



LEADERSHIP TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT:

A Guide to Success



Introduction

Take a moment to envision what would happen if one of your key executives were to step down tomorrow. What does your leadership pipeline look like?

Take another moment to think about what would happen to the productivity and engagement of your employees if their highly successful mid-level leader was no longer at your organization.

Now think beyond tomorrow and consider the long-term success of the company. Do you have employees ready throughout the organization to grow into the leadership positions you will need to fill? If not, you need to begin investing in effective leadership development.

Now, there is a reason leadership development is a \$366 billion industry globally.¹ Leadership development done right is a powerful vehicle that can help you build confidence, accelerate competence, and improve performance among leaders at all levels. This investment not only builds strong, capable leaders, it creates engaged, productive, innovative, and motivated teams of employees.

So, how do you reap these benefits for your own organization? You will need to invest the time, resources, and energy into building an effective leadership training and development program. In this guide, we will provide valuable information to help get you started, in hopes that by the end you will have many things to consider as you either build a leadership program from scratch or bolster your existing program. Remember leadership programs that are not effective fail both the organization and the employees who participate in them. Our goal is to help you overcome this and be as successful as possible. Let's begin.

The Numbers Say It All: Leadership Training and Development Matters

- Best-in-class leadership development programs are **94%** more likely to make significant impact on a company's financial success, and are **70%** more likely to have a major impact on competitive performance.²
- **75%** of the reasons why employees leave the company come down to things that managers can influence.³
- **70%** of the variance between poor, good, and great company cultures can be found in the knowledge, skills, and talent of leaders.⁴
- **67%** of millennials would leave a job if it lacked growth opportunities and avenues for leadership development.⁵
- Employees who strongly agree that their managers involve them in setting their goals at work are **3.6 times** more likely than others to be engaged.⁶



Want more proof? Scroll through the [“26 Data Points on Effective Leadership”](#) infographic.

Getting Started: 4 Things To Do Before Implementing Leadership Training

While you cannot know exactly what the future will bring, it is important to prepare well in advance so any challenges or roadblocks that come up can be managed quickly and effectively. One of the tried-and-true ways to do so, is proactive leadership training. Though before you jump into any leadership initiative, take the time to consider the following things.

1. **Establish Who Needs Training**

When it comes to leadership training, one size does not fit all. Your senior leaders training needs will be much different to those at more junior levels. Offering tailored programs for leaders at every level in the organization ensures you are building a strong leadership pipeline. It also helps you ensure the training content, methodology, and retention plan is optimally matched to its participants. To help get you thinking, here are four levels of leaders that are present in most organizations. Think through what training is needed for each level and plan accordingly.



Emerging Leaders

Individuals at this level may not yet be in positions of leadership, but have been identified as future leaders. By taking a proactive approach to training this group of people, you can determine who will excel in roles that manage people, rather than tasks.



Mid-Level Leaders

Leaders at this level often have titles such as manager, supervisor, or team lead. They are the ones who take the strategy and make it a reality as dictated by leaders at the top. Doing so successfully requires excellent people skills as they manage individuals, tasks, projects, and competing priorities everyday.



Senior Leaders

Those leading departments, regions, or large teams, will require a slightly different skill set than those leading a single team. Those in positions of senior leadership are more heavily involved in the strategy of the organization and less on tactics, and require the right training to make them successful.



Executive Leaders

When training executive leaders the key is to make training relevant to their current challenges and future goals, so they are fully prepared to lead the organization forward with confidence.



2.

Be Clear on What Needs Training

Leadership training is used for a wide variety of purposes. Perhaps your organization has undergone a merger that resulted in a negative corporate culture. In this case a culture transformation is scheduled to happen and will require leadership training to create leaders at all levels who can lead it successfully. This will require change management, communication, and coaching skills. In another scenario, your workforce has become increasingly remote in recent years. This change now requires leaders to lead differently than in the past, and as such requires leadership training on empowerment, collaboration, and accountability.

Whether you find yourself in these situations or not, the lesson is to carefully consider what has triggered the need for leadership training. Once you know why training needs to happen, you can narrow down on the skills your leaders need to accomplish that. Common skills that leadership training focuses on include:

- Building Effective Relationships
- Teamwork and Collaboration
- Resolving Conflict at Work
- Managing Stress in the Workplace
- Building and Leading Teams
- Giving and Getting Feedback
- Coaching for Results
- Accountability
- Managing Internal Communications
- Leading Change
- Communication
- Performance Management
- Leading an Empowered Workforce
- Executional Excellence
- Influence and Negotiations

Learn what skills will make your leaders optimally successful in [“Building World-Class Business Leaders Through Experiential Learning.”](#)

3.

Choose a Training Methodology That Is Best For Your Audience

Great leadership certainly isn't mastered from a seat in the audience at a seminar or in a corner office when viewing an eLearning module. Leadership skills are truly honed through practical application when interacting with others well after the training has occurred, which is why most leadership development programs are minimally effective at producing long-term results. They typically focus on presenting information and expecting that information to be retained and successfully applied later when on the job; however, as early as one week after training the retention of information drops off considerably, and the impact fades before the learning can become habitual and beneficial to the organization.

There are many options when it comes to leadership training, ranging in format, cost, and benefits. Here are some of the most common options, along with the pros and cons of each to help you select the best option for your leaders and the goal of your initiative.

Experiential Learning

PROS...

- Highly interactive
- Clear link between experience and real-life application
- Unique and engaging for participants

CONS...

- Potential for higher upfront costs
- Logistical challenges
- Uncertainty caused by trying something new

Reading

PROS...

