The Leader's Greatest Return

THE SUMMARY

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Introduction: Everyone Wins When You Develop Leaders

Everywhere you look, there is a leadership deficit. The good news is that leaders can be developed, and everybody wins when leaders develop other good leaders. If you are a leader—at any level or in any capacity—your organization will benefit when you start developing leaders. You can do that beginning today. There is nothing in this world that gives a greater ROI to a leader than attracting, developing, and multiplying leaders. It's the key to success for any country, family, organization, or institution.

Developing leaders is going to be difficult but worthwhile. The task is worthy of our best efforts because it adds the greatest value to others. Developing leaders is the one activity that compounds a leader's time, influence, energy, vision, culture, finances, and mission.

Developing leaders is a job that never comes to an end. The more I know about leadership, the more I know that I don't know. If developing ourselves as leaders in leadership is a lifelong process, then we should also expect the development of others to be an ongoing process that never ends.

Developing leaders is the best way to grow any organization. If you want to grow or strengthen your organization or department, start by developing those closest to you, because they will determine the level of success your team will achieve.

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How well you lead determines how well you succeed.

Developing leaders is the only way to create a leadership culture. If your organization doesn't already possess a leadership culture, creating one is a slow process, but it's worth it. Why? It's because developing leaders is the only way to grow, improve, create momentum, and achieve greater success.

Success for leaders can be defined as the maximum utilization of the abilities of those working with them. There's only one way for a leader to help people maximize their abilities and reach their potential and that's to help them develop as leaders.

Chapter 1: Identifying Leaders: Find Them So You Can Develop Them

How do you identify good potential leaders, people you want to develop? You need to have a picture of that person. Look at these six areas of identification, answer each of the corresponding questions and then you'll know what you're looking for.

Assessment of Needs: "What is Needed?" If the mission of your organization were to climb trees, would you rather hire a squirrel or a horse? Do you possess a clear target? Do you know what you're going after? That will tell you what kind of leaders you need to find to improve your organization.

Assets on Hand: "Who has Leadership Potential within the Organization?" The best place to begin looking for potential leaders is in your organization or on your team. It makes sense because they are a known quantity, they already fit the culture, and they have already established influence.

Assets Not on Hand: "Who has Leadership Potential Outside of the Organization?" As much as I advocate identifying leaders in your own organization, sometimes you can't find who you're looking for. Bringing in outsiders can create challenges because of the unknown. I think the greatest challenge is cultural compatibility.

Attitude of the Potential Leaders: "Are They Willing?" Attitude is a choice, and at the heart of a good attitude is willingness which includes willingness to learn, to improve, to serve, to think of others, to add value, to do the right thing, and to make sacrifices for the team. Leadership skill may come from the head, but leadership attitude comes from the heart.

Ability of the Potential Leaders: "Are They Able?" Leadership talent lifts organizations the most. Excellence is impossible in any endeavor without talent. No highly successful organization got to where it is without talent. Finding good leaders is like finding a good high jumper. It does you no good to find seven people who can jump one foot. You need one person who can jump seven feet.

Accomplishments of the Potential Leaders: "Have they Produced Results?" You need to look at whether they have the produced results in the past. What have they achieved? When given a task, do they complete it with excellence? Do they meet and exceed goals? Do they deliver? They can't lead others to success if they've never led themselves there.

People often say, "I'll know it when I see it." That's not a good strategy. I say, *Know it and you'll see it.* No team can win without great players. If you're not identifying the leaders of tomorrow whom you will train up, your potential and your future will always be limited.

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Chapter 2: Attracting Leaders: Invite Them to the Leadership Table

Not everyone invited to the leadership table will become an effective leader. Inviting someone to the leadership table does not mean that he or she will always remain there. The table is meant to attract potential leaders and find out if they will become leaders. For that reason, you should make the table as large as you can manage so that it will accommodate many potential players. Don't worry as the best leaders will separate themselves from the rest.

To make your leadership and your organization attractive to potential leaders, here's what you need to make sure happens at your leadership table.

