



About these tips...

For over twenty years we have partnered with many organizations that sought to build their leadership bench strength and provide a climate for their talent that allows them to shine. Education is often the first step, but as we know, it is not enough to produce the results you expect for the investment. Our list has been collected from successful interventions we have been proud to be part of. Should you be inspired to add to the list, please feel free to contact us at leadership@michaelneiss.com. Thanks!

1. Start with a tailored program

There are many good models of leadership that are the foundations of popular mass market learning products. You should not accept a packaged model as is. The program you select must resonate with the learner and be seen as relevant to your organization. At the least, your provider should understand your culture and values and build this into the curriculum. The facilitator should also be knowledgeable about your vision, and the primary business challenges and opportunities around that vision. Start with well researched model, such as the Leadership Challenge, and then work with the provider to make it personal! One hint, if the provider spends more time telling you about their product rather than asking questions about your business, be wary!

2. Talk human capital appreciation

It is important to set the organizational expectation that unlike equipment that we buy that depreciates, human capital is expected to appreciate each year. Many organizations have slipped into an entitlement mode where step increases are expected by team members every year and longevity becomes a criteria for advancement. With each developmental opportunity should come a clear expectation for increased results. If we believe that people are our most important asset, than we should provide the proper care and feeding and expect a greater harvest.

3. Clearly express expectations to attendees

When a participant understands that he/she has been selected for the leadership development activity as an investment in them as a contributor to the organization, it helps them to focus. A simple pre meeting with the attendee that explains why the organization is investing in leadership development and more specifically, why they are investing in their leadership goes a long way. Citing specific examples of the need for better leadership can be powerful.

4. Create a learning community

A successful learning experience often leads to a temporary condition we have labelled, "training afterglow". Participants are excited and anxious to try some new things. But alas, the tactical realities they return to often move these new ideas to the permanent back burner. We have had success by creating a learning community of participants including such things as consulting relationships with each other, quarterly follow up sessions, and internal blogging. This mutually reinforcing network often helps to keep the ideas alive, and actually tried!

5. Select a partner, not a vendor

Look for someone that is dedicated to your business's success and has the skills and experience to meet that goal. Consider the provider's own business background. Have they ever led a business team? Do they make efforts to understand your business through your eyes? Do they have the necessary background to make the lessons come alive with real, first hand stories? Would you feel comfortable with them as part of your management team? Is there the right chemistry between the provider and your team? Will the participants see this person as someone they could learn from?

6. Model the way

The executive teams' own leadership development should be visible. Consider being the first team to attend the session. At the least, we recommend a thorough executive briefing and participation in the 360 assessment.

7. Co-facilitate the sessions

Consider working with your outside vendor in the workshops. Our most successful interventions have been built on this model. Do make sure that the internal person co-facilitating is representative of the type of leadership you want from others. This is an excellent developmental assignment for your high potential candidates.

8. Debrief with graduates

Sponsor an internal focus session with graduates to identify barriers and difficulties they are having implementing their learnings. Often we find that the architecture (current policies, practices, and procedures) present hurdles to leadership behaviors. Set the expectation in these meetings that solutions, as well as barriers, be offered.

9. Stay in touch with your vendor

An experienced facilitator can offer you great insight gained from the sessions. Schedule periodic reviews of progress with the facilitator and ask them to document the learnings for you.

10. Celebrate success

Collect stories of successful leadership in action and recognize the leaders. The recognition does not have to be grand in scale. A handwritten note with a statement of the specific action and the results it produced will be cherished. Let the team know that leadership matters.