

The Top 10 Reasons Why I Don't Need Leadership Development

Abstract: Why is it that leaders who need development the most are the ones who balk the most? More importantly, what can we do as learning and development professionals to confront these excuses? In this somewhat irreverent examination of the excuses from leaders, we provide practical advice for those responsible for developing those leaders — advice that can help mitigate or eliminate the excuses and replace excuses with commitment.

*Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.
— John F. Kennedy, former American President*

Kennedy had it right: good leaders never stop learning and growing. Why then do some leaders — and ironically, those who need it the most — insist that they don't need development? Why do some leaders — managers, supervisors, directors, C-suite folks, and team leads — work so hard at excusing themselves from leadership development?

And, just as importantly, what can those of us responsible for leadership development do to respond to these excuses? In this paper we'll deal with the excuses leaders make about why leadership development isn't for them.

The Top 10 Reasons Why I Don't Need Leadership Development

Drum roll!

1. I don't need leadership development, because ... that's why I got promoted.
2. I went to a leadership development class a number of years ago so ... I already have the leadership skills I need.
3. I'm too busy dealing with problems that need my attention ... I don't have time for a leadership development class.
4. Good people don't need to be led ... so I don't need leadership development.
5. If I do leadership development ... what will my people think?
6. Leadership training isn't real-life ... the things we cover don't apply to me.
7. Leadership development is ... too expensive.
8. Leadership development is an HR-initiated, touchy-feely, fluffy kind of stuff ... I'm about results.
9. I have extensive experience and limited time ... so just give me the summarized version.
10. Leadership development focuses on my shortcomings ... I would rather focus on my leadership strengths.

Let's take a closer look at each of these excuses more closely and then define what YOU can do to mitigate or eliminate each excuse.

1. "I don't need leadership development... that's why I got promoted."

A Closer Look

The truth is most leaders probably didn't get promoted because of their outstanding leadership skills. They may have been with the team the longest. Or they were the most liked. Or they possessed strong technical skills. Or they made the most noise. Or they made the least noise.

Seriously, people who get promoted into leadership positions typically get promoted for one the following three reasons:

1. They're the most technically capable.
2. They are the hardest working.
3. They consistently produce high-quality work/results.

Marshall Goldsmith, who authored the book *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, describes the irony in moving into a leadership role. The very things that made leaders successful as individual contributors — their technical prowess, their heads-down "get it done" attitude, and their fervent pursuit of excellence — now work against them as leaders.

How do YOU Respond?

Ram Charan, in his book *Leadership Pipeline*, explains the needed shift in "what's important now" for new leaders. New leaders need to be told, "Because you now have to get things done through others, YOUR technical prowess, attitude, and drive is not the priority now. Now it is about YOUR TEAM'S performance. And THAT'S your new priority!"

The fact is that few — if any — of the leader's team members can match the leader's capabilities or passion for the work. If they are like many new leaders, they may end up alienating their team out of frustration over what they perceive as the team's lack of capability or initiative; or they may simply end up doing the work themselves since no one can do it as well or as fast as they can.

In addition to resetting priorities, it's important that new leaders recognize that leading — like any skill — isn't innate; leading is a skill and must be developed. New leaders need to hear, "Helping your TEAM engage, perform, and develop is what you're all about now. And that requires a new skill set, one which we're confident you can learn and develop."

It's not just new leaders who need leadership training. Leading managers or a business unit presents a whole host of new challenges — both operationally AND from a leadership perspective. For example, senior directors no longer have line of sight directly to the front line; they need to learn how to communicate through their staff. Skip-level meetings need to be done with finesse. Leadership

development helps equip these leaders with the skills and techniques that are required for their leadership level.

