

RELEASE YOUR POWER at WORK: A FRAMEWORK FOR GROWTH, READINESS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

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Workplace Growth Strategy White Paper

Release Your Power at Work™: A Framework for Growth, Readiness, and Organizational Impact

In today's evolving workplace, organizations face a critical challenge: employees who are present but disengaged, loyal but stagnant, and ambitious yet unprepared for advancement. At the same time, leaders struggle to build strong internal talent pipelines, reduce turnover, and cultivate a workforce that is agile, accountable, and future-ready.

Release Your Power at Work™ addresses this challenge by reframing employee growth as a **shared responsibility** — one that benefits the organization, leadership, and the individual alike.

At its core, this framework challenges a common but limiting belief: that advancement is primarily a function of time, tenure, or entitlement. Instead, it asserts a more sustainable truth — **readiness precedes reward**, and growth must be intentional long before a promotion, title, or opportunity appears.

Drawing from over three decades of professional experience in higher education, workforce development, recruitment, leadership training, and coaching, Dr. Coach Lilisa J. Williams introduces a practical, human-centered approach that helps employees “grow where they are planted” — not as a call to remain stagnant, but as a strategy to build competence, confidence, and credibility in their current roles while preparing for what's next.

The *Release Your Power at Work*™ framework emphasizes:

- Intentional self-development
- Alignment between individual contribution and organizational goals
- Visibility through performance and growth
- Leadership readiness at every level
- Ownership of one's career trajectory

Rather than positioning growth as something that happens *after* advancement, this model encourages employees to demonstrate next-level capability **before** the next-level opportunity arrives. In doing so, organizations benefit from higher engagement, stronger performance, reduced hiring costs, and a deeper internal leadership bench. Supervisors gain dependable, capable teams that require less micromanagement and deliver stronger results. Individuals gain clarity, confidence, and momentum toward meaningful career advancement.

This white paper provides leaders, HR professionals, and workforce development partners with a clear framework for cultivating a culture where growth is expected, supported, and rewarded — and where employees understand that remaining planted without developing is not the same as growing.

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Ultimately, *Release Your Power at Work™* is both a mindset shift and a call to action:
for organizations to invest wisely,
for leaders to model development,
and for individuals to take ownership of their readiness.

When growth becomes intentional, power is released — and workplaces transform.

The Workplace Challenge

Across organizations—particularly in higher education and mission-driven environments, there is a growing disconnect between employee experience, leadership expectations, and long-term organizational success. Many faculty and staff are dedicated, hardworking, and deeply committed to their roles, yet over time they begin to feel stagnant, disengaged, or uncertain about how to grow and advance.

In many workplaces, growth is implicitly tied to promotion or positional change rather than intentional development. Employees often believe that once a new title is granted, development will follow. Conversely, leaders frequently expect employees to demonstrate readiness before advancement yet lack a shared framework or language to communicate those expectations clearly.

This misalignment creates several persistent challenges:

