

The High Performer Trap

Why Your Best People Plateau Under Pressure

the new standard
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

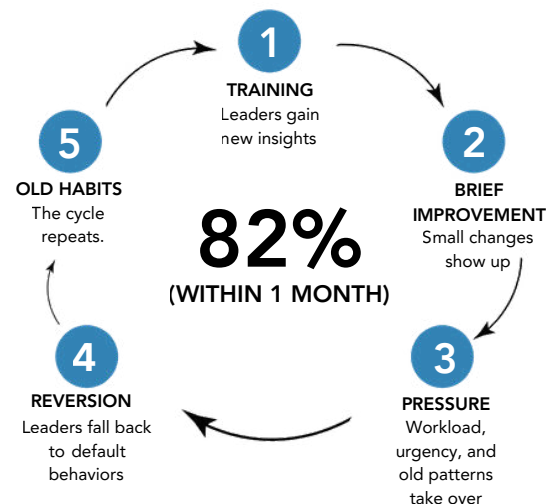
The Core Problem

The skills that get someone promoted rarely make them succeed at the next level. Solving problems personally, staying the default decision-maker, prioritizing urgent work over strategy. The instincts that got them there become liabilities the moment they're responsible for a team instead of a task list.

Most organizations respond with training: workshops on delegation, coaching, strategic thinking. That training works, briefly.

The Research

Behavior change follows a predictable cycle, and without reinforcement, it doesn't hold: According to research based on Ebbinghaus's forgetting curve, 82% of behavior change is lost within one month without reinforcement. This isn't a willpower problem, it's a design problem. Training alone was never built to survive contact with real pressure.



Why This Is More Urgent Now

Classic change frameworks (ADKAR, Kotter, Lewin) assume a period of stability after disruption: time to land, regroup, and prepare for the next change. That stability no longer exists. Reorgs, new technology, and new leadership now compound continuously, with no pause for old habits to reset on their own.

Without reinforcement, reversion doesn't resolve. It compounds.

What Changes the Outcome

The difference comes from identity work done before the pressure hits and reinforced through ongoing practice, not a single training event.

Organizations We Work With Include



Where To Go From Here

Use the Leader Reflection Guide to see where this shows up on your own team. Then explore the Build, Sustain, and Integrate options in our Program Overview to find the right starting point.

Bottom line for HR/L&D: if your leadership investment ends at the training event, you should expect reversion. Building leaders who hold up under real pressure requires reinforcement infrastructure, not just content.