Next Steps

- A. **Enlist a C-level leadership sponsor.** Leadership should be viewed as a core organizational competency: it's how we work around this organization and who we are. How we lead should be just as visible and transparent as how we treat customers or our focus on quality. (In fact, several of our clients see leadership as a competitive advantage — something to attract and retain the best employees ... and something to proclaim.) The sponsor's role is to create and sustain an organizational passion around leadership and leadership development.
- B. **Consider implementing a 360° survey**, such as Entelechy's customizable **360° Feedback Assessment**. Most leaders don't know the impact they have and how they might improve. A 360° survey can be the needed rude awakening. If your organization isn't ready for a true 360° survey (usually because leadership expectations haven't yet been clarified or cascaded throughout the organization), consider using the survey statements in a self-assessment format. This approach will introduce the expectations the organization has of its leaders and prepare the leader for a future 360° survey in which his or her boss, peers, and teammates will provide feedback. (Entelechy also offers a **Leadership Effectiveness Assessment** for individual leaders).
- C. **Start training at the top.** When leaders see their bosses going through training, they're MUCH more likely to see training as a valuable thing!

2. "I went to a leadership development class a number of years ago...so I already have the leadership skills I need."

A Closer Look

Leadership development **isn't** something you do once and never again, it's an ongoing process. A CFO client explained it this way: "I have to have my financial certifications renewed every year and attend training for that recertification. Leading people is just as important — and can be significantly more difficult."

Even if you DID take some leadership training a number of years ago, leadership practices change. We get smarter about how to work with people and get the most out of them. We need the refresher. We also hear information differently at different stages in our careers. You might uncover a fresh take on a current challenging issue by re-reading an old leadership book.

How do YOU Respond?

Leaders providing this excuse need to hear, "Even if you DID take some leadership training a number of years ago, leadership practices change. We get smarter about how to work with people and get the most out of them. Leaders need the refresher."

Or, leaders need to hear, “Even if you did take a leadership course a number of years ago, we fall out of good habits. Think about your last diet. Started well, didn’t it? But, if you’re like most dieters, you started slipping. You start getting into bad habits because it is not something that is reinforced on a regular basis. Leadership is like that. You need ongoing reinforcement and ongoing leadership development is your reinforcement.”

Next Steps

- A. Again, **consider implementing a 360° survey**, such as Entelechy’s customizable **360° Feedback Assessment**, to refocus attention on critical leadership skills. Marshall Goldsmith claims that THE thing that separates great leaders from good leaders is that great leaders understand the impact their behaviors have on others AND know how to change those behaviors that negatively impact performance. The 360° assessment is a great tool for identifying behaviors that may be having a negative impact on others and impacting performance.
- B. **Make leadership training current.** Don’t rehash the same old stuff. Make the training worthwhile. Focus on TODAY’S leadership challenges in your organization. Is the focus to work more efficiently? To engage and retain high potential team members? To increase diversity and inclusion? To navigate a hybrid work environment effectively? Just as leaders need a refresher from time to time, certainly your leadership development program could benefit from a little freshening up.
- C. **View leadership as a journey.** Leadership development can’t just be a one-time training event. Bake leadership development into critical processes for maximum adoption and success. Launching a new product? Build in a leadership component on sales strategy and customer high value needs. Reorganizing departments? Build in a leadership component on facilitating change. Reporting quarterly earnings? Include a leadership component on communicating vision. Having a company picnic? Include a leadership component on team member recognition. Any time — EVERY time — is a good time to develop leaders.

3. “I’m too busy fighting fires I don’t have time for a leadership development class.”

A Closer Look

Okay, you have to admit, the irony dripping from this excuse is laughable — in a sad way. Yet, it’s the number one excuse we hear from leaders. Look, if team members can’t live without the leader for a few hours, the leader isn’t doing a very good job of leading.

According to leadership guru Tom Peters, “True leaders don’t create followers, they create more leaders.” And the first step to creating more leaders is to provide the opportunity for people to rise to the challenge — to identify and solve issues independent of you.

How do YOU Respond?

New leaders need to hear, “If your team members can’t live a few hours without you, you’re not doing a very good job in developing THEM! What if, instead of being the fire chief and sole fire-putter-outer, you could teach your team members how to put out fires themselves and give them the authority to roll the fire trucks when needed?” Then encourage these leaders to run — not walk — to their first leadership class on delegation. They will learn how to use delegation to develop leaders within their team; and learn how delegation not only frees up their time, but also engages and empowers team members, generating loyalty and eliciting discretionary effort.

