

Approaches To Leadership Development

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Leadership is a social process that involves influencing others. The systematic development of good leaders is fundamental to long-term organizational success, yet organizations often overlook it or haphazardly undertake leadership development.

Strong leadership influences culture and plays a critical role in any company's sustained success. It drives engagement and motivates employees, which in turn improves employee performance and increases organizational productivity. According to a study by the Center for Creative Leadership (2020), 65% of companies with mature leadership development programs drive improved business results, compared to 6% of companies without a leadership development program. 86% of organizations with formal leadership development programs responded rapidly to changing market conditions, whereas only 52% of companies with undeveloped and immature programs were able to accomplish the same.

Definition

Leadership is the process by which an individual determines direction, influences a group, and directs the group toward a specific goal or mission,=. The following have been observed:

- Leadership is a behavior, not a position. Leadership is inspiring people to live the vision, mission, and values of the organization.
- Leaders do not just tell people what to do. Great leaders empower people to make decisions that support the goals and vision of the organization, ultimately developing smarter solutions. Their job is to inspire and coach. Leaders coach to build a community that is fully participating, both responsibly and accountably. Leaders create buy-in at every level and ensure that all staff knows that their contributions are important.
- Leaders are not necessarily born. People can learn leadership behaviors.
- Management is not synonymous with leadership. Managers facilitate people, processes, and products. Good managers implement strategies and find solutions to problems. In contrast, the goal of any leader should be to get as many people to live the vision as possible.

Leadership development approaches

Mentoring/Coaching Leadership Development

Mentorship is a relationship between two people where the individual with more experience, knowledge, and connections can pass along what they have learned to a junior individual within a certain field. The more senior individual is the mentor, and the junior individual is the mentee.

Mentoring benefits are dependent on the right mentor/mentee match being made. The mentor benefits because they can lead the future generation in an area they care about and ensure that best practices are passed along; meanwhile, the mentee benefits because they have proven that they are ready to take the next step in their career and can receive the extra help needed to make that advancement.

To be an effective mentor or coach it is an advantage to have:

- Gained credibility amongst peer groups through recognized personal success, this facilitates connection making for the mentee and experience that can be drawn on by both mentors and coaches;
- The ability to communicate to their mentees/coachees the importance of; learning through critical reflection applied to their own experiences, how to formulate a broad strategic systemic view given an evolving context, and the importance, in large complex projects, of sustaining collaboration across disparate groups of stakeholders with intense concern for detail.

Mentoring is a two-way leadership learning process that can effectively co-exist with other leadership development approaches.

Trial and Error Leadership Development

Trial and error leadership development involves observing the behavior of experienced leaders within a supporting culture guided by development objectives. While self-directed trial and error development is characterized by an organizational culture that is hostile to learning error, this tends to foster low learning risk-taking and therefore low learning productivity.

There are situations in which trial and error leadership development alone may not be feasible, such as, short-term democratically elected leadership roles that involve custodianship over significant assets. A situation such as this may not provide sufficient time to learn on the job for the term elected.

The success of trial and error leadership development depends on an organization investing in a supportive climate that fosters development and preparedness to tolerate development through questioning, listening and experimentation. If staff conclude their development is not supported, evidence suggests that staff turnover increases, particularly under favorable economic conditions. As radical change increasingly becomes the norm, the slower pace of trial and error development becomes less feasible and requires increasing support from other approaches to leadership development.

Programmed leadership development

Programmed Leadership Development consists of a series of modules that aim to develop and refine the leadership skills of particular individuals. However, programmed leadership development has its shortcomings. In 2014, McKinsey published an article based on a survey of the causes of weakness in leadership development programs. The article then goes on to highlight a range of specific areas of weakness in leadership development that reduced its effectiveness:

1. **Context matters** - It is important to recognize that context is a critical determinant of successful leadership. A brilliant leader in one situation does not necessarily perform well in another.
2. **Learning by doing** - Adults typically retain just ten percent of what they hear in classroom lectures, versus nearly two-thirds when they learn by doing.
3. **Applying to learn** - Burgeoning leaders, no matter how talented, often struggle to transfer even their most powerful off-site experiences into changed on-the-job behavior.
4. **Changing mental models** - Becoming a more effective leader often requires changing behavior. Although most companies recognize that this also means adjusting underlying mental models, too often organizations are reluctant to address the need for such changes, the root causes of why leaders continue to act the way they do.

Leadership development is often thought to be the key to business success which is why many organizations seek to invest in leadership development as a core business strategy. Numerous formal and informal means of developing leadership exist. Leadership development can be quite costly both in terms of monetary outlays and time spent, but recognized leaders and successful organizations understand and measure the impact of such efforts on the bottom line.

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