

smart CEO

WHITE PAPER

IT'S ALL ABOUT DECISIONS: Are your leaders ready for tomorrow?

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Decisions, decisions ... at the end of day, your success is all about decisions. Day after day, you make choices that affect the future of your organization, both short and long term. Your decisions about leadership development can be among your most important, such as identifying the right succession plans to ensure smooth executive transitions; creating initiatives to foster innovation across the organization at every level; and determining the optimal investment of resources to achieve your goals.

The decisions you make or defer regarding leadership development impact your entire organization and can serve as a competitive advantage to ensure your ongoing success.

Increasingly, organizations are taking a holistic approach to leadership development, continuing to focus on technical competence while broadening the analytical abilities and communications skills of the leadership team. Programs that align with business strategy and reinforce adoption of corporate culture and contextual integrated content address any gaps, enabling you to act on opportunities. Companies looking to build frameworks for cultivating leadership in this way are interested in engaging community experts. These might include formal and informal elements and varied delivery options that support knowledge acquisition and transfer, bolstering the probability of success. Leadership development that engages decision makers at multiple levels as learners can reenergize your organization to ensure you retain your best and brightest.

CASE IN POINT

A government contractor hired many early-career professionals into its workforce. While the company provided ongoing technical training, it also wanted to attract, develop and retain these high-potential professionals, creating a pipeline of talent to future leadership positions.

An integrated leadership development curriculum was created with the support of Drexel LeBow Corporate and Executive Education as its partner, to hone technical skills while fostering leadership communication and acumen. Over two years, employees participated in customized online courses and classroom seminars, worked with mentors, attended conferences, and collaborated on business projects. Academic faculty, subject matter experts, senior executives and coaches were engaged throughout to enrich the experience. Subject matter covered topics ranging from communications, engineering and finance to leadership, operations and security.

The initiative maximized internal resources and leveraged external expertise to enhance leadership development impact. The approach to cultivate the next generation of leaders was aligned with its business strategy, enabled the company to lift standards of work and competencies applicable to all business areas with marked improvements of the new hires' professional performance, cross-functional network and understanding of the total enterprise.

Over the last few years, the economy has rewarded organizational agility and innovation. Ensuring that your organization is addressing the development needs of your leaders at all levels is an investment in your company's ability to adapt and advance in the future.

Integrated leadership development with a custom approach offers the best of both worlds, focusing on the individual leaders or those with the potential to lead and the organizational needs, while providing them with strong core competencies and better strategic alignment to address tomorrow's challenges.

Launching a leadership development initiative, regardless of size, may seem daunting at the onset, but the optimal path becomes clear with support from the top and the right team in place. When creating or revitalizing leadership development in your organization, consider the following:

STRATEGY

- What are your organization's current levels of skills and capabilities? Desired future levels? Are the gaps being addressed?
- Is there alignment among strategic goals, expectations, desired outcomes and the initiative?
- Is there executive support and engagement across the organization?
- Are you willing to invest organizational resources and funds needed to achieve desired outcomes?
- On what criteria will you evaluate the program's success?

IMPLEMENTATION

- How will you design, develop and deliver the content that will help to achieve your goals? What is the optimal configuration of internal and external support to ensure successful leadership development initiative?
- How will you deliver the program across the organization? Online, classroom, or blended delivery? Mix of formal and informal elements? How will you engage leadership participation across the organization?
- What level of academic rigor and external thought leadership should be incorporated?

These programs can incorporate coaching, experiential exercises, team building, rotational assignments, assessments, evidence-based research and integrated capstone projects. There are numerous options; the key is finding the right fit for your organizational objectives.

Whether your decisions are strategic or tactical, having the right team in place to launch and support an integrated leadership development initiative is critical to its success. The support of a university-based executive education team, with a proven track record for design and implementation, can help you determine what works best for your organization today with an eye toward the future. Leveraging external resources for curriculum development or the creation and integration of experiential learning elements provides additional bandwidth for implementation and allows you to focus on ensuring alignment with leadership strategy.

Remember, whether you decide to invest today, tomorrow or not at all, is a decision that will have a lasting impact on your organization.



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