

# Colt’s ‘Management Fundamentals’ Results In More Mobility, Capability and Engagement

Colt Technology Services and InspireOne Consultants

Best Advance in Leadership Development

January 2022



## Company Background



<b>Company-at-a-Glance</b>	Colt Technology Services
<b>Headquarters</b>	London, England
<b>Year Founded</b>	1992
<b>Employees</b>	5,196
<b>Global Scale</b>	UK/Europe, the United States and Asia
<b>Customers/Output, etc.</b>	Colt provides world-class global network and voice services: optical, ethernet, cloud, cybersecurity, capital markets, business internet and VPN, and voice. They serve 15,000+ customers across 23 countries.
<b>Industry</b>	Telecommunications
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://www.colt.net/">https://www.colt.net/</a>

## Company Background

# InspireOne®

Performance, Inspired

<b>Company-at-a-Glance</b>	Gurugram, India
<b>Headquarters</b>	1999
<b>Year Founded</b>	\$11.7 million
<b>Employees</b>	49
<b>Global Scale</b>	Global
<b>Customers/Output, etc.</b>	InspireOne is India's leading consulting firm offering organizational and leadership development solutions. With nearly two decades of experience in the consulting domain, they help organizations convert their people and organizational capabilities into corporate value.
<b>Industry</b>	Learning & Development

## Budget and Timeframe

<b>Overall budget</b>	Four Talent employees
<b>Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?</b>	Two from Operations 19 SMEs
<b>Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?</b>	13 Facilitators for Stretch events Eight Facilitators for Learning labs Three Operations roles
<b>Number of contractors involved with implementation</b>	February-April 2020
<b>Timeframe to implement</b>	April 23, 2020
<b>Start date of the program</b>	Four Talent Employees

## Business Conditions and Business Need

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Looking back to the end of 2019, everything was coming together at Colt Technology Services. Business was booming worldwide, client numbers were growing at a rapid pace and, with respectable retention rates, employees weren't going anywhere. But therein lay the problem: employees weren't going anywhere.

While Colt wasn't hemorrhaging talent, it wasn't nurturing it either. This was especially evident in an immobile layer of middle management. Not only weren't they developing beyond their existing roles, development and succession planning for their subordinates was, at best, rare and, at worst, nonexistent.

By not progressing a diverse array of high-performing individuals, Colt ran the risk of hindering long-term business growth and innovation that could only be achieved by promoting the very best.

Internal mobility was at just 14%, lagging behind the global average of 19.6%. Feedback within the 2019 employees' "People Matters" survey also indicated that staff were disappointed with a lack of career progression/development opportunities. A prominent sentiment within this feedback was that managers were failing to provide effective targeted guidance and support. What also became evident was that different management practices were being used, meaning there was no consistent "management voice" across Colt.

The following scores demonstrate some of the areas that employees felt were lacking:

- Just 55% of employees agreed that Colt promotes the most competent people.
- Only 56% agreed that they had experienced an effective career conversation.
- Only 63% felt that leaders removed obstacles at work.

While "Opportunities to develop" appeared to be rated more favorably by 75% of employees, it was still below the standard Colt was striving to achieve.

From this survey, it became clear that Colt needed to reinvigorate its leadership development, both for the benefit of managers and their direct reports.

A culture of always being "too busy" for extracurriculars, coupled with impersonal, bulk-bought "off-the-shelf" learning packages, meant the appetite for development was at an all-time low. But this was about to change, with the introduction of a global leadership development program designed by Colt, for Colt.

## Overview

### Introducing Management Fundamentals

Following a comprehensive discovery and design process (see next section), Colt’s blended learning program, “Management Fundamentals,” launched in April 2020 with the intention of instilling the skills and leadership behaviors that would combat the current pockets of inconsistency across the business. The program was designed to be supported in a completely virtual environment, anywhere in the world, available in six languages for almost 800 leaders within Colt.

Colt devised the “fundamentals” of management represented by four key areas:

- Building engagement.
- Driving performance.
- Supporting development.
- Inspiring inclusion.

