

Leadership is a Choice – Leadership & Leadership Development Defined

What makes a leader a leader? This is a very popular question of the day. And one thing is for sure... A title does not make you a 'leader'. Anyone at any level within an organization can be a leader. And at the same time, many individuals with supervisory or managerial titles are not very good leaders... This is often the dilemma for HR professionals and managers in the work place. It is not uncommon for someone to be promoted into a supervisory type position for their expertise and hands-on experience within a particular function even though they do not possess very strong leadership or managerial skills. When this happens, it can cause a bottleneck in the chain of command when trying to move employees forward. In most situations such as this, employees become unmotivated and unproductive because they do not have a very good role model for leadership whom has the capability to motivate others to move forward.

What's important for employees to realize is that leadership is a choice and it doesn't take a title for you to be a good leader. At the same time, it is important for those in supervisory roles to understand their focus on leadership and managing their work force is a critical role in moving their company in the direction of growth and innovation.

To become a successful leader, regardless of where you fit in an organization, there are some key strategies to consider. Five key steps and strategies include:

- **Talk to HR**
A well-developed HR department is an incredible resource in helping an organization with any type of organizational development, including leadership development.
- **Seek Training**
Take advantage of any training offered within your company, or talk to your manager (and HR) about setting up training programs. This shows initiative and makes your manager aware of your interests.
- **Enroll in a Leadership Development Program**
Look for well-rounded leadership development programs that focus on people skills, personal skills and organizational skills. For example, training programs to develop people skills may include courses on listening, developing professional relationships, persuasive communication and conflict resolution. Organizational training programs may include a course on financial literacy or retention strategies. And courses focused on productive time management or career management are great to develop an individual's personal skills.
- **Continue to Grow**
Continue to educate yourself. This shows initiative and will keep you ahead of the game. Never stop learning to move ahead.

- **Become a Knowledge Bank**

Get involved and understand your company's business. It's hard to be a good leader in any company if you don't understand the purpose for your business and the day-to-day operations of your department.

It is also critical for Human Resource departments to understand their role and how critical it is to provide the strategies and tools required to develop their workforce. Human Resource departments are the backbone when developing employees and successful leaders. The key strategies and steps are similar for HR professionals as they are for individuals outside of HR, but are coming from a different angle or focus. To develop leadership, HR professionals should:

- **Do the Research**

Research and talk to clients. Understanding the specific needs of the organization will put HR in a better position to develop the roadmap for success in fostering and developing leadership in employees.

- **Build a Toolbox**

Develop training tools that focus on the needs discovered in the research and then some. It's important to be proactive versus reactive to your organization's needs.

- **Seek Well Rounded Training Programs**

Look for training focusing on people skills, organizational skills and personal skills. There are several companies that provide great resources and ideas for HR to utilize. Do your research.

- **Lead by Example**

Keep your HR skills sharp! It's challenging for HR to train others or facilitate and promote training if, as a department, they do not possess good leadership skills.

- **Be Consistent**

It's important to implement the training needed to develop your workforce and continue to provide it on a consistent basis.

These tips allow for a great starting point to develop leadership in an organization. There are many resources available, so I recommend doing as much research as possible. Companies, as well as the world, need great leaders.