

THE FOUR THINGS YOUR LEADERS MUST HAVE



By Walter Orechwa

Why most leadership training **doesn't** create better leaders.

Leadership training has fallen down a rabbit hole of inconsistency. It's a mishmash of seminars, live training and one-and-done opportunities that are nearly impossible to integrate into your leaders' daily lives.

At A Better Leader, our team has spent almost 40 years helping companies address and overcome leadership failures. The four areas in this guide are the key points on which we've most often focused to create swift and lasting change.

Focus on these four areas, and you'll improve engagement, reduce stress and find yourself at the center of a company that is a true employer of choice.

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The rate at which managers fail is alarming, and the news gets worse: even if poor managers leave an organization, their legacy is a wake of destruction among the team members they managed. Poor leadership directly impacts employee engagement levels and low levels of engagement are linked to increased turnover, decreased productivity and union organization - all factors that reduce bottom-line profits.

The Epidemic of Weak Managerial Skills

In a comprehensive study conducted by the Gallup organization, researchers examined more than 2.5 million manager-led teams and the engagement of their 27 million employees. The results were sobering:

- Only **30 percent** of US workers are engaged in their roles
- Employees who have highly engaged managers are **59 percent more likely to be engaged** themselves
- **Managers are responsible** for at least 70 percent of the variance in engagement levels
- 50 percent of employees have **left a job due to poor management** at some point in their careers
- Only **35 percent** of U.S. managers are engaged in their roles
- Disengaged managers cost the U.S. economy \$319 billion to \$398 billion **each year**

After reviewing the results of this research, Gallup experts came to a disturbing conclusion: only 10 percent of working people possess the talent to be a great manager and companies fail to select the right person for leadership roles 82 percent of the time. The cause is simple - most managers are chosen because of their tenure with

the organization or their success in previous roles, and not for their managerial skills.

Creating a Culture of Leadership Excellence

Senior managers and HR professionals have a difficult job when it comes to transforming leadership culture, as the project is two-fold. First, the promotion and hiring process must be refined to ensure the right people are placed in managerial roles. Second, managers must receive the training and development needed to glean new skills.

At its core, the path is simple:

- Teach Leadership Skills
- Create Better Leaders
- Become an Employer of Choice

A commitment to excellence and a comprehensive action plan can impact managers' effectiveness substantially. The four-point checklist for leader success identifies the critical skills needed for effective management and offers innovative methods for developing talent.

LEADER SUCCESS CHECKLIST

1

The Ability To MOTIVATE



Employees differ in what motivates them to do their best work, with some responding to internal motivation and others requiring external motivation. Strong managers have unique skills in that they can connect with both types of employee, inspiring all team members towards greater achievements through relationships built on trust, morale, and recognition.

You can spot a good motivator in action because you will see a constant raising of the bar. Motivational leaders challenge themselves and their staff to continuously improve and to deliver exceptional performance. They see the big picture, and they communicate it to their teams. They share their vision for the future, and they inspire staff members to join them in the journey.

When filling managerial roles, focus on these signs of a strong motivator:

A track record of taking the initiative outside of work. Did the candidate organize community events or fundraisers? Participate in volunteer activities? Complete a marathon? Staying engaged in the world outside of work - along with encouraging others to join them on the journey - is a promising indication of motivational skill.

Perspective on failures. A danger sign is a candidate who has no failures. No history of failing means no willingness to push past limits to greater achievements. Examine the perspective of those who do share failures. Are they self-aware? Can they identify their role in why things went wrong? Did they try again after failing the first time? People who are accountable for their failures know they have the ability to influence results - a perspective that is critical in motivating others.

Teaching motivational skills can be challenging, but there are specific steps you can take to improve motivational ability in current managers. The good news is that once you help leaders start the cycle of motivation, achievement, motivation, and greater achievement, it can be self-perpetuating. As teams reap the rewards of their success, they are inspired to work towards greater success.

