

5 STEPS TO CREATE A CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP

BY BILL HOGG

This is the fourth in a series of six articles that looks at leadership capacity and its impact on organizational growth. The full series will be available for download as a white paper once it is completed.

In our last article, we discussed some ideas on [how to assess leaders and their capacity to lead](#). Now let's discuss some of the steps required to create a culture of leadership.

Creating a culture of leadership is a key component in your companies' ability to grow year over year. It is not something that can be implemented; rather a culture of leadership evolves organically by taking the necessary steps and investing the time and resources that are required to create leaders not only at the top level, but throughout your organization.

1. Define your organizational culture

For a culture of leadership to exist, companies must first define it. This definition needs to be based on core leadership capacity principles and “must have” characteristics. These can be uncovered through internal reflection and an assessment of the company leaders which we discussed in our [last article](#).

However, culture should not be developed strictly through a top down approach. Gathering feedback and input from employees at all levels of the company will help to refine culture and understand the perspectives, beliefs, and values that exist throughout the company.

For a culture of leadership to exist beyond being a policy or internal directive, the entire organization must be involved. Leadership is needed at all levels and positions within the organization. Adoption will be more successful if employees feel they have had a hand in shaping organizational culture.

2. Build a culture of leadership into the hiring process

Once a culture of leadership is established, leaders must not only commit to the dedication to new leadership accountabilities, it must also be reflected in the recruitment and hiring process.

In order to ensure that a culture of leadership continues to evolve over time, leaders need to recruit and hire people that fit within your organizations idea and culture of leadership capacity. To attract the people that will fit your organizations culture leaders need to:

- Revise the recruitment process to seek out people that fit your culture. This can be done through:
 - Always being on the lookout for ideal fits for your company
 - Connecting with people through social networking sites such as LinkedIn
 - Asking for referrals from people who embrace your leadership culture
- Develop job descriptions that build in critical elements of leadership character and probe for a willingness to join a culture of leadership. This can be accomplished by building in character components into the hiring process rather than simply job tasks.
- Clearly communicate expectations, accountabilities and strategic objectives
- Provide training that is targeted at immersing new employees into your culture as quickly as possible. This can be done by including leadership principles, must have characteristics and culture into every training opportunity.

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3. Build accountability into leadership development

For a culture of leadership to exist, leaders must make leadership development an essential component of advancement. This can be accomplished by ensuring key building blocks are in place before considering advancement:

- Internal promotion standards that must be met before consideration to move up in the company
- Benchmarks that need to be achieved for both current and potential leaders
- Clearly outlining goals and objectives that are to be met at each level of the company
- A strong coaching component that identifies and builds on strengths

4. Provide exposure to decision making through coaching and mentoring programs

For employees and leaders to develop leadership skills, they must have the opportunity to be involved in the decision making process at various levels of the organization plus the opportunity to share their opinions in a safe environment. Companies need to:

- Create ways for employees to communicate issues, concerns, and obstacles
- Allow employees to voice their opinion and be part of dialogues related to strategy directions, goals and objectives that impact their position and role in the company
- Involve leaders at all levels of the company in strategic development
- Provide employees with the opportunity take the lead on projects or strategic objectives
- Make sure that leaders also partake in coaching and mentoring to improve and enhance their impact on culture

5. Enable mastery of professional skills at all levels of the organization

A leadership skill development program needs to be in place so employees have access to the resources necessary to evolve into leaders and leaders the opportunity to improve their leadership abilities. Nurturing leaders needs to involve effective and constant feedback that will allow employees to flourish. To make this happen companies can:

- Identify future stars and start their development early by giving them opportunities to observe good leadership models and have the opportunity to demonstrate/practice their own skills in controlled environments
- Provide training courses and seminars that are directly related to leadership development
- Provide feedback on a consistent basis that allows for a leadership dialogue to be developed
- Recognize positive progress and reward employees when they exceed expectations and reflect the culture of leadership you have defined.

Creating the right culture will help leaders and employees get into the correct frame of mind when it comes to the development of leaders and leadership capacity. Companies that invest in this culture and give leaders and employees the leadership tools will create growth and innovation.

The next article in our leadership capacity series will build on the steps needed to create a culture of leadership and examine leadership behavior and how it impacts the development of leadership capacity.

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Bill is the "just do it" guy who has walked in your shoes. Senior leaders at organizations like Anheuser-Busch/InBev, The Bay, RBH and ServiceOntario hire Bill to navigate change and influence and inspire higher performing teams that deliver exceptional customer service, higher productivity and improve profits.

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