Module 15

Read Ahead

Employee Development
Module 15: Employee Development

Objectives

After attending the training in Module 14, participants will be able to:

- identify how leadership development benefits the organization.
- know what employees need from the supervisor to develop into leaders.
- understand that leadership development should be a planned and carefully conducted program that requires a significant time commitment from leaders.

Introduction

It would be great if you were the boss, and all your employees loved their jobs. What if some of your most honest and dedicated employees found ways to improve the agency, spotted emerging opportunities and took advantage of them, identified challenges and dealt with them before they could grow, learned to motivate and steer peers and subordinates, were good at managing budgets, and loved dealing with the public? Does this situation sound too good to be true? As the boss, you would have almost nothing to do each day because your best employees have grown into brilliant leaders. You have created the ideal situation for the organization.

The situation in the prior paragraph happens in some agencies and organizations but not by happenstance. Nor does it happen when the boss assumes all authority and personally supervises all aspects of the employees’ work. It happens when the boss establishes a well-organized leadership development plan—a plan to develop employees into leaders.

The choice is yours. Would you prefer to manage all aspects of your bureau, division, or unit personally because no one else has your skill and judgment? Or would you prefer to commit serious time to developing the best leadership program you can, so your employees learn to run the business, and you have time to manage the big issues really well? Most people who have held high leadership positions and attempted to do it alone came to the eventual conclusion that “the more people they developed, the greater the achievement of their organization, and the more they enjoyed their job.”

Individuals who influence others to follow their every word are leaders with limitations. Individuals who influence others to lead others are leaders without limitations. People will not become great leaders if they want to do it all by themselves, want to micromanage, or want all the credit.

The remainder of this Module will discuss reasons to develop the employees under your supervision into leaders. We need to know how to plan and conduct a leadership development program.
Why You Need to Develop Employees Under Your Supervision

There are two overwhelming reasons to consider developing the people already working in your Department. The first reason involves the good of ALDOT, which benefits from enhanced leadership.

Benefits to the Organization

- If managers see leadership development as a priority issue and tend to enjoy continuous improvement, new leaders will be ALDOT’s greatest asset, and Department performance will increase engagement and credibility.
- Employees who are given what they need to do the job can (and often do) make the organization more productive and innovative because they have buy-in and are not micromanaged or ignored.
- The first duty of any leader is to create more leaders—this is the ultimate test of leadership, and success at this task reaps proven benefits to organizational morale and motivation.
- Achievement in organizations is impacted positively when the leader trains other leaders to help carry the mission and vision forward. On the other hand, organizations are impacted negatively when the leader insists on daily tasks with no vision for the future.

The second reason to consider developing the people under your supervision involves enhancing the lives and morale of individual employees. In effect, the leader is empowering them to reach their leadership potential.

Benefits to Involved Individuals

The first benefit to individuals occurs when they start to believe in themselves because the supervisor shows confidence in their abilities and in their capacity to accomplish their goals. Supervisors who are successful at developing others invest personal attention in their people:

- Everyone wants to feel worthwhile.
- Everyone needs and responds to encouragement.
- People “buy into” the leader before they “buy into” the leadership.
- Most people don’t know how to be successful.
- Most people are naturally motivated.

John Maxwell expresses much the same thing in his book, Relationships 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know, noting that believing in people before they prove themselves is key to motivating them to reach their potential. This requires leaders to see the best in people and have faith in them.
The following points show how people can move from disbelief to full belief in themselves:

- Most people do not have faith in themselves.
- Most people do not have someone who has faith in them.
- Most people can tell when someone else has faith in them.
- Most people will do anything to live up to your faith in them.

In addition to understanding the needs of individuals, successful leaders understand how to motivate them for their own good and the good of ALDOT. The following list gives examples of what motivates people:

**Significant Contributions**
Employees want to do a good job. More so, they want to be a part of a group that will have a lasting impact.

**Involvement in Establishing Goals**
They support what they create and take ownership of and gain buy-in to goal-setting if they are part of it.

**Involvement in Decision Making**
Employees are often the subject matter experts. They are fully capable of making many decisions that supervisors often make instead. Give your employees the opportunity to make bigger decisions, especially ones that involve their work.

**Positive Dissatisfaction**
Because dissatisfied people are highly motivated when they know something is wrong, they embrace the opportunity to make things better.

**Recognition**
Employees want to hear appreciation from a supervisor when they do a good job, find a needed solution, or achieve a desired goal. They want their contributions acknowledged. Recognition comes in many forms, from a simple thank you to an email acknowledging a good job.

