Welcome Leaders to Setting up a Leadership Development Program for the Hybrid Workforce!

They say "Youth is wasted on the young". But if you think about it, why is "Wisdom usually given only to the old?"

Now, in the Digital age, we can remedy that irony.

With a few practical tips, and insight, we can harness, merge and more efficiently share the collective youth and wisdom of everyone in our organization.

Sure, but why do we need to do this again?

For starters, enhancing team performance. If you have strong leaders, expect strong team performances. Leaders are the single greatest factor in any team's performance.

Next, it exponentially increases team engagement and commitment. It reduces stress and gives your people something to look forward to.

Finally, it improves the chances of hitting overall organizational targets and provides a lot of chances to further grow the organization to reach greater heights
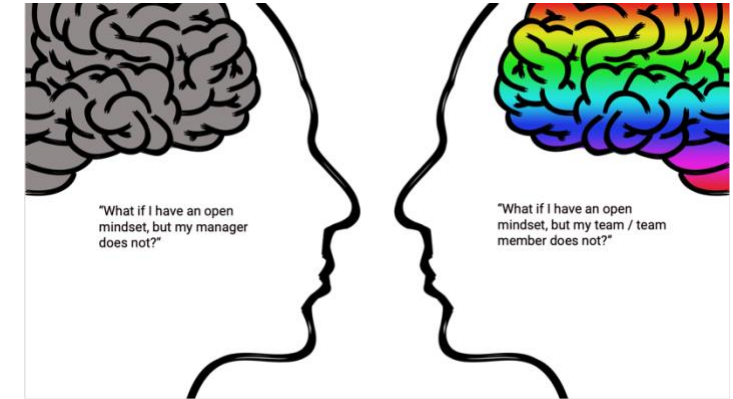

I.   Challenges of Leadership Development for the Hybrid Workforce

There are however, challenges that we have to overcome before we can really achieve these.

These are the top 3 Challenges that we see in most organizations that we have helped through our leadership training programs:

1. Mindset
2. Communication
3. Commitment

Mindset

The most common questions I get whenever I talk about leadership is either:

"What if I have an open mind, but my manager does not?"

Or

"What if I have an open mind, but my team / team member does not?"

Mindset is the first challenge of not just setting up a leadership dev program, but for leadership itself.

Leadership is not about authority or position, it is about influence.

Changing mindsets (for the better) is about influence plus a relatable perspective that the other person can "Buy-in" to.

Believe it or not, even the most "closed-minded" people need different perspectives too, the key is how it is communicated to them, who communicates it to them and how it is received and interpreted by them.

So, if your first challenge is Mindset. We must first understand how to influence people and provide a relatable perspective.

Communication

Communication is key to Influencing others. Verbal, written, non-verbal, actions. All of these are forms of communication that often gets lost in translation.

This is another common challenge, again, not just in setting up a leadership dev program but in general.

As part of Leadership development, and even getting it started, Communication is crucial. In everything we do, communicating is key to resolving issues or making it worse.

This can't be more emphasized In the Hybrid workforce setting where people have to juggle working remotely and then face to face. It gets confusing, overwhelming and stressful.

Here's a common scenario that you may have encountered:
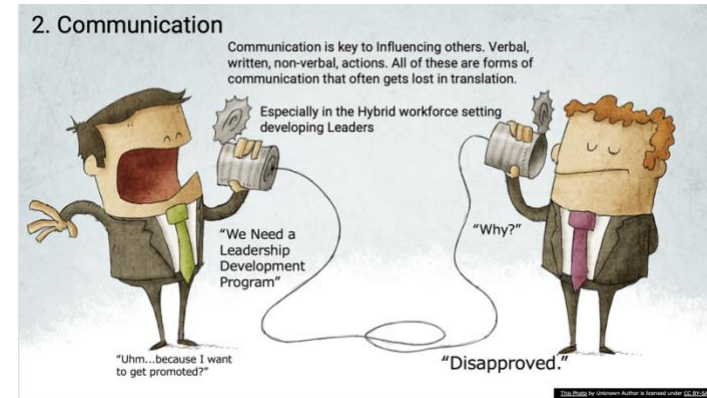
"Sir, we need a Leadership Development Program."
"Why?"
"Uhm…Because I want to get promoted?"
"Disapproved."

