CITI AT A GLANCE
A leading global bank, Citi has approximately 200 million customer accounts and does business in more than 160 countries. Citi provides a broad range of financial services and products, including consumer banking and credit, corporate and investment banking, securities brokerage, transaction services, and wealth management. Citi’s mission is to serve as a trusted partner to its clients by responsibly providing financial services that enable growth and economic progress.

SETTING THE CONTEXT
Citigroup’s CEO has implemented a new mission and value proposition that prioritises building an ethical culture and creating a growth mind-set within the organisation. Meeting these ambitious goals presents unique challenges for Citi leaders: As Brian Murphy, Head of Learning and Development, observes:

“To meet the ethics challenge, we’re asking leaders to be compliant, manage risk, and be custodians of an ethical culture. But we’re also asking them to adopt a growth mind-set, to lead creatively, and to make innovation a key area of focus. These two priorities are often not complementary — the role of Citi leaders is to navigate these contradictory drivers.”

Kate Matthews, Head of Leadership and Executive Development EMEA, concurs, noting that adopting a growth mind-set in a heavily regulated environment presents Citi leaders with a tough paradox to manage “because innovation comes with risk.” To be effective, Citi leaders must learn strategies that will help them foster innovation while managing the constraints of compliance.

DESIGNING THE SOLUTION
PROMOTING OPEN, HONEST COMMUNICATION
Citigroup offers a core suite of leadership development programmes to build the skills and capabilities of all managers within the company. These programmes are designed for managers of self, managers of others, managers of managers, and top talent. Six thousand employees in EMEA and 30,000 globally have participated in the last three years.

A business leader opens each programme by talking about his or her leadership experiences and challenges, which helps set the tone and create a strong sense of connection. Senior leaders also facilitate the learning sessions. As Murphy notes: “Employees love seeing their leaders facilitating — it helps remove the barriers.” It also reinforces the programme’s key areas of focus: promoting inclusivity and having honest conversations, both critically important skills for Citi leaders in meeting the ethics challenges they face. There are also “alignment” events for senior executives that are leader-led and allow for alignment with and discussion about Citi’s mission and strategic priorities.

“Open communication is powerful,” says Matthews, and the programme’s highly engaging format confirms this assertion: The use of innovative iPad technology allows business leaders to pose questions about key concepts or discuss important business issues, and then crowdsource responses from employees in real time. By providing a forum in which employees can connect directly with their leaders, Citi is “walking the talk” when it comes to its commitment to open communication.
MOVING FROM THE “WHAT” TO THE “HOW” TO CREATE A NEW APPROACH TO MANAGER EFFECTIVENESS

In addition to the core leadership development programmes, a global development experience for new managers helps clarify expectations and embed the right behaviours from the outset. During the six-month experience, new managers learn what is expected of them in order to be successful leaders at Citi, and how to lead in line with Citi’s new Leadership Standards. What successful leadership means, as Murphy notes, is undergoing change:

“Citi’s performance assessment system is rebalancing toward the ‘how’ rather than the ‘what’. In other words, it’s not just about results — it’s about how leaders achieve those results. The key message is the underlying importance of behaviour change, honest conversations, and how leaders build their teams.”

Citi’s new leadership standards and improved performance process are helping managers better understand “what good looks like” and are reshaping the organisation’s approach to compensation and to rewarding manager and leader performance.

MAKING AN IMPACT

Citi has been ranked by the Hay Group as one of the top 20 firms globally for leadership development and frequently earns external recognition for the effectiveness of its learning interventions. And within the organisation, improved promotion and retention rates — as well as the strong performance ratings of managers who have participated in the programme — suggest that Citi’s approach to leadership development is having a positive impact.

Although significant strides are being made in raising leadership capability throughout the organisation, Citi recognises the need to constantly review and re-evaluate its learning programmes to address the gaps and increase impact. One of the ways Citi is doing this is by focusing on post-programme actions that will help sustain behaviour change. Murphy notes that there is only so much that can be taught in a classroom: Programmes that are “episodic” and “interventionist” are not ultimately effective. To reach their full potential, Citi’s leadership development programmes should focus on continuous, on-the-job learning.

As a result, the organisation is seeking to develop a culture of ongoing learning and development in the workplace for all employees. A behaviour change initiative, called #BeMore, is helping to embed a culture of continuous learning by using the “3E” learning philosophy: experience, exposure, and education (based on the 70–20–10 model). One component of the #BeMore initiative is a 30-day development challenge in which employees are encouraged to “be more”. Each day, a 10-minute micro-challenge designed to bring about incremental behaviour change is posted on Citi’s internal Jive platform, “CitiCollaborate”. Employees who participate learn how they can “be more connected” or “be more courageous” each day by watching videos, reading articles, sharing learning and advice, and building a community online by using the #BeMore hashtag.

The #BeMore challenge has been a huge success, sparking high levels of activity and engagement: One of the videos promoted during the campaign had more than 50,000 employee views. Matthews attributes the success of the campaign to making the learning accessible and, more importantly, actionable:

“It’s really about showing our people ‘what good looks like’. Offering small bite-size chunks of learning every day makes it real for people — they learn how to go about embedding the behaviours in their work life.”

She contends that this approach is ultimately the best way to achieve behaviour change because it emphasises learning by application via small incremental steps that become embedded in people’s work.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS AND LESSONS LEARNED

CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Previously, Citigroup had many different leadership programmes across the globe, but Murphy notes that implementing a consistent framework — with a shared set of core building blocks — has completely turned leadership development around:

“Having a high-quality, globally consistent core offering that all your leaders are going through is really important. Whether you are a consumer business in Turkey or an investment banking business in Hong Kong, having consistent leadership standards, and building interventions that support these shared standards, is imperative.”
For a large organisation, achieving this consistency isn’t easy, but the rewards — namely, leaders across the organisation taking aligned action towards achieving shared leadership standards — are worth it.

**“LEADERS TEACHING LEADERS” HELPS EMBED CULTURE CHANGE**

Rather than HR or external facilitators leading programmes, leaders teaching leaders can have a huge impact on learning, Matthews says. This approach helps break down barriers within the organisation and drive culture change, which can often be most effective when it’s led from the top down — with senior leaders acting as role models, bringing the behaviours to life.

**LEARNER-LED LEARNING IS EMPOWERING**

Managers need tools and performance aids to help them learn on the job, while managing and developing their people when and where they need it. Citi views its managers as “learning catalysts” who ensure their teams have ongoing learning and development opportunities, as well as on-the-job feedback. This approach, says Matthews, “is really the ‘secret sauce’ for creating a true learning organisation”. Ultimately, by developing its managers to be effective developers of their team members, Citi will increase the learning capability and growth potential within the organisation: As Matthews observes, “All roads lead to back to building manager and leader capability.”