

Academy
of Management

Learning & Education

The Four Faces of Leadership Development

Teaching Material based on:

Vongswasdi, P., Leroy, H., Claeys, J., Anisman-Razin, M., & van Dierendonck, D. (2024). Beyond Developing Leaders: Toward a Multinarrative Understanding of the Value of Leadership Development Programs. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 23(1), 8-40.

Pedagogical Note

These slides present insights about how people (both the providers and recipients of leadership development programs) perceive the functions and values of leadership development. It can help audience to become more aware of their own perspective, but also to better understand others' perspective – that can enable them to design more effective programs as well as better evaluate the evidence of its effectiveness.

As such, they are well-suited for senior executives, HR directors, employees, leadership developers, as well as students interested in going into the HR/leadership development/training fields.

Please feel free to get in touch with us for any feedback, questions, or collaboration:

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Setting the stage

- Leadership development is a large and expanding industry
 - (a) Companies are investing billions of dollars in their leadership development
 - (b) This investment has grown more than 400 percent over the past twenty years and is estimated to increase in the future
 - (c) The cost of customized leadership development program can reach \$150,000 a person
 - (d) 74 % of top 50 business schools focus their mission around leadership and leadership development
- But is this a collective blindfold?
 - (a) Only 10 to 20% of organizations ever actually evaluate the effectiveness of their own leadership development program
 - (b) Our business school relies mostly on smile sheets! (brief surveys gauging whether participants liked the programs, rather than how much they actually learned)
 - (c) Organizations and business schools are “flying blind”

This paradox of a thriving demand for and supply of LDPs, and a lack of demonstrated effectiveness raises the question...

***How do stakeholders of LDPs justify the value of LDPs
in their organizations?***

What do business school professors say?

- **LDP as perks:** Companies perceived LDPs programs as part of the rewards for their managers.
- **Accreditation:** B-schools are legitimate providers of leadership training programs because we're accredited.
- **Placebo effect:** Leadership offerings are like vitamins. People take it despite the lack of evidence, but it might still have the desired effect nonetheless.
- **Humanistic value:** questioning the assumption on the need for measurable or quantifiable results.
- **"A leadership evangelist.":** a true believer in leadership development. If teaching a class can make a difference in one person's life, then that's enough.

What do managers say about the effectiveness of leadership development programs at their companies...

"We do not measure, it's scary, we work with our feelings"

"some of people just use the program as ticking the box. So you can't go up if you don't have this"

"The number one reason is clear, talent is short. You want a competitive edge in attracting talent and as well as holding them and developing them"

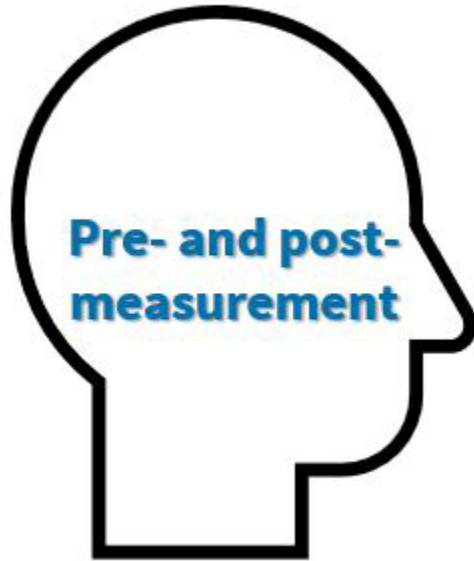
"You know (that the leadership development initiative is effective) once you promote an adequate percentage to director"

"I think companies know that these programs work. The HR department definitely have it figured out when they designed the program. Otherwise why would they put us through this, right?"

"Change only happens if there are those external stimuli, and those depend on the culture of the organization"