Start with this simple exercise across the organization:

- Each manager meets with individual team members to identify one part of their job that inspires them.
- Managers and team members identify one easy-to-achieve, short-term goal, preferably related to the item identified in step one.
- Managers encourage team members as they focus on the identified goal.
- Managers pile on the praise once the goal is achieved,
- Repeat, selecting a new, slightly more complex goal each time.

LEADER SUCCESS CHECKLIST

2

The Ability To PROVIDE SUPPORT



Good managers can get things done through people. When staff members are struggling, they don't step in and complete the task. Instead, they provide any necessary support, removing obstacles that prevent team members from achieving their goals. Of course, there are some prerequisites for providing support successfully.

Highly skilled leaders can identify current challenges and use creative problem-solving techniques to find solutions. The most talented can look ahead of the current situation to anticipate potential future difficulties so that they can either prevent them or prepare to see the team through them. Related skills include conflict resolution, prioritization, and delegation.

When interviewing managerial candidates, examine problem-solving skills through real-world "what would you do" scenarios. The situations can be outlandish - "What if you were stuck on a desert island with only these things?" You can also use real examples from your day-to-day business operations. You aren't measuring right or wrong as much you are as learning more about how the candidate processes information, examines options and makes decisions. Follow this question up with similar scenarios that require problem-solving for an entire team.

LEADER SUCCESS CHECKLIST

3

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT



The best leaders don't stop when they achieve their own goals, and they keep their teams moving forward through continuous improvement. Often, these individuals are lifelong learners, and they are constantly looking for ways to increase efficiency, streamline production and improve quality standards. Most importantly, they inspire team members to adopt these same principles so that the entire group is constantly updating skills and elevating performance.

Related skills include an ability to provide feedback effectively, a coaching mentality, strong ethical standards and an understanding of change management techniques. Managers who want employees working towards continuous improvement must also be secure enough to share their knowledge. Any hint of fear that a team member's success threatens a manager's confidence will destroy momentum towards improvement.

LEADER SUCCESS CHECKLIST

4

The Ability To MAKE CONNECTIONS



Workers don't usually abandon their employers; they leave their managers. Conversely, when employees are engaged with their team and connected with their managers, they stay in their roles. They are confident that they can grow and develop within the organization, and they trust their leaders to provide appropriate recognition for their achievements.

Excellent managers make these meaningful connections with their team members, building trust over time. They listen, they create opportunities for conversation, and they effectively manage crisis communication. Employees regard such managers as coaches and mentors rather than task-masters.

Spend time talking with candidates about their communication and feedback philosophies. Understand whether they are open to 360-feedback, or if they expect to be obeyed with no questions asked. Inquire about how individuals handle situations when they don't know anyone. For example, at a cocktail party, do they jump into conversations with strangers, or do they stick close to the host? How the candidate makes connections with others is an important indicator of managerial skills.

Organizations that focus on these four skills when hiring and developing managers gain a competitive edge. They rapidly become an employer of choice, attracting and retaining top talent. Their reputation, also known as their employer brand, precedes them into the labor market, ensuring that the most skilled candidates are anxious to apply for open positions.

Get Started Building Better Leaders With A Free Month of Training For Your Company.



**Provide the Best In
Leadership Training**



**Build
Better Leaders**



**Create A Culture of
Engagement**

START BUILDING BETTER LEADERS

What companies that use A Better Leader Are Saying...



"Before A Better Leader, we were experiencing high turn-over, and a lack of team unity. Now, our leaders have monthly training that is helpful for continued growth and they're learning leadership skills that they were lacking on."

Jomil Valdez
Trinity Services Group



"We have leaders who have grown up in the Company and have little formal training. With 5 plants in 3 states, A Better Leader allows us to provide consistent training that really gets people thinking!"

Bonnie Turner Ph.D., SHRM-SCP, SPHR
Elkhart Plastics



"The distribution for 'A Better Leader' could not be easier for me, and it provides excellent concept introduction for new leaders, without talking down to seasoned ones."

Patricia Moody, SHRM-SCP, SPHR
SSI Schaefer Systems International

START BUILDING BETTER LEADERS