

Next-Gen leadership: Building strong leaders within your team

Strong leadership is essential if you want your team to succeed and thrive through the hills and valleys of your industry. The best way to ensure a consistent flow of solid management is to always look for the best and brightest who can become your next-generation leaders. A great strategy involves finding good candidates early on, training those who show great potential, and then plugging those leaders into your ongoing succession plan.

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Here are some tips for identifying and setting the best people up to your leadership standards.

Identifying future leaders

Whether you have a startup or an established company, you can find future leaders by assessing their hard and soft skills. The ability to write, design, and gain a solid understanding of the concepts of your specific industry can all be taught. However, many soft skills that good leaders possess are not so easily learned and are often the result of work ethic and upbringing. You want to identify leaders that have a combination of these skills.

One of the most impactful soft leadership skills is an employee's ability to set goals and plan for the future without being told to do so. People who are content to simply finish the day and have no plans for an upward trajectory will likely not make good leaders. Dependability and integrity

are also key factors. Find someone who can complete their tasks on time and correctly without micromanagement. That individual will likely be someone who can take on more responsibility and eventually lead a team.

If you begin to find associates who appear to have positive leadership traits, take steps to vet those individuals to see if they have the right stuff. One way to do that is through *executive assessments*. Bring in the individual who desires to manage others and provide behavioural, cognitive, and personality assessments to see if they have the traits necessary for success. In addition to asking the candidate direct questions, you can gather input from peers and past and present superiors to see if you should move forward with that individual.

Training is key

You may not know when a new leadership opportunity will become available or when a current leader will step down, so be prepared by *integrating leadership development* into your training programs. Do that by adding lessons and classes about essential concepts like team building, coaching others, and conflict resolution. Then, see which employees take to it and those who don't.

The best way to ensure that you're finding and properly coaching the leaders of tomorrow is to *create a successful training program*. One key aspect is not to overwhelm the trainees with too much at once. Give them bite-sized content that they can think about.

As an example, instead of launching a full class, you could show them a short video that features your current leaders discussing what they look for in top talent. The trainer can then ask the class questions about what they saw and gauge where to take the lesson from there.

Another tip is to try to make the training enjoyable. You can do that by role-playing with quirky setups or doing the training like an improvisation class.

Then, make it a point to continuously tweak and improve the training by taking surveys after a session is complete. Ask participants if they thought the content was engaging, if the right amount of information was provided, or if it was too much for them to absorb. Then, make adjustments if necessary.

Even after formal classes end, your company must continue to maintain a coaching culture. Make every current manager a coach for their team. Have them look for employees who appear to have what it takes to be good future leaders and provide them with tasks that can help them hone their skills. It's never too early to start crafting a newer employee for a future leadership position.

Finish your strategy with succession planning

While you're finding and creating strong leaders, it's also essential that your company starts to incorporate those folks into your succession planning. Your managers and top executives are likely doing a great job now. Still, it's unreasonable to expect they'll be in that position forever, so plan for the right people to take those places one day.

There are a few best practices to follow for good succession planning.

First, you want to choose and speak to the superior employees you believe will make a great fit and ask about their long-term goals at your organisation. You don't want to pick a successor who won't stick around the company when the time comes for them to step up. Being transparent is critical because you can share important details and answer questions that can make the process easier. When they know there's a road to promotion, the employee will likely feel valued and want to do even more

to impress.

Once you find a short list of succession candidates, bring in trusted advisors and get the buy-in from executives and board members so they can provide input. You can all make the best decision together.

Conclusion

Finding and building up strong leaders within your team is vital for long-term success. Locate the candidates that will make a difference, spend time on them, and then build a succession plan to help them lead your business into the future.

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