Key Design Elements

The eight key design elements collectively define a leadership development (LD) initiative.
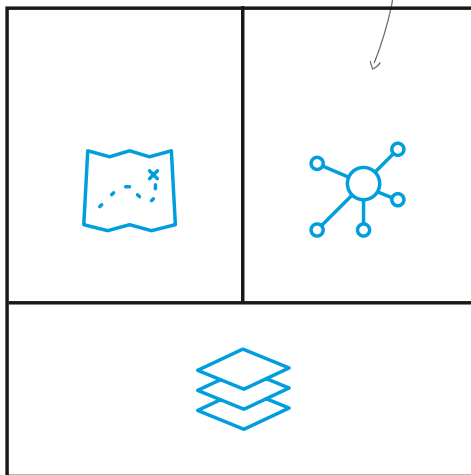
Context
How do internal and external context factors inform and influence your LD efforts?

Strategy
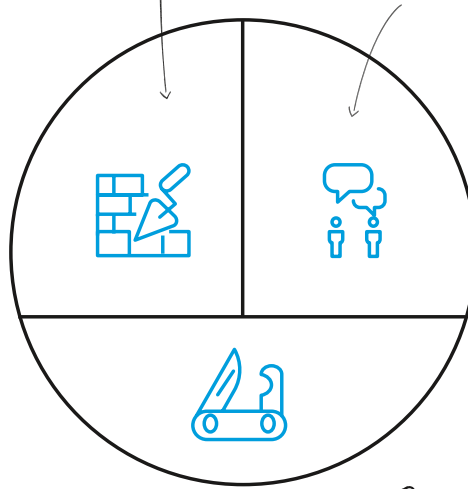How do your LD efforts link to your strategic goals and priorities?

Network
Which of your relationships and networks are key for developing leadership?

Jobs
How do you develop leadership in practice?

Feedback
How do you learn and act upon feedback for LD?

Platform
What are the places, structures, and processes where you manage LD interventions?

Resources
What are the frameworks, tools, trainings, or coaching that support your LD?

Measure
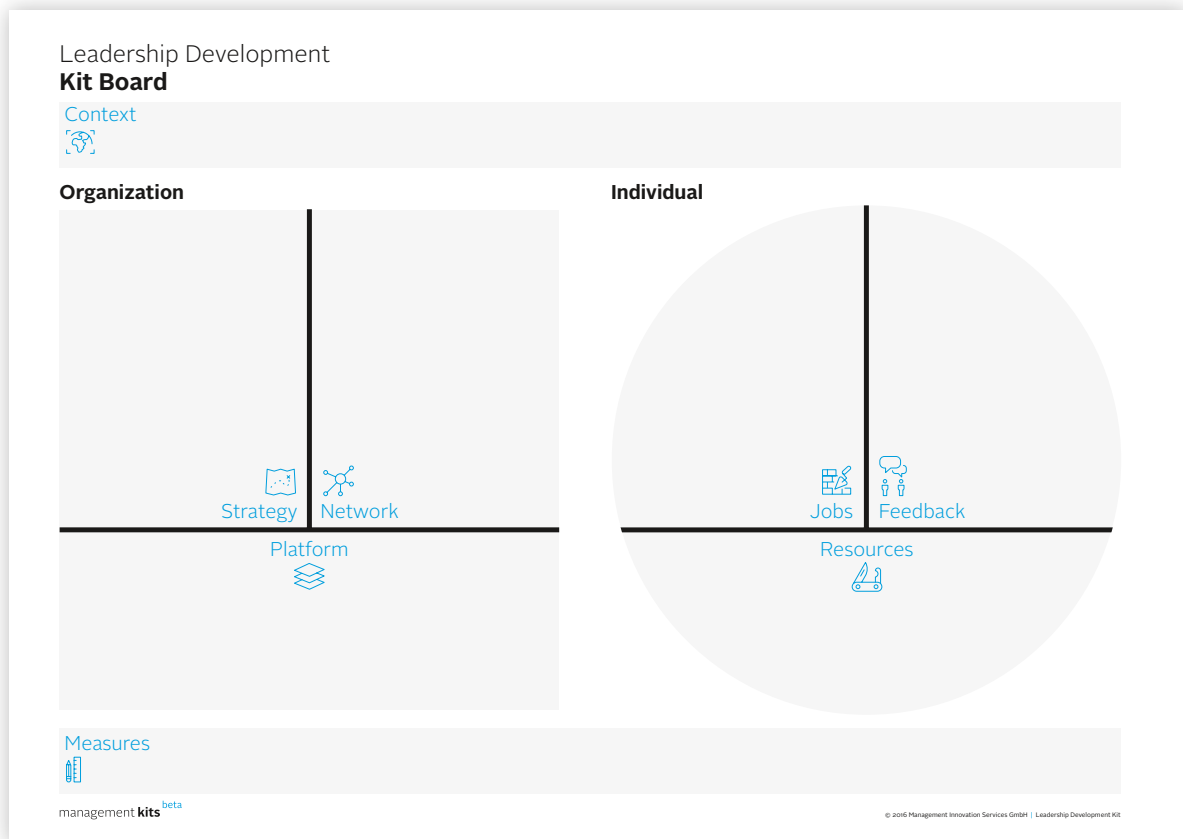How can success of your specific LD efforts look like and be evaluated?