People at the Table can experience a leadership culture. Organizations with a strong leadership culture depend on people for guidance and direction, not rules and policies. The first thing we look for at the leadership tables of my organizations is a match in values. People do what people see and they keep doing it. What people do on an ongoing, habitual basis creates culture.

People at the Table participate in the dynamics of the table. Creating a leadership roundtable allows you to provide a good environment for your team members to grow, learn, and begin embracing the dynamics of leadership.

If you haven't yet created your own leadership table or you have already begun developing leaders, but you want to find a way to handpick some leaders for greater development, why not create a leadership roundtable?

Do it by setting up-front expectations with the invitees. The format is discussion, not teaching. Focus on people and give them 100% of your attention. Expect them to add value to the table. Encourage everyone to *ACT:*

- What can you *apply* to your life?

- What you *change* about yourself?

- What can you *teach* to someone else to help them?

People at the Table benefit from the Power of Proximity. As a learner, there's no substitute for participating and having access to people who know what they're doing, can direct you, and can give you feedback. That requires proximity. Leadership is more caught than taught. One of the best ways for potential leaders to learn how leaders think, problem-solve and act is to spend time with them at the table. Listening to leaders wrestle through issues, seeing how they make choices, and watching how they interact with one another are some of the best gifts a potential leader can receive from you. Meetings become classrooms for potential leaders.

People at the Table get to practice leadership. In the end, the only way for any person to learn leadership is to lead. Leading isn't a theoretical exercise. Everyone has to start somewhere. Why not let your potential leaders start practicing at the table with you and other leaders who can help them.

What will it mean for you to create a leadership table in your organization or on your team? That will be as unique as you and your situation. Just as there are no one-size-fits-all leaders, there are no one-size-fits-all leadership tables. The main thing is to get started. Look for leaders and potential leaders, invite them to the table, and begin the process.

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Chapter 3: Understanding Leaders: Connect with Them Before You Lead Them

Before you lead and develop people, you need to connect them. You need to find common ground with potential leaders, which is less about ability and more a function of attitude. Soft skills, such as asking questions and listening, having empathy for people's journeys, and understanding their perspectives, are crucial in today's leadership environment.

Why is it so important to touch a heart before you ask for a hand? It's because people don't automatically commit to you and follow you when they understand you. They commit to you and follow you when they feel understood. I believe that will happen for you as a leader when you value them, let them know you need them, include them in your journey, adopt a teachable spirit, ask questions, listen well, seek to know their perspective, give credit to those who help you, express gratitude to those who help you, and replace *me* with *we*.

Good leadership requires a perspective shift from *it's all about me* to it's *all about others.* I began to learn how others thought and to lead them from where they were, not from where I was.

If you really want to understand other people, you need to ask questions. I'm a talker, so it took me a while to learn this, and I'm still working to increase my skill in the area of questioning. As I've asked questions, I made an important discovery. Asking questions has the opposite effect of giving direction. When you give direction to your team, you often confine them. When you ask questions, you create discovery room for articulation, communication, innovation and problem-solving.

Questions create space for open conversation, place value on others and their opinions, help people know one another better, invite everyone to participate, clear up assumptions, cause people to think and guide the conversation. People in authority usually prefer to talk. However, there is perhaps no better way to connect with people than to become a better listener.

Listening leads to understanding people. The biggest communication challenge is that most of the time we do not listen to understand. We listen to prepare our reply. People who understand one another work better together. Leaders are always more effective leading people they understand and care about and that process starts with listening.

Listening is the best way to learn. When we fail to listen, we shut off much of our learning potential. The higher people go in leadership, the more isolated they often become. If you want to be an effective leader, you must make 'learning by listening' a top priority every day.

Listening engenders trust and connection. Leaders who genuinely listen and keep confidences gain the trust of the people they work with. Listening draws people to you, which works much better than trying to push your leadership on them. Empathy builds trust. You can never get the best out of people if you don't know who they are, where they want to go, what they care about, how they think, and how they want to contribute. You can learn those things only if you listen. You want to understand the potential leader, and you want to offer that person opportunities to better understand you.

