Leadership effectiveness: How to set leadership development goals

In today's world of work, most teams understand the importance of leadership development. It has a measurable impact on team performance, culture, and ultimately revenue. In fact, for every year a company delays leadership development, it costs [7% of their total annual sales](). But where many businesses struggle is tracking the effectiveness of their programs and setting leadership development goals.

In this blog, we'll look at why it's important to set leadership development goals in order to determine if your leadership development program is hitting the mark.

Understanding the importance of leadership development goals

Before we explore how to set leadership goals, let's talk about why they're important. Establishing [leadership development]() goals is like creating a plan to ensure your organization has the strongest and most equipped leaders who can lead your team in the right direction. Goals help us figure out what areas we need to work on, how to prioritize

our efforts, and how to define success.

Why set leadership development goals?

- **Accountability:** Tracking and measuring goals holds leaders [accountable](#) for their progress. Knowing efforts are being measured makes leaders more likely to prioritize leadership development initiatives, tools, and practices, rather than letting them fall through the cracks and maintaining the status quo.
- **Staying on track:** Having a clearly defined set of goals reminds leaders (and everyone else in the organization) what they're striving to achieve. Plus, having these goals available for all employees to access boosts transparency, making everyone feel like they're aware and involved.
- **Maximize efficiency:** Failing to measure progress can result in inefficient resource allocation. With a clearly defined set of goals, organizations will have something to track against. This data can help in refining the program to ensure it aligns with the organization's evolving needs and objectives.
- **Measure return on investment (ROI):** Leadership development programs typically require substantial investments of time and resources. Measuring the impact of these programs helps organizations assess the return on their investment.

Strategies for leadership goal-setting

Setting effective goals for a leadership development program in an organization involves a systematic approach. Here are 15 ways to strategically set leadership development goals to ensure you're both maximizing your investment in leadership

development while also staying on track of your goals.

1. Identify organizational needs: Start by understanding the current and future needs of your organization. What leadership skills and competencies are crucial to achieving [strategic objectives](#)?

2. Engage stakeholders: Involve key stakeholders such as executives, HR, learning and development, and team leaders in the goal-setting process. Their input can provide valuable insights and ensure alignment with the organization's vision.

Tip: Kick off your leadership development work with Arbinger's [Start in the Right Way tool](#). It's a great exercise to ensure that everyone who is involved is aligned!

3. Define specific objectives: Make your leadership development goals specific and measurable. Avoid vague statements and set clear, quantifiable objectives that can be

tracked and evaluated. It can be a good idea to create a success plan that connects your leadership training to your organization's strategic goals. At Arbinger, we partner with our clients to do this to ensure we start off every engagement in the right way.

4. Use SMART Criteria: Using SMART criteria provides a structured and effective framework for creating goals that are clear, achievable, and focused.

- Specific: Clearly state what you want to achieve.
- Measurable: Define how you will measure success.
- Achievable: Ensure that the goals are realistic and attainable.
- Relevant: Make sure the goals are aligned with organizational needs.
- Time-bound: Set a deadline for achieving each goal.

Tip: An example of a SMART goal when it comes to leadership development could be something like:

5. Prioritize goals: Not all goals will have equal importance. Prioritize them based on their impact on the organization's success and the development needs of individual leaders.

6. Break goals into milestones: Divide goals into smaller, manageable milestones. This makes it easier to track progress and provides a sense of achievement along the way.

Tip: Find a way to document these milestones in a place where At Arbinger, we use Asana, a project management tool, to break larger goals into smaller, more actionable projects.

7. Allocate resources: Determine the resources required to achieve each goal, including budget, time, and personnel. Ensure that resources are allocated appropriately.

**8. Develop action plans:** Create detailed action plans for each

goal, outlining the specific steps, responsibilities, and timelines required to achieve them.

9. Monitor and evaluate progress: Continuously track progress toward your leadership development goals. Regularly review and adjust your action plans as needed to stay on course.

10. Collect feedback: Gather feedback from program participants and stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the leadership development program. Use this input to refine goals and strategies.

11. Celebrate achievements: Acknowledge and celebrate when goals are achieved. This helps maintain motivation and enthusiasm among participants.

Tip: Create a group chat with everyone involved and use it to stay accountable, ask questions, and motivate each other. Words of encouragement go a long way!
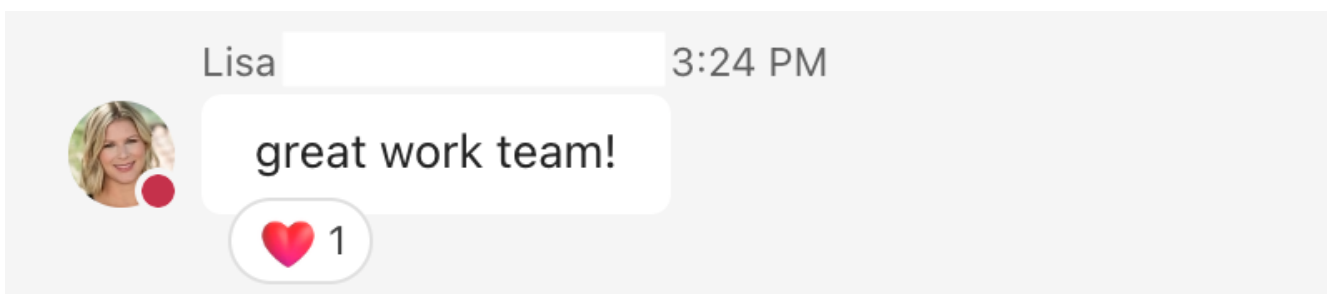
12. Adapt to changing needs: Recognize that organizational needs and priorities may evolve over time. Be flexible and willing to adjust goals and the program accordingly.

13. Communicate and align: Ensure that all relevant parties are aware of the goals and objectives of the leadership development program. Alignment and buy-in from leaders and participants are critical for success.

14. Evaluate impact: After goals are achieved, evaluate their impact on leadership effectiveness and overall [organizational performance](). This assessment helps demonstrate the value of the program.

15. Iterate and improve: Use the insights gained from evaluations to iterate and improve the leadership development program and its goals continually.

Tip: Set up a regular meeting to check in on progress, share successes and challenges, and re-evaluate goals based on your experiences.

Save this checklist as you look to set leadership development goals to ensure your training stays aligned to strategic objectives:

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Strategies for setting leadership development goals

- Identify organizational needs
- Engage stakeholders
- Define specific objectives
- Consider SMART criteria
- Prioritize goals
- Break goals into milestones
- Allocate resources
- Develop action plans
- Monitor and evaluate progress
- Collect feedback
- Celebrate achievements
- Adapt to changing needs
- Communicate and align
- Evaluate impact
- Iterate and improve

Truly effective leadership development is an ongoing process

As you work through your leadership development goals, it's important to remember that effective leadership development is an ongoing process. By following these steps, you can create a structured and purposeful framework for your organization's leadership development program, ultimately contributing to the growth and success of both individual leaders and the organization as a whole.

For more on how to become an effective leader, download our guide, **[The Leadership Gold Standard: A Blueprint to Culture Transformation from the Top Down.](#)**