

Theodore J. Paat

LEARNING & TALENT MANAGEMENT

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General Summary

Over ten years in tech, I've built the infrastructure that helps companies retain their best people, develop strong managers, and grow leaders. I pay attention to where the employee experience breaks (confused new hires, managers operating inconsistently, teams stuck on the same problems) and use those signals to figure out what's actually missing. My superpower - I build what fixes it: onboarding that gets people productive faster, manager development that builds capability before issues show up, team interventions that get groups unstuck, and coaching that helps people through big transitions. I'm a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach who believes people grow faster when you build on what they're already good at. Trained facilitator (improvisation, clown school) who knows how to influence without authority and work directly with executives to build learning systems that scale.

Core Competencies

- **Leadership & Talent Development:** Building capability across all levels through coaching, development programs, and career pathways
- **Learning Systems Design:** Enterprise onboarding, performance enablement, and manager readiness
- **Team Effectiveness:** Facilitating offsites, establishing norms, and coaching leaders on team performance using frameworks like Tuckman's model
- **Data-Driven Program Design:** Using engagement data, feedback, and metrics to shape priorities and measure impact
- **Automation & AI:** ChatGPT, Claude, Zapier, Notion AI, vO, Articulate, Docebo, Gemini
- **Cross-Functional Influence:** Partnering with HRBPs, and business leaders to drive alignment and adoption

Professional Experience

The Onward Practice LLC: Founder & Gallup Strengths Leadership Coach **(Jan 2026 - present)**

- Build leadership capability frameworks for managers and senior leaders using Gallup StrengthsFinder methodology. Assess leadership gaps across all levels, design development programs tied to company values, and create pathways that grow leadership quality and career progression.

Vercel: Senior Learning & Development Manager & LGBTQ ERG Lead

(Mar 2024 - present)

- Built enterprise onboarding infrastructure (company-wide, GTM, engineering) reducing time-to-productivity by designing need-to-know content for adult learners, focusing on what people need now vs. later to accelerate day-to-day performance.
- Owned resource hubs for New Hire Onboarding, GTM Onboarding, and Vercelate (SDR-to-AE career development), supporting 425+ new hires. Managers reported saving ~1 hour per new hire in onboarding prep, and manager preparedness increased 12%.
- Partnered cross-functionally with PBPs, Ops, and business leaders to design and iterate onboarding and leadership development programs. Integrated stakeholder feedback and engagement data into program design, driving 90%+ adoption of manager onboarding frameworks through change management and influence without authority.
- Coached managers on team effectiveness and new hire ramp, reducing early variability by standardizing resources and coaching leaders on expectation-setting and feedback ownership.
- Owned team development, partnering with senior engineering leaders to design and facilitate offsites using Tuckman's model to establish norming behaviors and improve team execution. Built peer learning system making high-performer knowledge reusable across the company.
- Led People Team AI hackathon and encouraged adoption of AI tools (vO, Zapier, ChatGPT) to automate workflows, design internal dashboards, and accelerate team productivity.
- Co-led LGBTQ ERG, designing consistent programming that created community and improved belonging for LGBTQ employees.

Carta: L&D Lead, Employee Experience & Pride ERG Lead**(May 2021 – Mar 2024)**

- Built leadership development system across all levels, establishing shared leadership baseline and reducing early performance gaps. Created new manager onboarding and coached senior leaders on inclusive leadership principles, management standards, and team effectiveness. Designed Aspiring Manager program testing readiness before promotion and clarifying management rigor at Carta.
- Built performance management toolkit for managers including calibration guides, feedback frameworks, and review templates. Partnered with HRBPs to improve rating consistency and review quality.
- Scaled onboarding infrastructure for 2,000+ hires, reducing early confusion and accelerating role clarity. Standardized manager resources improving leadership confidence during new hire ramp.
- Owned team development, partnering with senior engineering leaders to design and facilitate offsites using Tuckman's model to establish norming behaviors and improve team execution. Built peer learning system making high-performer knowledge reusable across the company.
- Led M&A onboarding reducing post-acquisition uncertainty by creating clear expectations and aligning managers to support acquired employees.

Affirm: Instructional Designer & LGBTQ+ ERG Co-Lead**(Sep 2019 – Apr 2021)**

- Built Customer Operations onboarding system reducing quality risk by establishing clear expectations, role context, and practical training before new hires handled live work.
- Designed QA and training workflows aligning team on priorities, standards, and decision-making as function scaled, reducing duplicated effort.
- Introduced shared program design framework (5D method) establishing consistent program structure and improving scalability as hiring increased.

Leanplum: Learning & Development Manager**(May 2018 – Aug 2019)**

- Implemented first LMS (Docebo) delivering trackable training to customers, partners, and revenue teams, addressing inconsistent external and internal readiness.
- Built Customer Success onboarding reducing reactive skill gaps by developing role-specific training that built CSM confidence before issues impacted customers.
- Designed customer and partner training improving adoption and retention by integrating education into the product experience.

Professional Certifications

- **Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach (CliftonStrengths)** — Nov 2025
- **ACT Leadership & Performance Coaching Certification (Brown University)** — Expected Jan 2027

Education

- **The Clown School of San Francisco:** Beginning Clowning
- **Studio ACT:** General Acting Classes
- **San Jose State University:** Single Subject Teaching Credential (Emphasis: Adapted Physical Education)
- **San Jose State University:** BA in RTVF & Minor in Deaf Education
- **Edinburgh Napier University:** School of Mass Communications & Public Relations

Personal Interests

Baked by Theo, The Onward Practice, CrossFit, Acting, Vintage Hawaiian shirts, Big Talk, Bread pudding, and Cinnamon rolls (centers only)