

# Building a Leadership Development Culture

## Summary

(Mac Lake)

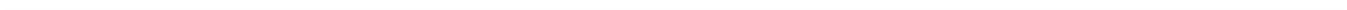
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This document contains a summary of, "Building a Leadership Development Culture" by Mac Lake.



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## Help! I Need Leaders Now

The top two needs in positioning yourself for growth are:

1. an intentional leadership development strategy
2. making leadership development a priority

Begin with a small group of leaders that you personally develop and work through. Pour into them so they can pour into their teams.

We don't have a leadership problem. What we have is a leadership development problem.

We are surrounded by people with leadership potential who have unique skills. They may even be leading in other areas of their lives while not leading in our organization. We need a system that equips existing and emerging leaders to maximize their leadership capabilities.

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## If It's So Important, Why Aren't We Doing It?

Most people won't admit that leadership development isn't important; however, they often have excuses why they aren't doing it. To overcome that, one of your key tasks will be to help others see that the long-term health and growth of your organization is dependent on the constant reproduction of new leaders.

### *Line of Reasoning*

Leadership development increases the number of influencers in your organization. Well developed leaders:

- Take initiative.
- Spread positive attitude.
- Model the life and leadership of Christ.
- Own the vision.
- Operate in their strengths.
- Enlist and empower others.
- Reproduce themselves.

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## What's a Leader to Do?

Your first impulse may be to adopt the latest training fad; however, the solution to the problem is neither quick or easy.

Stop focusing on building leaders. Instead, focus on building a leadership development culture. The key difference is that with a culture, the focus is on continually reproducing leaders so that there is never a shortage. It's not effective to only build leaders to fill an immediate need.

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## Eliminate the Excuses

Before you will be able to make significant progress, you'll need to identify and eliminate the excuses for not developing leaders.

### *Excuse 1: I Don't Have Time*

The truth is, the busier you are, the more opportunities:

- a potential leader has to observe you in action
- you have to give a few responsibilities away to a developing leader.

### *Excuse 2: I Don't Know How*

It's a matter of taking the time and putting forth the effort to think through your system for developing leaders.

### *Excuse 3: I Can't Find the Right Program*

You can't find the right program, because there is **no** right program. Leadership development occurs in the context of relationship, not out of a book or in a conference or seminar. Classes can be helpful as part of an overall system; however, competencies form as learners interact with and observe experienced leaders. The only "magic bullet" is a leader who is willing to invest in developing other leaders.

### *Excuse 4: I Already Have Enough Leaders*

Thinking you have enough leaders is a shortsighted view. You should be developing for vision, not immediate need. If there's a vision for growth, then recruiting and developing leaders must be daily disciplines for all leaders in an organization.

### *Excuse 5: I Don't Have the Money*

Leadership development doesn't need to be expensive, because it's not about sending people to conferences or buying expensive classes.

### *Excuse 6: No One Told Me I Should Develop Leaders*

Unfortunately, this is true in many organizations. Developing other leaders should be part of every leader's job description.

### *Excuse 7: No One is Ready for Development*

Jesus developed people who weren't ready. He found someone with potential and said, "Follow Me" [[Mat 4:18-19](#)]. Focus on willingness more than readiness.

### *Bottom Line*

Confront the excuses and begin the intentional effort of building a leadership development culture in your organization.

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## Focus on Transformation

When Jesus did leadership development, His disciples experienced transformation. Acts 4:13 illustrates His affect on them.

*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” (Acts 4:13, NKJV)*

Transformation should also be our focus.

### *Definition*

Leadership development is an intentional process. It involves a person interacting with an experienced leader. The result is that the person undergoes a transformation in character and competencies that increases ability to influence others.

### *Million Dollar Question*

Many ask, “How do you train leaders?” The danger in that question is that it suggests there is a quick, easy answer. Plug and play programs don’t work. Leadership development is messy work that requires time and discipline. We should be thinking of a well thought out system rather than a program.

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## WWJD?

Our best model is Jesus. As you study the gospels, you can see His strategy for developing leaders.

### *Two Undergirding Practices*

#### **Practice 1-Make Leadership Development Relational**

Jesus built a long-term friendship with the people He was developing. One of the greatest enemies of effective leadership development is impatience. Potential leaders need someone committed to walk with them, observe them, encourage them, and give them constructive feedback. The key is patient investment in potential leaders.

#### **Practice 2-See People for What They Can Be**

*Then He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Mat 4:19, NKJV)*

Jesus took two ordinary men and did extraordinary things through them. He had confidence in their potential.

Instead of looking for weaknesses, look for potential that you can help develop.

### *Three Environments*

#### **Environment 1-Mentoring**

Tip-1: Provide potential leaders with resources they can use to grow.

Jesus used parables to capture their imagination and cause them to think about what He said (**Mark 4:33**). He wanted them to learn to think for themselves and wrestle with the principles He was teaching.

We can provide leaders with resources to stimulate their learning. For instance, you can give an apprentice a short reading assignment which you discuss later. We could also provide an online training platform.

Tip-2: Give challenging assignments.

Caution: Assignments should not be of the sink or swim variety.

