

I.N.V.E.S.T.™

A Practical Framework for Proving ROI on Leadership Development

Executives don't fund "training." They fund **outcomes, risk reduction, and performance improvement**. INVEST is a concise, business-aligned framework that helps senior HR leaders build a defensible case — transforming leadership development from a budget line item into a strategic investment with measurable returns.

HR LEADERSHIP TOOLKIT

EXECUTIVE BRIEFING



I – Impact

The first question every executive will ask is: **What outcomes are we actually investing in?** Your answer must be stated in business terms — not HR language. Speak the language of the boardroom.

Manager Effectiveness

Improved day-to-day leadership quality across teams and business units

Regrettable Attrition

Reduction in the loss of high performers and critical talent

Succession Readiness

A stronger internal pipeline of leaders ready to step up

Execution Speed

Faster decision-making and stronger cross-functional collaboration

- ✓ Your action: Define 2–3 specific impact outcomes tied to your organization's current strategic priorities. Use your own language, not generic HR metrics.

N – Negative Cost

What is the current state of poor leadership actually costing? Doing nothing is not a neutral position, it carries a real and often underestimated price tag. Quantifying the downside reframes the conversation entirely: the risk isn't in spending, it's in *not* spending.

Turnover & Backfill

Replacement costs typically range from **50% to 200%** of annual salary. Factor in recruiting, onboarding, and ramp time.

Lost Productivity

Disengaged or poorly led teams deliver measurably less output. Estimate the impact on your key business deliverables.

Rework & Missed Deadlines

Poor leadership creates friction — decisions get revisited, projects stall, and timelines slip at a compounding cost.

Performance Management Load

HR and manager time spent on employee relations issues, PIPs, and escalations has a significant opportunity cost.

✓ Your action: Pull actual numbers from your HRIS, finance, or people analytics team. Even credible ranges carry weight in executive conversations.

V – Validation

How will you measure progress? You don't need perfect precision, you need credibility and consistency. Select a small set of leading indicators that can show meaningful movement within **90 days** of launch, giving stakeholders early evidence that the investment is working.

→ Manager Effectiveness Scores

Pulse surveys or 360 feedback tied to specific leadership behaviors

→ Reduction in Escalations

Track frequency of performance issues or HR-related escalations reaching senior leaders

→ Team Engagement Shifts

Monitor directional movement in team-level engagement data

→ Organizational Leadership Assessment

Reach out to Arden Coaching for an organization-wide tool you can use to track leaderships skills before/during/after your programs.

Design Principle

Precision is less important than consistency. Pick measures you can track reliably over time, and commit to reporting on them.

Start with what you already have. Don't let perfect be the enemy of defensible.

E – Expected Standard

What does "good" actually look like for your organization? Without a defined benchmark, any improvement is subjective and easy for stakeholders to dismiss. A clear standard gives your data a reference point and your investment a definition of success.



Industry Comparisons

Benchmark against sector peers using published engagement, attrition, and leadership effectiveness data. Know where you stand relative to the market.



Internal Top-Performer Baselines

Use your highest-performing leaders as the internal gold standard. What behaviors, scores, and outcomes define them? Set the bar there.



Target Effectiveness Ranges

Define acceptable ranges for leadership effectiveness scores, retention rates, or team performance — then track toward them over time.

- ✓ Your action: Identify at least one benchmark source — internal data, industry report, or prior-year comparison — to anchor your "expected standard."

S – Stakes

What happens if your organization chooses not to invest? Risk must be translated into business reality — not left as abstract HR concern. The risks of under-investing in leadership are real, compounding, and often invisible until they become crises.

Execution Friction

Poor leadership creates drag: slower decisions, misaligned teams, and missed windows of opportunity

Performance Drag

Unresolved performance issues fester under weak managers, consuming disproportionate time and resources

Talent Erosion

Top performers leave managers, not companies. Declining engagement leads to quiet quitting... then actual quitting

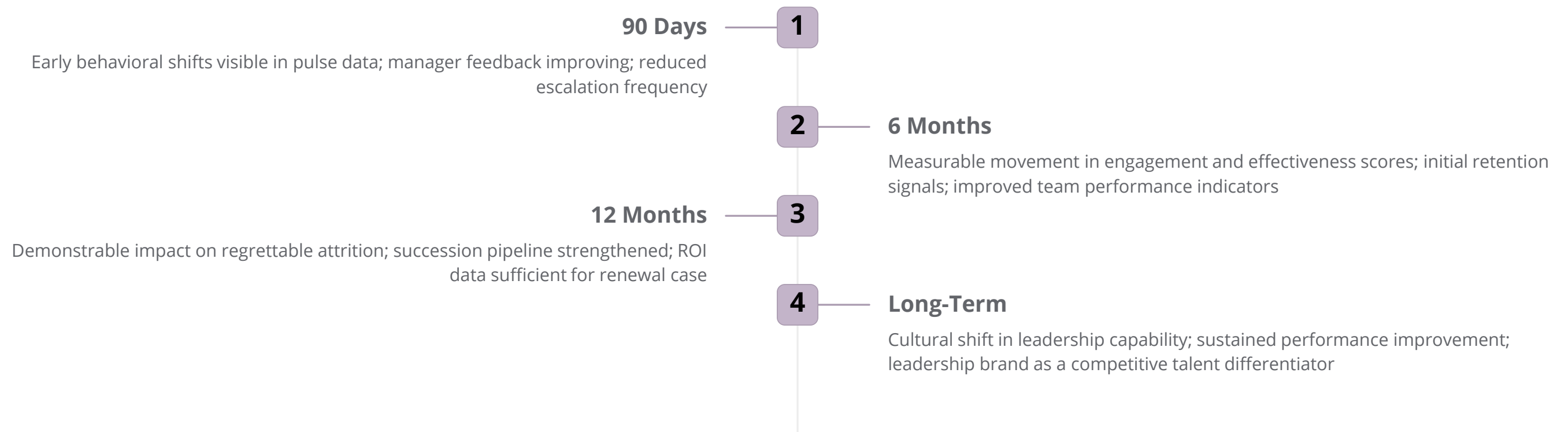
Brand & Credibility Risk

Leadership culture becomes visible: through Glassdoor, exit interviews, and declining candidate quality over time

Not all of these risks appear immediately in financial dashboards, but they all show up in outcomes. The question is whether you address them proactively or reactively.

T – Timeline

When will stakeholders see results? Setting realistic, phased expectations is essential to executive credibility. Anchor the investment in time — so it can be evaluated, defended, and renewed with confidence.



✓ Pro tip: Present the 90-day milestone as a built-in checkpoint. This gives stakeholders a decision gate and reduces the perceived risk of the initial investment.

The Bottom Line

I.N.V.E.S.T.™ shifts the conversation from *"Should we spend money on leadership development?"* to *"Are we making a smart, measurable investment in outcomes that matter?"*

01

Collect Your Data

Use the I.N.V.E.S.T.™ framework to gather your own numbers, stories, and benchmarks from across the business

02

Build Your Case

Translate people metrics into business outcomes using the language your executives actually respond to

03

Present with Confidence

Walk into the room with a defensible, time-bound investment narrative, not a training proposal

The organizations that win on talent are the ones that treat leadership development as a business strategy, not a development perk.



Ready to Build Your Case?

Arden Coaching partners with senior HR leaders and their executive teams to design, implement, and measure leadership development initiatives that deliver real business results. We can help you apply the I.N.V.E.S.T.™ framework to your specific organizational context: from data collection to stakeholder presentation.

Reach out to start a conversation about your leadership strategy:

Schedule a Call

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