

## **Why Build Future Leaders?**

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Aren't you busy enough with all the other problems you have to deal with daily? Where will you find time to build leaders for the future? Why should it even be worth your attention? The people you have in place seem to be performing adequately, aren't they? Why build leaders for the future?

My answer starts with the end that we will all ultimately face one day. You're going to die.

Oh, sure, you hope to live to a ripe old age. Perhaps you'd like to start another business, or do philanthropic or mission work, or spend more time with your family. Will you be able to do those things if you don't have strong leaders looking after the organization you've built? Probably not.

What you may feel forced to do instead is pass up those options and keep working. Why? You've established something valuable, and you don't want it to disintegrate.

Can't you just hire leaders as your organization grows? Sure, that's the default strategy. And that's what you'll do if you don't start developing your future leaders soon.

Is that approach wrong? It certainly has two very significant drawbacks.

First, what kind of signal does hiring leaders from the outside give to the loyal individuals who have served your organization for many years? They spent their developmental lives helping you be successful, and you reward them by going to the outside and bringing in hotshots who they will have to train. That's not a very effective way to keep valuable people loyally enthusiastic!

Second, the skilled outsiders you hire will bring along their existing perspectives, prejudices, and expectations. It's unlikely that their values will align perfectly with the culture you've worked so hard to establish. Not knowing and appreciating your existing organization will probably create disruption.

You might ask, "Oh, but what about them contributing creative new ideas?" If you need an injection of imagination, hire a known innovation consultant. If you feel you must acquire a permanent team member who is highly creative, go looking for that very special person, not a cadre of outsiders.

How have your current leaders moved into their existing positions? I speculate they were particularly capable in their technical skill areas. You rewarded them for their performance in the work they did in the past. They were the best of who you had at the time.

Functional mastery doesn't automatically transform into leadership skills. So, how do you prepare leaders for the future of your company? The "how to" answer to that question is on my website (see address below). Scroll down to find "A Proven Process for Building Leadership Skills." You have all the information there that you need to start building leaders for the future.

I'd like to offer one more reason for you to work on building future leaders. Our world needs good leaders. Poor leadership is often what we hear described in the news.

You might be thinking, "There's no way I can build leaders who could have influence in the world!" I'm sorry, I beg to differ! If you and every other reader who sees this article develops three individuals to a skill level that exceeds your own, we will have made a major impact in many states and in several nations around the world!

Individuals who have decent leadership skills pass along those abilities unwittingly to their children. You might be partially responsible for building the capabilities of an employee's child or grandchild!

You have poured your life into an organization. Your single biggest legacy will be having prepared individuals with the vision, values, and skills to excel in carrying your organization forward. If you don't work to build the leadership skills of your existing colleagues, who will carry on the legacy that you are working so hard to establish?

Here's one final perspective. You've probably had the experience of teaching a course of some kind. Surely you've found that you learn so much more by preparing the material than you would have learned if you had been a student in that same subject matter. So it is with building leadership skills.

Intentionally building future leaders in your organization will do more for building your capabilities than almost anything you can do. The same concept applies to your direct reports. Like anything else for which you are responsible, you can delegate this task. Imagine how knowledgeable your leaders will become when every one of them is intentionally building a future leader!

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