If you are going to develop leaders, and you hope to eventually experience the leader's greatest return, you need to connect with your leaders and potential leaders. You need to learn who they are and do everything you can to understand them. You also need to be open enough to allow them to understand and learn from you. That's the only way you will be able to go to the highest level as a leader who develops leaders.

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Chapter 4: Motivating Leaders: Encourage Them to Give Their Best

One of the questions leaders ask me most is, "How can I motivate my people?" There's a good reason for that. Every leader's organization or team possesses people who seem to lack motivation. It's difficult to get them moving, and if you do succeed, it's only a matter of time until they slow back down again. If getting them to move isn't a big enough challenge, keeping them moving is. It can be exhausting.

My answer is that I don't motivate my people. I don't try to push or pull people. Instead, I try to inspire people and help them find their own motivations. That means I must first find my own motivations and model the behavior I want to see in the people I lead. Good leaders inspire others only to the extent that they inspire themselves.

My decades of working with people have taught me there are seven internal motivations that move people forward:

Purpose—Leaders want to do what they were created to do. The human spirit comes alive when it finds a cause worth fighting for.

Autonomy—Leaders want the freedom to control their lives. Historically, when people have the freedom to make choices and were rewarded for their efforts, productivity went up nearly tenfold.

Relationships—Leaders want to do things with other people. One of my great pleasures in life is getting to do something that matters with people who matter to me.

Progress—Leaders want to experience personal and professional growth. A mentor told me, "Spend your life being *for* something and running *to* something.

Mastery—Leaders want to excel at their work. Ongoing growth doesn't guarantee mastery, but if you're not growing and working at getting better, you have no shot at experiencing the exhilaration that comes from being great at what you do.

Recognition—Leaders want others to appreciate their accomplishments. As you lead and motivate others, never forget to recognize and praise their work. Let them know you appreciate their accomplishments.

Money—Leaders want to be financially secure. The best thing money can buy is financial freedom, which gives a person options, but money is a powerful motivator only until you have enough to get what you want.

Connect your people to as many of the seven motivators as you can. That will help them start moving forward and developing motivation. Set them up for success:

Believe in them

Encourage them

Show them

Train them

The idea is to help them do what's right to help them succeed and do so consistently until it becomes a habit because people don't determine their future. They determine their habits, which determine their future.

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Chapter 5: Equipping Leaders: Train Them to Be Great at Their Job

The steps of identifying, attracting, understanding, and motivating leaders are essential to the process of developing leaders, but they're really only the beginning. Only good leaders take the process that far, and unfortunately even many of them make the mistake of stopping there. It's at the equipping state that multiplication happens.

This is where the leader's greatest return really kicks in. Why? Because when you start equipping leaders and helping them become great at their jobs, you begin experiencing the compounding of influence, time, energy, resources, ideas, money, and effectiveness.

As a leader, it's one thing to ask people to join your team and take the journey with you. It's another to equip them with a road map for the trip. Good leaders provide a means for people on the team to get where they need to go.

As soon as I realized the positive impact that equipping could make on the leaders I trained, on my organizations, and even on my own leadership, I changed my focus and my leadership took a giant leap. That's when I decided to become an equipper of leaders.

My five-step process for equipping and empowering leaders includes teaching them to develop other leaders:

- I do it.

- I do it and you are with me.

- You do it and I am with you.

- You do it.

- You do it and someone else is with you.

Over the years, I've found that there are three main reasons people fail in a job. They lack the ability or desire to do the job. They are not properly trained to do the job. They do not understand what they are supposed to do to complete the job. The good news is that equipping people addresses two out of three of those problems.

I believe you can be successful in the process if you focus on six essential practices:

1. *Be an example others want to follow.* The bottom line is that the quality of leaders is reflected in the standards they set for themselves.

2. *Gather your potential leaders around you.* You can't do it from a distance.

