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The Case For Providing Leadership Development For All Employees

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There are a variety of paths to becoming a leader. But the most efficient path should involve identifying and developing a person's inherent skills and abilities. Many organizations ignore this opportunity, leading to a lack of great leaders.

In fact, the 2015 Global Workforce Leadership survey found that 30 percent of companies are having trouble filling leadership positions. This creates problems not only for succession planning, but also with a company's daily ability to motivate and guide its employees.

To avoid a leadership drought, a company has to recognize that many people have the potential to become a leader. You just have to know the right way to tap into that talent. With the right leadership development program, you can have a company full of employees with the right leadership skills.

A Logical Choice For Leadership Development

Most organizations focus development opportunities on those employees they consider to be high potential leaders. However, that means many other talented employees remain untapped, leaving them without valuable leadership skills, and the company is missing out on a tremendous amount of employee potential. Let's consider why all employees should go through a leadership development program: They're already leading.

Every day, employees face situations that require them to manage others in some way or make important decisions. As a result, according to 2015 research from Saba, 68 percent of employees already feel like they're performing like a leader at work.

And they're not wrong. Whether they're organizing a team project or training a new hire, your employees -- managerial or not -- are leading. Without the right training, this means they are unable to do their job to the best of their abilities.

Better Employee Retention

Very few employees are content in the same role for their entire career. They want opportunities to learn and develop so they can take on greater challenges and responsibilities. If your company can't offer this sort of growth and development to employees, they won't stick around for long.

In fact, a 2016 LinkedIn study found the number one reason people leave their jobs is a lack of career advancement. Forty-three percent said that's why they had changed companies.

<https://workplacetrends.com/the-global-workforce-leadership-survey/>

<http://info.skylineg.com/recognizing-high-potentials>

<https://www.saba.com/us/press-releases/go/2015/us-workforce-expected-to-experience-massive-shift-in-2015/>

By offering leadership development, employees see that they have a future with the company. They understand that you're willing to invest in them and help them gain valuable skills they'll need to succeed long-term.

Valuable Return On Investment

Many companies avoid widespread leadership development because they're worried about the costs. They assume that a quality program will be too expensive. And while this can be an issue, when you have the right professional development program in place, it pays off in the long run.

The key to proving the investment is worthwhile, is to create a program that is scalable to more than just senior leaders or high-potentials, provides the right skills that will make a difference to team and company performance, and has the ability to track the efficacy of the program at both the individual and group level. Over time, you can modify your program so it's even more effective and valuable to the organization.

Skyline's Coaching For Leadership program allows users to effectively track changes on both the individual and the organizational level. This way you can clearly see your ROI. In fact, after implementing C4L, LinkedIn realized they'd achieve \$30 million in growth over the three years.

Best Ways to Develop

Once you've made the decision to develop all employees' leadership skills, the question becomes: how? With each of your employees possessing unique strengths and learning methods, how do you create a program that meets everyone's needs?

Here's how:

Start with assessments. The first step to any successful leadership development program is to assess every individual's starting point. Everyone has different strengths and experiences that influence their skills and how these abilities are utilized. Many people will work on developing unique skills, and a number of people may be working on improving similar skills. The specifics of how they do this may depend on their personality and role.

By having employees complete leadership assessments, you can identify their strengths and areas of opportunities. With this information, you can then create a plan to develop each employee effectively. In addition, pre-assessment provides a baseline for post-program comparison as the individual develops their abilities.

<https://c4l.c4x.com/>

<http://info.skylineg.com/blog/warning-are-you-dooming-your-leadership-development-programs>

<https://skylineg.com/360-assessment>

Provide a Wide-Variety of Learning Situations

Think back to your days in school. Was there ever a time when you were bored and completely checked out? You're sitting at your desk, unable to concentrate because the teacher is droning on and all of the various topics seemed to blend together. Sitting in classroom after classroom became monotonous and it grew more difficult to learn. There was no connection to why what you were learning was important.

The same thing happens when employees are trying to learn new skills.

In fact, a West Unified Communications Services survey found that a third of employees didn't find their training materials interesting or engaging. By providing a variety of learning experiences, employees will be more engaged in the entire process.

Be sure to incorporate different types of development methods. A mix of digital learning, in-person coaching, and the classroom setting are all good options. When deciding which method to use, consider the individual's role and responsibilities. Whatever modality of learning is used, it's critical that the content is directly linked and can be applied to the person's job. Real learning and long-term impact to the individual occurs when the leadership development program takes place over time, learning can be applied immediately, and application is further reinforced as part of the development program.