Jesus gave assignments that were developmentally appropriate. Before He sent them out in pairs to spread the gospel, He had done several tours with them as a group so they could observe Him as a leader. He gave them clear instructions and guidelines. In [Luke 10:1-20](#), He told them where to go, what to do, what to say, and how to handle situations He knew they would face. Afterward, He was there to debrief their experiences with them.

Think about the specific areas where you need to grow leaders.

1. Plan a set of sequential assignments that will provide the experiences they need to be equipped.
2. Match each leader with a mentor who can model the necessary skills.
3. Have the mentors observe the developing leaders in action and give them feedback.

Tip-3: Provide coaching.

Consider [Mat 14:22-32](#) where Peter got that “sinking feeling” that he had just made a huge mistake. Notice how Jesus coached Peter. He reached out His hand and caught Peter. Then Jesus used the incident as a teachable moment. Before He returned Peter to the boat, He discussed what had gone wrong. When a leader is neck deep in trouble, you will have his undivided attention. What you teach in the heat of the moment will be something the leader won't forget.

Every developing leader needs a coach who will discuss issues, question him, debrief experiences, encourage him, and challenge him.

## Environment 2-Huddles

Huddle = a small group of leaders who meet for shared learning

Peer to peer learning is one of the most effective means of sustained learning.

Huddles are a good place to:

- Celebrate successes.
- Discuss common challenges.
- Share helpful insights.

Consider what Jesus did in [Mark 10:35-45](#) when the disciples were outraged at James and John's request to sit at His right and left when He came into His kingdom. He huddled the whole group together, addressed the issue, and used the issue to teach about servant leadership.

There is heightened receptivity to learning when people are facing problems. That's a good time to huddle for problem solving. The key is to avoid making it a time to air out problems they have with one another. Instead, focus on leadership challenges related to roles. Encourage them to share what they are learning.

## Environment 3-Conferences

The power in a conference is usually not the content. You can find most of that in books or podcasts. The power is in the energy of a room full of people learning something at the same time. This energy can create greater receptivity to new ideas and learning.

Multiple times in the Gospels, we see Jesus surrounded by crowds who came to hear Him teach. Sometimes people stayed to listen even when they ran out of food ([Mark 8:1-3](#)). That's a sure indicator of energy and receptivity to learning.

In-house conferences can be beneficial. If done well, they:

- Inspire your leaders
- Let you cast a unified vision to leaders
- Give you a venue for celebration
- Help leaders recognize they are part of something bigger than themselves
- Open minds to new ideas

- Provide a way for leaders to network with one another
- Give you a venue to show appreciation for your leaders

### *Why Don't We Use the Same Methods?*

If this strategy worked so well for Jesus, why aren't we using the same strategy?

Two Reasons:

1. In today's world, we want leadership development to be neat, fast, and easy. It's not any of these. It requires our patience, grace, and understanding.
2. In today's world, we center leadership development around the organization. Instead, we should center it around leaders. Organizations can fund, resource, and supplement; however, it takes leaders to develop leaders. Our leaders must accept developing other leaders as a key responsibility.

## Putting It Together

If you agree that this strategy makes sense, the question is, "How do you make this work in your organization?"

### *Step 1: Involve the Senior Leader*

The **displayed** values of the senior leader become the values of the organization. If leaders developing leaders is the culture you want to have, then your senior leader must be developing at least one other leader.

### *Step 2: Evaluate Your Current Systems and Structures*

Healthy leadership development will only occur if your systems and structures support it.

### *Step 3: Choose a Strategy*

We need an intentional leadership development strategy. Some things to consider are:

- Think Simple: It must be simple enough for people to understand and implement.
- Think Alignment: We should use the same strategy in every department. We should establish best practices across the organization.
- Think Small: Don't ask, "How can we train as many leaders as fast as possible?" Instead, ask, "How can we empower our current leaders to replicate themselves in one or two other people?" **Many mentors** is a better strategy than one teacher [[Eph 4:11-12](#)].

### *Step 4: Determine Your Content*

We must be clear on what we want leaders to learn and we must let leaders and developing leaders know.

### *Step 5: Clarify Expectations*

Leadership development will not become part of our culture until we take a stand for it. Examples:

- Put "develop leaders" into the job description of every leader in your organization.
- Only hire people who are leader developers.

### *Step 6: Put it on the Calendar*

Schedule leadership development events on our yearly calendar.

- Mentoring: Set dates to evaluate the state of mentoring/coaching.
- Huddles: Set dates for these. (We may also want to suggest themes or learning activities for them.)
- Conferences: Set dates for two in-house all leader meetings each year.

### *Step 7: Evaluate Often*

Frequent restarts cause people to become cynical about anything new. Minimize the need for total restarts with frequent evaluation and adjustments.

## *Step 8: Celebrate Success*

When we identify, recruit, and develop new leaders, it's a reason to celebrate. When our leaders are

growing, it's a reason to celebrate. We should share success stories and express appreciation for our leaders.

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## **The Messy Truth**

Leadership development is messy. In spite of our best efforts, there will be times when leaders fail. Sometimes they will struggle to understand ([Mark 6:51-52](#)). We must be prepared to use mistakes as learning experiences and not lose heart.

Our goal is to produce leaders who produce leaders. Our job in developing a leader is not done until that leader has developed another leader.