Four distinct perspectives of leadership development

What they care about in leadership development programs



Empiricist



Believer



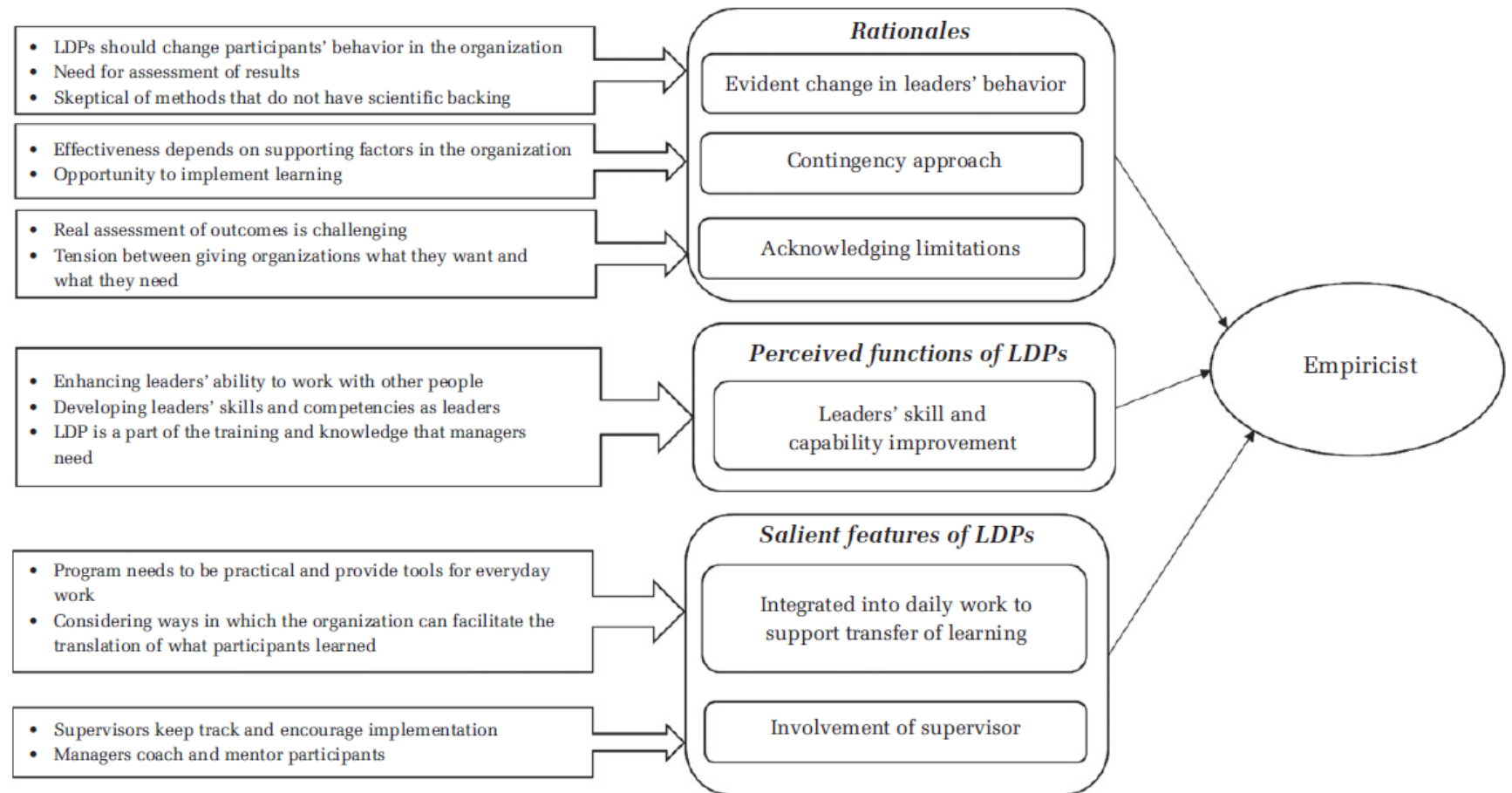
Cynic



Pragmatist

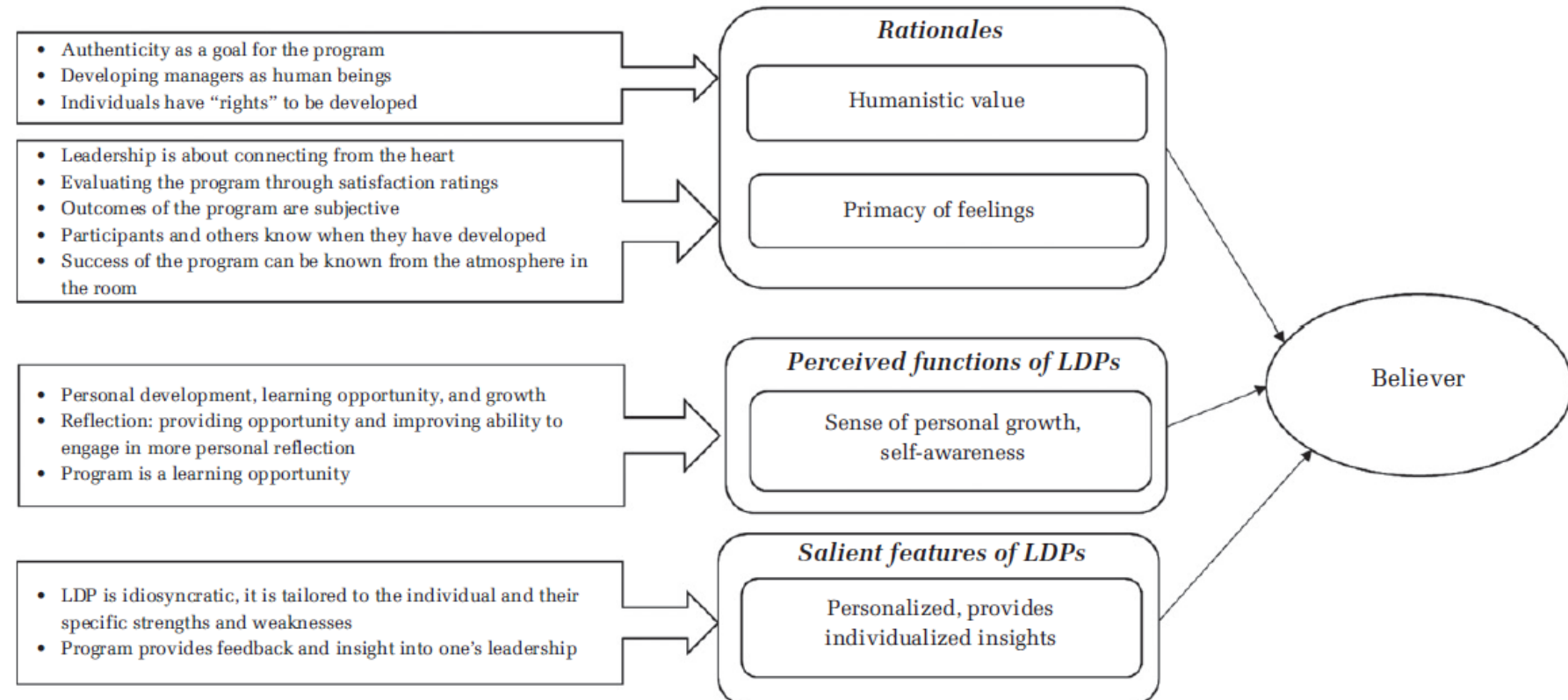
Empiricist

- View LDPs to be about developing individuals to be more effective leader
- Expect LDPs to translate into leaders' improved behaviors in their daily work.
- Want LDPs to be integrated into daily work, and participants' supervisors to be involved in the programs.