What if we changed the conversation this way:

"Sir, we need a Leadership Development Program."
"Why?"
"Because we want to reduce your stress levels."
"…I'm listening."

I talk about this a lot more in my transformational Leadership Communication course. (More information here: https://businessmaker-academy.com/live-webinar-transformational-leadership-communication-training/)

If you feel that communication is a challenge within the organization look at including that in your leadership Dev program first.

Commitment

Finally, the third top challenge is commitment. A leadership program needs the support and involvement from top leadership to the participants.

That being said, the most precious resources everyone has to provide are:
1. Time
2. Attention
3. Involvement (Effort)
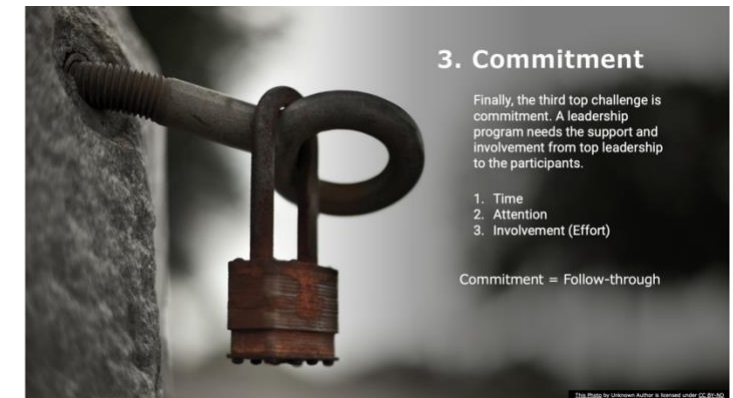
Of course, on top of this, leadership must also be willing to commit money into investing in their Leaders.

However, if Leadership also puts in the time, attention, and effort, then investing money will be

easier to decide on. Whether you have a budget or not, as long as you commit time, attention and effort, you already have the foundations of a strong leadership dev program.

Commitment is best if it is <u>formalized</u>.

When the Covid Pandemic hit, that was actually when we decided to formalize a Leadership Development Program.

We included and formally announced it as one of the organizational objectives and targets in 2020.

Our organizational objectives were simple:
1. Protect our People
2. Develop our People into Leaders
3. Rebuild our Company

It is actually these objectives, prioritizing our people first, that got us through the crisis. It unified us as an organization and it generated gratitude for each other.

When we formalized it, we showed our people that we were committed to it and we continue to follow through with it.

2 years later, we are glad that we did as our people and our organization have grown and developed tremendously since then.

When you commit. Commit. And you will reap the benefits sooner than later.

II. 3 Key elements of an Effective Leadership Development Program

1. Qualifying Leaders

Attitude is the first and foremost qualification of great leaders. A resilient, positive, but realistic and practical attitude towards all kinds of circumstances that life throws at you is critical.

Another important thing to look for is the **attitude of Gratitude**. Gratitude in itself is one of the qualities that the BMA culture values greatly. It is crucial to real "engagement" and commitment of your leaders to be.

Because the energy of gratitude, based on experience is far more effective (and a lot less toxic) than the energy of fear.

Of course, while Attitude is extremely important, competencies and the ability to "Perform" are the next important things to consider.

Gratitude without performance isn't enough. It must be both. Fortunately, both attitude and performance can be developed in a Leadership Dev Program, yes, even in a hybrid workforce setting.

In fact, doing it remotely makes it a lot clearer and more efficient than just face to face.

