

Leaders and Money: Don't Waste Them

Nine Tips to Get Your Money's Worth with Leadership Training

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Developing leaders in business is a cost of doing business. Want high performance? Educate leaders as to how to get it. To that end I have a modest proposal.

If there is someone in a leadership position in your business (supervisor, manager, and team leader, executive) that you are unwilling to invest in developing - get rid of them. Either they are lacking something essential or you hold a perception that makes it impossible for them to succeed.

If it is time for you to start, revamp, or upgrade your approach to building leadership capacity for the future of the business consider these nine tips to make sure your investment isn't wasted.

1. Get clear

How will the specific learning be linked to the strategic plan, operational objectives and competency models (if you have them)? What do you expect the leadership development program to accomplish? What will be different and improved in the business as a result?

2. Make learning specific to your business

Program content and facilitation must be in the context of your business. That said, there are perspectives, skills, and tools that we know are common to high performing leaders. Focus on proven best practices with facilitation and exercises specific to the reality of your business and the participants.

3. Set measurement and checkpoints

Metrics can be simple like, "reduce time in meetings 30% by the end of 2010." Some may be more complex such as, "improve cross functional collaboration and decision making to eliminate costly mistakes." Specific mistakes and their costs should be called out. Evaluate progress of the training/development program at regular intervals as committed at the outset.

4. Select appropriate participants

It's a mid-west farm phrase with enduring value, "You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." Leadership training is not the tonic that turns a problem child into the valedictorian. It can profoundly change lives and business results. Have a deliberate selection process to determine who plays.



5. Define and commit executive involvement, support and participation
The greatest results come from programs that start at the top. Ideally executives have adopted and demonstrate the perspectives, skills and tools of high performance. This is not necessarily reality. You get the best result when senior executives understand the content and actively support participants.
6. Require and audit application
This is being done to improve business results, right? Require application of the learning. Deliver learning and application exercises pertinent to the business in each session. Include a structure that requires application of learning by participants back on the job.
7. Structure for cross-functional relationships
There is a huge value multiplier. Want to break down turf protection, eliminate cross-departmental miscommunication? The dynamic interaction and relationships built in learning sessions make it easier to get work done faster back on the job.
8. Acknowledge and appreciate participants
An effective leadership development program can feel like graduate school to participants. It takes time. There is accountability to the business and the learning team. Make a big deal about it. Make participation a high value benefit. Give and get recognition for the investment and commitment.
9. Make developing more leaders an accountability of all leaders
Competent leaders have a commitment to the growth of others. Teach leaders how to do it, expect it.

Leading others is important work. Those who do it well are golden. They get good results and more. Good news here is that people can learn to be high performing leaders. The value and results in a team of leaders who together have learned and apply the perspectives, skills and tools of high performance is profound. Being a professional leader gets easier and more satisfying.



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