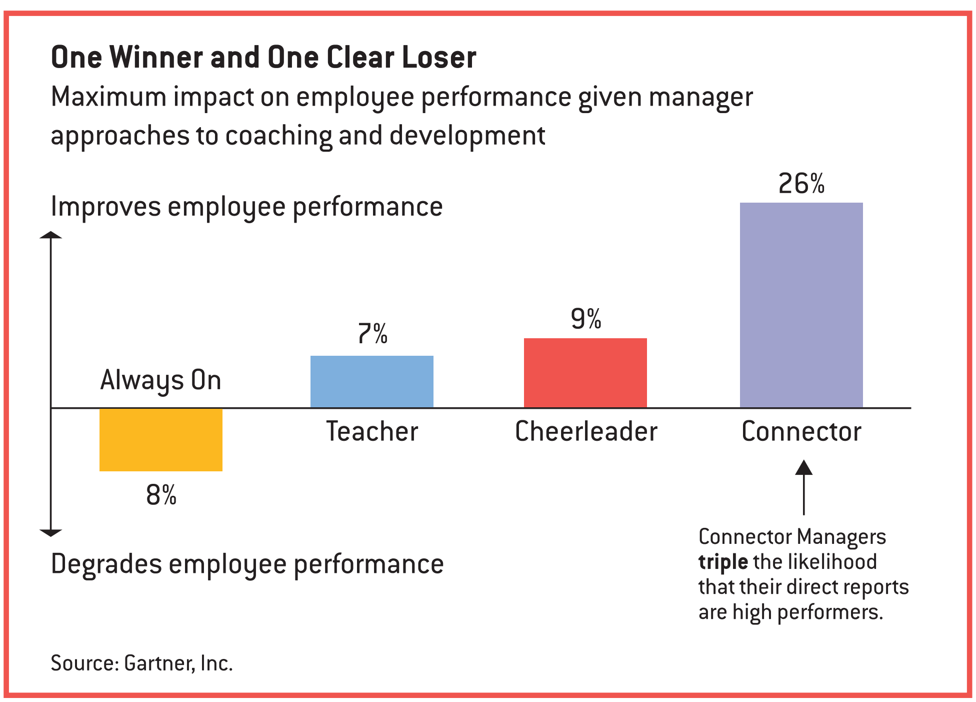

Figure 3: Manager Types by Employee Performance Impact

performance—it doesn't even come close. In fact, when Always On managers implement their approach consistently, the impact they have on employee performance is *degrading*. Always On managers detract from their employees by up to 8 percent.[29] In other words, Always On managers often provide too much feedback for people to act on. Other times they offer advice that lacks relevance to where their employees are in their development. Finally, because they provide advice to others in areas where they may lack expertise, their guidance may be wrong. The outcome is that Always On managers make employees less effective, less engaged at work, and less likely to stay in their jobs. *They do more harm than good.*

Why is this conclusion good news? Well, for those of you who are Always On types, it's likely that you're both stressed out by the amount of work it takes to manage people and frustrated that it never feels as if you're doing enough. You can stop! For the rest of you, this is even better news. Your organization may be asking you to coach more frequently and on a broader range of topics, but you don't have to follow that mandate. And you shouldn't—because it's failing. The constant pressure organizations put on managers to "do more" is actually getting them less.

Conclusion 2: The Connector Wins . . . by a Mile: If the Always On manager actually degrades employee performance, is there a style of coaching and development that actually has a positive impact on employees? We do see that the Teachers and Cheerleaders make slight positive impacts on the performance of their employees—7 percent and 9 percent, respectively—and it makes sense that they do.[30] Teachers bring a background of experience and expertise that enables them to truly help employees improve in *some* but not all skill areas. Their limited expertise narrows the impact they can personally have on employee performance—and since they don't solicit external help, that's all the impact they have. Cheerleaders have a marginally greater positive impact on their staff, which they achieve through sheer positive empowerment.[31] However, their impact is limited by a lack of specific performance corrective feedback—their empowerment can leave employees motivated but aimless.

One type of manager emerges from the data as best by far for improving employee performance: the Connector manager. The Connector has an outsize impact on employee performance, boosting it by as much as 26 percent and more than tripling the likelihood that an employee will be a high performer.[32] This means that Connector managers provide better support to their employees in their day-to-day tasks and actually help them grow their future career potential. They still perform the same core coaching activities as other managers, but they prioritize the rest of their coaching time differently. What Connectors have in common are a set of leadership qualities that enable them to make three essential connections for their staff: the employee, team, and organization connections. These connections will serve as the foundation for the rest of this book.

Connectors personalize development to suit employee needs and interests. They focus on understanding a person's needs, inspiring two-way development dialogues to get underneath surface-level behaviors. This ensures that they are providing targeted development at the right times for the right skill needs. Moreover, Connectors understand that sometimes they are best suited to provide feedback and coaching, and at other times, they're not. In those instances they connect their employees to others, whether on the team or across the organization. However, Connectors don't just pair up employees with a colleague or mentor and wish them well—they ensure employees learn from their connections. In chapter 3 we'll share more about how Connector managers actually achieve these results.