3. *Ask the right questions.* If you don't ask questions, you may find yourself teaching the wrong people the wrong things at the wrong time for the wrong reason.

4. *Encourage potential leaders to learn by doing.* Few things cement learning like actually doing the work yourself, hands on.

5. *Set Equipping Goals with them.* Those goals become a road map for them to follow.

6. *Remove barriers to growth.* As a leader in my organization, I think of myself as a "lid lifter." Make ways for your

people to grow and move forward. Sometimes that means giving them tools or providing the resources they need. Other times it means introducing them to people who can help them—inside and outside the organization.

Chapter 6: Empowering Leaders: Release Them to Teach Their Potential

One of the most powerful things you can do as a leader is release the leaders you develop to reach their potential. The majority of people working today are not close to reaching their potential. Why? They feel they're not in the right job, they're not using their strengths, and they're not excited about the work they do. Empowering people can change that. If those you empower are leaders, it has a multiplying effect, because every leader you empower can help empower the people they lead to reach their potential too.

Some leaders don't empower others. Their reasons include a lack of confidence in others, an "I do it best" mindset, personal enjoyment doing tasks themselves, an inability to find someone else to empower, reluctance caused by past failures or, finally, ignorance or inability to empower others.

The ability to empower others is based primarily on earning respect, building relationships, and providing an environment of empowerment.

Respect: Earn the power of credibility by achieving success. Over the years the harder I worked the more experience I gained; and the more wins I achieved, the more credibility I earned.

Relationships: Be secure enough to give your power away. As a leader, I can have one of two attitudes toward the people who work with me. I can try to impress them with what I can do, or I can empower them by helping them do what they can do. I cannot do both at the same time.

Environment: Create a place where empowered leaders can rise up. Empowering environments embrace people's potential, give people freedom, encourage collaboration, welcome accountability, give people ownership, value people serving one another and reward production.

I empower my leaders by using a method I call 10-80-10. For the first 10 percent, I start them off by doing five things: I communicate the objective meaning what must be done, why it must be done, and the spirit in which it must be done. I ask questions to help them plan. I provide resources. I offer encouragement. I release them to take ownership.

Once they've been set up for success and released, in the middle 80 percent they do what's needed to translate the vision into reality and rise up to their potential: Empowered leaders add more and better ideas, seize opportunities, use their influence, and facilitate the success of their teams.

As empowered leaders get ready to take their team across the finish line and complete the project, I get involved again for the last 10 percent by adding value if I can and giving recognition to them and their team. I also ask questions to help them learn from the experience such as, *How was your experience? What did you learn? What would you do differently next time?*

My approach to empowering senior leaders on my team involves letting them come to me to discuss decisions that need to be made. We identify the issue. We discuss context. We list options. We settle on the direction. We ensure buy-in.

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The 10-80-10 method doesn't work in every situation or with every leader, but it's been highly effective for me. If you can set people on a good course, release them to achieve it in their own way, and then help them learn on the back end, it's a win for everyone.

Chapter 7: Positioning Leaders: Train Them Up to Multiply Their Impact

What's more powerful than a motivated, equipped, and empowered leader? A group of motivated, equipped, and empowered leaders!

What's more powerful than that? The same group of motivated, equipped, and empowered leaders working as a team! When good leaders are gathered together, motivated by a leader, focused on a vision, and working together as a team, there's almost nothing they can't do.

Teams of leaders are powerful but difficult to create. Why? Leaders are hard to gather, and it can be a challenge to get them to work together. They all have their own ideas, and they would usually rather gather a team than be on one.

Over the years, I have come to believe leadership development has three levels of difficulty. The lowest level is developing yourself as a leader. The middle level is developing others as leaders. The highest level is developing a team of leaders.

How well you've developed yourself as a leader will determine the caliber of leaders you will be able to invite onto your leadership team. People won't buy into your leadership and want to be part of your team until they buy into you. When you're ready to start developing a team of leaders, here's what you need to look for:

- *Leaders with a track record of demonstrated leadership.* The people you recruit need to be leaders.