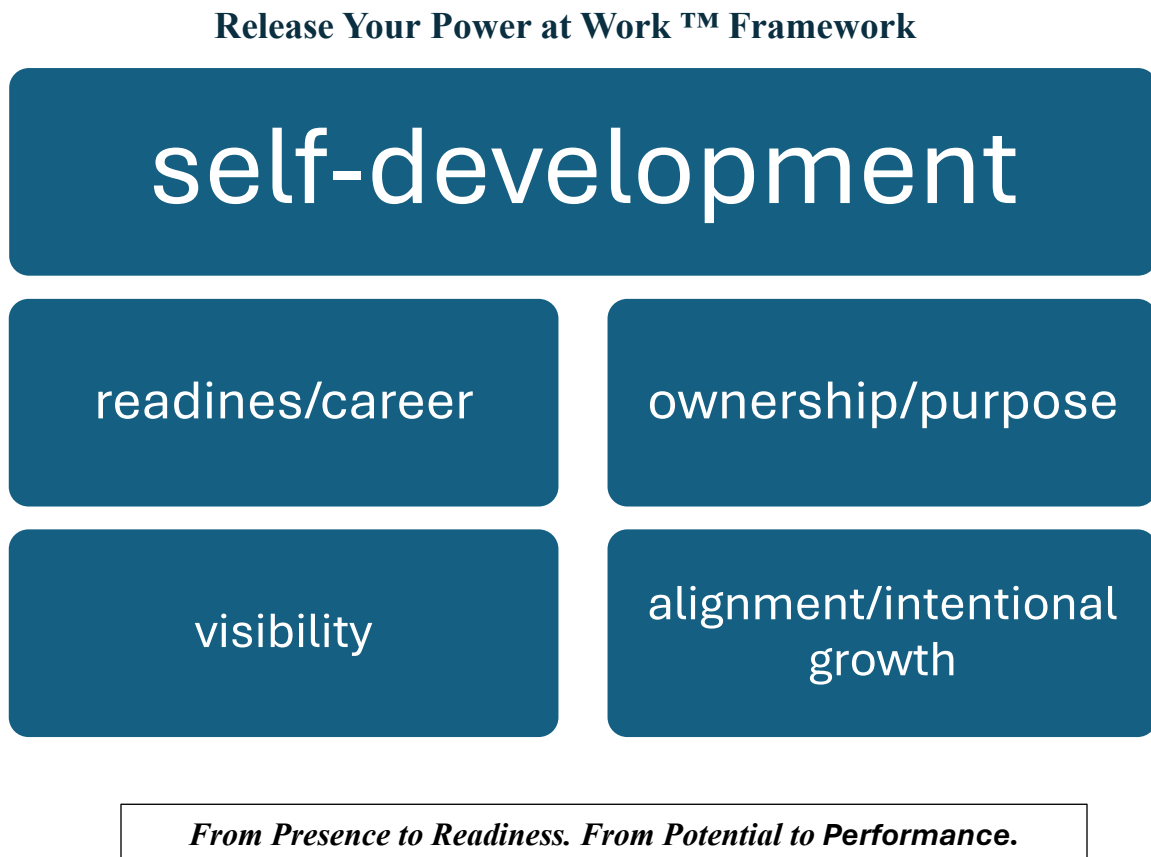
- Employees equate effort, tenure, or loyalty with readiness for advancement.
- Faculty and staff focus primarily on task completion or content delivery, rather than growth and leadership influence.
- Individuals do not consistently see themselves as leaders who model growth, resilience, and success behaviors.
- Supervisors struggle to guide development conversations without overpromising opportunity.
- Professional development is viewed as optional or supplemental, rather than essential to organizational health.

Over time, these dynamics contribute to frustration, disengagement, and stalled leadership pipelines. Employees may feel overlooked or undervalued, while organizations experience reduced agility, weakened culture, and missed opportunities to maximize talent and impact.

At the same time, students, clients, and stakeholders are directly affected by these conditions. They experience organizations through the people who serve them. When growth among faculty and staff is unintentional or unsupported, the environment becomes transactional rather than transformational.

Addressing this challenge requires a fundamental shift in perspective—from viewing growth as something that happens after advancement to recognizing development as a prerequisite for opportunity, leadership, and sustained success. Organizations must intentionally create cultures where individuals are encouraged and supported to **grow where they are planted**, aligning personal development with organizational purpose and outcomes.

The Release Your Power at Work™ Framework



The *Release Your Power at Work™* framework is built on a simple but transformative principle:

- **Being planted is not the same as growing.**
Growth must be intentional before advancement is possible.

This framework provides organizations, leaders, and employees with a **shared language and structure** for understanding how growth actually happens in the workplace — and why readiness must come before reward.

Rather than focusing solely on titles, tenure, or aspiration, this model emphasizes **development, alignment, and demonstrated capability** at every stage of an employee’s journey.

Framework Overview

The *Release Your Power at Work™* framework consists of **five integrated pillars** that work together to move individuals and organizations from stagnation to sustainable success.