Within each of these core competencies, four key skills/behaviors were identified:

**Figure 1: What Are the Management Fundamentals?**



## The Learning Journey

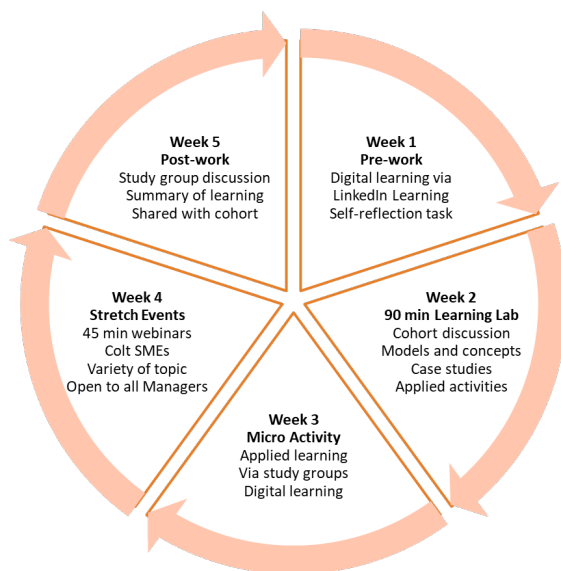
There are four stages to the Management Fundamentals learning cycle:

- Awareness — This phase allows one month for kick-off, communications, and reflection. To understand the individual participant’s current level of understanding, and identify core skills gaps, within this phase Colt provides:
- Individual and team management reports consisting of collated feedback from direct reports (79% survey completion) concerning each of the 16 behaviors of the Management Fundamentals Model.
- Self-reflection tools and a self-assessment survey for participants to rate their strength and development areas in relation to the four core competencies and 16 fundamental behaviors which would be addressed in the “Application” phase.
- Preparation for Colt’s executive leadership team for the journey, including kick-off events designed to define additional roles and expectations, such as cohort sponsors or subject matter experts.

### 1. Application

This is the phase whereby participants learn, apply and share the core skills and behaviors. With five weeks allotted for each of the four fundamentals (building engagement, driving performance, supporting development and driving inclusion), this phase includes 25 hours of learning over 20 weeks. Each five-week cycle includes:

**Figure 2: Five-Week Cycle**



Colt and InspireOne worked together to design engaging, valuable content, which was facilitated across the company in multiple languages.

Learning Labs included peer-to-peer interactive engagement with topics such as:

- Developing purpose and mental framing.
- Colt's model of feedback (Evidence, Effect, Continue, Change).
- Facilitating performance development and career conversations.
- Signature traits of an inclusive leader.

Stretch events, where leaders from all levels could come together to extend their learning in a small, conference-like environment, included modules such as:

- How storytelling builds employee engagement.
- Driving performance within "New Normal" times.
- Diversity, inclusion and belonging.
- Future possibilities – The importance of a flexible career path.

The applied activities, whereby managers would start putting ideas into practice within their teams, included:

- Developing a team purpose/goals.
- Formalizing management check-in conversations.
- Taking psychological safety assessments, to understand the current culture of raising ideas or rectifying mistakes within a team.

## **2. Actualize**

This phase, running for four weeks in November 2020 gave opportunity for direct reports (76% survey completion) to provide another round of feedback to their Managers and Management Teams on each of the 16 fundamental behaviors. Participating Managers could also reflect on what was learnt and engage with post-program self-reflection tools and survey, providing a holistic approach to measure any potential early improvements and assess where they are in their longer-term development journey.

## **3. Accomplish**

This is more than just a phase of a program, this marks the start of each participant's ongoing, long-term development. This is when continued coaching is introduced and when the fundamentals are linked to overall performance management.

## Objectives

Colt's aim was to define their people management standards and enable the support, communication, measurement, and development of them, for managers across multiple countries. Management Fundamentals launched in early 2020 and the following stretch targets were set for 2022:

- Double internal mobility from 14% to 30%.
- Increase employee engagement score from 80% to 84%.
- Reduce regrettable attrition from 8% to 4% — with consideration given to the fact that short-term attrition could be impacted by the pandemic.

By designing the program with a diverse audience in mind, it is also Colt's aim to increase female representation within the upper echelons of the business by at least 20% by 2022.

