Don Murray & Associates

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Principles to Guide Management Development

Our research has produced a set of reliable principles for guiding a successful management development program. We use it much like a pilot refers to a checklist before takeoff – you don't have to do something about every principle, but it's a good idea to review the list.

Our Key Principles include:

A. Aligned Program Goals
B. Address Business Outcomes
C. Senior Management Approval
D. Targeted Training Methods
E. Action Learning Focused
F. Based on Continuous Improvement
G. Key Staff Involvement
H. Assessment Focused

A. Aligned Program Goals

We continually refine our workshops so they become the "Best of the Best" in training technology, content, and methods. When designing your management development program, we like to help you be clear about your program goals:

- To educate participants in the essential tools of self management
- To teach the tools for guiding and empowering group effort
- To engage participants in effective problem solving methods
- To inspire leading situationally, adjusting style based on circumstance
- To produce real business results as a result of the training experience
- To enlighten managers as visionary leaders, enabling a "servant leadership" model of leading

B. Address Business Outcomes

We define leadership as "a series of behaviors that produce significant outcomes"; thus, leadership training must impact human behavior. To ensure training moves managers toward company goals, we recommend a set of interviews with a diagonal slice of top management to gain their help in selecting goals and management competencies.

C. Senior Management Approval

One common barrier to effective training occurs when senior management is unaware of training that is being taught inside the company. They inadvertently miss opportunities to endorse the new principles, and may even implement behaviors contrary to those in the program. Senior managers need to experience the training firsthand to sign off on the competencies they deem most important. Once they do so, it's easy to cascade the program to each of their department and division teams in an orderly, top down fashion.

D. Targeted Training Methods

On the following matrix we outline a variety of training practices that correlate with organization level. The vertical axis identifies career rank, and the horizontal axis typifies how each group spends forty hours of annual training.

Targeted Training Matrix
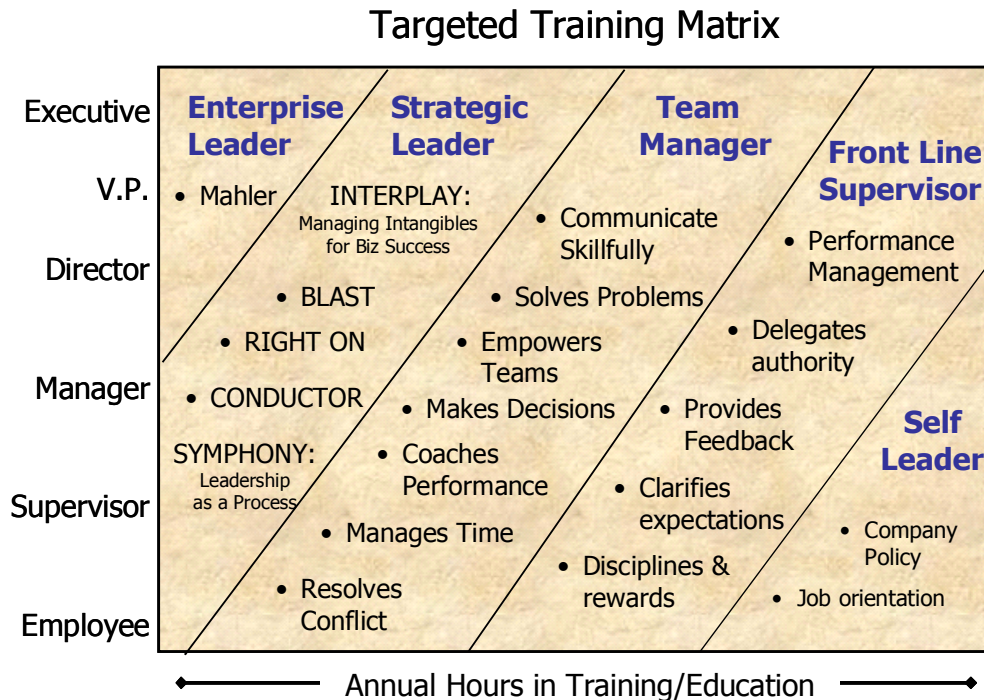
Self Leader. Front line workers require expedient sharing of information – classroom lecture, policy manual read through, videotapes, e-learning, plant walk through, and program instruction.

Front Line Supervisor. When instructing supervisors to guide front line employees, the focus is behavior modeling – observe ideal behaviors, practice in a classroom setting, implement in the workplace, then return to the classroom for the next tier of learning.

Team Manager. When solving problems, it makes sense to begin with a situation analysis. When deciding to establish priorities, use the 80/20 Method. When selecting skills to improve, use 360 feedback technology. These methods help managers practice the tools of management.

Strategic Leader. At higher levels, training programs use sophisticated, experiential learning events that simulate the behavior required in the business setting. Leaders also apply concepts that have been researched and proven.

Enterprise Leader. Senior level managers typically delight in being challenged to think strategically on how to align internal resources to match current and future opportunities in the marketplace.

E. Action Learning Focused

There are two huge benefits to action learning, which teaches the tools and methods of problem analysis. First, people find out if the program tools are really effective in the workplace. Secondly, cost savings and performance improvements can be measured, resulting in a positive return on investment from your training program. Action learning begins when participants interview their managers to select a real business problem to be solved.

F. Based on Continuous Improvement

Management development courses must be adapted over time. If your company goes through a period emphasizing safety, future programs should include a segment reinforcing safety concepts. Don Murray & Associates relies on post-workshop ratings, unsolicited feedback, and recommendations from senior management and internal staff to help guide course changes.

G. Key Staff Involvement

Because internal staff are part of the corporate culture, it is difficult for them to serve as instructors for an entire management development process. However, they often contribute in a specific area. For example, a CFO might teach a session on Financial Management for non-financial managers. The VP of Human Resources might teach a session on Selecting and Hiring. This kind of involvement helps customize the program to your organizational needs.

H. Assessment Focused

A manager's perspective on an individual is often too narrow to make an accurate assessment of leadership development. Instead, we suggest participants receive a 360 rating from various sources to help them create their own leadership development plan. The virtues of the 360 are widely extolled by experts such as the Center for Creative Leadership (Handbook of Leadership Development) and best-selling author Daniel Goleman, who said "The 360 is far superior to any other method of predictive validity of leadership effectiveness" (Primal Leadership, p. 136).

When you include a 360 as part of a training program, rather than just one-on-one coaching, you get a secondary benefit. The participants are trained and educated to consider feedback constructively and to convert it into an actionable plan for improvement. The 360 is not just a good idea, it is nearly an imperative.

360 Leadership Assessment