

The Advisory Alliance

60-Second Email™ – September 26, 2006

The A, B, C & D's for First-Time Leadership Development

In this month's 60-Second Email™, we take a quick look at 4 basic essentials for first-time leadership development.

I certainly won't assert that one can cover the entire knowledge base of leadership development known to humankind in 60 seconds or by using an ABC-style mnemonic. But you can cover at least 4 important points that should be considered when embarking upon a leadership development initiative or program for the first time within your organization. Here goes:

A: Focus on Your "A" People.

I know it's noble to think that as many deserving people within your organization as possible should benefit from leadership development, and that is true. If they are deserving, they should benefit from it...at some point. But if this is your first time out of the gate, focus on your best people. Time and financial resources are always limited, and you need to get the most from them. So start with your "A" people, those that clearly stand out from the rest. This is a time when equity rules. Give to those who have clearly demonstrated they deserve it. You focus on your "A" people first, because you know they will benefit most and the company will benefit most by your doing so.

B: Begin With the End in Mind (with thanks to Stephen Covey).

Okay, so you know who the "A" people are. So what will you do with them? And that's not a rhetorical question. Truly, 3 – 5 years out, what will you do with them? Where will they go in your organization? What will your company need? How do you know that? Unless you know what your "A" people should or will be doing down the road, you can't develop them properly; you can only develop them generically.

C: Challenge Them.

You won't learn leadership development from an iPod. Public seminars, lectures, podcasts, and even books only go so far (and their quality varies tremendously). They may teach you *what* to do as a leader, but the true *how* of leadership (and, frankly, a lot of the *what* of leadership) is learned by actually leading others (go figure). So if you want to develop your people, challenge them with assignments, projects and real work that test them as the future leaders they are to become. Certainly assess them up front so you know what you and they will be getting into (so you can manage the risk), and also provide them support and coaching (so your aspiring leaders, your company and your customers can all succeed and benefit accordingly).

D: Demand That They Do the Same (Develop Other Leaders)

Only the weak leaders will tell you how important they are, how it's all about them. Okay, so maybe some great ones do that as well. But my experience has been that great leaders know that it's not about them; it's about others and what they, as leaders, do with others. Great leaders know that one of their prime mandates is to continue the tradition, principles and processes that led to their becoming a great leader. Great leaders take the time to develop new great leaders. It is not something they find

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time to do. It is something that they do as a great leader. It is in their essence. It's not an obligation. It's fundamentally who they are. Great leaders, like great parents, are delighted when those they've developed ultimately surpass them. It must be so if we are to succeed as individuals, as a company, and even as a country.

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Until next month,

David

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