For example, if a person is improving their communication skills, they can bring the behaviors associated with effective communication skills by practicing them in their meetings and other real world applications. The individual can then share their successes and challenges with their coach or facilitator to help reinforce learning and gain new insight.

Show the difference between leading people and leading initiatives

As any leader knows, each situation requires a different set of skills. When working one-on-one in guiding an employee, you approach things differently than when spearheading a new company initiative.

In order to run an effective leadership development program, both you and your employees need to know the different skills required in a variety of scenarios so you can identify which situation a person will thrive in best.

<https://www.westuc.com/en-us/blog/webinars-enterprise-streaming/state-employee-training-infographic>
<https://www.skylineg.com/resources-videos-skyline-group/116984379>

When leading individuals, it's important to remember to:

- Adapt to the person's needs. You're there to support them, not force your own agenda.
- Lead them to the solution. Instead of telling them what to do, help them find answers for themselves.
- Give them useful feedback. Every situation is a chance for the employee to learn and improve.

When leading a team, focus on:

- Foster collaboration. If the team can't work together, things will be harder for everyone.
- Recognize individual's strengths. This makes it easier to delegate tasks to the right person.
- Show appreciation. Every leader needs to reward employees' efforts and success.

When leading an initiative, it's important to:

- See the big picture. Taking a project from an idea to a success requires perspective.
- Have reasonable expectations. An initiative is dead before it starts if its goals are unobtainable.
- Align goals. Each initiative has a purpose. It's important for that to align with the company's vision and individual's goals.

Applying New Skills on an Ongoing Basis

Once employees have completed their formal leadership development program, ensure they continually develop their leadership abilities throughout their career. You can play an active part in encouraging them to apply their new skills.

Value Their Voice

Everyone on your team has ideas. They have thoughts and opinions on ways to improve the company. When they're given the chance to voice those ideas and see them to fruition, employees' motivation and engagement improves drastically.

In fact, a 2017 CultureIQ survey found that among the top rated company cultures, 90 percent of their employees say that their manager regularly listens to them.

https://go.cultureiq.com/rs/406-EAG-919/images/CultureIQ_Report_TopCultures_Final.pdf

Take time to ask your employees about their ideas and suggestions. This can be done at routine team meetings or during brainstorming sessions. Listen to what they have to say and ask why they think it's important. This will help you and your team come up with ways to improve everything from workflow to employee satisfaction.

Then, let the employee helm the project that brings around the change.

Once the project is complete, whether it was successful or not, be sure to sit down with the employee. Ask them how they went about implementing their plan, what challenges they faced, and how they think those factors affected the outcome. This will allow you both to see what steps to take next in their development.

Let Them Mentor

Mentors can have a big impact on young employees. As professionals with more experience, they can provide valuable advice to the next generation. All the while, the mentors get a chance to practice their leadership skills.

When creating a mentorship program, decide the best way to pair up mentors and mentees. Should the mentor be someone who previously held the same role as the mentee? Or is it best to partner up people who are different so they can round each other out?

Also, be sure to think about who's ready to be a mentor. Consider the following qualities:

- Have they completed their own leadership development program?
- Were they someone who was better at leading one-on-one vs a group?
- How are their communication skills?
- Do they have enough time in their schedule to take on a mentee?
- Are they able to set aside or balance their own goals to focus on someone else's?
- Do they embody the company culture and support its vision?
- Have they successfully advanced their own career in way the mentee can learn from?

Track Results

The investment that you have made in your employees needs to be measured. Critical metrics include pre and post-scores of individual leadership development skills, pre and post-cohort skills, and achievement of team or company objectives that can be linked to leadership development program efficacy.

<http://info.skylineg.com/blog/mentoring-and-leadership-coaching-are-not-the-same.-do-you-know-the-difference>

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There are a number of benefits as a result of broadening the scope of employees who receive leadership development in your company. These benefits include a better skilled workforce and ability to promote new leaders from within, a company culture that is better aligned as a result of the shared skills and abilities of its people, and employees who are more productive and feel a greater sense of engagement because their company is investing in them.

About Skyline Group

Skyline Group is the leading provider of scalable leadership solutions with a foundation built upon decades of executive coaching with some of the most recognized companies in the world. We are revolutionizing the leadership development industry with our C4X coaching platform. C4X is the only coaching solution that gives you the ability to develop all of your leaders consistently and systematically from onboarding to executive development. C4X combines a flexible technology platform (integrated assessment, content, metrics, and coach management system) with the personalized impact and connection of 1:1 coaching. Learn more at www.SkylineGroup.com and www.C4X.com.



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