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management **kits** beta

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## Kit Board – a canvas tool to strategize your leadership development effort

This Kit provides you with the key knowledge, approaches, and tools to develop leadership capabilities. It is built around the Kit Board canvas – a practical tool to map out the key elements that together make up effective leadership development. The exact shape of these elements depends on your organization, its context, goals, and your ambitions and people. For that reason, our canvas is an open, yet pre-structured tool on which you define your individual strategy for leadership development. To support your ideation and design work with the Kit, each key element is explained in the framework, and we provide references, tools, and approaches to support your thinking or facilitate work sessions with your team.

How to use this Kit to build leadership capabilities within your organization

This Leadership Development Kit is for anyone who seeks to **build leadership capabilities** within an organization. The Kit is designed to support an action learning journey "on the job" and "through the job". That means the framework, tools, process guides, and supporting materials have been built and tested with a view towards management action: translating the most essential management knowledge on LD into a Kit for managers to come up with actionable strategies, goals, and implementation plans. Accordingly, the Kit will be most useful when applied to a specific, compelling and valuable challenge to strengthening leadership in your business. To that end, we have focused on three use cases for this Kit:

→ If you are an **HR business partner,** or in another internal service role considering a new approach towards leadership development, you may work with the Kit to define your strategy, approach, and action plan.

→ If you are a **team leader** who wants to strengthen leadership within your team, you may use the Kit, or select tools from the Kit, to run a leadership development work session within your team.

→ And as an **individual leader,** either current or aspiring, you may leverage the Kit to reflect on the state of leadership in your organization and come up with ways to strengthen your own leadership approach.

The framework will explain the different elements of the Kit Board canvas. In addition, the Kit contains tools that complement the contents of this framework, which you can use to support your thinking or facilitate work sessions. The process sections provide guidance on how the Kit Board and the tools can be deployed in collaborative sessions.
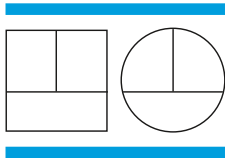
# Four key premises of effective leadership development