In the immediate term, the following goals were a priority:

- Have leaders engage/participate in the program — while Colt made it mandatory for certain levels of leadership, they still needed managers to not just complete the course, but to actively demonstrate their engagement with the content, by putting their learning into practice.
- Have leaders improve their own soft skills across the 16 identified desired behaviors (baselined by a self-assessment and anonymized feedback from direct reports prior to the learning commencing).
- Introduce a whole new standard of consistent management skills and behavior, unlike those seen before at Colt, while also looking to improve the perception of development opportunities and the support offered by leaders across the business. This would expectedly be reflected by an uplift in scores and positive sentiment in the next iterations of the Manager Feedback and "People Matters" surveys.

Ideally, all of these would culminate in a cultural transformation focused on creating a "future-ready" Colt. An additional target for the end of 2020 was to improve business performance by driving a 5% uplift in client bookings, in turn increasing overall revenue.

## Design and Delivery of the Program

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### The Existing Landscape

A lack of engagement had hindered previous attempts at embedding a learning and development culture at Colt. Aside from mandatory compliance training, optional skills development learning had a less than 30% completion rate. This was potentially attributable to one of two things:

- Generic universal content was bulk bought, covering general management skills, rather than designed with Colt employees in mind.
- A lack of awareness. Onus was on each individual to request training for specific skillsets. Content wouldn't automatically be shared publicly with the wider business, so employees wouldn't always know what learning resources were available.

A vital component of Management Fundamental's success was that the program was designed by Colt, for Colt. In partnership with leading L&D specialist InspireOne, Colt set about gathering input not just from the managers who would be participating, but their employees as well.