Each pillar answers a critical workplace question.

PILLAR 1: SELF-DEVELOPMENT — “Who Am I Becoming?”

Growth begins internally.

Self-development is the foundation of workplace readiness. It requires employees to intentionally strengthen their skills, mindset, habits, and self-awareness — not for a future role, but for the role they currently occupy.

This includes:

- Building new skills
- Increasing emotional intelligence
- Strengthening work habits and discipline
- Understanding strengths and development areas
- Embracing continuous learning

Strategic Insight:

Employees who do not grow themselves cannot expect their roles to grow around them.

PILLAR 2: OWNERSHIP — “How Am I Taking Responsibility?”

Ownership shifts employees from passive participation to active contribution.

Rather than waiting to be noticed, directed, or promoted, individuals who release their power take responsibility for:

- Their performance
- Their development
- Their attitude
- Their impact

Ownership eliminates entitlement and replaces it with accountability.

Strategic Insight:

Careers accelerate when individuals stop waiting and start owning their growth.

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PILLAR 3: ALIGNMENT — “How Does My Work Support the Organization?”

Alignment connects individual effort to organizational purpose.

Employees often struggle to see how their role contributes to the larger mission. This pillar helps individuals:

- Understand organizational goals
- Connect daily work to outcomes
- See their value in the system
- Operate with purpose, not just compliance

Strategic Insight:

When employees understand *why* their work matters, engagement and performance increase.

PILLAR 4: VISIBILITY THROUGH PERFORMANCE — “What Evidence Am I Showing?”

Growth must be visible to be recognized.

Visibility is not self-promotion — it is **demonstrated readiness**. This pillar emphasizes:

- Consistently strong performance
- Initiative and problem-solving
- Next-level thinking
- Reliability and follow-through
- Contribution beyond the job description

Strategic Insight:

Promotions are rarely based on potential alone; they are based on visible performance at the next level.

PILLAR 5: READINESS — “Am I Prepared for What I’m Asking For?”

Readiness is the intersection of growth and opportunity.

Employees often ask for advancement without preparing for it. This pillar reframes advancement as:

- Preparation before promotion

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- Capability before title
- Contribution before recognition

Readiness is what organizations look for — whether they name it or not.

Strategic Insight:

Advancement is not a reward for time served; it is a response to demonstrated readiness.

How the Framework Works in Practice

The five pillars are not linear — they are **reinforcing**.

- Self-development strengthens ownership
- Ownership drives alignment
- Alignment increases performance visibility
- Visibility signals readiness
- Readiness attracts opportunity

When employees engage all five pillars, they move from simply being present at work to becoming **valuable, prepared, and promotable contributors**.

Why This Framework Matters

The *Release Your Power at Work™* framework:

- Creates clarity around growth expectations
- Removes confusion about advancement
- Reduces frustration and entitlement
- Strengthens leadership pipelines
- Aligns individual ambition with organizational needs

Most importantly, it empowers individuals to stop waiting for permission to grow — and start releasing their power right where they are planted.

Workplace impact is how growth shows up daily.

Organizational impact is the result when that growth is sustained.

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Lived Experiences

1. **Valcor Engineering** — *“Promotions come when they see you doing the work at the next level.”*
2. **Continental Airlines** — *“Be a Star Where You Are.”*

The following stories illustrate a consistent truth: **advancement follows demonstrated readiness, not time served or desire alone.**

Readiness Before Promotion — Valcor Engineering

Early in my career at Valcor Engineering, I worked as a File Clerk and aspired to move into a Purchasing Buyer role. Year after year, I asked about advancement — and year after year, my request was denied. Frustrated, I voiced my disappointment to coworkers, convinced that my desire and tenure should result in promotion.

Eventually, my supervisor, John Stuart, had a candid conversation with me — one that would permanently shape my understanding of career growth.