Next Steps

- A. Encourage delegation.** Make sure you cover delegation in your leadership training (if, for nothing else, to address this excuse by telling the leader, “This training will be PERFECT for you since we’ll teach you how to free up your time and increase your team members’ capabilities!”) Many leaders don’t delegate because they think it’s an all-or-nothing proposition: they’ve turned something over to a team member and it wasn’t completed correctly or on time so obviously the leader MUST do it or make the decision themselves. Effective leaders know HOW MUCH to delegate depending on the team member and the situation. Effective leaders delegate at different levels from “research this and tell me what you found” to “come up with three solutions and your top suggestion” to “move forward but copy me on your communications” to “just make it happen and tell me how it turned out.”
- B. Jump rank.** As part of your leadership development process, involve the team members’ bosses in setting the expectations. Ask the team member’s boss to direct the team member to, “Go to the training, turn off your cell phone, and focus on learning how to delegate; I will cover any major issues while you focus on learning. When you return, I want to hear your plans for helping your team becoming more self-reliant....”

4. “Good people don’t need to be led... so I don’t need leadership development.”

A Closer Look

Well, this is just nonsense. While providing room for team members to demonstrate initiative IS important (see the previous excuse as a contrast), providing NO direction is not only inefficient and ineffective, it abdicates the very role you’re charged with — to lead.

Leadership guru and author John Maxwell states, “A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.” In my experience, those leaders who claim to be a “hands-off kind of leader” either don’t know the way (vision) or refuse to go the way (model); they lack the courage to lead and, as novelist Stephen King suggests, “A cowardly leader is the most dangerous of men.”

How do YOU Respond?

While this excuse may cause you to shake your head with bewilderment, be gentle. Often this type of leader truly is lost and is hoping that someone else figures out what should be done. Sometimes this leader is approaching the sunset of his career and is looking merely to eke out a few more years before retirement. Coach the leader and help identify ways to create or articulate a vision, if for nothing else, to create a legacy that will positively impact the organization for years to come.

Next Steps

- A. **A 360° assessment** will clearly identify that this style of leadership is taking its toll on employees and will help these leaders conclude that maybe this “hands-off” style isn’t as effective as they make themselves believe. Make sure to help this leader analyze the results correctly as they may tend to assign the low scores to the quality of people completing the survey.
- B. **Consider hiring an executive coach** to help this leader if the position warrants — and the leader is worth — such an investment. One-on-one support may be the most effective and efficient intervention since this type of leader tends to dismiss possible leadership techniques as “not aligned with my leadership style.” [By the way, Leader, this type of leadership isn’t a style! It’s a non-leadership style!] An executive coach might ask the question, “So, how’s that working for you?” The honest response is almost guaranteed to be, “Well... I guess it’s not working all that well.”
- C. **Teach Marshall Goldsmith’s “feedforward” technique** in your leadership development program. Essentially, feedforward is asking others for advice; it’s like feedback without all the baggage that usually comes with feedback. The leader asks a peer or boss or team member: “I’d like to focus on my leadership capabilities (or communication, or recognition, or connecting with team members, or...) and value your opinion. What do you feel would make me more effective as a leader?” The leader then listens without comment or judgment (good or bad) and then says, “Thank you for your input! I appreciate it!” If taught in the leadership development program, make sure to have the participant/leader identify **WHAT** they’re going to ask, **WHO** they’re going to ask, and **WHEN**.

5. “If I go to leadership training... what will my people think?”

They’ll think you’re probably finally getting the help you’ve needed! The **WORST** they would think is that you’re modeling a behavior that team members should model — continuous development.

A Closer Look

As Marshall Goldsmith suggests in a video we include in our leadership development program, “The best way to encourage your people to develop and grow is to have them see **YOU** develop and grow.”

It's worth noting that this excuse comes up less as leaders get ready to ATTEND leadership training and more when leaders LEAVE the training. "How do I apply this stuff without coming across to my team like I have two heads? If my team members hear me asking for their feedback, they'll think I'm dying of some horrible disease and am looking to make my peace with them." Or "If I just come back from training and start delegating more or coaching more, they'll think it's a trick."

How do YOU Respond?