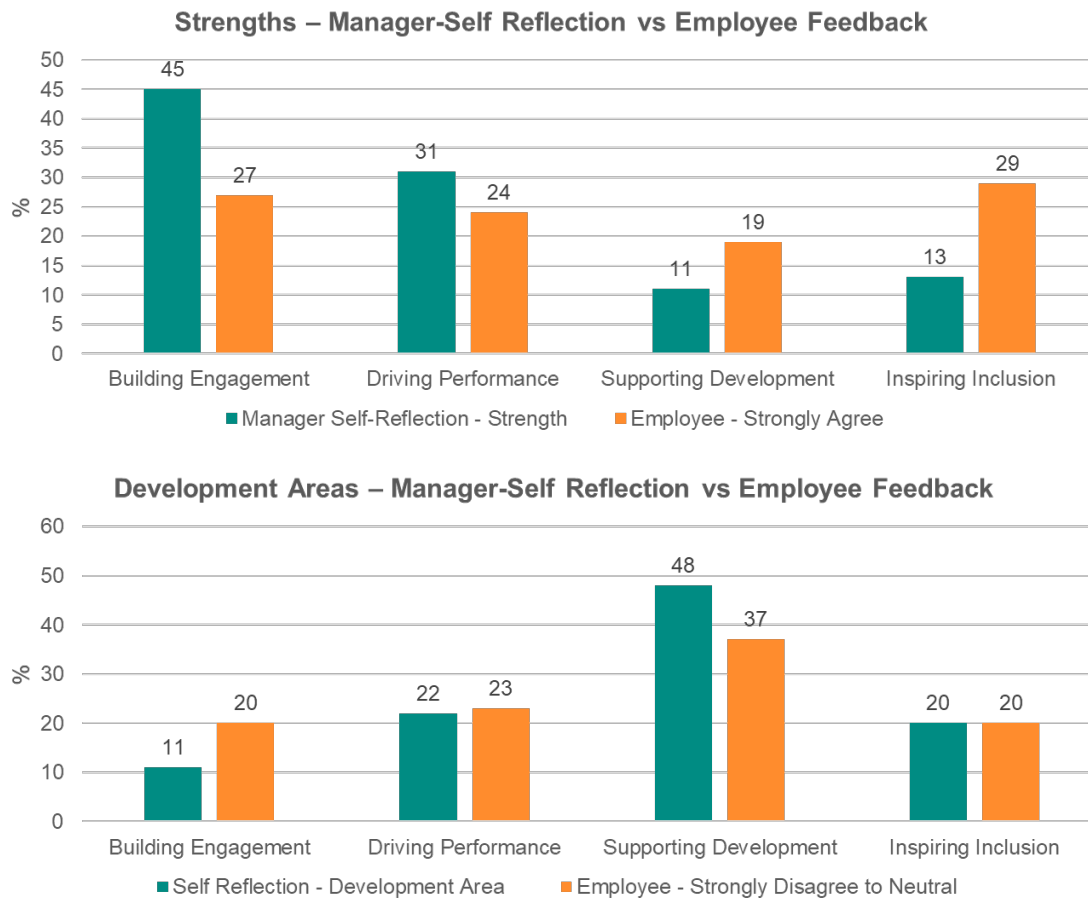
### Understanding the Skills Gap

Colt needed to understand both where leaders felt they lacked skills development opportunities and where direct reports felt their leaders needed to improve. Manager feedback and employee feedback — extracted from both the "People Matters" survey and new Manager Feedback survey specifically designed for this program — began to shape the outline of Management Fundamentals.

Further content design was aided by self-assessments undertaken by both leaders and direct reports. Both groups assessed leaders' perceived strengths and development areas, which interestingly didn't always align:



**Figure 3: Strengths and Development Areas**



**Focus Groups**

Inspire One helped Colt design and facilitate focus groups to help further design the different learning profiles and content requirements. Management Fundamentals needed to be representative of the diverse nature of Colt, so these sessions included a mix of employees, representing different global geographies and cultures, with differing:

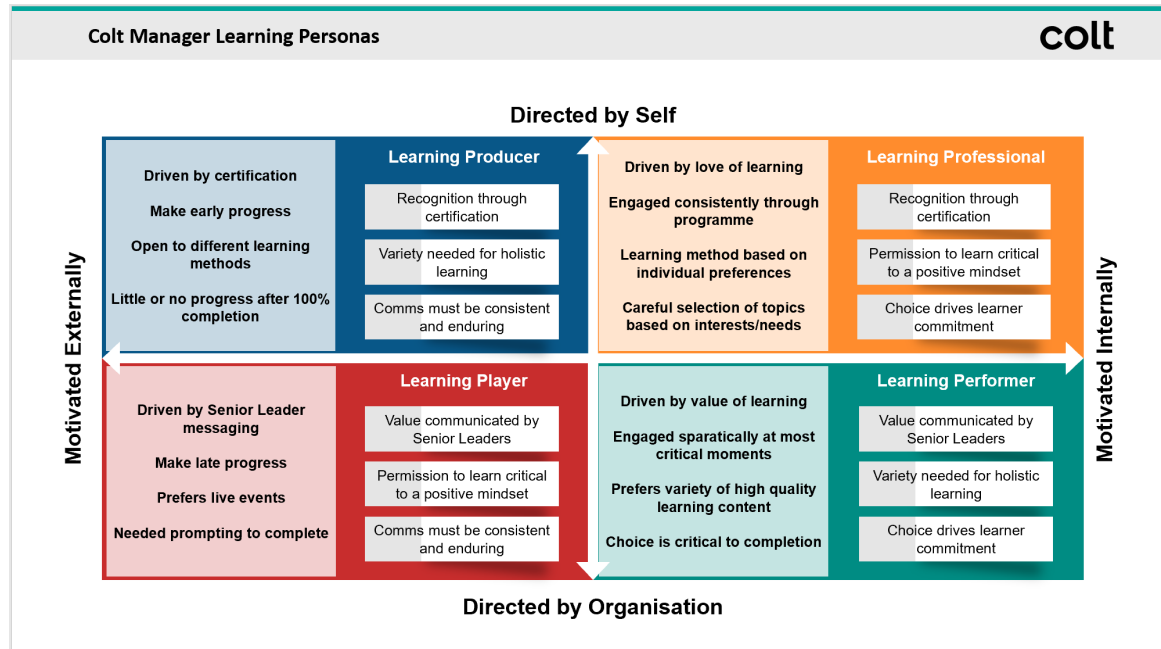
- Tenures.
- Seniority levels.
- Ages.
- Genders.