He said, *“Lilisa, I’m going to tell you the same thing I tell my two daughters. Promotions come when they see you doing the work that is required at the next level.”*

That moment was pivotal. He did not question my ambition — he challenged my **readiness**. He helped me understand that organizations promote demonstrated capability, not intention. Advancement does not begin when a title changes; it begins when performance changes.

I never forgot that conversation. More importantly, I applied it. I shifted from waiting to preparing, from asking to demonstrating. That lesson has followed me through every leadership role I’ve held — and now informs how I teach others to grow with purpose and clarity.

1st Leadership Insight:

Promotion is not the starting point of growth; it is the result of it.

“Be a Star Where You Are” — Continental Airlines

Later in my career, while serving as a Staffing Representative (recruiter) at Continental Airlines (now United), I was responsible for interviewing employees seeking promotions into new roles.

Over time, I noticed a troubling pattern. Many employees were not pursuing advancement because they were excelling and ready — they were seeking to escape their current situation. Some were frustrated with supervisors or coworkers. Others had productivity or performance challenges. Still, they were confident that a new role would suddenly improve their performance.

As recruiters, we had to ask a difficult but necessary question:

If an employee is not performing well now, what evidence suggests they will perform better in the next role?

Time and again, candidates assured us, *“I’ll do better once I get my dream job.”* But experience told a different story. Performance issues are rarely resolved by changing departments — they are often carried forward.

That realization led our HR team to create a companywide workshop in 1999 titled **“Be a Star Where You Are.”** The message was simple, but powerful: excellence is demonstrated in the present, not promised in the future.

The principle behind that workshop remains relevant today. Employees who do not shine where they are planted cannot expect to shine elsewhere. Growth begins where you stand.

2nd Leadership Insight:

Employees do not grow into excellence by escaping responsibility — they grow by mastering it.

Connecting the Stories to the Framework

Both experiences — one as an employee and one as a recruiter — reinforce the same truth at different stages of the workplace journey:

- Readiness precedes reward
- Growth must be visible
- Performance is portable
- Development is the employee’s responsibility
- Opportunity responds to preparation

These lessons form the foundation of the *Release Your Power at Work™* framework and underscore why organizations benefit when employees are encouraged — and expected — to grow where they are planted.

WIIFM: What’s in It for Every Level of the Organization?

Why “Grow Where You Are Planted” Is a Strategic Imperative

For growth to take root in the workplace, it must make sense at every level of the organization. When employees understand how their development benefits not just themselves, but also their leaders and the organization as a whole, engagement shifts from compliance to commitment.

The *Release Your Power at Work™* framework answers the WIIFM question clearly for all stakeholders.

Organizational Level — WIIFM for the Company

Organizations that encourage employees to grow where they are planted gain measurable and strategic advantages.

What the Organization Gains

- **Stronger performance and productivity**
Employees who grow contribute at higher levels and solve problems more effectively.
- **A reliable internal talent pipeline**
Development reduces dependency on external hiring and builds leadership from within.
- **Lower turnover and recruitment costs**
Growth increases engagement, retention, and institutional knowledge.
- **Greater agility and resilience**
Skilled, adaptable employees respond better to change and disruption.
- **A healthier organizational culture**
Growth-oriented environments foster accountability, innovation, and trust.

Organizational Bottom Line:

Growth is not a perk — it is a business strategy that drives sustainability and results.

Supervisor / Manager Level — WIIFM for Leadership

For supervisors, employee growth directly impacts day-to-day effectiveness and leadership credibility.

What Supervisors Gain

- **More capable, dependable teams**
Growing employees require less micromanagement and supervision.
- **Improved team performance and morale**
Development reduces frustration, errors, and interpersonal conflict.

- **Stronger leadership reputation**
Leaders are judged by the strength of their teams.
- **Succession and coverage support**
Developed employees can step up, support projects, and fill gaps.
- **More time for strategic leadership**
Less firefighting, more forward-thinking.

Supervisor Bottom Line:

When employees grow, leadership becomes more effective, respected, and sustainable.

