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Executive Development: Get to the Heart of What Really Matters & Drive Results Through Real-Time Learning

By Gayle Lantz



“Please don’t put us through a program!”

This was the plea from a client who wanted to plan a day off-site with his leadership team. This executive was tired of sessions in the past from other executive development consultants that didn’t achieve the results he wanted. Understandably, he wanted to be in the driver’s seat this time. He wanted to focus on their specific issues and learn what they can do better.

This scenario is not uncommon.

Many executives today are rejecting training approaches that deliver stock content. Instead they opt to spend time learning through dialogue, resolving current problems, airing issues and building skills where they can see a direct link to results. By getting to the heart of what really matters to the team, they experience better learning and results.

Executives must step up to the plate and assume greater responsibility for their own learning and development

The challenge for those charged with helping executives develop has never been greater. And therein lies part of the problem. If you as the executive assume that “someone else” is handling your developmental needs, personal improvement is off your radar.

Compounding the problem, you may even resent the person trying to help. “How can they know what I need?” Internal and external trainers, coaches and consultants must work collaboratively with leaders, not impose the latest fad, process, program or leadership book.

Ultimately, it’s the executive’s personal commitment to development that determines the success of any learning initiative.

Commit to Development Now & Start Driving Results Tomorrow

So you have a few competing priorities. Development will always take a back seat if it’s viewed as a stand alone, disconnected exercise. People will find time when they clearly see the benefit. Your benefit to commit to development is better business results.

Executives often think it takes getting away from the office in large chunks of time to reflect and focus on critical issues. The good news is that learning on-the-go with short focused conversations will help leaders and their team accomplish their goals.

So, now that you decided to commit to development now so you can improve productivity and your bottom line, what are you going to focus on?

Achieve Your Business Goals by Focusing on Here-and-Now Issues

It doesn't matter how many ways you can be a better leader if you have a serious problem in your face right now. Like it or not, that issue becomes your focus. You will benefit by striking a balance between dealing with the here-and-now issues and developing best leadership practices to help your business achieve its goals.

In my experience working with senior executives, they want to know how to address a pressing challenge...now. They seek practical ideas they can implement right away that support their immediate needs and long term vision.

Successful leaders know they must constantly be doing and reflecting. It feels like pushing the accelerator and the brake at the same time. Sometimes leaders don't know what to do when they're not in motion.

Here Are My Top 5 Key Executive Development Points to Help You Get to the Heart of What Really Matters & Drive Results

- **Development happens daily.** It doesn't have to be an event or class to be checked off as part of the "personal development plan." It's a mindset. Leaders must be in a constant state of learning. Most real learning doesn't occur in the classroom.

- **Curiosity fosters executive development.** The best leaders are curious. They want to understand the world around them and how that learning can apply to their business.

- **Strengths deserve attention.** Leaders should be familiar with their key strengths. Many don't know what they are. Building on strengths helps leaders do what they need to do more easily. So, don't spend as much time trying to work on your weaknesses. The payoff is different.

- **Development requires dialogue.** Leaders like to interact with other peers and learn from each other's war stories and triumphs. By providing opportunities for dialogue one-one-one (perhaps with a mentor, peer or coach) or in small group settings, you're offering the best developmental experiences for executives.

- **Company commitment is imperative.** Companies that place a high priority on executive development raise the bar on leadership at all levels. They understand that executive and leadership development is not a "nice to do" but a "need to do" to attract and retain talent, compete well and grow their business. These companies create cultures where self-development is expected.



No matter what executive development approach you pursue, you must keep it simple, focused and relevant. And remember, ultimately executives are responsible for getting results. Any training and development activities should be directly linked to those results. Companies will continue to need great leaders. Great leaders grow themselves.

About the author:

Gayle Lantz, President of [WorkMatters](http://workmatters.com), has helped hundreds of companies and organizations just like yours improve performance and drive real results. For more free ideas on how to grow yourself, your team and your business, visit WorkMatters Tips at <http://workmatters.com/signup>.

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