In total, two groups were formed, made up of 17 managers and 16 direct reports. Participants assessed what had worked in the past and what could be done differently, how to mitigate potential risks and which solutions would deliver the most impactful outcomes.

### Learner Profiles

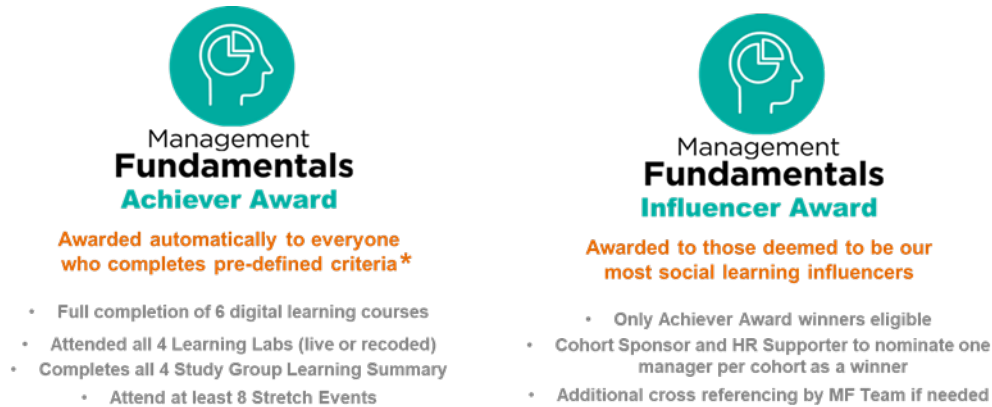
Management Fundamentals needed to be engaging for all managers as well, so learner profiles were devised from particular personas that were emerging through analytics collected and reported on a weekly basis. This insight helped to establish how Manager needs could be met in a practical sense:

Figure 4: Colt Manager Learning Personas



These profiles assessed the learning styles of participating individuals, to not only understand what outputs different learners needed to inspire and motivate them but also the overall landscape of learners within the business. These profiles will contribute to the design of future training programs.

Understanding the different motivations of individual learners led to Colt introducing two certification options that could be tracked through progress reports and earned through participation: the “Achiever” award and the “Influencer” award.

**Figure 5: Achiever Award and Influence Award**

The content also needed to be adapted slightly based on seniority and tenure, so these different categories were assigned to participants:

- New manager (0-24 months in people management)
- Manager of people (>2 years' experience)
- Manager of managers
- Top-level management (e.g., Executives/Directors)

Top-level management had slightly different content compared to others, plus additional responsibilities. They could choose to be a cohort sponsor, responsible for driving engagement and motivation, plus providing advice and feedback — or they could be a subject matter expert and present at one of Colt's stretch events.

## Adoption of the Program

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### COVID-19 Response

When initially designing Management Fundamentals, there was tangible desire to switch from traditional e-learning to a more physically engaged face-to-face learning environment. While the initial design focused on introducing classroom learning, little did Colt know that these plans were about to be de-railed by a global crisis. When Covid-19 swept across the world, hopes for more physical interactions between learners and educators were dashed. Instead — just one month prior to launch — the program had to be completely reinvented for a virtual environment, while still ensuring they maintained momentum and got typically unengaged leaders to willingly take control of their development.

As digital alternatives, Colt introduced:

- Live Zoom webinars and virtually facilitated learning sessions.
- LinkedIn learning (for self-directed content).
- Microsoft Teams for virtual study groups.

### Adoption for a Busy Audience

A major issue with previous iterations of leadership training was the overriding culture of being constantly busy, with training being seen as an unproductive use of time. To combat this attitude, managers were allotted specific time to complete Management Fundamentals. An interactive and facilitated learning environment helped keep leaders engaged, rather than solely relying on the learning to be self-directed.

This learning was delivered simultaneously across the globe in six different languages, over the course of a week. 750+ managers were split into 26 cohorts, with each cohort containing 30-45 people, for applied learning. From there, each cohort was split into study groups of around six people who they would work with in a virtual environment for help and support, away from facilitators. This support also helped notoriously time-poor leaders be more accountable for their learning journey. Detailed digital progress reports also allowed participant and facilitators to keep track of progress:

Figure 6: Detailed Progress Reports



**DIGITAL LEARNING**

Your achievement is **40%** you have completed...

