

Why train everyone in your organization on both leadership & followership?



The most successful organizational transformations (for example, FDIC in the USA), train everyone on both leadership and followership. Why is this? After all, many organizations only train those with a leadership role on leadership, while not training front-line staff and ignoring followership. It turns out that there are many compelling reasons to include everyone.

Here is why everyone needs leadership training:

- a) Your team members need to know what better leadership looks like so they can help co-create the leadership you need. They can also hold leaders to account for poor leadership behaviours.
- b) People need to know what someone is doing and why they are doing it so they can respond appropriately. If they don't recognize the new leadership, they are unable to be effective partners and might even be suspicious. Leadership training is your north star. If everyone has been trained on leadership, they are more apt to respond as expected and as you need them to. This, in turn, creates greater leadership capacity, efficiency and effectiveness.
- c) Segregated development is risky because it suggests to people that the organization doesn't actually value equity, diversity, and inclusion. You don't want people to feel left out or less than. You don't want to miss potentiating your racialized or marginalized talent who are currently frontline contributors.
- d) Everyone takes on a leadership role from time to time, whether leading a meeting, an initiative, a project, a collaboration, a team, or an organization.
- e) Research shows the ROI of leadership development is higher when delivered to those lower in the organizational hierarchy.
- f) The norms of your emerging culture will be way stickier with everyone experiencing the same foundational training.
- g) In today's highly competitive environment, we need all hands on deck. We need everyone to step up and be a true thinking partner in both their leadership and followership roles.
- h) Developing only the leadership role with managers perpetuates the idea that leaders are more highly valued than others. And it hasn't worked. Since the explosion of the leadership industry in the last 30 years, perception of leadership quality and fairness has actually decreased.
- i) To shift culture, you need everyone pointing in the same direction. That's more likely to succeed if everyone knows ahead of time which way to "point".

And here is why everyone needs followership training:

- j) Historical leadership development is premised on the belief that leaders will teach their followers to follow well. Given that we barely even utter the f-word, it's baffling to imagine how this thinking came about and still prevails. It hasn't worked and it is largely nonsense.
- k) People become empowered and feel validated when we acknowledge, develop, and appreciate the other role they do (we all do!), followership.
- l) Research shows that we don't promote people for their leadership skills, we promote them based on demonstrated strong followership from which we infer their leadership capacity.
- m) It's hard to know what to emulate if you aren't shown, trained, coached, and mentored, and given feedback on it.