



What Should a Leadership Development Program Include?

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The essential components of leadership development that creates practical, measurable growth.

A strong leadership development program should do more than teach leadership theory. It should help people understand themselves, lead others more effectively, communicate through challenges, make better decisions, and apply new skills in the workplace. The most effective programs are intentional, practical, measurable, and customized around the leaders and organization they are designed to support.

Start With the Organization - Not a Generic Curriculum

Leadership looks different at every level. A first-time manager may need support with delegation, accountability, and leading former peers, while an executive may need to strengthen strategic thinking, executive presence, organizational communication, or leading through change. Before selecting topics, an effective program should identify the organization's goals, leadership gaps, workplace challenges, culture, and the skills participants need to develop.

That discovery process can include leadership interviews, employee feedback, assessments, job or role analysis, organizational priorities, and conversations about what success should look like after the program. This creates a development experience built around real needs rather than a one-size-fits-all training calendar.

1. Self-Awareness and Leadership Style

Leaders need to understand how they naturally communicate, make decisions, respond to pressure, and affect the people around them. Self-awareness helps participants identify strengths, blind spots, triggers, and behaviors that may need to change as their responsibilities grow.

2. Communication Skills

Leadership happens through communication. Programs should address active listening, clear expectations, feedback, presentations, meetings, difficult conversations, cross-department communication, and adapting communication to different people and situations.

3. Emotional Intelligence

Strong leaders need the ability to recognize emotions, regulate their responses, understand other perspectives, and build productive relationships. Emotional intelligence is especially important when managing conflict, receiving criticism, navigating uncertainty, or leading people through change.

4. Executive Presence and Confidence

Leaders should learn how to communicate with credibility, remain composed under pressure, influence others, contribute confidently in important conversations, and represent the organization effectively. Executive presence should be developed authentically rather than teaching everyone to lead the same way.

5. Accountability, Feedback, and Performance Management

Managers need practical tools for setting expectations, addressing missed performance, giving meaningful feedback, documenting concerns appropriately, recognizing strong work, and holding people accountable without creating unnecessary conflict.

6. Delegation and Developing Others

Leadership is not doing everything yourself. Development programs should teach leaders how to delegate effectively, coach employees, build capability, recognize potential, and create opportunities for others to grow.

7. Conflict Resolution and Difficult Conversations

Avoided conflict becomes organizational friction. Leaders should practice addressing disagreement early, separating facts from assumptions, managing emotionally charged conversations, and creating solutions that protect both accountability and working relationships.

8. Strategic Thinking and Decision-Making

As leaders advance, they must move beyond daily task management. Programs should help participants prioritize, evaluate risk, consider financial and operational impact, connect decisions to organizational goals, anticipate consequences, and think beyond the immediate problem.

9. Leading Through Change

Organizations are constantly evolving. Leaders need tools to communicate change, understand resistance, maintain trust, listen to employee concerns, explain the purpose behind decisions, and help teams remain productive during uncertainty, restructuring, growth, or new leadership.

10. Team Dynamics, Trust, and Collaboration

Leadership development should strengthen more than the individual. Participants need to understand how trust is built, why teams fall into silos, how different working styles interact, and what leaders can do to improve collaboration and workplace culture.

11. Career Development and Leadership Pipeline Planning

Organizations should connect development to the future. Programs can help emerging leaders identify career goals, prepare for expanded responsibilities, build succession readiness, and understand the skills required for their next level of leadership.

12. Practice, Coaching, and Accountability

Learning becomes valuable when it changes behavior. Effective programs should include real-world scenarios, role-play, facilitated discussion, action plans, coaching, reflection, and follow-up. Participants should leave knowing exactly what they will do differently when they return to work.

How Should Leadership Development Be Delivered?

The best delivery model depends on the organization and its people. Leadership development may combine **one-on-one executive coaching, new manager coaching, half-day workshops, leadership retreats, team training, remote online learning, facilitated discussions, assessments, and ongoing development sessions**. A blended approach often creates greater impact because leaders have opportunities to learn together while also receiving individualized support for their specific challenges.

Measure More Than Attendance

A completed training roster does not necessarily mean development occurred. Organizations should define what they want to improve and revisit those outcomes. Measures might include participant confidence, communication, employee engagement, retention, internal promotions, leadership readiness, missed deadlines, team collaboration, performance concerns, or progress toward individual development goals.

Leadership development should ultimately be visible in the workplace: stronger conversations, better decisions, clearer accountability, healthier teams, more confident managers, and leaders who are prepared to take on greater responsibility.

The Still Standing in Heels Approach

Still Standing in Heels Consulting builds customized **leadership development programs, executive coaching, new manager training, corporate workshops, half-day retreats, communication training, executive presence development, emotional intelligence training, conflict resolution programs, and leadership pipeline development**. We can work with one leader, a leadership team, emerging leaders, or an organization-wide cohort.

We begin by understanding the people, challenges, and goals of the organization. From there, we create practical learning experiences around the situations participants are actually facing. The goal is not simply to complete a leadership program. It is to develop stronger leaders who can apply what they learn, advance their careers, strengthen their teams, and create a meaningful impact throughout the organization.

A leadership development program should not simply fill a training calendar.

It should change how people lead.

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