



Developing Others

Developing Others Defined

Leaders of innovative organizations are often celebrated for their individual genius. But they also often excel in another key competency: elevating the people around them to higher levels of performance—that is, developing others.

There are a number of factors that determine when and if team members and colleagues will be able to foster achievement in others, including:

- Knowing them as individuals.
- Determining their readiness for growth.
- Choosing the best development methodology.

However, the core skill involved in developing others is emotional intelligence, which encompasses:

- A simultaneous awareness of people and organizational priorities.
- The ability to recognize the potential connections between the two.
- Communication skills that empathically encourage others to succeed.

Impact

A team member who is good at developing others is of special value to his or her organization. While it is beneficial in a general way to offer encouragement to peers, there is a specific return on helping the right team member embrace a strategic challenge. It advances not only the individual but the organization.

Techniques for Development

Skill in developing others begins with recognizing that a coworker is ready for growth. In some cases, the best way to make an assessment on growth readiness is to simply ask, "How would you feel about taking charge of a special project?"

Matching individuals to the right kinds of opportunities also requires care. Encouraging coworkers to stretch their boundaries does more harm than good if the challenge leads to failure, especially if that failure is due to foreseeable deficits of knowledge or support.

Opportunities for growth can occur in any of the following areas:

- *Business knowledge.* Learning can lead workers toward specialization (adding the value of expertise) or toward a broader understanding of their organizations.
- *Interpersonal skills.* Meeting new people is healthy. Peers can assist by initiating relationships. Friendship at any level provides both a model of and practice in social skills, including poise, openness, respect, and empathy. Expanded friendships also provide access to social networks.



- *Leadership potential.* In most organizations, opportunities to help others try their hand at leadership are plentiful. Encouragement and an offer of support may be all it takes to help coworkers learn valuable leadership skills, such as resource planning, team building, monitoring execution, and reporting results.
- *Self-actualization.* Self-actualization means fulfilling one's potential as an individual and member of society. It is a dimension of growth achieved by those who reach the top in their fields.

Individuals can promote development in others by applying three modes of feedback:

1. *Good listening*, which allows practice in articulating thoughts for others.
2. *Offering alternate views*, which uncovers potential objections, promotes 360-degree thinking, and offers "what-ifs" for brainstorming and creativity.
3. *Reflective reframing*, which restates the case in a new context or perspective. Getting a new perspective is a powerful factor in encouraging development, as it increases relevance and often points the way to innovative ideas.

Rotation through managerial posts in different parts of the organization is a traditional way of developing executives. With each new assignment, the level of responsibility increases, and challenges take on new dimensions of complexity and uncertainty. If successful, the executives learn to move beyond their preferred styles of management to gain adaptability, resourcefulness, and stability.

To support development of high-potential individuals, organizations can leverage peer groups. Colleagues facing similar challenges offer both reassurance and a range of strengths and strategies. Bringing groups together regularly reinforces peer influence in the long-term development of the next generation of top managers.

Related Reading

- *Empower Your Employees* by Cris Mattoon, *Leadership Excellence Essentials*
- *Inclusive Leadership Matter to Performance* by Sarah Naudé, Matt Stanley, and Verity Ratcliffe, *Human Resources Magazine*
- *The Manager's Employee Engagement Toolbox* by Peter R. Garber, *Business Book Summaries*
- *Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders Today* by Scott Steinberg, *Talent Development*
- *The Trainer's Inside Edge* by Helen Dyrkaca, *Business Book Summaries*



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