

Developing Our Next Generation of Leaders

By Ann N. Gatty, Ph.D.



Daunting times are ahead for our business community in developing our next generation of leaders. With the continuous exit of approximately 3.5 million baby boomers from the workforce each year, finding qualified replacements is becoming paramount. The greatest challenge for companies will be finding qualified talent—and keeping them! Statistics indicate that millennials have an average tenure of 1.6 years per job, so even if leaders find quality replacements, they may not be staying for long.

Unfortunately, most business owners do not have strategies in place to find and retain the knowledge and experience that is walking out the door. Preparing emerging leaders to step in and assume leadership roles is an identified challenge.

What if these business owners found creative ways to identify the pool of emerging talent and prepare them for advancement before the knowledge leaves the building? What would that procedure look like? Here are some ideas.

By 2020 millennials and Gen-Z-ers will make up 50% of the workforce. In other words, soon most members of the workforce expect to work with a single company for approximately two years. They will be walking out the door, unless leaders shift their working relationships with this fluid workforce. The traditional training strategies no longer solve the needs of developing this generation to assume leadership responsibility.

There is a distinction between learning to know vs. learning to do. Much of what is offered through training modules in the corporate world, helps employees acquire more knowledge. This occurs through the utilization of both online course instruction and in-person training packages. But, can the employees take this information and apply it in their work? From my experience as a learning expert, companies would be better served by creating an employee learning and development model that addresses how to better develop our next generation of leaders. Individuals need to self-identify as leaders before they can take on the leadership role. A clear career development path which highlights the improvement of specific leadership skills can and should be designed.

HERE'S HOW TO DEVELOP OUR NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS.

As the world of business changes, so does the arsenal of competencies our next generation of leaders will need to successfully navigate and exploit the value their companies provide to their customers.

Describe the why

There's a lot of talk about defining the purpose of your company, but, in reality, all companies are in business to make a profit. That is why they exist. However, it's how you make your money that sets you apart and assists in building customer loyalty and employee longevity. To develop your next generation of leaders, start by clearly defining the ways in which your company improves the lives of others and how their leadership contributes to that goal. Employees want to know that they are a part of something bigger than themselves. If these emerging leaders are aligned with the purpose, they will be more likely to stick around and grow with the company.

Include problem solving practice

If you want this next generation of leaders to become more proficient strategic thinkers—an important leadership competency—provide stretch opportunities to develop these skill sets. Opportunities must be afforded that allow them to figure things out. Opportunities must be afforded that allow them to predict what an outcome could be if a specific solution is offered. Having the ability to solve problems as they arise is a core leadership responsibility. As the emerging leaders practice problem solving techniques, they naturally will develop a stronger sense of resourcefulness. Define what outside sources and which individuals are necessary to move a situation to a successful conclusion.

Give them a voice

New employees join your company hoping not only to showcase their skill set, but also to showcase their knowledge base. Today's employees joining the ranks of our workforce have a unique relationship with technology that is more competent than most of the employees preparing to retire. Blending these perspectives gives companies an unparalleled opportunity to develop innovative products and services and new ways of handling the daily workflow. Blending the wisdom of the baby boomers with the technological agility of the millennials can be incredibly invigorating, if leaders allow these new employees to have a voice in company meetings.

I realize that newbies need time to understand a company's culture and how things are done in the workplace, but a newbie is only an outsider with outside perspective for a short amount of time before becoming enculturated. Take advantage of these fresh ideas. Listen to their points of view. Recognize that this is the next generation of leaders. Since leadership development is a necessary concern for companies, allowing new employees to practice these skills with the company will pay dividends in the long run.



Include a continuous learning component

We have witnessed that the millennials and Gen Z-ers are more likely to look for ways to improve their skill sets and develop leadership capabilities more than previous generations. This bodes well for sustaining your company. Take advantage of this by including professional learning and development programs. Include both in-person masterclasses with webinars. Include a mentorship component. Provide professional development plans with any performance reviews. The next generation of leaders will provide innovation to the company's growth if given the change.

About the Author

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business development strategist. She helps her clients clarify the vision for their businesses, boost their leadership capabilities and add quality talent to help the clients reach their goals. Through a collaborative mentoring process, she and her clients create workable strategic business plans and success initiatives, while improving their workplace processes. Dr. Gatty is a frequent writer and contributor www.AllBusiness.com, www.MarketingInsiders.com, and www.WomenOnBusiness.com. Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Join her [Facebook Group, Strategic Thinking Summit Elites](#) for strategies you can implement to grow your business success and enjoy camaraderie with others entrepreneur members.