

Use Articles to Develop Leaders in Your Organization

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Who is responsible for enhancing your skills as a leader? You are!

Who is responsible for building the leadership skills of your direct reports? You AND your direct reports share this responsibility. Do you have a routine process that contributes to building their skills?

Maybe you're not the designated leader of an identifiable sub-entity in your organization. Does that change your responsibility? In my opinion, "No!" You are still responsible for your growth as a leader. And while you're at it, why not work to enhance the skills of the individuals who work with you?

Here's a simple way you can grow and beneficially influence others at the same time. Study leadership articles collaboratively with your colleagues. Designate a lunch period on the same day every other week. Keep the meeting time to thirty minutes if possible, so there is minimal conflict with "real" work.

If there's no way to do this during lunch, arrange a half-hour meeting either before the start of the work day or immediately after the work day.

You may be tempted to meet once a week. If you try to do too much too fast, people will burn out and this great idea you started will quickly die. I recommend starting with a session every other week.

Participation in this activity should be voluntary. If you make it good, people will want to come!

The purpose of the session is to explore as a group how a given article can be applied in your operations. Select an article from the internet (more about this below) that you believe could enhance your processes and culture. Distribute a copy of the article several days in advance to all who are participating in these "improvement opportunity" conversations.

Communicate that you expect people to read the article in advance, underlining and making marginal notes. Folks should come prepared with questions and points of emphasis to explore with the group.

Start the meeting on time. Provide a brief introduction as to why you selected this particular article for conversation. Ask participants to identify a few questions or topics they'd like to explore in the conversation that is about to take place. Capture these discussion points on a chartpad or whiteboard.

Serve as a facilitator of the dialogue, seeking to keep everyone engaged and to focus energies on application of the article to your workplace. Look for very specific opportunities to experiment, either individually or collectively.

Allow the group's energy to choose the order for addressing the questions; the order in which the thoughts were identified may not be the best order for dialogue. Be sensitive to consider additional questions or perspectives that might arise as the conversation develops.

At the end of the session, ask the group to identify what the participants did well and ask what could be done better in future sessions. Before the group disbands, ask if there are followup activities, either group or individual, that should be executed. If there are, identify who will do what by when.

Where do you find the articles? There are thousands of leadership articles on the internet. Start by simply putting "leadership articles" in any search engine.

My website is a good source of short, practical, easy-to-understand and easy-to-execute articles. Go to the "Article Archives" page, where you'll find over 300 articles, each with a brief description. Use the search box at the top of the page if you are looking for a particular topic.

Another big advantage of using my articles is that I'm willing to dialogue with you or your group about any topic. After you've explored an article and there are residual questions or conflicting perspectives, please designate someone to contact me. If you'd like me to participate on a speakerphone for your followup exploratory meeting, that would be delightful. My desire is to facilitate your growth!

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