Qualifying leaders in the remote work setting actually helps in the following

    a. Being able to separate the Pretenders from the Performers
    b. Identifying those who can Self-Management vs those who can't
    c. Gratitude and Accountability

2. Having Clear Competencies, KPI's & Milestones

"We want to develop leaders". Is a statement we announce to the organization. The issue and the question is "how?" Specifically, what are we looking for that makes us say, "you are the leader we need."

Most of the time, leaders practice "certainty" more than "clarity".

Positive, "Can-do" attitudes over compensate for clear expectations of what your future leaders should be.

So for any effective program to materialize, CLEAR expectations are needed first.

There are no hard and fast rules. Each organization, each person is unique. It is about matching the culture, the objectives and the leaders and that will take some work and some time to achieve.

Once you clarify what it is that you want from your leaders, that is when the program will take shape.

As an Example, here are the Competencies we are developing in our own Leaders.
(Please note that we include both attitude and competencies in the program and is a work in progress. It is unique to us and the people we are developing.)

Core Competencies
   a. Communication + Motivation
   b. Decision Making and Problem Solving
   c. Teaching & Delegation
Cross-Functional Competencies
   a. Computer Literacy
   b. Collaboration Literacy
   c. Time and Resource Management
Technical Competencies
   a. Sales communications
   b. Issue Resolution
   c. Social Media Management

KPI's for each competency is then broken up into smaller measurable, quantifiable entities.

The important thing to note about KPI's is that it has to measure progress for each competency.

Non-measurable ones often in the attitude category are left to other evaluation methods from the direct supervisor and even their peers.

All of these are tackled more comprehensively in our course called KRA's and KPI Development and Implementation Course here:
https://businessmaker-academy.com/kra-kpi-training/

3. Training, Mentoring and Coaching

Everything we do, especially while doing our functions is a teachable moment that should go towards your leadership program, specifically Training, Mentoring, and Coaching.

Perfect learning opportunities occur when something goes wrong. This doesn't mean we encourage mistakes, it means, when they do happen, then the perspective will have to be: "Okay, we made a mistake, how do we correct this now? What did we learn? How do we get better?"

It doesn't mean we can't be angry. We can.

In fact, a lot of times, we should…as long as it is commensurate to the mistake and it is clear that you are not angry with the person, but the situation.

Leaders in training have to feel anger and disappointment because if not, how will your leaders know what consequences and being accountable really is?

The best Leadership lessons occur not in a protected "bubble" but in real-life and how we deal with it should be part of our commitment to teaching people and developing them further, NOT to make them feel small or despise leadership.

   a. Immersing and Confidence Building
   b. Leadership Communication and Expectation Setting
   c. Investing in External and Internal Learning

Diversity

Before I talk about preparing for diversity, it is still essential to have a strong central leadership core.

A set of Principles, Values, that define the overall organizational culture. This forms the back bone of a great Leadership Development Program.

That being said, we have to acknowledge that there are also generational differences in the world we live in today.

Having a Hybrid workforce setting opens up our doors to dealing with people from different regions, countries and beliefs and cultures. Take the BPO industry for example.

Because of Diversity, instead of just creating "mini-ME's" we should strive to create upgraded, better versions of leaders.

Values and Culture should be combined taking the best everyone in the organization can offer.

However, correcting diverse points of views is another thing we need to consider in building a Leadership Development program.

We should acknowledge differing points of view, but it is important to also correct the point of view if it is misaligned with the principles and culture of the organization as a whole.

III.   Setting Up a Leadership Development Program

Start Small and commit the resources needed.

The next key to having a GREAT program is Accessibility and Engagement which can be achieved with lesser effort if there is gratitude towards each other.

Now in the Digital age, with the help of technology, we can build a more seamless leadership program that can do that.

Technology is the tool and is important, but engagement and commitment of everyone in the team is the key to achieving this.