Leaders need to hear, "It's great that you're concerned about how your team members may perceive your desire to be better at your job. Get them involved in your development! Share with your team (and your boss) what you're doing, what you hope to achieve, and what you learned and are working on. If you're brave enough, invite them to give you feedback on how you're doing and how you could be even more effective."

Leaders also need to hear, "Be kind — but firm — with yourself since you may make the occasional blunder or temporarily slip into old habits; get back on the leadership horse and try again. Pretty soon self-assessing, reflecting, and leading more effectively will be new old habits."

Next Steps

- A. **Make the models and techniques you cover in training adoptable.** For example, everyone may have a different coaching style, but they should follow the same steps of the prescribed coaching model. Like a pair of favorite shoes, leadership models and techniques should be easy to put on and comfortable to wear. If they are too tight or restrictive (violate my philosophy) or scratch (don't sound like me) or otherwise don't fit, they won't be used.
- B. **Make leadership development a privilege and an honor;** make it a big deal. Make sure leadership development is viewed throughout the organization as an opportunity for good leaders to become great, and NOT a "fix-it program" for wayward leaders. Have a senior leader take the group out for dinner and use the opportunity to share "what makes for a great leader at our company" or "leadership lessons I learned."
- C. **Set clear expectations around how to apply topics covered in training back on the job.** Build into the leadership training a discussion around how participants should act when they leave training and return to the job. Should they, for example, have the coaching model in front of them as they coach? Or should they share the coaching model with their teammates? Discuss these questions in class to prepare participants. (Our answers to these questions by the way are yes and yes. Why not be transparent?)

6. “Leadership training isn’t real-life ... the topics don’t apply to me.”

A Closer Look

There’s a story about a young girl who had such an optimistic attitude that she became the subject of a research study. She was always amazingly positive, and researchers wanted to find out why. The researchers placed the young girl in a number of situations that were increasingly depressing; yet the girl remained surprisingly upbeat through each. As a final test, the researchers placed the young girl in an observation room with three feet of horse manure covering the floor. After a few seconds of looking around, the girl started squealing and flinging horse-poop everywhere. Puzzled, the researchers stopped the study and asked the little girl how she could be so upbeat and excited in a room filled with manure. She exclaimed, “With all this horse manure, there’s got to be a pony here someplace!”

The best learners look for the pony. All programs have at least one or two good things. The best learners look for the good things.

How do YOU Respond?

First, on behalf of leadership development designers everywhere, I apologize for the rooms of horse manure we sometimes place you in. In many cases, we in the leadership development world deserve the criticism for training that isn’t on the mark. Sometimes our leadership development initiatives are 1) based on some leadership fad of the day centered around a book that the CEO read on the plane, or 2) jammed so full of “stuff” because we succumb to the pressures of “since we have them here already, it wouldn’t hurt if we just added this one thing....”

Let’s make a deal with leaders: YOU look for the pony and WE’LL do better at eliminating the manure.

Next Steps

- A. **Make the leadership training real** — use real examples, real scenarios, and real challenges. Training’s role is that of translator and simplifier. Identify the leadership challenges and identify how to best address the challenges; simplify the models and techniques. Then have participants work the examples, scenarios, and challenges — using the simple models and techniques — in the training.
- B. **Focus the training.** The hardest thing about developing effective leadership training ISN’T knowing what to put IN but knowing what to leave OUT! Stuff that doesn’t quite fit into your core leadership training should become follow-on modules or eLearnings or handouts, etc. Anything you put into a leadership development program automatically detracts from other stuff that’s in the program. When in doubt, leave it out!

- C. **Recognize that there are two types of learners.** There are those who are thirsty for leadership development opportunities and view training as a gift. And then there is everyone else: the reluctant, the weary, the been-there-done-that, the skeptical. Don't design your leadership program for the first group of learners; design it for everyone else. Make it so real, so powerful, and so impactful that your leadership program becomes the high-water mark against which all other programs are measured (and come up short).

7. "Leadership development is... too expensive."

A Closer Look

Compared to what? It's certainly more expensive than paper clips or staples. But it's not as expensive as poor leadership.

