

Volume 21**What I'm hearing**

I want to establish a leadership-development program. How do I build one from scratch?

What it means

The true expense of developing your future leaders will impact your most valuable resource: your time. You will need to spend time selecting, mentoring, teaching and providing feedback to your future leaders. Also consider the two things that participants in leadership development programs consistently rank as the two most valuable takeaways from the programs: a greater knowledge of themselves and the relationships they build with peers and senior leaders. Building a program with limited resources means having a rigorous selection conversation, committing time to spend with the participants, and fostering ownership and community within your future leaders.

What you should do

Here is an outline of some simple steps you can take to start developing your next generation of leaders.

- 1. Selection:** With your leadership team, brainstorm a list of characteristics you look for in a leader, ultimately settling on the five to seven most important items. Next, create a list of people in your organization whom you believe would make good leaders. Include both those expressing interest in leadership and those identified by the leadership team. Finally, evaluate each candidate based on your criteria and pick the top five to ten.
- 2. Create a community:** Bring the group of leadership candidates together monthly for check-ins, group activities, and learning from senior executives.
- 3. Assign a Mentor:** Assign a mentor — a current leader within the company — to each future leader. Future leaders should meet monthly with their mentors.
- 4. Focus learning on three areas:**
 - **Build Self-Knowledge:** Use the Harvard Business Review article “Managing Oneself” by Peter Drucker to structure the conversation. Have the leadership candidates read and answer all of the questions presented in the article and review the results with their mentors.
 - **Lead:** Each future leader should seek out two opportunities to lead something — one within the organization and one outside — such as volunteering, not-for-profit work, coaching, etc. Mentors and candidates should review these leadership experiences to expand self-understanding, discuss what was learned and identify future development needs.
 - **Communication:** All leaders have to be great communicators. The most effective way to accomplish this is by making a commitment to attend Toastmasters for one year.



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Follow up your leadership development program by (1) finding ways for each of your current leaders to spend time with each candidate throughout the year and (2) repeat the yearly conversation to review and revise the list of candidates.

When a candidate is promoted to a leadership role, use the steps above to create a new development experience for your new leader. Your time is the most valuable currency you can use to show your future leaders they are valued. Invest well.

Need help building a leader-development program within your organization?

Looking to enhance your own abilities as a mentor to your people? Contact me.

Scott@thetrugroup.com

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