**Clear Expectations**
Employees are more motivated if they know exactly what they are to do and have the confidence to do it successfully. No one wants to be assigned a vague task or a job with an uncertain description.

**Authority Over Tasks**
Employees desire the authority to carry out an assigned task. Allowing this autonomy is an act of appreciation.
These needs, expectations, and motivations are important to employees. Another important factor involves aspects of the leader’s character.

The following list gives examples of leadership traits that promote motivation and enhance morale. Again, if the leader demonstrates these traits, employees are more likely to develop into leaders themselves.

**Valuing Employees**
Leaders need to understand the worth and impact of their employees. Without this trait, which cannot be faked, supervisors will not be successful in developing employees. As leaders, we need to understand that we are only leaders because we have employees. The opportunity to develop others should be a privilege of supervision.

**Committing to Employees**
Commitment to employees is demonstrated by the leader’s time. When a supervisor does not give employees time, how can they view that supervisor as committed? Ignoring employees, spending time only with other “managers,” or lacking the energy to become invested in employees will lead to failure.

**Integrity When Dealing with Employees**
A supervisor demonstrates integrity by being honest, transparent, and open, and by engaging with employees. This is an issue of the leader’s character.

**Standards for People**
When a supervisor has no vision, no goals, no behavioral norms for employees, it is no surprise that employees become apathetic or even lazy instead of trying to do their best. Most employees respond to clear standards with energy and a desire to excel, especially when the supervisor offers recognition and appreciation.

**Positive Influence with Employees**
Anyone can be a bad influence. Not everyone can be a positive influence. It takes discipline and accountability for a supervisor to be positive in all circumstances—or at least most. It means being the cheerleader, role model, and example for all to see.

**Benefits to the Leader**
At this point, it should be clear that leadership development places demands on the time of leaders but also delivers great benefits. First, they gain the viewpoints and knowledge of intermediate managers whom they mentor, which helps them know the pulse of the organization. Second, they often gain trusted advocates during the mentoring process. Third, as the developmental program advances, the budding leaders take on more difficult tasks (very important to their development) that formerly occupied much of the manager’s time. There are many other benefits, but perhaps most importantly, the leader ends up with more time to invest in issues that are crucial and pressing for the Department.
Principles of Leadership Development

At www.sideroad.com, Stephen Fairley indicated that leadership development is “not about reading a book or attending a seminar.” It is a sustained effort aimed at the organization’s needs. He further noted that research has identified three common criteria among successful leadership development programs:

1. There is a written and consistent plan for leadership development.
2. The organization practices leadership development with training, coaching, and/or mentoring to decrease learning curves.
3. The program is promoted by advertising and showing every employee how to succeed.

Ray Blunt is one of the acknowledged experts in this field. He has written and researched extensively regarding admired leaders. In his article, “The ‘3 Cs’ in Developing Leaders,” Blunt wrote that he had come to a deep belief that leaders grow leaders. In another document, he wrote that “we learn far more from tacit rather than from cognitive knowledge—as apprentices of masters in the school of international and challenging experience.” In “Growing Public Service Leaders,” Blunt profiled three leaders who brought about significant change in their public service organizations and in growing leaders. He credited their success to four common character and capability qualities:

- An abiding focus on the core purpose of public service
- A deep and demonstrated belief in the worth and capabilities of people
- Courage and willingness to take personal risks and organizational risks
- Personal caring about people

Blunt’s research, involving surveys of highly successful governmental and corporate leaders, identified four key factors associated with their leadership programs. These factors are listed below, along with a measure of importance for each factor, expressed as a percentage:

- Challenging, work-based experiences (42%)
- Significant interaction and relationships with senior leaders (22%)
- Self-awareness that often comes through reflection on the hardships of life and the failures of work (20%)
- Training, early work experience, reading, and other factors (16%)

From the literature, leadership programs clearly are most successful when the leaders model character and capability on a daily basis and when they form deep and lasting relationships with those they are mentoring or coaching.

Quotes on Developing Employees into Leaders

“It is a fine thing to have ability, but the ability to discover ability in others is the true test.”
--Elbert Hubbard
“You’re only as good as the people you hire.” --Ray Kroc

“Giving people self-confidence is by far the most important thing that I can do. Because they will act.” --Jack Welch

“When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion.” --Dale Carnegie

“Value people on their potential, not on their history.” --Bo Bennett

“No executive has ever suffered because his people were strong and effective.” --Peter Drucker

“Leaders learn to lead as apprentices in the classroom of experience with senior leaders.” --Ray Blunt

References


