

A grayscale photograph of an offshore wind farm with several wind turbines of varying sizes receding into the distance over a dark sea under a cloudy sky. A solid teal horizontal bar is positioned above the main title.

HARNESSING POTENTIAL

2026 Cross-Sector Challenges and Opportunities Regarding Workforce Performance



PERSPECTIVE

At Consensus, we have the good fortune to partner with many of world's leading organizations. Our clients span five continents and most industries.

Helping a diverse client base tackle complex issues provides us with unique insights into global business challenges and opportunities across sectors.

In the pages that follow, we share the biggest challenges faced by organizations as they begin 2026, as well as insights for capitalizing on opportunities.



Value is created or destroyed in meetings, decisions, handoffs, negotiations, and other business interactions.

If those interactions improve, execution improves - and so do sales, margins, speed, profit, and risk outcomes.

For 2026, executives are focused on improving professional interactions as a means of driving business results.

How Does Your Company's Interaction Quality Impact Your Critical Business Results?

Call ⁺¹ **212.391.8100**

Consensus helps clients create and capture value in business interactions through customized, targeted, and immediately actionable Leadership Development solutions

WHAT EXECUTIVES ARE ASKING IN 2026

Senior leaders are no longer asking,
“Is this engaging and informative leadership training?”

Instead, they’re asking:

“ **How does leadership behavior fail to capture value? How can we fix it via training?** ”

Return on Interactions™ provides a way to answer that question with rigor.

It reframes leadership capability as an operating system for execution – one that directly impacts speed, cost, risk, and performance.



THE CENTRAL ISSUE

THE HIDDEN ECONOMICS OF LEADERSHIP INTERACTION: WHY **RETURN ON INTERACTIONS™** DETERMINES EXECUTION

Most organizations don't fail because they lack strategy.

They fail because value leaks out during execution. Decisions stall. Priorities collide. Agreements are rushed. Work gets revisited. Senior leaders get pulled into issues that should never have escalated.

Meanwhile, your highly paid talent spends an extraordinary amount of time navigating challenging interactions with internal and external counterparts instead of moving the business forward.

While none of this shows up cleanly on an income statement, it quietly erodes margins, delays growth, increases risk, and exhausts leaders.

In 2026, the most sophisticated organizations are finally naming the real issue:

The Economics of Interactions.

Where VALUE is really **CREATED** ...or **DESTROYED**

Every organization runs on interactions:

- Decision conversations
- Cross-functional handoffs
- Priority-setting meetings
- Accountability discussions
- Negotiations over pricing, deliverables, resources, timelines, and risk

These interactions determine whether time, talent, and information convert into aligned action...or dissolve into friction and delay.

When interactions are high quality, execution accelerates.

When they're not, cost and risk compound.

This is why Consensus frames leadership capability through a financial lens:
Return on Interactions™.

Return on Interactions™ reflects how effectively professionals convert business interactions into outcomes that matter - speed, productivity, alignment, accountability, and bottom-line results.

BENEFITS

PROBLEM

WHY MOST LEADERSHIP TRAINING FALLS SHORT

Most leadership programs fail because they optimize for inspiration, instead of for execution. They focus on:

- Abstract competencies
- Personal style
- Broad cultural aspirations

What they miss is the component in which real business value is created: the interaction itself.

Return on Interactions™ leadership development is different. We focus on behavioral change and business results. We include:

- Practical frameworks and tools that are readily understandable and actionable
- Role-plays and case-studies that are customized for your organization to reflect participants' real-world contexts and challenges
- Immediate application (in the classroom) to participants' live situations at work

The metric is simple: Does the training change what happens in meetings, decisions, and handoffs following the workshop? Are direct reports more engaged, is productivity higher, and are escalations down?

If not, your ROI doesn't justify the training.

INSIGHT #1

Execution Drag is a Financial Problem (Not a Cultural Problem)

Executives often describe execution problems as “complexity,” “silos,” or “change fatigue.” But, from a financial perspective, the pattern is more precise.

Execution drag shows up as:

- Longer decision cycle times
- Increased rework and duplication
- Higher SG&A per dollar of revenue
- Missed market windows
- Leadership time consumed by escalation

These are not abstract cultural issues. They are **operating costs**.

When leaders lack the skills to align stakeholders, clarify tradeoffs, and reach durable agreements, the organization pays...repeatedly.