In researching and designing the Kit materials, we have been guided by a number of key propositions from the academic leadership development literature, which have been validated and enriched with input from experienced managers and LD practitioners. By way of introducing this Leadership Development Kit, let us briefly touch on some of the most important insights.
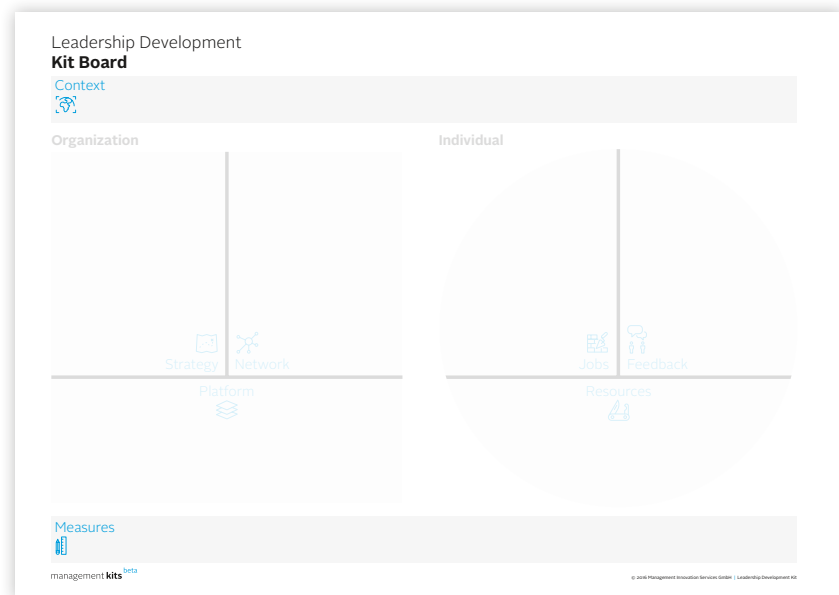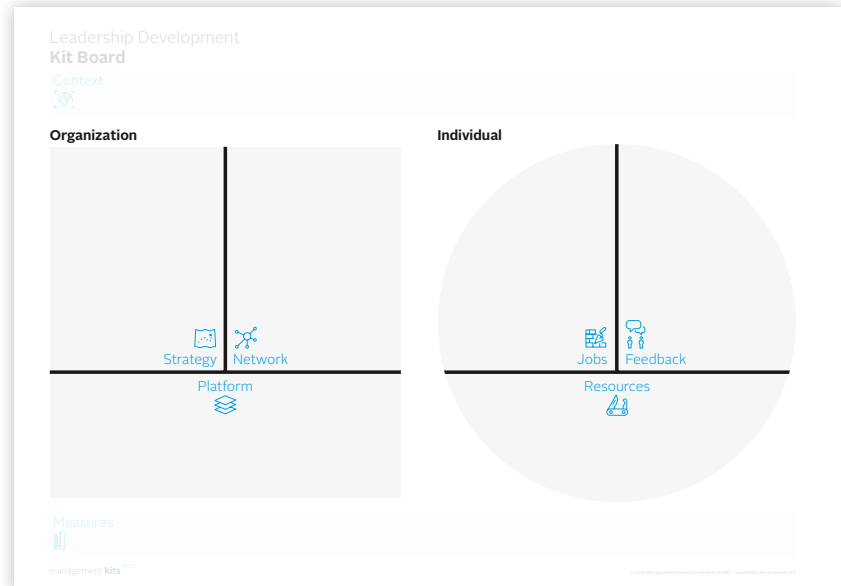

1. Leadership development efforts must be shaped in view of context, and they must have measurable outcomes
In shaping your approach towards leadership development, it matters a lot whether you are in a turnaround situation or whether you are overseeing a story of fast growth; whether the environment and the future are deeply uncertain, or whether you have a stable business model and market; whether you support middle management, a select circle of "high potential" leaders, or your executive board; and whether you are focusing on the organization as a whole or only on a particular unit, area, or function with its specific environment. Context matters. As a result, you must clarify your context first before you dive into the "how" and the "what" of leadership development. Clarifying context essentially names the ultimate challenges (or parts of challenges) that your organization's leadership needs to respond to.

Just as you have to pay careful attention to context, you need to define what success would look like for your leadership development initiative. This is essential and not a trivial task, given the partly intangible nature of leadership and its development processes. By investing time, energy, and resources into developing leadership in
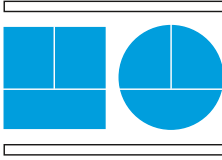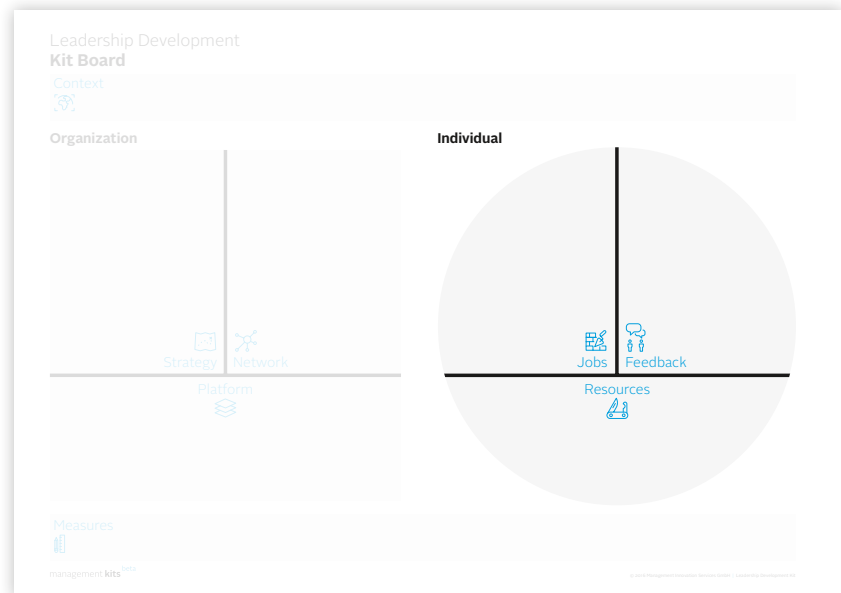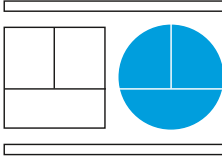
your organization, you expect to bring about change in leadership behavior and management practice. And this change needs to be made concrete and measurable. We will elaborate on different ways in which this can be done in the respective framework chapter on measures.

