

# Leadership Development Plan

## Guiding Principles for Effective Leadership Development Plans

Following are ten guidelines for creating effective leadership development plans. See these tips in action on the leadership development plan template which follows.

1. **Less is More.** Focus on no more than two to three development areas. A thorough assessment of the leader’s context and business goals will help prioritize the most important areas for development. As goals are accomplished, new ones can always be added, but it can be de-motivating and ineffective to spread a leader’s development focus too thin across multiple goals.

2. **Use SMART Guidelines.** Goals should be Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Timely. Although crafting goals that meet each of these requirements can feel burdensome, the payoff will far exceed the upfront effort. Qualitative indicators along with appropriate business metrics should be used when specifying how leader behavior change is to be measured. ©2017 MDA Leadership Consulting 2

3. **Link Activities to Individual, Team, and Organization Needs.** Development plans should identify how the leader, team, and organization will benefit from enhanced leadership capability in the targeted areas. Leader behavior has ripple effects throughout the organization. Focus on the link between personal change and leadership effectiveness.

4. **Activate Strengths.** The importance of leveraging strengths to maximize potential and performance has become more relevant in leadership development. Sometimes leaders minimize their strengths or fail to fully apply them in their roles. It can be helpful to identify at least one key strength that has high importance given the business context, in addition to identifying development gaps.

5. **Identify the Business Context.** Focus on the intersection between a leader’s development needs and what the business needs are now and in the future. Highlighting the real and immediate business context helps both the leader and the organization achieve their goals.

6. **Use the 70-20-10 Rule.** Research indicates that people develop most through experiences (70%), next through people or key relationships (20%), and lastly through formalized classroom training or education experiences (10%). Weight development plan activities with experiential activities—those that actually engage the leader in new, broader, or deeper experiences.

7. **Live the Plan.** Good plans are ones that live and breathe rather than collect dust on a shelf. Revisit the plan quarterly, assess progress against goals, and revise strategies in light of current business conditions and leadership challenges. Make changes as needed to ensure that the focus of the plan will drive short-term results and long-term learning.

8. **Balance Support and Challenge.** Ensuring sufficient sources of support for the leader (i.e., peers, resources, manager support) will allow the leader to take on more challenges. Activities should challenge a leader to behave in new ways and should cause the leader to be somewhat uncomfortable—indicating appropriate stretch—but not overwhelming.

9**. Get Feedback from Colleagues.** Feedback from managers, peers, and colleagues can be helpful upfront to build support for development efforts, help refine focus, and generate creative ideas for development. As strategies are implemented, enlisting feedback from stakeholders to assess development can reinforce progress and deepen relationships.

10. **Measure Progress.** Establish measures to evaluate the plan on a regular basis and track progress toward goals. Leaders follow through on their development plans much more when others are informed about the goals and the leader is required to communicate progress updates or gather ongoing feedback from key stakeholders.

# **Leadership Development Plan**

# **Developmental Goal #1**

## **Goal (Tips #1 & #2):** Keep it simple and focus on one of the 5 LPI practices.

## **Desired Outcomes (Tip #3):** “Results I want from developing this skill.”

Self:

Team:

Organization:

## **Self-Understanding (Tip #4):** Strengths that I can build on and development needs I can address.

Strengths:

Development Needs:

## **Business Context (Tip #5):** Challenges in my business environment that require this skill.

# **Development Actions**

## **AWAKEN (Tip #6):** Activities for gaining personal insight into my impact as a leader.

1)

2)

3)

## **ALIGN:** Actions for connecting my leadership development goals with my business outcomes.

1)

2)

3)

## **ACCELERATE:** Experiences, people, and education that will provide new concepts, skills, and knowledge.

1)

2)

3)

# **Development Success Factors**

## **Timeline (Tip #7):** Within the next 6 months.

## **Support Need (Tip #8):** Who and what I need to effectively implement my plan.

1)

2)

3)

## **Indicators of Success (Tips #9 & #10):** When will you know you accomplished your goals?

1)

2)

3)

# **Developmental Goal #2**

## **Goal (Tips #1 & #2):** Keep it simple and focus on one of the 5 LPI practices.

## **Desired Outcomes (Tip #3):** “Results I want from developing this skill.”

Self:

Team:

Organization:

## **Self-Understanding (Tip #4):** Strengths that I can build on and development needs I can address.

Strengths:

Development Needs:

## **Business Context (Tip #5):** Challenges in my business environment that require this skill.

# **Development Actions**

## **AWAKEN (Tip #6):** Activities for gaining personal insight into my impact as a leader.

1)

2)

3)

## **ALIGN:** Actions for connecting my leadership development goals with my business outcomes.

1)

2)

3)

## **ACCELERATE:** Experiences, people, and education that will provide new concepts, skills, and knowledge.

1)

2)

3)

# **Development Success Factors**

## **Timeline (Tip #7):** Within the next 6 months.

## **Support Need (Tip #8):** Who and what I need to effectively implement my plan.

1)

2)

3)

## **Indicators of Success (Tips #9 & #10):** When will you know you accomplished your goals?

1)

2)

3)

# **Developmental Goal #3**

## **Goal (Tips #1 & #2):** Keep it simple and focus on one of the 5 LPI practices.

## **Desired Outcomes (Tip #3):** “Results I want from developing this skill.”

Self:

Team:

Organization:

## **Self-Understanding (Tip #4):** Strengths that I can build on and development needs I can address.

Strengths:

Development Needs:

## **Business Context (Tip #5):** Challenges in my business environment that require this skill.

# **Development Actions**

## **AWAKEN (Tip #6):** Activities for gaining personal insight into my impact as a leader.

1)

2)

3)

## **ALIGN:** Actions for connecting my leadership development goals with my business outcomes.

1)

2)

3)

## **ACCELERATE:** Experiences, people, and education that will provide new concepts, skills, and knowledge.

1)

2)

3)

# **Development Success Factors**

## **Timeline (Tip #7):** Within the next 6 months.

## **Support Need (Tip #8):** Who and what I need to effectively implement my plan.

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## **Indicators of Success (Tips #9 & #10):** When will you know you accomplished your goals?

1)

2)

3)

Based on the book: *Awaken, Align, Accelerate: A Guide to Great Leadership*, Chapter 3, “Develop Yourself. ISBN: **159298391X** ISBN13: **9781592983919**