

Positioning Yourself For Greatness

Every day and everywhere, individuals develop their own leadership qualities and put them to positive use in and out of the workplace. And they don't have to have a top-ranking or supervisory job to do so.

More often than not, you find great leaders among their fellow staff members and within their project teams. They seem to command respect, regardless of job title, because of their proficiency in leadership skills.

In fact, some of the most important leaders in a company are highly engaged with Learning & Development. These may be leaders within L&D working to design and develop training or leaders outside L&D working to ensure quality training is delivered and supported throughout the organization. As a colleague in the world of training and development, you may already be positioned for greatness.

Great leaders are so valuable because they draw upon multiple avenues of information and experience to discern patterns in their environment, which in turn, reveal solutions. Then, they use their skills to support and guide others to achieve. They fully appreciate change and understand that when individuals are being stretched, they learn. They know that if you're in your comfort zone, then you aren't growing. This broader view makes L&D leaders (at every level) essential to the overall success of an organization.

Learning + Change + Applying It = Leadership

To grow as a leader and advance your L&D department as a vital entity within your organization, there's so much you can do: engaging in mastermind sessions, joining friends in new activities, correcting unproductive behavior, and attending training, seminars and webinars that take you out of your comfort zone.

You may also consider these concrete steps to cultivating and harvesting your leadership attributes:

- Expand your mind with curiosity-inducing activities, such as mind-maps, visual thinking exercises and sessions with exponential thinkers in fields that are seemingly unrelated to your job.
- Read about and explore areas where there's no "right" answer, such as the arts and humanities, to help you learn to analyze and make decisions amid ambiguity.
- Build a team to create your next training program that includes at least one person who will challenge your thinking and expand the definition of what's possible.

Assessing Current Leadership Skills

Would you like to be a learning leader? The following assessment will help you to learn more about yourself as a learning leader and the characteristics you would like to improve. Assign a rating to each of the characteristics listed below to assess your skills as they pertain to your current leadership role within the organization or to the way in which you carry out your work in a non-leadership position.

Rate yourself from 1 – 5: 1 = applies to me; 5 = I need to improve or develop this characteristic

Leadership Assessment		
Characteristic	Rating (1-5)	Who and what will help me improve in this area
Interpersonal Skills		
Develop and nurture effective working relationships		
Contribute to a spirit of teamwork and cooperation		
Show appreciation for a job well done		
Help others develop ways to overcome barriers to personal effectiveness		
See interconnecting relationships among a variety of work-related issues		
Get recognition for being very fair		
Foster respect and appreciation of employees' differences		
Influence others while knowing when and how to follow		
Support personal and work practices that promote health and wellness		
Communication Skills		
Share communication in a clear way, via e-mail, memos, letters, reports, and conversations		
Write concisely and directly using words understood by most employees		

Leadership Assessment

Characteristic	Rating (1-5)	Who and what will help me improve in this area
TIP!	One way to write better is to remove unneeded words. Excellent writers say a lot with as few words as possible.	
Speak as clearly and effectively as possible		
Present yourself well and demonstrate likability in video form		
TIP!	Spend time watching speeches, debates, or presentations on YouTube. When you listen to people of inspiration speak convincingly to an audience, you'll quickly discover that your own verbal skills improve.	
Project effective body language to those around you		
Listen attentively to catch details that may be missed and attempt to understand others		
Pay attention to employees' body language and nonverbal cues		
Share expertise and knowledge to help others develop		
Respond in a timely way to the concerns of others		
Delegate responsibility and authority to maximize use of employees' skills		
Confidence		
Take risks to propose new ideas and support those of others		
Clearly and respectfully express your own needs, concerns, and views		
Remain positive and productive during times of uncertainty and change		
Make appropriate decisions, even under pressure		
Flexibility & Creativity		
Positively approach challenges and change		
Consider how to do things better and differently		

Leadership Assessment

Characteristic	Rating (1-5)	Who and what will help me improve in this area
Keep up-to-date with new methods and innovations in the industry		
Use creative problem solving		
Anticipate and plan for problems and roadblocks		
Remain a life-long learner		
Organizational Consciousness		
Support strong company missions and goals		
Remain a role model for others by actualizing organizational values		
Encourage your team to regularly assess its effectiveness		
Collaborate with key stakeholders to provide the best client services		
Recognize and respond appropriately to the political implications of situations		
Achieving Results		
Follow through with and keep commitments		
Inspire others toward a hopeful vision of the future		
Manage time and resources efficiently		
Manage workload and achieve results on time and within budget		
When possible, remove roadblocks that interfere with employee performance		
Ensure a balance between concern for employee and concern for work results		

Source: Assessment adapted in-part from *Organizational Leadership Development: Personal Resources Handbook*, Environmental Health, Seattle-King County Department of Public Health, January 1999