

## How to mentor and develop a potential leader

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If you're a top leader in your organization, at some point you will need to find, mentor, and develop others into the kind of leader the organization needs. Quite often this is not properly carried out. Some leaders have a tendency to make hasty decisions on the matter and then end up regretting it later on.

Leaders must be good at judging others. Leadership expert Peter Drucker has often said, “It is important to disciple a life, not teach a lesson.” Discipleship of another person involves discerning where that person is, knowing where he or she is supposed to go, and giving them what they need to get there. The person and the assignments they are given must match. As Drucker also said, people are like flowers. One, like a rose, needs fertilizer. Another, more like a rhododendron, doesn't. If you don't give flowers the care they need, they'll never bloom. The leader must be able to tell which is which.

Everyone you recruit for your organization should be a potential leader, but you should not try to personally mentor every one of them. Lead and nurture those within your influence, spending 80 percent of your time on the most promising 20 percent. This doesn't mean you ignore the other 80 percent, they just don't get the same time commitment from you. Here are some guidelines for selecting the right people to mentor and develop:

1) *Select people whose philosophy of life is similar to yours.* It will be difficult to develop someone whose values are too different from yours.

2) *Choose people with potential you genuinely believe in.* If you don't believe in them, you won't give them the time they need. And they will discern your lack of confidence in them. Belief in their potential, on the other hand, will empower them. Some of the nation's greatest professional athletes have come from tiny colleges that receive no publicity. All those athletes needed was for a pro scout to come along and recognize their potential that the right opportunity could bring out. The secret of mentoring in any field is to help a person get where he or she is willing to go.

3) *Determine what a person needs.* Determining what potential leaders need involves looking at their strengths and weaknesses objectively. Their strengths indicate the directions they need to go, as well as what they can become. Their weaknesses show us what we need to help them improve. Encouraging them in their strengths and helping them overcome their weaknesses will move them closer to reaching their potential.

4) *Constantly evaluate their progress.* People need feedback, especially early in their development. Ben Franklin said, “The eye of the master will do more work than both his hands.” He knew that a leader's ability to evaluate is his or her greatest strength. An honest mentor will be objective. If necessary, he or she will encourage the person to stay on course,

to seek another direction, or even to enter into a relationship with another mentor.

5) *Be committed, serious, and available to the people you mentor.* The development of potential leaders will be a reflection of your commitment to them: poor commitment equals poor development; great commitment equals great development.

Danny Thomas, a famous American philanthropist, said, “All of us are born for a reason, but all of us don't discover why. Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others.” By personalizing each person's journey, you are helping them to maximize their potential. You are giving them a chance to discover their purpose. You also maximize their contribution to you and your organization.

Most people agree that nurturing is important to the development of children. However, they often fail to see its importance in the workplace. They assume that potential leaders will nurture themselves. If you as a leader don't nurture the potential leaders around you, they will never develop into the types of leaders you desire. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.” When you nurture the people around you, everyone wins. Mentoring and developing potential leaders sets up a promising future for all stake-holders.

~ The End ~