

Writing a Leadership Development Plan

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Listen to any motivational speaker describe actions that lead to success. You'll hear "write down your goals and your vision of the future."

Why do those experts make such a big deal about writing everything down? Can't you just *think about* your goals and your vision?

Sure. You'll accomplish more if you think about these things than if you don't. People who don't imagine what is possible in the future rarely take the actions that lead to achievement.

Just last week, one of my clients asked the members of her leadership team to share their personal goals for the next twelve months. She was surprised by the blank looks on several faces—many of her key leaders had not thought about their goals and plans for the coming year.

Beyond *thinking about* your goals and plans, studies show that putting thoughts in writing accomplishes more than just pondering possibilities.

My clients are typically successful individuals who want to be even better. When they examine what has worked for them in the past, they acknowledge that when they disciplined themselves to write down a plan for accomplishing a goal, they were more successful than when they just "winged it."

I help leaders discipline themselves to write a "leadership development plan." Why? Usually, they've never had a defined process to identify growth opportunities. Oh, they have a history of growing! Many have become quite successful. But they realize that the process of growth has been haphazard. They'd like to experience a more intentional approach.

There are three reasons why I encourage you to generate a written leadership development plan.

It engages the brain constructively. Science is making huge strides in understanding how our brains function. A thought that remains unexpressed is very different from one that passes through that section of your brain where you select words to describe it. The contemplation is even further strengthened when you engage the muscles required to hold a pen and write the idea down. A written inspiration is more tangible and more explicit than if you just allow it to remain floating around in your brain.

It provides accountability. We are creatures of habit. Given the opportunity, we'll take the easy route. Comfort, however, is the enemy of growth. Situations that demand action beyond our current capabilities stretch us, encouraging us to look for new insights, try new responses, and build more refined skills. Sharing our plan with someone we respect helps to ensure we follow through on our good intentions.

It encourages a strategic timeframe. You are action-oriented, right? You jump right on new ideas, making them happen NOW! But when you think about growth over a year, if you don't write it down, you won't remember everything you intend to do. And writing it forces you to prioritize, keeping only those activities that will yield the greatest return on your investment of time and energy.

Writing a plan for developing your leadership skills ensures that you stretch yourself beyond your current capabilities, allowing you to reject really good ideas in favor of those that you consider are even better.

My clients **write** a focused, year-long "to do" list of the activities they will combine with their daily "real work." The more your plan coincides with your real work, the greater the likelihood you will act on it. You enhance your skills while accomplishing the practical necessities of today's demands.

To see a sample "leadership development plan," send Dennis Hooper an e-mail at dhooper2@juno.com or call him at 404-575-3050.