

Intentional Leadership Development
Integer Leadership Consulting
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October 11, 2014

Leadership Development Defined:

Becoming a leader does not happen on its own. Yet, this is a critical error in judgment made by many would-be and emerging leaders. The reality is that leadership is a complex proposition where high levels of emotional and social intelligence, personality type, leader behaviors, external variables, strategic objectives, and tactical execution all combine to influence culture, impact people, define processes, and move an organization forward toward measurable and sustainable success.

In his book *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, Peter Northouse (2013) defines leadership as "...a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (p. 5).

My own leadership definition, while not unlike Northouse's, is a slightly expanded definition: "The process whereby an individual influences others in a manner that galvanizes commitment and builds motivation to the end that shared objectives are attained."

Looking at these two definitions, leadership includes the following:

1. Involves influence
2. Occurs among groups of people
3. Uses defined common goals and shared objectives
4. Seeks accomplishments, progress, and movement
5. Includes building commitment
6. Requires the ability to motivate

Why Being Intentional Matters:

In Rothstein and Burke's (2010) book, *Self-Management and Leadership and Development*, a compelling case is made for leaders to take full responsibility for their own leadership development. In other words, this is one area that should never be delegated to others. When men and women make the mistake of leaving their own development and growth as leaders to other individuals and/or organizations, the chances are very high that the process of development itself will fail to materialize in a manner that fully benefits the individual. While indeed, people and organizations can and should partner with you in your development as a leader, a wholesale abdication of your leadership development to others is a significant mistake.

For individuals who know they want to be leaders and to exercise leadership (as defined above), there are clear steps forward:

Strategies for Personal Clarity:

1. Answer the questions, “*Why* do I want to lead?” and “In what *type* of organization do I see myself leading in the future?”
2. Build clarity on your work style, leadership style, personality type, emotional intelligence, and social intelligence by taking assessments that address each of these areas. The more self-knowledge, the better.
3. Identify and ask peer mentors and actively engaged professionals, those who you admire and respect and who represent/embody many of the leader and leadership characteristics that you value, to spend designated time providing feedback based on questions you ask and observations/insights they have gathered through their years of experience.
4. Immediately and always choose to place yourself in opportunities that will (1) leverage the strengths and experiences you already possess and/or (2) invite you to stretch and grow further in a manner that will add to your leadership portfolio.
5. Carefully examine and “mine” any experience for insights about your personal and professional development

Strategies for Professional Clarity:

1. Build a Leadership Development Strategic and Tactical Plan. This involves defining your objectives for leader and leadership development over a 1-, 3-, 5-, and 7-year period of time. Then develop those tactics that will define your progress toward the goals within the interim periods.
2. On your own, take advantage of workshops, seminars, and presentations that address some aspect of leadership development. Also attend events that feature successful leaders in a variety of industries.
3. Take courses that address leadership and managerial excellence. Consider certificates or badges that speak to specialized knowledge in areas of leadership.
4. Begin a leadership library. Ask key leaders that you meet what one or two books they would recommend, purchase the books, and read them carefully.
5. Hire a professional career or executive coach at different points to engage in conversation, reflection, assessments, mid-course corrections, and to process experiences that can fuel further learning and strategic/tactical development.
6. Look and ask for opportunities at the university within internship programs and in your paid career positions to provide leadership. Volunteer often if those opportunities invite you to lead or co-lead processes, projects, and/or, most importantly, influence, support, and encourage people.

Key Leadership Development Strategies that Yield Dividends:

1. Value and build conscious awareness of yourself as a leader.
2. Build authenticity and transparency.
3. Value people first and what people can do second.
4. Maintain self-care as a way of delivering quality to others.
5. Look for key and critical opportunities to increase self-knowledge, special knowledge of leadership practices, knowledge of human behavior, etc.
6. Take advantage of assessments and diagnostics that provide valuable feedback on you as a person and leader.
7. Avoid hubris and embrace humility while also expressing confidence and sharing expertise. Choose to be effective first and powerful/effective second.

8. Network, network, network.
9. Engage in strategic conversations with visible and successful leaders.
10. Learn from failure.
11. Say “yes” to leadership opportunities now, not later.
12. Be willing to change and evolve as a person and leader.
13. Invest time and money in your development as a leader.

References:

Northouse, P. (2013). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Rothstein, M., & Burke, R. J. (Eds.). (2010). *Self-management and leadership development*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.