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Developing Leadership at a Collective Level

Abstract:

Leadership development refers to any activity that enhances the quality of leadership within an individual or organization. These activities have ranged from MBA style programs offered at university business schools to action learning, high-ropes courses and executive retreats. Traditionally, leadership development has focused on developing the leadership abilities and attitudes of individuals.

Key Concepts: Leadership Development, Self efficacy, Visioning, Succession Planning,

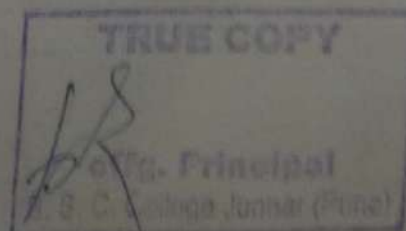
Introduction:

Just as people are not all born with the ability or desire to play football (soccer) like Zinedine Zidane or sing like Luciano Pavarotti, people are not all born with the ability to lead. Different personal traits and characteristics can help or hinder a person's leadership effectiveness and require formalized programs for developing leadership competencies yet everyone can develop their leadership effectiveness. Achieving such development takes focus, practice and persistence more akin to learning a musical instrument than reading a book.

Classroom-style training and associated reading is effective in helping leaders to know more about what is involved in leading well. However, knowing what to do and doing what you know are two very different outcomes; management expert Henry Mintzberg is one person to highlight this dilemma. It is estimated that as little as 15% of learning from traditional classroom style training results in sustained behavioral change within the workplace.

The success of leadership development efforts has been linked to three variables:

- Individual learner characteristics
- The quality and nature of the leadership development program
- Genuine support for behavioral change from the leader's supervisor



Development is also more likely to occur when the design of the development program:

- Integrates a range of developmental experiences over a set period of time (e.g. 6–12 months). These experiences may include 360 degree feedback, experiential classroom style programs, business school style coursework, executive coaching, reflective journaling, mentoring and more.
- Involves goal setting, following an assessment of key developmental needs and then evaluate the achievement of goals after a given time period.

Key Concepts in leadership development

Experiential learning: positioning the individual in the focus of the learning process, going through the four stages of experiential learning as formulated by David A. Kolb: 1. concrete experience 2. Observation and reflection 3. Forming abstract concept 4. Testing in new situations.

- **Self efficacy:** The right training and coaching should bring about 'Self efficacy' in the trainee, as Albert Bandura formulated: A person's belief about his capabilities to produce effects
- **Visioning:** Developing the ability to formulate a clear image of the aspired future of an organization unit.

A good personal leadership development program should enable you to develop a plan that helps you gain essential leadership skills required for roles across a wide spectrum from a youth environment to the corporate world.

Developing Leadership at a Collective Level

More recently, organizations have come to understand that leadership can also be developed by strengthening the connection between, and alignment of, the efforts of individual leaders and the systems through which they influence organizational operations. This has led to a differentiation between **leader development** and **leadership development**.

Leadership development can build on the development of individuals (including followers) to become leaders. In addition, it also needs to focus on the interpersonal linkages between the individuals in the team.

Succession Planning

The development of "high potentials" to effectively take over the current leadership when their time comes to exit their positions is known as succession planning. This type of leadership development usually requires the extensive transfer of an individual between departments. In many multinationals, it usually requires international transfer and experience to build a future leader. Succession planning requires a sharp focus on organization's future and vision, in order to align leadership development with the future the firm aspires to create. Thus successive leadership development is based not only on knowledge and history but also on a dream. For such a plan to be successful, a screening of future leadership should be based not only on "what we know and have" but also on "what we aspire to become". Persons involved in succession planning should be current leadership representing the vision and HR executives having to translate it all into a program. According to Meir Jacob and Amit Cohen (1995) three critical dimensions should be considered: 1. Skills and knowledge 2. Role perception and degree of acceptance of leading role 3. Self-efficacy (Albert Bandura). These three dimensions should be a basis of any leadership succession programme. There are several qualities or traits that leaders possess which can impact their success while influencing those around them. Here are a few key attributes to look for in a great leader or develop in you to take the lead.

Living example of core values - A company may incorporate into its mission statement that honesty is one of honesty and integrity. However, employees must witness the leadership and ownership practicing these values and must be developed into honest and forthright employees, or that company won't fulfill its mission. When it comes to core values, it is more important to show people who you are and to exemplify what the company's beliefs are than it is to talk about it. Although, communicating your values and looking for opportunities to share your value statement are certainly important.