BECOMING A CONNECTOR MANAGER

As we conducted our study of managers across the globe, we heard case after case of managers feeling stretched and unable to be *truly* successful in their roles, let alone support their staff in development. We also heard *employees'* frustrations about not having the type of guidance that could catapult their careers or extend their potential and impact in their jobs and on their teams. This dynamic of missed expectations and outcomes must change. And tapping into the principles of the Connector manager can help you leap forward in the right direction. Connectors are the best-positioned manager type to reengage the implicit contract between manager and employee, reigniting a shared commitment to a realistic and productive series of connections that allow each party to grow. Found in business, education, nonprofits, and government, Connectors ultimately attain new performance heights and unleash underutilized talents. You can learn from them and become a Connector yourself. During our journey through this book we will learn from many prominent examples of Connectors, including

- **Governor Narongsak Osottanakorn** of the Chiang Rai province in Thailand, who was responsible for coordinating the search-and-rescue operation for the Wild Boars and who truly understood his team's strengths and gaps and forged the right connections to make the mission a success.
- **Brandy Tyson**, principal of a middle school, who built trust with her staff and students to transform the failing school into an inclusive environment where every student had the opportunity to learn and excel.
- **Anita Karlsson-Dion**, a rifle shooter representing Sweden at the Seoul Olympics and a leader of Business Process Outsourcing at IBM, who was able to motivate and unify tens of thousands of employees scattered across the globe by truly understanding their needs and desire to succeed.
- **Pranav Vora**, founder and CEO of the men's apparel brand Hugh & Crye, who recognized the need to expand his employees' learning and development options by depending on external partners ("benevolent outsiders," as he called them) for help.
- **Alison Kaplow**, principal director at the global professional services company Accenture, who managed more than one hundred early-career analysts and developed employee connections through the use of unique and thought-provoking questions.

These and other leaders in the book will serve as role models and provide aspirational points of reference that you can use in your job as you work to master and apply the techniques with your staff—more clearly and realistically setting them up for success.

The book is designed as an end-to-end "manual" of sorts, which breaks down just what makes Connectors so special—and how to become one yourself. We will also explore what companies are doing to create an environment for Connectors to be successful by looking at how IBM, Intel, and Amdocs changed their manager development strategies. Now that we've offered a first look at the manager types and the clear benefits of the Connector, the next chapters will demonstrate the differences between Connectors and Always On managers and go deep into the three connections Connectors accomplish. After that, we turn to creating a Connector company, where every current and future manager can use this approach to give all employees a chance to develop completely, contribute fully, and succeed. Finally, we will introduce the idea of Super Connectors, the individuals across companies and industries who not only make all the connections we describe in this book at scale but also enable the creation of more Connectors across the company.

We will show you how to think, act, and plan like a Connector manager. You will gain strategies to keep at bay those Always On tendencies you may fall prey to. The book concludes with a road map for building a Connector ecosystem across not only your team but also your organization. We challenge you to consider this book on multiple levels. On the most basic level, you'll engage in self-discovery to better understand your coaching and development style. This will help you actively unpack and examine habits you might not otherwise be aware of. Some tendencies will be worthwhile to keep, while others will need to be set aside. You might be using some Connector approaches already in specific instances, but other times you may be acting as an Always On boss, to the detriment of your team. Beyond understanding your current approach, the book will help you devise a plan for yourself, with actions you can take tomorrow, next month, and next year as you apply the Connector tactics you read about. Some of these can be used in your next pull-up with your team or direct report, while others involve long-term planning that can set you up for success. By now you must be wondering which type of manager you most resemble. Before you begin chapter 2, turn to page 000 to take the What Type of Manager Are You? quiz.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- While macroeconomic, demographic, and corporate changes continue to increase in speed and occurrence managers are being asked to devote more of their *limited* time to developing their employees.
- Our research finds that *every manager falls into four distinct profiles* in terms of the way they approach coachin and development

  Teacher: A manager who develops employees using personal expertise and experience, provides advice-oriented feedback, and directs employee development.

  Always On: A manager who provides continuous, frequent coaching, drives employees' development, and gives feedback across a breadth of skills.

  Connector: A manager who introduces employees to other people for coaching and development and creates a positive team environment while providing targeted feedback to employees.

Cheerleader: A manager who takes a hands-off approach to development, gives empowering positive feedback, and enables employees to take development into their own hands.

- Defying the conventional wisdom that the Always On manager has the best approach to coaching and development, this manager *does more harm than good* by degrading employee performance.
- The Connector manager had the most significant positiv impact on employee performance, tripling the likelihood that their direct reports are high performers.