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2. Leadership development is as much about the organization as it is about developing the capabilities of individual leaders
Leadership "happens" and is developed in the interplay between the individual and the organization. Leader-follower relationships, and the networks in which those relationships are embedded, determine if leadership has positive impact. The fact that many organizational leaders in hierarchical organizations are simultaneously followers makes this even more important. For example, a division leader may be expected to lead her unit through a transformative change – at the same time that she's following the CEO of the company in executing the overall strategy. How this manager leads will not be determined exclusively by her followership of the CEO, but rather will be enacted in a broad network of stakeholders, each entangled in leader-follower relationships. You're never leading on your own – you're leading in complex social settings.

Many leadership development interventions ignore this social dimension and focus too narrowly on the individual level, such as certain individual skills and abilities. Leadership development needs to go beyond this and should intervene both at the individual and at the organizational levels, and should link according initiatives throughout the organization. Leadership development efforts include the question of how to foster formal and informal organizational networks in which effective leadership happens.

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3. Leadership is learned in practice, based on reflection, supported by resources

Leaders are not made in the classroom. As McCall rightly puts it: "The primary source of learning to lead, to the extent that leadership can be learned, is experience. While this has long been understood in principle, organizations still find it challenging to integrate their trainings and formal interventions with lived experiences. One famous approach is Jack Welch's "popcorn stand", whereby he gave young leaders who displayed high potential profit and loss responsibility early in their careers. (Of course, in the case of GE a popcorn stand might have been a multi-million-dollar business.) This kind of relatively manageable end-to-end responsibility was seen both as a stretch for these young leaders and – because of that – also as the most effective learning opportunity.

While there's nothing wrong with this approach, practical experience alone, without opportunity for reflection and social learning, is incomplete. As success and failure are often the result of many factors, some of which are out of anyone's control, "raw" practical experience alone might lead to incorrect conclusions and learning based on false conceptions.

This is why a systematic approach to providing feedback is crucial. If it's well delivered, feedback from bosses or coworkers can allow a leader-in-training to draw conclusions and identify areas that should be further developed through practical experience. Resources are also important. Coaches can further help leaders gain a holistic understanding of the different dimensions of leadership behavior in practice, and focus the attention of aspiring leaders. Leadership trainings are best when, in addition to providing and practicing tools and approaches to support leadership behavior, they leave time for reflecting upon practical experiences and learning from one another.

4. Allow for and support the development of authentic leadership

Leadership is not only an individual practice – it is also highly personal if practiced in an authentic way. Different personal leadership styles can be equally successful. Just as leadership development interventions must observe the broader context of the organization (such as market characteristics, differentiating capabilities, or strategic priorities), they also have to allow for authentic ways for an individual to lead – or else risk missing an important point of developing leaders in the first place. As per Avolio and Gardner's definition, authentic leadership development involves the "ongoing processes whereby leaders and followers gain self-awareness and establish open, transparent, trusting and genuine relationships." It's important to note here that the increasing attention paid to authentic leadership is due to an understanding that such leadership could mitigate some of the estranging effects sometimes associated with modern organizations.

Used in practice, leadership development efforts in this vein should allow leaders to hone their skills in accordance with and reflecting their personal values, rather than confining them to generic personas or roles that adhere to a set of "best practice" leadership behaviors. This also means that to the extent that organizations train their leaders for certain skills and practices, the calls for authentic leadership in adopting these skills and practices should be thought through and designed into the LD program.