

Georgia

CONSTRUCTION TODAY



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Creating Your Own Personal Leadership Development Plan

Regardless if you are a natural born leader, everyone can learn how to lead more effectively. The ability to lead is a collection of skills, abilities and attitudes we can become proficient in through study and practice.

As we learn and grow throughout our lifetime, our leadership capacity increases so we can become more effective leaders. Many people attend leadership training programs to enhance their skills. Others are fortunate to have mentors and/or supervisors who provide a positive example and help us cultivate our leadership potential. Some of the most successful people attribute their success to a disciplined reading program – another way to develop leadership know-how.

One of the most powerful ways to accelerate your leadership development is to **create a personal leadership development plan**. Successful business leaders know that having a well-thought-out written business plan in place helps to map out the company's future, establish goals and priorities, and focus available resources on achieving those goals. The same is true with people – a personal development plan can focus your attention on achieving specific performance goals to enhance your overall leadership effectiveness.

Why develop a personal plan

A leadership plan is the vehicle through which you articulate a vision of what you are striving to achieve in your life. It defines specific personal development goals based on the areas you need or want to improve in and commits you to executing specific action steps within a set time frame. In the leadership classic, *Learning to Lead*, Warren Bennis and Joan Goldsmith write, "Leadership means not only having a dream, but claiming that dream and the role you want to play in it."

What does a personal leadership development plan look like

This type of plan is one of many tools that can result from a thoughtful self-assessment into your strengths and limitations. It is typically a 2-3 page document (or in its simplest form a set of index cards with your thoughts written on them) spelling out your personal leadership goals based on competencies and behaviors you want to improve, action steps you will take to achieve these goals, the expected time frame, and any resources needed to achieve these goals. Pay close attention to the benefits of taking a specific action and anticipate obstacles. The overall goal is to assure successful implementation of your

development plan so you build new leadership capabilities over time. (A sample plan is on page 17.)

Getting started

Take some time to answer these questions in writing to help make it easier to put your plan together.

1. What are my current strengths or outstanding abilities?
2. How can I make better use of these strengths?
3. What are my current limitations/weaknesses that are interfering with achieving my goals and vision for my future?
4. How do I overcome these limitations?
5. What is the knowledge, abilities or attitudes I want to strengthen and what do I need to learn the most?
6. What are some of the "costs" to my not being more developed in these areas?
7. What can I do to strengthen my less-developed abilities? (workshops, books to read, coaching)
8. Of all the things I need to work on, what is the one thing at this time I would choose to develop to help improve my overall leadership effectiveness?
9. What are the obstacles I see in accomplishing my goals?
10. What actions can I commit to for at least 10 minutes each day to enhance my leadership potential?

Getting feedback from others is always helpful – what do others see as your strengths and limitations. If you get stuck



SAMPLE PERSONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR JOHN SMITH *December 5, 2009*

Developmental Goals (where) (Competency Area)	Strategies to Achieve Goal (what)	Time Frame (when)	Specific Action Steps (how), Resources Needed (who) Benefits (why) & Obstacles
1. Improve relationships with co-workers.	a. Invite co-workers to lunch one at a time	Complete by 1/30/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule w/ Sam, Carol and Mike Better understanding of each other will make it easier to work together
	b. Ask Joe (supt.) what he needs and expects from me to perform well on our upcoming project.	Complete by 11/15/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will make Joe more receptive to hearing what I need and expect of him on the upcoming project. Joe can be stubborn, so we need to focus on what is best for the client to insure project success.
	c. Observe what Sam (who is great at building relationships) is doing so I can start doing some of the same things.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take Sam to lunch Notice Sam's body language
	d. Pay closer attention to the positive things people are doing around me and let them know I appreciate their efforts.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus especially on people who have a different personality style than me to find their strengths Say thank you
2. Demonstrate a willingness to learn and change.	a. Eliminate use of "killer statements" that shuts down new ideas and open communication.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get feedback and make a list of statements I use so I can avoid them (Ex. That won't work; We can't afford it.)
	b. Find more occasions to ask others for their input in solving problems – especially those who have a stake in the outcome.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will get me more buy-in for solutions
	c. Before acting out of habit, ask myself and others if there is a better way to approach something.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put reminder note to do this where I can easily see it each day Refrain from evaluation during brainstorming sessions

on what kind of actions you can take to improve in certain areas, ask others who are proficient in these areas for ideas or observe what they do. Also consider a 360 degree feedback process to compare how you see yourself with how peers, supervisors, and others see you.

Implementing your plan

Just like working to execute a business plan or fitness health plan, implementation of a personal leadership development plan requires daily practice and maintenance. Keep track of the progress you are making and take corrective action when needed. Ask others who you value for their feedback to see if they notice any improvements. You will then know if you are on the right track! ■



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