Return on Interactions™ Solutions

- Negotiation Skills for Leaders
- How to Say No (and Move Forward)
- Cross-Cultural/Cross-Generational Communication

INSIGHT #2

Internal Friction is the Most Expensive Cost Center That Isn't Tracked

Most inefficiency today is not external. It's internal.

Organizations are more matrixed, global, and interdependent than ever. That means leaders spend more time negotiating internally, often without realizing how costly those negotiations have become:

- Meetings that produce no decisions.
- Projects that stall in handoffs.
- Competing KPIs that force teams to optimize locally while the enterprise underperforms.

Each unresolved interaction consumes high-cost leadership time, and delays execution. The cost isn't visible in isolation - but at scale, it's enormous.

Improving your organization's **Return on Interactions™** means increasing the productivity of internal interactions, not adding more meetings, layers, or oversight.

Return on Interactions™ Solutions

- Collaborative Decision-Making
- Facilitating Meetings
- Bridging Differences

INSIGHT #3

AI Has Raised the Stakes for Good Judgment

AI has lowered the cost of analysis. It has not lowered the cost of indecision.

In fact, as information becomes cheaper, leadership judgment becomes more valuable. The differentiator is no longer access to data. It's the ability to:

- Frame the right questions
- Make principled tradeoffs
- Commit to action amid uncertainty
- Align stakeholders around decisions

Organizations that fail to strengthen these human capabilities experience a paradox: **more data, yet slower decisions.**

Your organization's Return on Interactions™ improves if your leaders are trained not just to analyze, but, instead, to decide, communicate, align, and execute.

Return on Interactions™ Solutions

- Change Leadership
- Innovation & Creativity
- Influence Skills

INSIGHT #4

Middle-Management Can be a Multiplier ...or a Bottleneck

Strategy does not fail at the top. It degrades as it moves through the organization.

Middle managers are where an organization's Return on Interactions™ is either multiplied or destroyed. They translate strategy into priorities, decisions into action, and goals into accountability.

When managers lack the skills to manage up, across, and down simultaneously:

- Strategy gets diluted
- Accountability weakens
- Senior leaders must step in to compensate
- Management overhead increases

Organizations that invest in improving interactions at the middle-management level consistently see stronger returns on strategic initiatives – not because strategy improves, but because execution does.

Return on Interactions™ Solutions

- Managing Up & Across the Organization
- Executive Presence
- Coaching & Mentoring

INSIGHT #5

Behavioral Risk is a Significant Cost ...that Can Be Avoided

Many of today's enterprise risks are not technical. They are behavioral:

- Avoided conversations.
- Unclear ownership.
- Inconsistent decision standards.
- Misaligned stakeholder commitments.

These behaviors introduce volatility such as missed forecasts, failed initiatives, compliance exposure, and unwanted attrition.

From an executive perspective, improving leadership interactions is a form of **risk management**. High-quality interactions reduce surprises and stabilize results.

Return on Interactions™ Solutions

- Difficult Conversations
- Seeking & Receiving Feedback
- Collaborative Negotiation

BOTTOM LINE

Organizations don't lose value because their people aren't smart enough. They lose value because too many critical interactions are inefficient, produce friction instead of progress, or are avoided altogether.

In a world of constant change, complex interdependence, and AI-driven acceleration, **interaction quality is the new productivity frontier.**

Leadership development earns its place at the executive table when it improves ROI - when it measurably increases the return on the most expensive asset in the organization: your professionals' time, energy, and attention.

Better interactions don't just feel better. They perform better.

Return On Interactions™

Our **Return On Interactions™** methodology guides each of our engagements across all three practice areas - Consulting, Peace Building, and Leadership Development.

The approach, which we developed, tested, and applied throughout our 30-year history, focuses on generating measurable results for our clients. Broadly speaking, we incorporate multifaceted analyses, strategies, and solutions that leverage emotional intelligence, proven frameworks, and unique skill sets.

Combined, we provide a menu of services that generate business value for our clients - including increased profits, reduced turnover, and sustained relationships - by improving their interpersonal dynamics, discourse, and interactions.

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The following information available for download:

- Leader Development Catalog
- Leadership Skills Overview
- Professional Development Overview
- Impact Report
- Company Brochure

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SEE RESULTS !!!

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