Why Leaders Don't Build Future Leaders

By Dennis Hooper, copyright © 2018, distributed October 16, 2018

"A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle." James Keller

Most of my career was with Procter & Gamble, a corporation that rewards managers for developing their direct reports. When I started coaching full-time, I was surprised that so many leaders were not increasing the capacity of their organizations by building their potential future leaders.

Please ponder the justifications offered here. Consider the current reality in your organization. If appropriate, recommit with your leadership team to developing your future leaders more effectively.

Before we start, you might push back and say, "Oh, Dennis, we do develop future leaders. We have an extensive development process that begins as soon as a new person joins our organization."

Let's make sure we're talking about the same concept. I'm describing <u>leadership</u> skills, not the functional and technical skills required for your organization's mission. Yes, every organization must transition new hires such that they can perform the work required by their customers. Please see the article entitled "The Seduction of Functional Competence" on my website (address is below).

In the past nineteen years, I've heard many reasons for not developing future leaders. Which ones seem to jump out at you as being most relevant in your organization?

<u>Oversight</u>. Perhaps you've never considered an intentional, repeatable process for building leaders. Conscious effort is required to systematically enhance another person's leadership awareness/skill.

<u>Limited skills yourself</u>. Maybe you feel inadequately prepared for your position. If you started your business, growing a sustainable organization requires vastly different skills from entrepreneurship.

<u>Lack of confidence</u>. Surprisingly, some leaders with excellent skills lack confidence. It takes both skills and confidence to consistently challenge and support direct reports to grow as leaders.

<u>Lack of time</u>. Many leaders are consumed with solving problems, meeting with customers, and planning for upcoming commitments. It's amazing how quickly the end of each day arrives!

<u>Lack of knowing how</u>. Wanting to build future leaders and knowing how to do it are quite different. If you don't know how you probably won't even try.

<u>Egocentrism</u>. Many leaders like being the "go-to" person. For them, knowledge is power. Further, some leaders think, "If the person I train becomes more skilled than me, what will happen to me?"

<u>Perceived lack of interest from team members</u>. Team members probably won't demand growth if it's not encouraged by your organization's culture. As the leader, you are the prime encourager!

<u>No immediate reward</u>. Leaders receive no immediate payback for putting energy, money, and time into developing future leaders. Yes, it takes all three of those limited resources. The payback comes eventually in the continual growth and ongoing success of the organization!

<u>Assuming that you'll hire future leaders as you need them</u>. This is the presumptive fallback position of many organizations. However, two huge negatives stimulated me to write "Buying or Building Leaders--Which is Better?" You can find that article on my website (address below).

<u>Serving your direct reports is a foreign concept to you</u>. Consider spending some time on this website: <u>toservefirst.com</u>. Click on the "Resources and Articles" page for some initial awareness. Or use the search box on the "Article Archives" page of my website and enter "servant leadership."

Whatever the current health of your organization, enhanced leadership will contribute to an improved culture, more reliable processes, and better results. Many suggestions are available on the internet. If you prefer some personal help, interview several executive coaches in your area to learn about their skills, approaches, and costs. Obtain references, just as you would for any other investment.

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Almost 500 leadership articles may be found at <u>buildingfutureleaders.com/article-archives</u>.