



Developing the Best Leadership Competencies for Your Organization

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“ **The scarcest resource in the world today is leadership — leadership capable of continuously transforming organizations to win in tomorrow’s fast-changing and increasingly more competitive world.**”

— A.G. Lafley, retired chairman, president, and CEO of Procter & Gamble.



We all know that future business leaders don’t emerge by chance. The best leaders step into their biggest roles after years of intentional development. What looks like a natural next step is often the culmination of years of hard work. Work that entails building the exact skills, knowledge, and experiences required for that position at that moment.

So, what has been happening behind the scenes? Do you know how to develop leadership competencies that work best for your organization?

Define Your Core Leadership Competencies

Before anyone can build the competencies they need to lead your teams and business, you must know this one thing. You have to be clear about which leadership competencies are most important for your organization. Fortunately, there are many leadership competency models to start from. When you’re ready, select and define the competencies required for success at your organization.

Most companies identify somewhere between 5 and 30 key leadership competencies. Here, as a sample reference, is a list of leadership competencies defined by the [Deloitte Leadership practice](#):

- **Inspirational Leadership:** Inspire others to take action.
- **Execution:** Get teams to achieve results.
- **Influence:** Persuade and influence in all directions.
- **Collaboration:** Collaborate with others.
- **Direction:** Set vision, direction, and a compelling course of action.
- **Business Judgment:** Make business decisions that drive positive bottom-line performance.
- **Competitive Edge:** Know their markets and innovate to stay ahead.
- **Building Talent:** Develop people for competitive advantage.

Identify Potential Leaders



Use web-based [skills assessments](#), manager assessments, and career conversations with employees to identify which employees can potentially become future leaders. Look for those professionals who are already stepping up. For example, those who are volunteering for additional tasks or responsibilities. Or those who are speaking up with ideas and

constructive feedback. And don't forget those who are actively collaborating with others to complete a project or solve a problem.



Be sure those who are showing capability are interested in pursuing a leadership role. Take time to discover their vision for themselves, their teams, and your company. At the same time, ask those who say they want to be leaders to demonstrate their willingness to do what it takes to get there. Both attitude and aptitude are essential ingredients.



Then, outline a development plan with your future leaders. Identify current strengths, interests, experiences, and skill gaps. Create a supportive, progressive plan for developing leadership competencies. The plan should encompass the skills, knowledge, and experiences they need to grow.

Build Core Leadership Skills

Effective leaders master a mix of hard skills (technical and business know-how) and soft skills (the way people do their jobs). Being able to clearly communicate, inspire others, and actively listen is as important as analyzing a balance sheet, tracking a project, or making strategic business decisions.

Mastering such a broad skillset requires a training program that starts with basic learning opportunities and expands to more diverse development exercises. Classes and courses. Mentoring. Books, videos, and movies. Practical application and practice. All of these learning options have their place in developing essential skills.

In [this article](#) highlighting four companies' leadership development best practices, Phil Geldart, CEO at Eagle's Flight, reminds us that articulating the "why" behind the "how" of skill-building is also important. "Gone are the days . . . of simply lecturing about tactics when it comes to making great leaders. Instead, there's a focus on principle-based training: people must understand the principles then be coached to apply them in their own specific work environments."

Together with your young leaders, emphasize the "why" behind the targeted skills. Use ongoing skills assessment to track their progress – and the level of proficiency – to ensure their development plan stays aligned with their goals.

Develop Essential Knowledge

Unlike an individual contributor, leaders must know about areas of the company beyond one core operational area. Knowing the history of your company, the products and services you offer, and the clients and partners you serve are all important. Understanding people – including best practice for recruiting, hiring, and team-building – is also essential.





As Merck highlights in its [leadership development recruitment video](#), one common way to build knowledge about a company is for potential leaders to rotate through assignments in different functional areas and geographies. That direct exposure to different areas of the business is tremendously effective in building first-hand knowledge of the company and the market you operate in.

Expand Leadership Experiences

Over time, your young leaders should be taking on broader and higher-level responsibilities. Map out experiences for young leaders to experience success – and failures – to build upon.

Future leaders should experience leading meetings, projects, teams, departments, and, when ready, cross-organizational activities. Give them opportunities to speak up, make recommendations, then decisions and, later, to set the direction of an initiative.

Young leaders should be visible to internal colleagues as well as clients and partners. Through mentorship guidance, shadow opportunities, support roles, then lead roles, individuals will build experiences that shape their own best practices for leading. As leaders become more competent in their roles, look for opportunities for them to lead through coaching and mentoring others.

As author and speaker Simon Sinek outlined in his now-famous [TEDTalk](#), “How Great Leaders Inspire Action,” the goal is to do business with people who believe what you believe. Leaders who are connected to the fundamental “why” of your business – and who can communicate that “why” – will inspire employees, clients, partners, and others to join you. So, when building the competencies of your next great leaders, don’t stop with the tactics of building skills, knowledge, and experience. You’ll know when your leaders are ready. It’s when you see them inspiring others to act in a way that supports your people, your company, and the clients you serve.

Ready to Start the Conversation?

If you’re just getting started with developing leadership competencies that work for your organization, read our white paper: [5 Key Competencies to Develop Your Future Leaders](#). Or [contact us](#) to find out how Avilar’s [WebMentor Skills™](#) and [WebMentor LMS™](#) can help you develop the skills, knowledge, and experience of your future leaders.