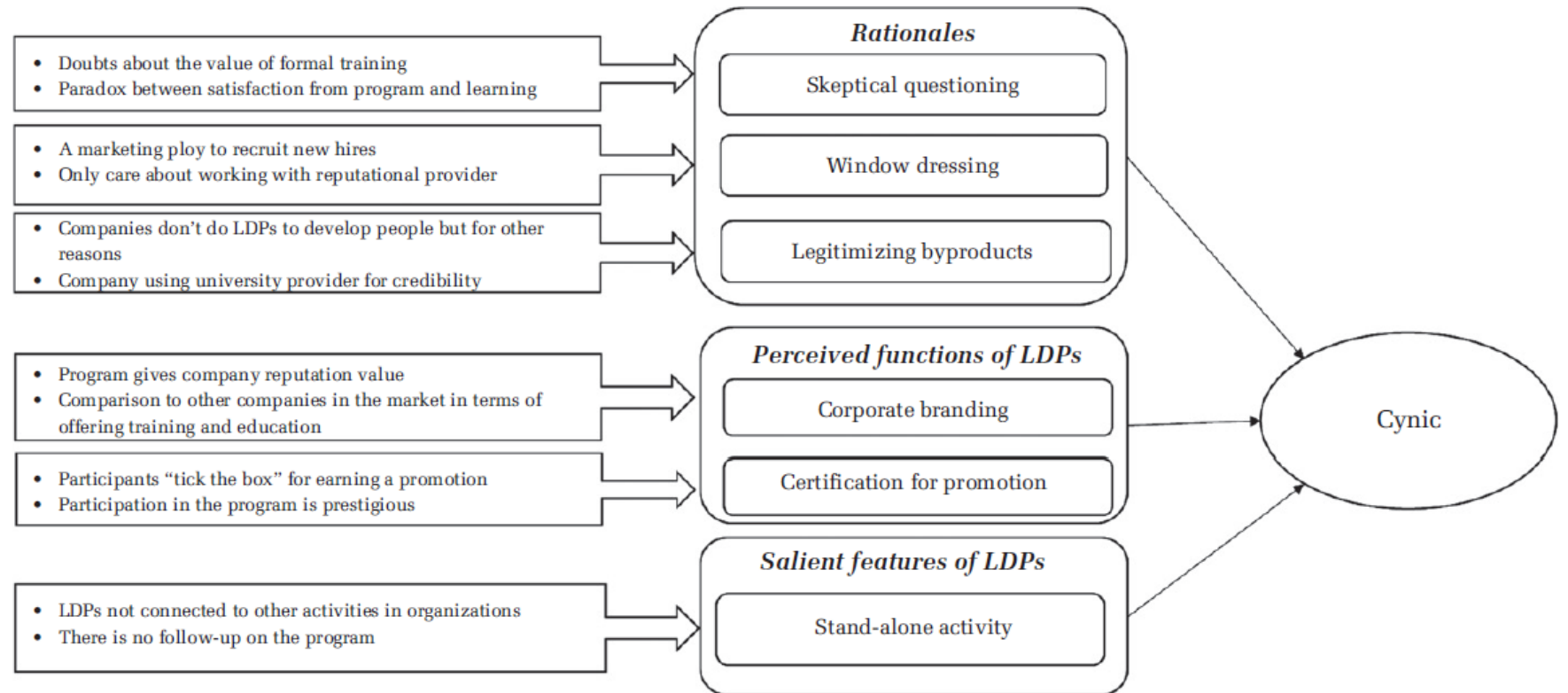
Believer

- View leadership development through the lens of personal growth beyond the workplace.
- Emphasize that everyone can benefit from such development and that organizations have a moral responsibility to offer LDPs to employees