- *Leaders who understand their place and purpose on the team.* You need to help them by positioning them properly. Give them roles that leverage their strengths.

- *Leaders who know the place and purpose of the other leaders.* Help them understand and appreciate the other team members.

- *Leaders who love, respect, and believe in the team.* No team succeeds when its members put themselves ahead of the team.

- *Leaders who embody the values and model the vision of the organization.* When you appoint leaders to your team, you have given them your implicit endorsement and they become leadership models for other people in your organization.

- *Leaders ready to give up their personal agendas to raise up the team.* One is too small a number to achieve greatness. Individualism can win trophies, but teamwork can win championships.

- *Leaders who continually produce results in their leadership.* Whenever you invite leaders into a leadership team, make it clear they haven't reached a *destination*. They have been given an *invitation*. Let them know it's not the time to rest. It's the time to make a difference.

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- *A good team is always greater than the sum of its parts.* A good team of *leaders* has the potential to accomplish great dreams. To set your team of leaders on the right course, do these five things. (1) Make sure your leaders are in alignment with the vision. (2) Help your leaders bond and care for one another. (3) Ensure that your leaders are growing together. (4) Position your leaders to complement and complete one another. (5) Communicate to your leaders how they are making a difference.

Positioning your leaders means doing more than finding their passions and strengths and placing them into the right roles. You can help them position their minds to think differently about their work. You can encourage them to think more about others and less about themselves, to start their day sowing into others without focusing on reaping a harvest for themselves. Finally, you can challenge them to intentionally add value to their teammates every day.

Chapter 8: Mentoring Leaders: Coach Them to the Next Level

We cannot reach our potential without the help of others. Self-evaluation is valuable, but the perspective and assistance of mentors are essential. We all have blind spots where we lack self-awareness, and only another person can help us by providing another perspective. Mentoring helps us go farther, faster, and more successfully than we could ever travel on our own.

Being mentored has made a huge difference in my life. So has being a mentor. For the mentor, nothing is more fulfilling than developing other leaders. Not only is it personally rewarding, but it gives the biggest bang for the buck when it comes to personal investment. Why? Because every leader you mentor can then positively impact other people. That's why I would rather mentor one leader than dozens of followers. It's why my purpose is to add value to leaders who multiply value to others.

Whether you're seeking a mentor or seeking to be a mentor, consider these three questions. (1) "Does the mentor have credibility?" (2) "Is the mentor's strength compatible with yours?" (3) "Does the mentor reproduce other leaders?"

I want to give you a road map for mentoring leaders. The map is simple, but the journey you take won't be. As a mentor, you need to be teacher, guide, coach, and cheerleader, and you must learn which to be at the appropriate time. Here's how I suggest you proceed.

1. Choose who you mentor—don't let them choose you. The more successful you become, the greater the number of people who will ask you to mentor them but it's crucial that *you* do the choosing. When you pick the right ones, you win, they win so everybody wins.

2. Set expectations up front for both of you. When we sit down together for the first time, I go over three sets of expectations: what we both agree to do, what I expect from him or her, what he or she can expect from me and the standard I will uphold for myself.

3. Personalize your mentoring to help leaders succeed. Mentoring is discipling another person. It involves discerning where they are, knowing where they are supposed to go, and giving them what they need to get there. Mentoring leaders must be good at evaluating people's potential and needs.

4. Care enough to have crucial conversations. Good mentors don't hesitate to deal with the "elephants" in the room. More often than not, the best time to have a crucial conversation is now. That's why I advise leaders to shovel the pile while it's small.

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A great mentor ultimately wants to pour himself into his student, and see his student surpass him. However, my time is very limited, so I need to make the most of it. I'm sure that's true for you as well. Deciding to mentor someone is a choice I make, not an obligation I must fulfill. As long as the person I'm mentoring is making progress, I'm willing to keep meeting. If progress stops, so do I.

