

## Leading Ways: DEVELOPING OTHERS

One standout trait of all successful leaders is the ability to develop others around them. These efforts produce an abundant return for the leader and the organization, but can be surprising at how little attention it gets from those in leadership roles. The rewards are indeed compound. First, the leader gets colleagues that have a richer set of skills and are more confident in the use of those skills. Second, the leader's commitment to them to be fully engaged with their development is one of the most powerful motivational tools available. Third, delegation is much easier if it is done in the context of a development plan that becomes essential to the work. Fourth, the ability to influence down will be deeply enhanced if a fundamental part of the relationship is based on a commitment to the development of others. Finally, if there is commitment to developing direct reports, then a succession plan writes itself. It comes as a freebee of the process.

One action – a commitment to development – produces all of the above. And, if the leader works at it with sincerity, the person being developed will actually start to drive this development agenda for themselves, only needing gentle guidance from the leader. Most leaders want to develop their people or even feel like they are, but the reality is that they are not systematic in their efforts and end up wasting more time or sometimes even working 'cross purposes' to what they want to achieve.

A commitment to each direct report of three hours a year, done in an informed and formal manner is all that is required of calendar time to accomplish this. But it has to be done in the right way and with the mindful engagement by the boss or supervisor.

Some basic material to support leaders in this essential task include [Guide Developing and Using Vision](#), [The Art and Importance of Delegating](#), and the [Guide to Mentoring](#).

Below, are a list of effective steps with links to additional resources that will help with improving development skills.

### **KNOW YOURSELF**

The first step is to understand what you bring to the process of developing others. What are the particular ways you approach the world, interact with people, get inspiration and insight, do the work, and channel drive and energy? Being a successful mentor, coach and supervisor that can develop others is driven by how well the leader understands, accepts, changes when needed, and effectively uses time and effort to achieve the goals of working with others. Developing this self-knowledge is an essential step in being a good mentor. [Reflecting on How You Develop Others](#) provides a few self-assessment questions to assist you in assessing leadership skills and focusing attention on what needs development.

### **BUILD THE RELATIONSHIP**

Good mentoring involves more than just the technical process of sharing information. It is fundamentally about developing a solid and supportive relationship in which information can be shared both ways in a trusting and encouraging manner. Without this relationship dimension, the very best insights and observations about another person's development will be wasted because without trust the messages will not be heard, fully understood, or valued. It is the strength of this relationship that allows you to give constructive input and be heard. Without this the negative will be heard and understood as a critique of the person you are developing, not the skills in that person that you want to call out. Some secret words are, "I want you to be successful." Leading with these and, more importantly, living up to them with time and courage to speak the truth, will build a lasting connection. There are many ways to work on building the relationship. Putting time and energy into developing them is a solid start. [Active listening](#) will also build a strong tie to the person being developed.

### **SHARE SOMETHING PRACTICAL**

Most people want to be successful and the leader needs to share with them the pathway to that success. Sadly, leaders know a lot and it is likely to come across like drinking from a fire hose: too much, too soon. It is not about what the leader knows, but how it can be learned. Think about the questions when you were new, not the rarefied ones that move you now. Basic things like what skills need to be developed, people to know, how to be present in every meeting. That will be enough, and it will establish a safe and comfortable foundation from which to share all the other great things needed to be shared. It will be good to review a few suggestions for these first meetings at the [first meeting with a new direct report](#). It is also helpful to have them do some work before that first session. This [questionnaire](#) is a good start before coaching and can easily be adapted to their position and the expectations that surround it.

### **BUILD SPACE FOR CONSTRUCTIVE AND SUPPORTIVE FEEDBACK**

This is essential and all of the work that has gone into this process will be wasted if a safe environment is not carefully built. An environment in which affirming and corrective feedback can be given and can be heard, understood and valued. These links have suggestions for building such an [environment](#) and giving the [feedback](#).

### **DEVELOP A PLAN**

Finally, it all comes down to the plan. A written agreement between the leader and them on where the work will be focused, measured, and readjusted as needed. There are suggestions for this in the two guides mentioned above. But a specific tool to use combines work challenges, future directions and external developments. This [goal development plan](#) form is a guide to develop these parameters.