Vision in Action: Leaders Live Case Studies  
How to set adaptive performance goals  
Write an adaptive performance agreement

Complete **5** more LinkedIn Learning lessons to achieve 100%

*LinkedIn Learning lessons must be from those chosen as part of the Management Fundamentals programme*

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**STRETCH EVENTS**

Your achievement is **63%** you have attended...

It's your team that **JUST DOES IT**  
How Storytelling Builds Employee Engagement  
How Shampoo Adverts can Help You Manage Change Communication Better  
Navigating Change with Authentic Leadership  
How Vulnerability Creates an Engaged and Powerful Performance Culture

Attend **3** more Stretch Events to achieve 100%

*Achievement includes Stretch Events that are attended live or watched via recordings in the Colt Excel*

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**LEARNING SUMMARIES**

Your achievement is **25%** you have submitted...

Building Engagement Learning Summary

Submit **3** more Study Group Learning Summaries to achieve 100%

*Achievement includes Learning Summaries submitted as part of your Study Group or individually*

Colt was also flexible when business-critical priorities arose. One learning phase was extended to allow Managers to fully embed the behaviors being practiced. Similarly, a summer break of three weeks was introduced in the middle of the program to ensure Managers could take their summer holidays without concerns about having to catch up on their learning journey upon their return.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

Management Fundamentals quite literally meant taking learning back to basics and going over behaviors that leaders likely assumed they already understood/were already displaying. Having leaders participate in the design of the program helped combat some resistance, but Colt also needed to engage the very top of the business.

During the design process, the whole business was undergoing rapid change. A brand-new CEO joined just prior to the launch of Management Fundamentals. The former CEO had been a huge advocate of the program and had lent support to the design and intended to host the launch event. Colt's L&D team worked with the new CEO, who also had extensive L&D experience, to ensure she was prepared for her role as executive sponsor and was fully engaged with the objectives of Management Fundamentals.

Execs had already been interviewed at the very beginning of the design phase, but Colt took this opportunity to reconnect with all of them – the new CEO included – and reassess the strategy to ensure it was still aligned with their agenda, which helped build that advocacy from the very top of the business. Thorough communications ensured they were familiar with how the program worked and how it would impact their employees.

### **Launch**

- Management Fundamentals kicked off with a Colt-wide announcement, hosted by the new CEO in an “all-hands” meeting for the whole organization.
- Executive “sponsors” selected ambassadors/champions for the program across all verticals who would liaise with the managers in their area.
- People weren't at physical locations due to Covid, so rather than banners/desk-drops, Colt's L&D team used Teams, email and the workplace intranet to send teasers and pre-reading to managers around the world.
- For non-managers who would not be participating, careful consideration was given to ensure they were not overtly burdened by advertising.

## Measurable Benefits

### Engagement

778 out of 800 managers in total registered for the learning. Previous development programs had seen a 30% completion across the business, but Management Fundamentals saw the following completion percentage for each “fundamental”:

- Building engagement — 93%
- Driving performance — 84%
- Supporting development — 78%
- Inspiring inclusion — 70%

### Learning Objectives

Participants were scored by their reports — both pre- and post-learning — against each of the 16 core behaviors. In comparing “agree” and “totally agree” scores before and after, there was an uplift in performance across the board:

**Figure 7: Learning Objectives**

Question & Category	Increase May – Nov (Top box scores)
<b>Building Engagement</b>	+3%
My manager collaborates with me in making decisions that affect our work.	+4%
My manager is good at explaining the reasons for organisational changes.	+2%
My manager's actions are consistent with their words.	+1%
My manager gives me recognition for achieving outcomes.	+2%
<b>Driving Performance</b>	+3%
My manager is good at working with employees to set outcome-focused performance goals.	+2%
My manager holds people accountable for delivering their goals.	+2%
My manager provides me with feedback that helps me to improve my performance.	+3%
My manager helps me to remove obstacles that prevent me from doing my job well.	+3%
<b>Inspiring Inclusion</b>	+3%
My manager does a good job of building teamwork.	+3%
My manager works effectively with people who are different from themselves.	+3%
My manager treats me with respect.	+4%
My manager listens carefully to different points of view before reaching conclusions.	+3%
<b>Supporting Development</b>	+3%
My manager is effective at identifying appropriate personal development opportunities with me.	+3%
My manager encourages people to learn from their mistakes.	+4%
My manager works with me to look beyond our department/team for development opportunities.	+3%
My manager has had career conversations with me that were effective in furthering my development.	+4%

