# How to Create a Thriving Leadership Development Program

A leadership development program helps employees grow within their careers and become better leaders. Some programs are geared toward developing new leaders, while others focus on assisting experienced managers in improving their skills. A leadership development program can help you improve employees' productivity, innovation, and creativity. It can also help you reach your organizational goals by ensuring a pool of individuals who can lead without hiring at the higher levels.

There are many reasons to encourage your employees to participate in leadership training. As an organization grows and changes, it's essential that its employees understand their role in achieving goals and contribute adequately at work. To start a leadership development program in your organization, follow these four steps.
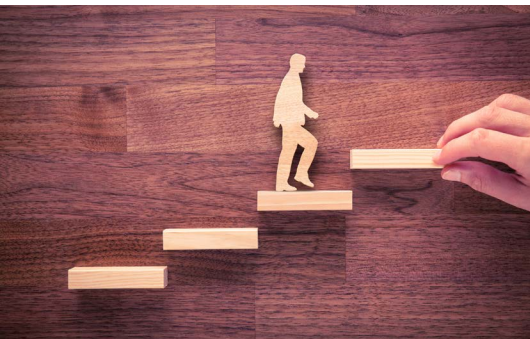
Determine Potential Leaders

Before undertaking a leadership development program, it's essential to think about suitable candidates who are willing to grow. Don't limit yourself to the people you're closest to, or even just your star employees—find anyone you think might make a good leader and talk to them about the program. It's important to remember that some employees may not want leadership roles and are happy doing their everyday tasks. However, it is vital to make it known they have the opportunity to learn leadership roles if they wish.

Employees naturally fall into different categories or roles within an organization. The way someone approaches their job will tell you about their leadership ability. For example, engaged employees show interest in their work beyond what is required of them. It's also important to look at how employees handle failure or a challenge. Most people either avoid or give up on a difficult task or project, but those with potential see it differently. Rather than avoid or give up on a challenging task or project, they try to learn from the situation to succeed next time.

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Identify Leadership Gaps

Leadership development is about identifying gaps in strengths, skills, and knowledge so you can improve your program. Create a chart to write where you're at now and where you'd like to be in the future. When considering the gaps in your leadership team, keep in mind that people are not interchangeable parts. They have different skillsets and capabilities. Consider each position on your leadership team, what strengths and weaknesses each person possess, and how much time it would take to develop their skillset into a strong leader.

After you figure out what areas you need to pay extra attention to, break down your training program into two sections: for junior leaders (those who have been in the company for less than three years) and senior leaders (those who have been in the organization for more than three years). Different goals might apply to each group. For instance, your goals might include improving junior leaders' communication skills while building trust among senior leaders.

Nurture and Develop Leaders

It's important to place employees in positions to learn and grow. One way to do this is by allowing individuals to step up when leaders are away or collaborate with colleagues in other departments on special projects. People must be able to lead themselves and others to take the initiative required in today's business environment. Many organizations treat leadership development as a training issue, but it's not enough to put emerging leaders through a series of structured classes, and lectures, simulations. It's also vital to undergo exercises like job rotation, shadowing, and project leadership.

There are other ways to nurture and develop leadership among your employees. One way is by being a mentor to them. Take them under your wing and let them see how experienced leaders handle different situations and interact with their teams. Another way is by giving them low-risk opportunities for failure and then helping them get through those tough times. Anyone can lead when everything is going smoothly, but they learn what it means to be a leader and deal with adversity when things go wrong.

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Define the Measurable Outcomes

Before implementing your leadership development program, determine how you will measure its success. Some options include measuring the success of individual participants and the overall success of your program. Estimating these outcomes can be as simple as using pre and post-program assessments. This kind of questioning can help you see how participants improved by rating themselves on a five-point scale. For example, questions can look like: how comfortable they feel managing conflicts or how confident they are in leading meetings in the workplace. Then, compare the answers before and after the training to see the improvement results.

Not only do you want to measure the success of your leadership development program, but you also want to measure its participants' abilities. Successful leaders are not only great communicators and problem solvers, but they also adapt well to changing circumstances. Look for multi-skilled individuals who push themselves beyond their usual boundaries and embrace new ideas and opportunities. The more flexible and adaptable these workers are, the better they will be in any situation.

Leadership development is crucial to any business. Without great leaders, an organization cannot have a strong culture, proper communication, or excellent performance. Your company can have leadership programs that benefit every employee by identifying leadership gaps, nurturing and developing leaders, determining potential leaders, and measuring outcomes.

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