

# Providing Development Opportunities for Candidates

## The eighth of eight articles in the *Choosing and Developing Tomorrow's Leaders Series*

This month's article closes the "Choosing and Developing Tomorrow's Leaders series. We have traced the steps required to define leadership success, to evaluate potential candidates for leadership positions, to choose candidates, to groom them for future success, and to coach and mentor them. The final topic explores the on-going development of leadership candidates and will answer these questions:

1. What is leadership development?
2. What options are there for on-going development of your organization's present and future leaders?



**Leadership development** is the process through which current leaders and candidates for future leadership positions acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviors, perspectives and insights to facilitate leadership success. Development activities include:

- Formal and informal programs and activities
- On-the-job and off-site options
- Company or industry specific vs. programs aimed at a more diverse audience

### **Creating a Personalized Development Plan**

On-going development is essential for individuals with high leadership potential. To guide that development, a manager or mentor for each candidate should work with the candidate to create a personalized development plan. Here are the suggested steps in creating such a plan:

1. Meet to discuss the process of creating the development plan and each person's role.
2. Review the candidate's strengths, development needs, and those areas that fall in between. Collect as much relevant information as possible, preferably from a variety of sources.



- This review can be quite unstructured and simply utilize a self-evaluation from the candidate and a manager/mentor evaluation. (See the section below “Sample Leadership Competency Dimensions for Evaluation” for a list of possible competency areas to consider in this review.)
  - Another alternative is to use a more structured 360 degree evaluation process. (See the section below “360 Degree Evaluation” for information about a more structured process.)
3. For each competency area evaluated, determine if the candidate is strong in that area, minimally adequate, or has opportunities for improvement.
  4. Based on the results of the evaluation, the candidate and his/her manager/mentor set specific goals for development.
  5. Working together, the two individuals identify development opportunities to address each of the development goals.

### **Sample Leadership Competency Dimensions for Evaluation**

Your organization can decide what competencies you want to include in the evaluation and development plan, or the pair of candidates and their manager/mentor can make those decisions on their own. Below is a list of leadership and management competencies that illustrate the types of factors often included in the evaluation and development plan.

#### **1. *Influencing Others***

- Leading/motivating others
- Building team spirit
- Directing/developing others

#### **2. *Thinking and Deciding***

- Problem solving and decision making
- Planning
- Personal organization/time management

#### **3. *Interpersonal Skills***

- Understanding others
- Approachability
- Respect for diversity

#### **4. *Managing Relationships***

- Building work relationships
- Teamwork
- Conflict management

#### **5. *Communication***

- Oral communication
- Written communication
- Delivering presentations

#### **6. *Personal Attitudes and Habits***

- Drive and work ethic
- Self-awareness and personal development
- Integrity and trust

## 360 Degree Evaluation

For a 360 degree evaluation, ratings are obtained from a variety of sources to gain additional perspective on the strengths and development needs of the candidate. Although you can adapt this process as you see fit, frequently ratings for each of the competency dimensions you want to measure are gathered from these sources:

- candidate self-evaluation
- manager (supervisor)
- peer(s)
- direct report (subordinates), if any

Sometimes, results can indicate discrepancies among sources, such as an individual working very effectively in conflict situations involving a direct-report employee, while a large development need exists in relation to conflict among peers. Examine the results thoroughly, and use those results to establish the development goals that will guide the creation of the development plan.

## Options for Leadership Development

Once development goals have been created, the candidate and manager/mentor should discuss alternative means by which the individual can work to learn, grow, and improve, particularly in areas for which significant improvement is needed. There are scores of different types of activities for leader development. Here are a few alternatives:

1. **Coaching/mentoring.** We discussed this topic in the March article in this series (“Coaching and Mentoring Candidates”). One-on-one feedback, guidance, and grooming can serve as a great development process.
2. **Job assignments/rotation.** Assign candidates to different tasks – or even different job positions – to provide them with a variety of experiences that will be useful to them in future leadership roles.
3. **Leadership/management books and articles.** Many great leaders learn a good deal about their craft on their own, reading and digesting information from a variety of sources including books, journal articles, etc. (Several recommendations appear at the end of this article.)
4. **Web readings.** We live in the era of Google and Wikipedia, and knowledge is at our fingertips. Explore topics related to the candidate’s stated development goals.
5. **Leadership development programs sponsored by universities.** Many universities offer development programs for leaders and managers. These programs may be either for academic credit, continuing education credit, or both. Talk with your local universities.
6. **University classes (graduate and undergraduate).** Sometimes, there are university classes that will meet some development needs for leaders/managers.
7. **Other professional seminars.** A variety of professional groups and consulting firms offer professional development seminars on a variety of topics. Consider these seminars as a possible supplement to other development activities.



By identifying goals for improvement and working to meet those goals, the high potential leadership candidate can turn into a high performing leader.

### **To learn more about Providing Development Opportunities for Candidates:**

Peters, Tom (2005). *Tom Peters Essentials Leadership*. DK Publishing (Dorling Kindersly). This is a small book, and you do not have to read the content in order. Skip around and let the contents trigger your own leadership thoughts and ideas.

Maxwell, John C. (2002). *Leadership 101: What Every Leader Needs to Know*. Thomas Nelson Business, Inc. Another small book and a handy resource.

Pfeffer, Jeffrey (2015). *Leadership BS: Fixing workplaces and careers one truth at a time*. HarperCollins. Pfeffer is a leading management author of our time, and this book is a good one to put on your reading list.

Hughes, Richard; Ginnett, Robert; and Curphy, Gordon (2014). *Leadership: Enhancing the Lessons of Experience*. Irwin Management. While this book is more of a textbook than others, the authors have one of the most impactful approaches to leadership available today, and there is plenty in this volume to serve both the serious reader and the occasional reader.

Roberts, W., & Ross, B. (1996). *Make It So: Leadership Lessons from Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Simon and Schuster. This book is a classic and shows that leadership lessons exist in unexpected places. As it turns out, the character of Star Trek Captain Jean-Luc Picard was a master at influencing others, and his words provide examples of inspired leadership.

### ***Concluding Comments on This Series***

This concludes the eight articles in the Choosing and Developing Tomorrow's Leaders series that has explored topics ranging from how to hire individuals with leadership potential to how we develop leader candidates and prepare them for future leadership roles. While we have provided many recommendations along the way, none of those recommendations is iron clad. You can customize as you think best to meet your organization's needs. It is important, however, to have a game plan and to develop an effective leadership pipeline, as we discussed in article 6 in this series (*Grooming Candidates for Success*).

Thank you for joining in this journey, and we wish you the best as you choose and develop your organization's future leaders!