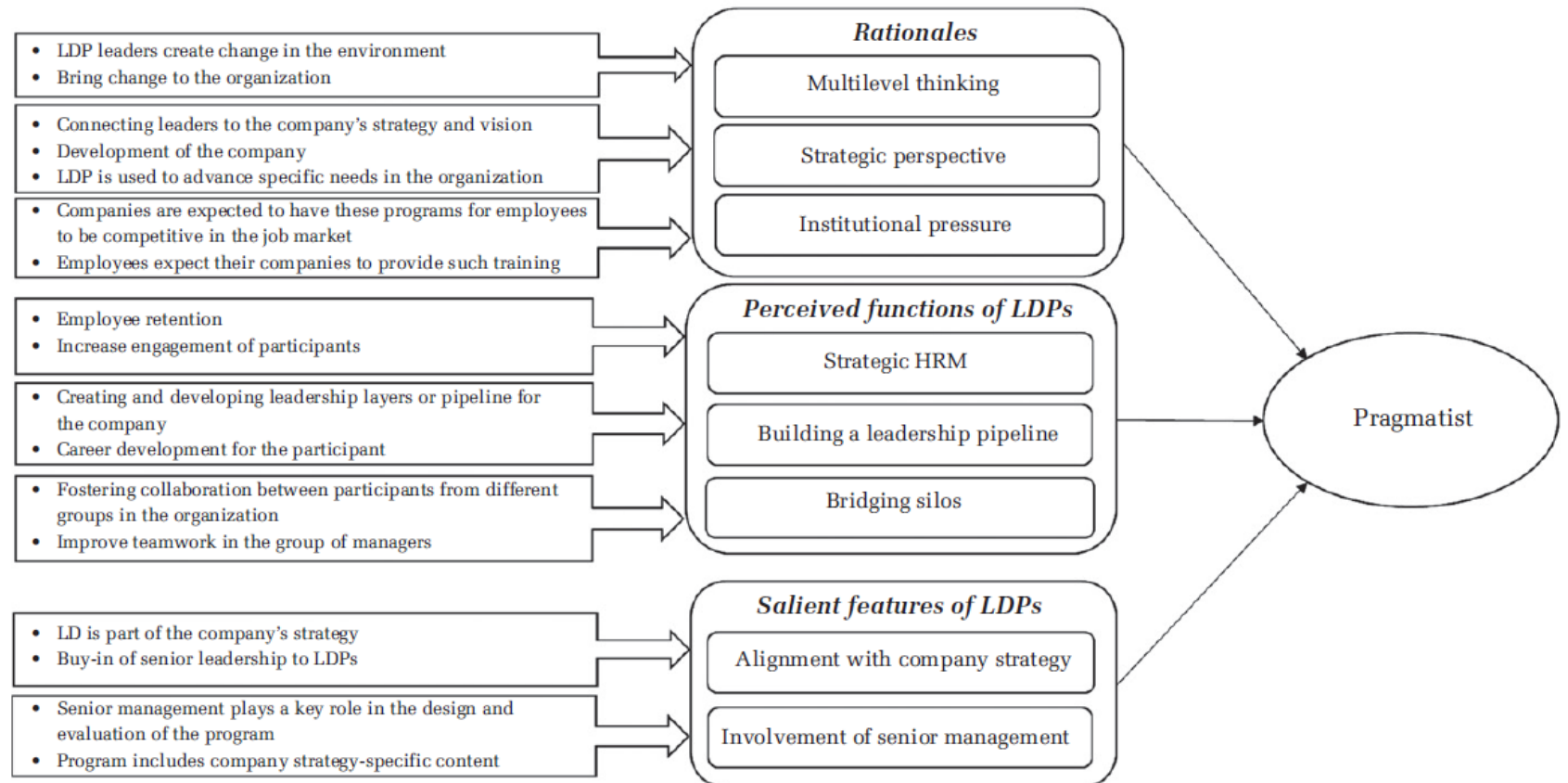
Cynic

- Are skeptical about the organization's espoused goal of developing leaders.
- Suspect that organizations care little about actually developing people, and were using LDPs for marketing purposes.
- Some viewed LDPs as a required career step rather than a real learning opportunity.



Pragmatist

- View LDPs as more strategic in nature, asking whether the programs provide value to organizations.
- Similar to the empiricists' in needing clear, discernable outcomes. But pragmatists viewpoint was often wider, extending to how LDPs fit into the larger organizations in terms of strategies, goals, and performance.



What can leadership developers do?

- Awareness that leadership development is about more than just developing leaders but about a host of other outcomes. But also reflect:
 - Which perspective have you been operating on?
 - How did that perspective influence the evaluation of the programs?
- While this espoused goal may be one of the criteria used, if the organization wants to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the functions and impact of its leadership development activities, it should consider examining multiple criteria.
- To help ensure that all four perspectives are addressed, a leadership developer may want to first assess the current perspectives that people in the organization have about LDPs.
 - See next page for a *checklist* to assess the four perspectives

All four types are important to the creating and assessing effective LDPs

- **Empiricists** are needed to work with the status quo to highlight problems, which could lead to tangible improvements in LDPs.
- **Believers** are needed for new programs to get things going, even though there might be no tangible evidence of the transfer of training just yet. This is similar to how visions or missions are formed.
 - Furthermore, trainers might need to have faith in what they teach for them to invest their energy and push participants to be more engaged in the course.
- **Cynics** are needed for raising political capital against current leadership models and practices, highlighting the lack of time for development or the difficulties in practicing what was preached, while providing strong negative emotions that serve as drivers of change
- **Pragmatists** perspective could provide a bird's-eye view—strategic thinking about leadership development practice—and connect the separate activities into a coherent system in organizations.

Checklist: *Why and when should we invest in LDPs?*

<p>Empiricist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When we can have clear measurable performance outcomes of a program. • When there is identifiable change in leader effectiveness. • When there are clear/tangible outcomes indicating changed behaviors. • When there is clear evidence (pre- versus post-measurement) that the program works.
<p>Believer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because leadership development gives people a chance to develop themselves as a person. • Because I am convinced that we need better leaders in society. • Because it is our social responsibility to help people grow. • Because I personally believe that leadership development can do wonders.
<p>Cynic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because a program is a necessary step for getting promoted in an organization. • Because it is a modern perk (on top of salary) that people get. • Because the organization wants to appear to be an attractive employer. • Because it follows popular trends in society, where leadership is valued.
<p>Pragmatist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because it can help to align organizational values with those of employees. • Because it allows people across the organization to exchange ideas. • When it builds a leadership pipeline for the organization. • When it is part of the organization's HR strategy.