Results from the “People Matters” survey completed in early 2021 indicate improvements across many areas previously impacted by a lack of support from leaders, including:

- 82% confidence in decisions made by senior leaders (+12% from last year)
- 80% belief that the Executive Leadership Team are role models (+13%)
- 84% belief that there are sufficient opportunities to learn and improve skills (+9%)
- 76% belief that they have the opportunity for personal development and growth

This survey also showed that an incredible 91% of employees would recommend Colt as a great place to work.

### **Business Performance**

Following the introduction of Management Fundamentals:

- Internal mobility has already increased from 14% to 30%, already meeting the 2022 target.
- Employee engagement has increased from 80% to 86%, surpassing the 2022 stretch target.
- Female leadership representation has increased from 27% to 30%.

Colt is also seeing overall business growth, which could be attributed to improved performance by both managers and direct reports as a result of skills learned during Management Fundamentals — client bookings are up 12%, with orders for Colt's 100G network services up 70% and high value deals increasing by 54%.

## **Overall**

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### **Lessons Learned**

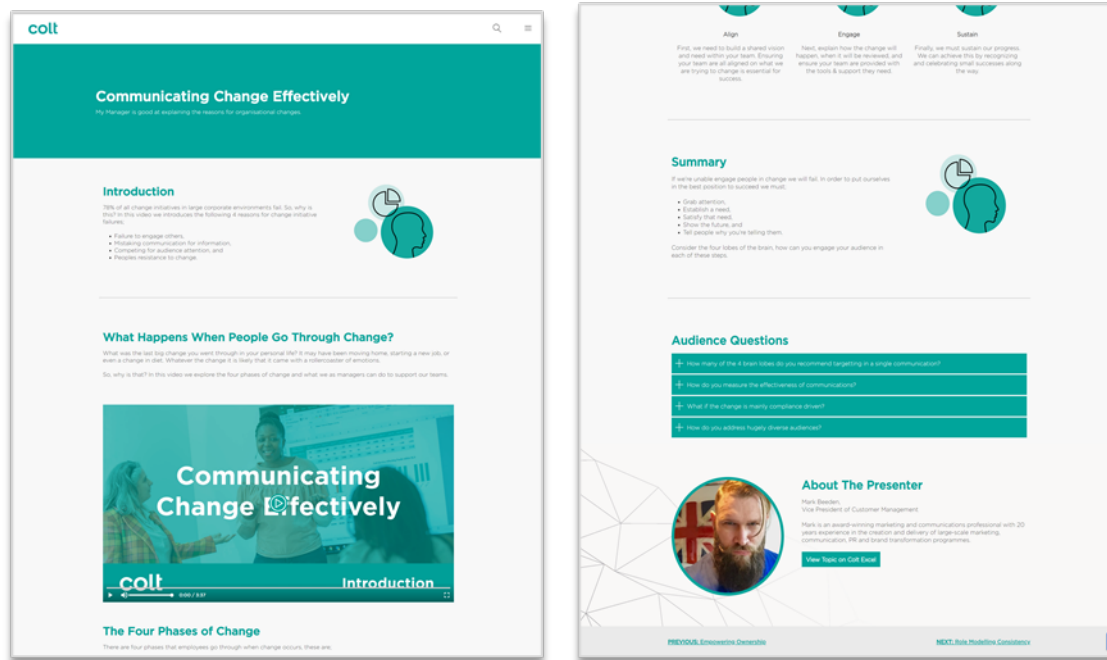
Adaptability and agility were key themes throughout 2020. Largely influenced by the impact of COVID-19, Colt migrated from Skype to Teams, which the L&D team harnessed for Management Fundamentals. Microsoft Teams was well-received by the business. To ensure it was fit for purpose, user experience testing was undertaken and adjustments made to processes to support any feedback from users.