Chapter 9: Reproducing Leaders: Show Them How to Develop Leaders

The best purpose of leadership achievement is to use everything you've learned to give a hand up to others, helping them become leaders, and then teaching them to do the same for other leaders.

The leader of the team is the primary culture carrier. As I work to lead organizations that focus on leadership development, I strive to model the six *Cs* of a reproducing culture.

- *Character*—be it
- *Clarity*—show it
- *Communication*—say it
- *Contribution*—own it
- *Consistency*—do it
- *Celebration*—embrace it

A leadership development culture is modeled from the top, but it's grown from the bottom up. Everyone has someone mentoring him or her, everyone has someone to share mentoring experience with, and everyone has someone to mentor. Leaders focus on developing leaders not recruiting followers.

One of the key transitions to become a reproducer of leaders is to focus less on what you can accomplish personally and more on what you can accomplish through others. Leaders who work in a reproducing culture grow themselves out of jobs continually. Every time they assume a new role or are put in a new position, as soon as they've mastered the job, they begin equipping someone to replace themselves. The best leaders also develop their replacements in leadership.

If you develop a reproducing culture where leadership development becomes woven into the fabric of the organization, you need to create 3-G leaders.

Grounded—possessing a foundation that makes them solid. The characteristics I seek in a grounded leader are humility, teachability, authenticity, maturity and integrity

Gifted—possessing strengths that can help them succeed. The more talented and gifted the leaders on the team, the more successful the team has the potential to be. Why is giftedness so important? (1) Giftedness Gives an advantage—don't abuse it. (2) Giftedness Gives opportunity—don't miss it. (3) Giftedness requires humility—model it. (4) Giftedness requires responsibility—accept it.

Growing—possessing a hunger and capacity to be developed. The most important growth area you need to help leaders work on is how they think. Help them to think better. Encourage them to think bigger. Ask them to think with creativity.

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Expect them to think about people. What separates successful from unsuccessful people is the gap in the way they think.

If you can create a reproducing culture where the development of leaders is normal, expected, and pervasive, and if you can personally develop 3-G leaders, taking them to the highest potential and insisting that they develop leaders as one of their highest objectives, you will create a leadership-intensive organization with a great bench of current and future leaders. That's the kind of organization that never runs out of leaders and is set up to go after any opportunity that presents itself.

Chapter 10: Compounding Leaders: Receive the Highest Return of Developing Leaders

I've learned that doing a few important things will give a much greater return than doing many less important things. If I focus my efforts on the top 20 percent of my priorities, the Pareto principle means it will give me an 80 percent return.

With certainty, I can promise that you will increase your leadership return if you will embrace the power of the Pareto principle in your leadership. Here's why:

1. *Small advantages in the beginning become big advantages in the end—be strategic.* When I coach leaders, I ask them to consider their gifting, timing, relationships, and intentionality.

2. *It takes time for little things to add up to big things—be consistent. Here's how that works:* Right Choices + Consistency + Time = Significant Returns.

3. *Developing a few leaders will give a greater return than developing many followers—be intentional.* Developed leaders help you carry the leadership load by multiplying your resources—time, thinking, production, people, and loyalty. Developed leaders help you create momentum, expand your influence, keep you on your toes, ensure a better future for your organization, and multiply whatever investment you make in them.

This doesn't mean we're supposed to develop *everyone.* Let's say you have ten people on your team. I'm sure you recognize that not everyone has the same production potential. The top two probably produce the majority of results for the team. If I have ten people on my team, I invest 80 percent of my time and effort into my top two—my top 20 percent. I add value to them, so they can multiply value to the other 80 percent of my team.

If we want to see the benefit of compounding in the leadership realm, we need to invest in our best leaders every day, give our best to them first, and keep doing it for the long haul. Leadership development isn't quick or easy. It's slow, challenging, and long-lasting. It's the only solution that really works, but you have to be intentional in your investment.

No matter what it costs you, developing leaders is the most impacting and rewarding thing you can do as a leader. If you haven't already gotten started, what are you waiting for? There's no time to lose. Start today.