External Experts

Organizations tend to look at external sources for expertise or an "outsider's" perspective for corrections / Interventions / Improvement

When choosing external training, it is important to look at
1. Localized and Aligned Content
2. Competency Based Content
3. Mentors / Coaches that Connect and Engage and can "Transform" people whether it be face to face or virtual platforms

At Businessmaker, we do that a lot for our Clients and students. It is a privilege to be part of their growth and we will continue to do that and evolve to our client's needs.

Internal Experts

While external expertise are still extremely valuable, let us not forget that our organization has a huge amount of knowledge and wisdom as well within.

We need to "Tap" into that by giving opportunities for our team to teach themselves AND even teach Executive Leadership with a "Collaborative" Learning approach.

One of the standing goals we have for our people is to be able to teach, present and communicate what they know about our operations. What we are doing right, what we are doing wrong, what we should do to improve.

We do that on a quarterly basis through our QBRs or our Quarterly Business Reviews.

While those are major "Teaching and Learning" events for us, there are many opportunities for team members to improve by teaching simple things to each other either in a formal or informal setting.

For example, our marcom supervisor will teach the team on the new updates on FB messenger, specifically "How to answer customer inquiries properly on social media" They meet on zoom or have a specific viber thread to post questions or clarifications and explanations.

The problem with having your people start training other people within the org is that it is very intimidating and they may not know where to start.

If it is within themselves, usually the pressure is somewhat lower but if it is to higher ups then the pressure goes higher.

Regardless of the situation, we reinforce the culture of "Mistakes as a teachable moment" and that you must do your best and not just do it for the sake of.

Furthermore. It does not have to be perfect because that is where the "Collaborative" part comes in.

In all cases where teaching, coaching, mentoring is involved, collaboration means each team member has to improve and provide comments and feedback.

Sometimes it is kind, sometimes it is harsh. If you fail, you learn you improve.

As mentioned, the team uses technology to Train each other. Low tech and free versions are a good place to start. For example, you can use free versions of zoom, or upload a recorded lesson on Youtube. Maybe follow it up with Viber or messenger.

However, the problem of using these tools is it lacks the power of an "integrated" way of tracking and "follow-through" mechanism.

But if you have a limited budget, maximize what you have but always look at streamlining it further.

Once you've exhausted all the free resources available, inevitably we have to be willing to invest in a higher phase of the leadership development program.

An example of a "Higher Phase" of the program will include investing in an LMS or LXP platform. They solve the issue of compliance and tracking once your Leadership program becomes company wide and not just limited to 10 to 12 people.

These platforms, will consolidate the lessons, allow for more collaborative, self-paced learning. If set up properly, it should be quite accessible and engaging at the same time.

To Summarize:

Setting up a Leadership Development Program for the Hybrid workforce may have challenges, but the benefits of
1. Enhancing team performance.
2. Exponentially increases team engagement and commitment with reduced stress
3. Improves the chances of hitting overall organizational targets

Will outweigh these challenges.
Furthermore, remember the 3 Key elements to an effective Leadership Program
1. Qualify Your Leaders
2. Have Clear Goals
3. Train, Mentor, and Coach

Finally, start small, commit resources to it and maximize both External and Internal training tools available. When the time is right, invest in higher level learning tools and platforms like an LMS or LXP where collaborative learning can happen across a bigger audience within your growing organization

They say "Youth is wasted on the young". But if you think about it, why is "Wisdom usually given only to the old?"

Now, with a few practical tips we can remedy that irony.

If you liked what you learned here, we recommend investing in follow up trainings for you and your leaders:
- Leadership Program Bundle for Supervisors: https://businessmaker-academy.com/bundle-leadership-training-program-for-supervisors/
- Leadership Program Bundle for Managers: https://businessmaker-academy.com/bundle-leadership-for-managers/
- KRA's and KPI's Development and Implementation Webinar: https://businessmaker-academy.com/kra-kpi-training/
- Visit https://www.businessmaker-academy.com for even more quality training,