

How to Build a Culture of Inspirational Leadership

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Leadership, leadership development and [leadership training](#) are “Hot” issues in today’s business world. A recent Internet search uncovered over 44 million hits on leadership, over 20 million hits on leadership development and 15.7 million on leadership training. Visiting an Internet bookstore revealed similar interest with almost 18,000 titles including the key word of leadership, over 2,200 titles including leadership development and 1,400 titles with leadership training.



Extensive research conducted by the American Society for Testing and Development (ASTD) discovered direct training expenditures were 2% of payroll costs with another 10% of more in indirect costs. Daniel Goleman author of *Working with Emotional Intelligence* estimated that in 1999, U.S. companies spent \$30 billion in emotional intelligence training focusing on leadership development. With all of this interest and dollars being invested in training and development for improved **leadership**, possibly now is the time build a culture of inspirational leadership that will help you reach that next level of success. The following 10 action steps will help you turn those training expenditures into development investments that will assist you in this process.

Step One

First, clearly identify the current organizational goals and then review the [leadership development](#) to ensure alignment to those goals. According to Linda Martin and Dr. David Mutchler authors of *Fail-Safe Leadership*, this is called a results based approach to organizational **leadership** development. A quick way to determine if your organizational goals are in alignment is to ask everyone or a sampling of your employees from all departments to name the top three goals for the current year. If you receive more than 3 goals, there is a problem with alignment.

Step Two

Review your current value statements and share those with the trainers or facilitators of your leadership development. These values should be model by all and clearly demonstrate what behaviors are and are not acceptable within the leaders of your organization.

Step Three

Understand the difference in language and perception between the words program and process. A program usually has a beginning and an end. If I participate in a program, I know it will end and by focusing on the end, I may not be “present” during each individual learning session. A process on the other hand exists to achieve the desired results and is therefore a continuum. If I am told it is a process to secure ongoing results, I will potentially be more focused on each learning session.

Step Four

Separate your learning engagements into training and development. Training is the action of learning a new skill. Development is the action of enhancing and refining an existing skill. This separation provides you to better understand the participants' needs and helps to begin to build What's In It For Me (WIIFM) leading to What's In It for Us (WIIFU).

Step Five

Recognize and accept that changing behavior will not happen in a one-day or two-day workshop. If we presume that most individuals have been demonstrating this behavior for at least 10 years to maybe 30 years, then expecting 8 to 16 hours to change behavior is absurd. To build a culture of inspirational leadership requires a minimum of 50 hours per year in a variety of learning venues. These learning engagements should be scheduled so that opportunities for application and feedback are always present.

Step Six

Review the schedule of your learning engagements. If the schedule is one to three days once to four times per year, consider shorter learning sessions with greater frequency. With technology, video conferencing reduces travel time while providing greater learning frequency. Also, long sessions (over 3 hours) tend to be less productive for two reasons: Heavy workloads keep participants from being totally focused as they are worried about what's happening back at my desk and the brain will absorb what the butt will endure. Coaching is another way to work with your learning schedule. Research suggests that every dollar invested in coaching yields a minimum \$2 to \$10.

Step Seven

Assess your current [leadership development curriculum](#) to determine where the emphasis is or is not. Many excellent curriculums spend a significant amount of time on knowledge and skills while ignoring the attitudes and habits. However when looking at leadership and performance failures, is it a question of a lack of knowledge or skills or a question of poor attitudes and poor habits? To build inspirational leadership begins by developing inspirational attitudes that are internalized by everyone within the culture.

Step Eight

Determine if your curriculum is a "core" competency based or "results" based. Core competencies present a challenge because whose "core" competencies are they? If you understand your desired results, then by selecting a curriculum that helps you achieve your specific desired results is more likely to move you closer to achieving those results.

Step Nine

Within your learning sessions, is the desired end result to improve weaknesses or to build strengths? Winning teams win because of their strengths not their weaknesses.

Step Ten

Finally, ensure that all participants have the tools necessary to own their own self-**leadership** development. Many organizations share the challenge of implementing change or operationalizing new initiatives. By providing participants with proven tools, such as a Goal Achievement Plan, helps them to take action in a structured and aligned manner thereby achieving the desired organizational goals.

These 10 steps are neither simple nor easy. However, to truly create a cultural of exceptional and inspirational **leadership** requires significant planning. By viewing this planning as an investment of your resources, you will reap amazing results and build a culture as Aristotle once said, "...where excellence is habit."

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