



FOCUSED FEATURES

INVEST IN YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM – EVERYONE WILL REAP THE REWARDS

All too often, we promote individuals into leadership roles because they are doing a great job, at doing their job. How many times have you heard about companies who take their highest producing salesperson and promote them to sales manager? Within six months, the company is trying to figure out why sales have dropped off.

Unfortunately, when we put people in leadership roles, our expectations often exceed their actual leadership capabilities. We don't intentionally set people up for failure, but placing staff members into positions of leadership without the benefit of training, mentoring, and coaching, will do exactly that – set them up for failure. How can we expect them to continue being our “super stars” if we don't provide the tools to help them shine?

As you read the last two sentences, you may have thought “Are you kidding? Who has the time? We are working more with less. I cannot spare them for one minute. And, our training budget is spent on teaching our people how to use the technology that generates revenue for the company.”



Here is the reality – your leadership team needs you to invest the time and a bit of money in their professional development. They are not going to learn how to lead other employees in your company strictly by osmosis. And, the good news is you don't need to send them to expensive training programs for days on end, only to come back to the office and not be able to practice what they've learned due to the demands of the job.

There are many ways to get the leadership development process flowing. Start by initiating the first few experiences. Conduct a 30 minute discussion with your leaders about topics such as setting expectations, recognizing and rewarding star performers, and providing corrective feedback in a way that gets positive results. Then pass the responsibility for future discussions and/or activities on to the leadership team. You'll see how quickly they brainstorm ideas for developing skills for themselves as well as the people they lead. And, this is true leadership in action.

Here are a few ideas you can use to help your company's leadership team become more inspired, making them better leaders. The cost for these three tips will be a bit of time, light refreshments, and about \$5 to download a movie.

Get creative. Have your leadership team watch Clint Eastwood's production of *Invictus*. The movie is based on a true story about Nelson Mandela and how he deployed the most heartfelt and creative leadership techniques to unite a nation.



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First, preview the movie solo and identify a dozen or so key elements for your team to be mindful of as they watch the movie. Key items may be

- Setting expectations.
- Identifying common goals, common element to bring people together.
- Building trust across generations and personal cultures.
- Exposing personal vulnerability without fear.
- Finding strength during adversity.
- Knowing your constituency groups – who’s cheering for whom, why, and how to get everyone cheering for the same team.

To make the experience of the film even more relevant to your leadership team, instruct the group to listen for the word “country” and replace it with the word “company” every time the word is used.

Hold bi-weekly best practice forums. Establish a standing date and time for the leadership team to meet and talk about their individual experiences with the employees that report to them. The experiences can be challenging or rewarding. Keep the meetings to 30 minutes or less; have each person offer one situational example; and record the outcomes into a running list that can be transcribed electronically for the team to use as a reference for future situations.

Develop leadership statements. Ask your leadership team to write a statement that depicts the type of leader they aspire to be. The statement is meant to be a personal guide to help keep the individual focused and on course with how they lead others. By developing their leadership statement, it will also identify areas that need improvement and can be used for future leadership training activities.

The best way for them to begin the process is by answering a series of questions like -



- What are my values?
- What are the characteristics that make me a good leader?
What words best describe who I am as a leader – transparent, authentic? Am I open to showing my vulnerability?
- What do I focus on - tasks or people?
- How do I relate to people? Am I a good listener? Do I understand body language and the unspoken word?
- Do my employees see me as a leader? Do they understand my instructions? Do I communicate well?
- Do my employees trust me? Do I ask for their input, then disregard it, or let them know they add value?



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There are many other ways you can develop your leadership team and help them gain confidence in leading others. Start to build an inspired learning experience, and without a doubt, your investment will increase in value over and over again.

KEY NOTES:

- We promote individuals into leadership roles because they are doing a great job, at doing their job. Be sure to provide adequate training and mentoring so they can also become great leaders in *your* company.
- There are many ways to get the leadership development process flowing without spending a lot of time and money. Be creative and make the learning experience meaningful and enjoyable.