

Back-to-School Season Is a Reminder for Employers: Future Leaders Won't Wait

Organizational psychologist Dr. Celina Peerman shares five questions organizations should ask now to strengthen their leadership pipeline for 2027 and beyond

WAVERLY, IA, UNITED STATES, August 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As students across the country return to classrooms, organizational psychologist and leadership strategist Dr. Celina Peerman says employers should be thinking about another group that needs continued learning: the people leading their workplaces.

"Back-to-school season is a great reminder that learning doesn't stop when a degree is finished, a certification is earned or someone gets promoted," Peerman said. "The

strongest leaders remain curious, keep developing their skills and recognize that what got them to their current role may not be enough for what comes next."

That need is particularly important for employees preparing to move into their first people-leadership roles.

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Dr. Celina notes "Future leaders won't wait."

Organizations frequently promote strong individual contributors because they are technically skilled, dependable or knowledgeable about the operation. But leading people requires a different set of skills, including communication, coaching, accountability, decision-making, relationship building and navigating change.

"A promotion gives someone a new title. It doesn't automatically give them the skills or confidence to lead people," Peerman said. "New people leaders need support as they make that transition. Trial and error will always be part of learning, but it shouldn't be the organization's only development strategy."

Peerman says organizations also need to begin developing potential leaders before positions become available.

"Future leaders won't wait until there is an opening on the organizational chart," she said. "They are already on our teams. The question is whether organizations are intentionally helping them develop the judgment, communication skills, confidence and ability to lead others that they will need next."

Five Questions for the Leadership Bench

Peerman recommends organizations use the fall planning season to ask:

1. Who is the organization developing before they are promoted?
2. What support do first-time supervisors and managers receive?
3. When did experienced leaders last intentionally invest in their own development?
4. What will leaders need to know and be able to do two or three years from now, not just today?
5. If a key leader left tomorrow, who would be ready to step forward?

Leadership development, Peerman emphasizes, should not be limited to a single class or reserved for senior teams. Organizations can build leadership capacity through mentoring, facilitated learning, stretch assignments, coaching, peer discussions, reflection, feedback and opportunities to practice new skills.

Development also needs to continue throughout a leader's career.

"The workplace keeps changing, so leadership has to keep learning," Peerman said. "Leaders are being asked to navigate new technology, changing employee expectations, increasingly complex workplaces, knowledge transfer and ongoing change. Continuous learning isn't an extra anymore. It is part of the work of leading."

As organizations finish 2026 and begin planning for 2027, Peerman encourages employers to look beyond filling current positions and consider the strength of the entire leadership pipeline.

"An organization's next leaders are probably already working there," Peerman said. "Give them opportunities to learn before the organization desperately needs them to lead."

About Dr. Celina Peerman

Dr. Celina Peerman is an organizational psychologist, leadership strategist, professional speaker

and author with more than 30 years of experience in human resources, operations and leadership education. Through The Peerman Group, she and her team work with organizations to strengthen leaders, teams and workplaces as they navigate change and prepare for the future of work. Peerman is a four-time author, two-time TEDx speaker and Certified Speaking Professional (CSP).

Dr. Peerman is available for media interviews and expert commentary on leadership development, first-time manager readiness, succession and leadership pipelines, changing workplace expectations, and preparing leaders for the future of work.

Editor's Note: Peerman first explored this topic in a guest article published by Waverly Newspapers in Waverly, Iowa.

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