- Cost effective
- Focused subject matter
- Familiar method to learners and stakeholders

CONS...

- No interaction
- Does not appeal to variety of learning styles
- Hard to assess knowledge gain

Webinars

PROS...

- Easy, simple way to share information
- Little technical skill required
- Content can be accessed later

CONS...

- Passive learning
- Lack of interaction
- Hard to maintain engagement

eLearning

PROS...

- Flexible
- Learners gain information in real time
- Some insight into real-world application

CONS...

- Lack of interaction
- Does not offer any hands-on practice with training content
- Can be expensive

Lectures

PROS...

- Familiar method to learners and stakeholders
- Lessons from successful people can be inspirational
- Relatively easy to implement

CONS...

- Does not appeal to variety of learning styles
- Lack of interaction
- Real-world application is not always clear



The Power of Experiential Learning

When providing leadership training with the expressed intention of building better leaders, adding a component that actually makes the learning fun should be a priority. Doing so increases the interest level for the participants, increases their degree of engagement, and accelerates their learning. And experiential learning is an option that does just that. Not only will leadership skills and competencies be developed, but leaders at every level will be engaged throughout the duration of training. Benefits include:

1. Participants are fully engaged and committed to achieving an outcome.
2. The activity is themed to mask any connection to day-to-day reality.
3. The activity is an exact metaphor for the reality faced by the participants.
4. It's captivating and fun.
5. The compressed timeline creates an intense focus on a single, desired outcome.
6. A facilitated debrief connects the results of the experience to the results at work.
7. The debrief can be customized to the unique business reality of the audience.
8. Participants see the results of their actions, building the necessary conviction to change behavior after the training concludes.



4.

Create a Retention Plan and Put It Into Action

Having a retention strategy in place that will follow up leadership training ensures you are maximizing the potential impact the training can have and minimizing learning decay. Ongoing post-course reinforcement keeps the learning top of mind and ensures that busy leaders remember and use the principles taught back on the job. Select reinforcement tools that provide bite-sized snippets of the key learnings delivered after the training on a regular basis to sustain the conviction built during the highly relevant and practical training session. You can also consider using mobile platforms, interactive games, and group discussions to maximize retention.



Developing World-Class Leaders Goes Beyond Training: What You Can Do

While training is an integral part of any effective leadership program, building world-class leaders goes beyond the walls of the training room. Your leaders need additional development opportunities to reinforce the lessons learned in training and achieve their career goals. Not to mention, these development opportunities have the potential to boost engagement among leaders and reinforce their commitment to your organization. With that in mind, here are a few of the things you can do that will have the greatest impact on leadership development:



Create a Leadership Track

Employees need to see that they have a future in leadership at the organization and that there is a clear career growth path. Creating a leadership track that employees can follow demonstrates an organizational commitment to the employee's development and prepares future leaders to step into new roles at the organization.



Develop a Mentorship Program

Create and implement a mentorship program in addition to the training your leaders receive. When leaders are paired with other leaders that have a track record of success, they can learn valuable lessons about the nuances of the job or organization. Mentorship also allows for further on-the-job observation and access to a leader who can answer questions as they arise.



Encourage Feedback

By creating a feedback structure that allows both current leaders and future leaders to share their thoughts, experiences, and best practices, you are tapping into invaluable insights. Gathering feedback helps you identify gaps in your organization and places for growth that may have otherwise not been identified.



Implement Cross Functional Training

Cross-functional training develops awareness of the organization in areas that leaders might not otherwise experience. Special projects offer another way to accelerate growth and provide an opportunity for current and future leaders to stretch their skills beyond their normal daily routine. This type of work also allows leadership to observe how candidates take initiative, demonstrate accountability, and engage with the organization.



Measure Progress of Your Leaders

Any effective leadership development program measures results. When an organization invests significant time and resources in its leaders, you want to see a return on your investment in the form of improved performance, competency development, and application of new skills. A measurement and reporting strategy can help you objectively assess the development metrics that are most meaningful to your organization.



Be Agile

The world is changing and evolving almost everyday, as are leaders. As such, your leadership development program must be agile so that it can adapt to the changing needs of your leaders, employees, and stakeholders. Take the time to regularly examine your program and determine if updates need to be made to make the investment as beneficial as possible for everyone.

Read more on this topic in [“The Executives Guide to Succession Planning and Building Your Leadership Pipeline.”](#)

Conclusion

Whether you are working to develop your high potentials into future leaders or honing the skills of your top department leaders, working with an experienced partner can help you build a leadership training and development program that addresses your organization's unique learning needs and future goals. Using the power of experiential learning, Eagle's Flight has developed and delivered customized learning and development solutions to more than 2.1 million participants over the last 30+ years. We've developed programs that cover a wide range of competencies and skills for organizations of all sizes and industries, with the common goal of improving organizational performance and achieving sustained behavior change.

[Browse our extensive offering of leadership programs](#) with the help of our Find a Solution tool, or contact us today to learn more about how Eagle's Flight can help you develop a custom, comprehensive leadership training and development program that meets your needs.



Since our founding in 1988, Eagle's Flight has developed and refined a framework for creating predictable, sustainable behavior change. We specialize in experiential learning and provide organizations with a better outcome by truly engaging the learner. Successful organizational development programs require ongoing work, but this can easily get lost in the shuffle of daily tasks that feel more urgent. Partnering with a provider that has a strong track record of helping organizations achieve long-term measurable change will help ensure that your development goals are met. If you would like to learn more about how Eagle's Flight can support your corporate culture goals, contact us today.

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