COVID also led to time becoming even more precious. Partway through the first iteration of Management Fundamentals the finance functions found making time for their learning overwhelming due to business-critical deadlines. They felt there wasn't enough time between learning segments. Colt took this feedback and adapted accordingly, creating a short break of three weeks to allow leaders to catch up on their workload.

### **Looking Forward**

In 2021, a summary of this program has been converted into a digital playbook, exploring the 16 behaviors that form Management Fundamentals. This will act to reinforce learning for managers who went through the training and function as a guiding textbook for all managers to come.

Figure 8: Conversion Into Digital Playbook



This digital playbook will guide self-directed learning for new and emerging managers. Future goals include reducing time to competence, supporting completion of probation and creating a supportive community for new managers.

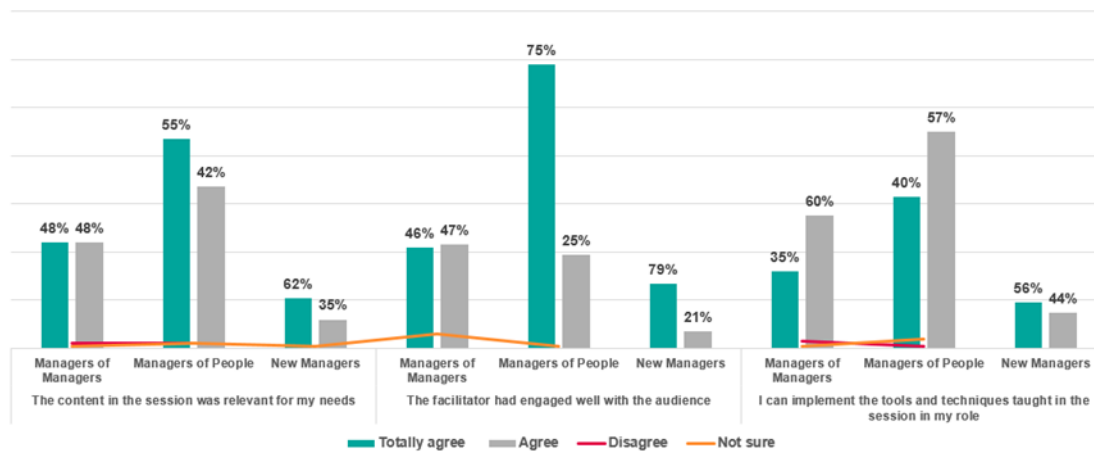
A separate workstream has already commenced, focusing on performance management for 2021. The project aims to align performance management with the learning objectives within Management Fundamentals.

**Final Word**

It’s clear from employee feedback and business results that Colt’s 750 managers are better equipped with the desired skills and behaviors since partaking in Management Fundamentals. Colt’s business growth is surpassing expectations, largely aided by a more confident and engaged workforce, despite the constant looming threat of the pandemic throughout 2020.

Feedback from participants on a selection of learning sessions also shows how the content resonated with managers at all levels:



**Figure 9: Feedback**


All illustrations provided by Colt Technology Services and InspireOne Consultants

On average:

- 97% of managers agreed/totally agreed that the learning content was relevant for their needs.
- 98% agreed/totally agreed that Colt facilitators engaged well with the audience.
- 97% agreed/totally agreed that they could implement the tools/techniques learned in their everyday role.

To conclude, here are some final words from participants:

- *“The subject was very clearly presented, and the session was very, very helpful. Nice workshop in groups too, enjoying the learning path so far and taking the best out of it!”*
- *“It was very dynamic and interactive, which keeps you attentive and helps things to stick.”*
- *“Great session with a lot of energy including a really helpful toolkit with concrete advice for action.”*
- *“An excellent session. It was really helpful and gave me loads of ideas for how I can apply the model to my team. I would thoroughly recommend to anyone.”*
- *“The content was straightforward, easy to understand, and gave great advice on listening that I’ve already put into good use. Excellent!!”*

## About Brandon Hall Group

With more than 10,000 clients globally and 28 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

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