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## Executive Sponsorship of Training

### *Seeing It All The Way Through*



There's no question that professional development is a priority and a trend in companies today. The importance of development shows up in every study.

86% of surveyed leaders cite leadership development as one of their most important challenges.\*  
83% of surveyed organizations said that targeted development is important or very important.\*  
62% of surveyed managers said that executive coaching is needed to stay current in today's job market.\*

But, there's another trend that seems to be developing right along with the commitment to people development and that's a lack of patience in allowing the development to take place. We see it every week in our workshops and coaching sessions. Well-intentioned leaders identify communication as an area to accelerate or develop further. Managers are scheduled for workshops or coaching, and leaders endorse the investment. But, when the training time comes up, leaders tell managers to reschedule or to step out for an hour phone call. Managers come into programs with deadlines due at the end of the day or a stream of texts from their leaders throughout the day. An interruption used to mean a true business emergency. Today, interruptions are an expected and acceptable part of every day.

I often wonder if leaders consider the messages they send to managers who are trying to improve their skills.

*It could mean, "We want to invest in you, but it turns out today isn't a good day."*

*It could mean, "Take care of my needs first and then you can focus on you."*

*It might mean, "You don't need a full dose of development. Just get half of it."*

*It probably means, "I forgot where you were. Can you switch gears and help me?"*

*It definitely means, "No one is covering for you back at the office. You'll have to balance running your business with whatever is happening in that program."*

*Or, it may mean all of the above. The point is that it's a mixed message.*

The overachiever will usually push through these mixed messages and get what they need from development. Some managers get stuck between the mixed signals and lose their focus. The impact can be that the experience with a company like ours is less beneficial than it could be.

We don't see relief on employee's faces when these interruptions occur. We see disappointment and hear the following:

*"My boss sent an email. I'm going to have to leave for 1.5 hours. Can you wait until I get back?"*

*"My boss keeps calling and needs me to step out. I'm so sorry. Will I miss a lot?"*

*"My boss needs me for two hours. Can I catch up when I get back?"*

Unfortunately, the answer is no, yes, and probably not.

In our programs, you can't catch up. You miss a significant portion of the program if you leave for over an hour, and I think that most high impact development programs are similar. If you could miss an hour, we would have taken it out of the curriculum. More importantly, there are others in the program who will be there. So, the format and the learning move on without some participants. And, I think that's an unintended consequence.

I feel confident that leaders who agree to a development step or program for an employee care about the outcome and are vested in seeing it through to completion. If you are one of those leaders, these six steps may guide you to see development through to completion. It means a commitment from the beginning to the end of the process to really validate that commitment to a manager.

**Step One: Define Goals.** When a development gap or opportunity is identified, go beyond defining the need and define clear goals for a manager. If you match goals or behaviors to the development step, it helps the manager understand a new expectation.

**Step Two: Provide Support.** This is the weakest gap and new trend that we see emerging. If you agree to training or coaching, support it. Allow the time and focus needed to leverage this opportunity. Whether it is accelerating someone's position or correcting a gap, it is an opportunity and an investment. Treat it as a well-intended one.

**Step Three: Seek Input.** Development isn't meant to be a solo experience. Talk about training or coaching with your manager after it occurs. Ask for feedback on any development step and listen for key takeaways and learnings. You gain great insight about skills by asking people to talk about their experience with learning.

**Step Four: Coach Skills.** While outside resources add great value in building skills and accelerating results, they aren't around for day-to-day reinforcement. If you want people to develop new skills and habits, focus on what you can do to provide ongoing support.

**Step Five: Measure impact.** Identify an upcoming event or opportunity to assess the new skills yourself. Talk about progress and if appropriate, let the manager know they've reached your expectations. If they haven't, be clear about additional development needed.

It's always surprising to hear managers say they've had the same goals on their development plans for three years. And, most often it isn't for lack of training. It's for lack of follow-through or closure around a development area.

There's no question that as companies continue to evolve, development will remain a priority and an important trend. But, the lack of follow-through doesn't have to take hold.

The steps above can help any leader set direction and support a manager through development. It's the difference in training that has impact...managers who feel valued...and leaders who get vested in the development of their people.

Call us when you need us!



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