A visionary - Has a strong desire to succeed and help others as well as the company to succeed. Leaders see opportunities and threats coming and take action to capitalize on present business, family, community, country and/or world.

Communicates well - Sharing your vision, goals and thoughts while actively soliciting feedback and input from those around you. The best communication is dialogue and not monologue. A great communicator takes advantage of timing and communicates at the right time.

Breaks it down - Great leaders know how to take large dreams, visions and projects and then break them down into manageable bite-sized pieces. Taking small steps to finish a large objective helps the individual tasked with the job to understand the process and execute it more easily in the future.

Seeks self-development - While developing others, it is imperative to recognize the importance of looking for opportunities to help yourself grow. Seek to become better daily.

Motivates - Motivation is important for your success both personally and professionally. Read a lot of books, watch a lot of motivational videos, and follow other leaders who possess similar core values. Avoid de-motivational materials, people, conversations and activities.

Multi-tasks effectively - Leaders have the ability to multi-task while focusing on each individual project and/or person and then devote their focus, effort and time to them. The type of person who possesses this skill can do no more than two things at a time and do them well.

Manages time well - Time management is an extremely important skill to understand. Prioritizing and being able to say "No" are key factors. Understanding processes and knowing how to accurately estimate time of activities is an important step towards good time management. Additionally, when it comes to priorities, it is important to start with the opportunity that will have the biggest impact in achieving your goal or goals.

Follows up and follows through - Develop a system to retain information for future opportunities and or follow-ups with your staff, customers, family, friends, etc. Once information has been retained, you have to physically do something with that information. The best plans fail because of lack of implementation.

Approachable and visible - A leader is not only approachable but visible to those who follow them, thus distinguishing them as leader and not just a boss. While there are certainly needs that warrant closed-door planning sessions, they should be the exception and not the rule.

Attitude of Gratitude - Be thankful and share your thankfulness with your team and your customers. In conjunction with humility, thankfulness is a powerful trait that many great leaders possess.

Trustworthy - This person can be counted on and is worthy of trust both professionally and personally. They tell the truth and don't manipulate words or withhold truth in order to get what they want

Empower others - True potential can't be obtained by micro-managing people. Policies, procedures and guidelines certainly have their place and setting expectations are extremely important. However, it is impossible to write policies for every possible scenario particularly in this ever-changing world. Staff should be empowered to do their job and take care of the customer. If a situation is handled wrong, make suggestions for how to handle it better next time. If done well, praise a job well done.

In regards to leadership, training is the teaching of tasks and things whereas development is the encouragement and leading of people to do what they were created to do. For example, you can train an employee how to process a credit card, but you have to develop the employee to understand the sales process, the customer and ultimately the closing of the sale.

Additionally, you can train management and leadership teams to understand policies and procedures but you have to empower and develop them to make real-time decisions that benefit both the customer and the company.

According to Mike Myatt, who is a leadership advisor to Fortune 500 CEOs and their boards of directors, these are some clear **differences between training and development:**

1. Training blends to a norm - Development occurs beyond the norm.
2. Training focuses on technique/content/curriculum - Development focuses on people.
3. Training tests patience - Development tests courage.
4. Training focuses on the present - Development focuses on the future.
5. Training adheres to standards - Development focuses on maximizing potential.
6. Training is transactional - Development is transformational.
7. Training focuses on maintenance - Development focuses on growth.
8. Training focuses on the role - Development focuses on the person.
9. Training indoctrinates - Development educates.



10. Training maintains status quo – Development catalyzes innovation.
11. Training stifles culture – Development enriches culture.
12. Training encourages compliance – Development emphasizes performance.
13. Training focuses on efficiency – Development focuses on effectiveness.
14. Training focuses on problems -- Development focuses on solutions.
15. Training focuses on reporting lines – Development expands influence.
16. Training places people in a box – Development frees them from the box.
17. Training is mechanical – Development is intellectual.
18. Training focuses on the knowns – Development explores the unknowns.
19. Training places people in a comfort zone – Development moves people beyond their comfort zones.
20. Training is finite – Development is infinite.

Conclusion:

In this day and age both development and training are important to the success of a business, community, and family or individual. However, it is very important to recognize the differences between the two to see success with both.

A good personal leadership development program should enable you to develop a plan that helps you gain essential leadership skills required for roles across a wide spectrum from a youth environment to the corporate world. It's been our experience through numerous leadership-training events, workshops, and visits with consultants over the years that Developing people, especially leaders, takes time and is best done over time versus a one-meeting-and-done scenario. Developing people takes a mentorship approach where the mentor takes significant interest in seeing the responsibility succeed and win.

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