Individual Employee Level — WIIFM for the Person

For individuals, growing where they are planted is the fastest and most reliable path to career mobility and fulfillment.

What the Individual Gains

- **Increased confidence and competence**
Growth strengthens both skill and self-belief.
- **Greater visibility and credibility**
Performance and initiative are noticed.
- **Preparedness for advancement**
Employees become promotion-ready before opportunities arise.
- **Higher job satisfaction and purpose**
Growth brings meaning to daily work.
- **Career protection and mobility**
Developed employees remain valuable in changing environments.

Individual Bottom Line:

Growth gives you options, relevance, and readiness — regardless of title or tenure.

The Shared Win

When employees grow where they are planted:

- The **organization** gains performance and stability
- **Supervisors** gain strong, reliable teams
- **Individuals** gain momentum, confidence, and opportunity

3rd Leadership Insight:

Everyone benefits when growth becomes intentional. When employees grow where they are planted, power is released at every level of the organization.

Conclusion

The modern workplace is no longer sustained by tenure alone, nor is it transformed by ambition without preparation. Organizations that thrive today do so because they cultivate environments where growth is expected, supported, and demonstrated — not delayed until a promotion appears.

Release Your Power at Work™ reframes growth as a **shared responsibility**. It challenges organizations to move beyond entitlement-based advancement and encourages individuals to take ownership of their readiness long before opportunity knocks.

When employees grow where they are planted:

- Performance strengthens,
- Engagement deepens,
- Leadership pipelines become clearer,
- And workplaces become more resilient and future-ready.

This approach does not ask employees to remain stuck or complacent. Instead, it empowers them to develop, contribute, and lead from wherever they stand — while preparing for what comes next. It also provides leaders with a practical framework for identifying readiness, supporting development, and making advancement decisions rooted in evidence rather than assumption.

Call to Action: Releasing Power Through Intentional Growth

The call to action is clear:

- **Organizations** must invest in development as a strategy, not a perk.
- **Leaders** must model growth and communicate expectations with clarity and consistency.
- **Individuals** must take ownership of their development and demonstrate readiness through performance, not promises.

Final Leadership Insight:

- Being planted is not the same as growing.
- Growth must come before advancement.
- Power is released when preparation meets opportunity.

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About the Author

Dr. Coach Lilisa J. Williams, MBA is an executive coach, leadership and workforce development consultant, and adjunct faculty member with more than 30 years of experience across higher education, workforce development, recruitment, training, and coaching. Her work focuses on helping individuals and organizations align growth, leadership, and impact to achieve sustainable success.

Dr. Williams is the author of *Release Your Power: Eight Strategies for Becoming Who You Really Are* and is widely recognized for her ability to connect personal growth with professional readiness. Her work is grounded in real-world experience — as an employee, recruiter, leader, coach, and facilitator — allowing her to address workplace challenges with authenticity, insight, and practical solutions.

How to Partner: Bringing Release Your Power at Work™ to Your Organization

Release Your Power at Work™ can be delivered and customized to meet the needs of organizations, leadership teams, and workforce development initiatives across industries.

Begin the Conversation

To explore partnership opportunities, customized programming, or speaking engagements, organizations are invited to connect directly.

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High-Growth Organization vs. Traditional Organization

HIGH-GROWTH ORGANIZATION	TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATION
Growth is expected at every level	Growth is optional or delayed
Leadership is influence, not title	Leadership is positional
People develop before advancement	People develop after promotion
Learning is continuous and visible	Learning is episodic or reactive
Employees own their development	Development is assigned or avoided
Feedback is normal and constructive	Feedback is limited or corrective
Readiness drives opportunity	Tenure or timing drives opportunity
Staff model adaptability and resilience	Staff model stagnation or burnout
Engagement is sustained	Engagement fluctuates
Retention and outcomes improve	Retention and outcomes suffer

*When staff and faculty grow, students, customers, and clients benefit.
Growth at the people level drives success at the organizational level.*