This excuse typically comes from decision-makers who are responsible for budgeting for leadership development, although it could also be a smokescreen for leaders who simply don't want to attend leadership development and are using their "fiduciary responsibility" as an excuse.

How do YOU Respond?

Look, the math is easy here. Pick two leaders in your organization, one good and one not so good. Compare the performance — more efficient, better quality/fewer mistakes, more/larger sales, better customer retention/satisfaction) and higher engagement (i.e., more innovation, less turnover, more discretionary effort) — of the good leader's group with the not-so-good leader's group. How much better is the performance and engagement of the good leader's group? Be conservative. Let's say the good leader's group is 5% better than the other leader's group. How much of that difference is due to better leadership or management? Let's say half — that's 2.5%. Now what's the payroll of that less productive/engaged team? Let's say a half million (10 people earning \$50K each). Having ONE not-so-good manager is costing the organization \$12,500 (\$500K x 2.5%), per year.

And how many leaders do you have in your organization who fit into that "not-so-good" category? Ouch! Leadership development isn't expensive; NOT developing leaders is expensive.

Next Steps

- A. **Know the true impact of your leadership development initiative.** Include direct costs (facilitator salaries, development costs, materials, etc.) and indirect costs (leader time out-of-pocket, opportunity costs, etc.). Identify and quantify benefits including improved performance and productivity, reduced errors/improved quality, more innovation, and team member loyalty/retention. (Check out [Entelechy's Leadership Development ROI Calculator](#) if you need help calculating). When possible, use real numbers from existing measures — organizational health surveys, team member retention, and exit interview information. When those don't exist, poll program participants what THEY thought the impact of the leadership development

program was on them; in addition to anecdotal stories, see if they can quantify the impact in terms of improved performance, increased discretionary effort, improved quality, reduced turnover of good team members (and swift removal of consistently poor performers), etc.

- B. Be ruthless in slashing unnecessary costs.** If you're considering building your own leadership program from scratch, pause and reconsider. You may be able to purchase a customized or ready-to-launch leadership program more economically than building it in-house. Plus, you would have the benefit of leveraging proven models, activities, and expertise.
- C. Use a range of delivery technologies when appropriate.** Virtual training has made considerable strides in recent years and most organizations enjoy the increased flexibility — and reduced costs — that often come with virtual training. However, when done judiciously and thoughtfully, many leadership development programs still benefit from some in-person elements, particularly around networking and collaboration. The best leadership development program is one that fits best within your corporate culture. You know your leaders best and will know if they prefer in-person workshops, virtual sessions, or a social learning experience. At the end of the day, we find the most engaging programs are truly blended and take full advantage of the unique benefits each delivery method has to offer.

8. "Leadership development is HR-initiated, touchy-feely, fluffy stuff... I'm about results."

Hidden within this excuse are two related issues:

- First, when HR (or the training department) leads the charge for leadership development, often the program DOES tend to lose touch with the real issues facing operational leaders.
- Second, many out-of-touch programs tend to be filled with content that is difficult for participants to translate in how they (or their teams) will apply and benefit from the content.

A Closer Look

For lots of reasons, HR often assumes the role of driver for leadership development at many organizations. That's fine, as long as the focus remains on productivity, quality, performance, results, margins, sales, and customer retention — the things that drive business results. It's not that HR doesn't know how to translate "soft topics" like communications or coaching into business results. But the CFO or senior plant manager or CEO will have a different perspective. For these folks, people (team members) are just one of many elements in the business results equation and knowing how to get the most out of people — or a forklift or an assembly line or the fleet or a piece of specialized technology — is a critical skill. Getting the most from a tool is fairly straightforward; getting the most from people gets squishy.

How do YOU Respond?

Make sure the leadership development program makes a clear link from coaching or communications or feedback or delegation (the squishy stuff) DIRECTLY to improved performance and business results.

Use post-training feedback from graduates of the program as your ally; what do THEY say about the relevance and practicality of the training? What do THEY say the impact will be on their business?

And if your leadership development program DOES have the unfortunate reputation of “touchy-feely happy stuff,” enlist the help of functional leaders to change it.

Next Steps

- A. **Find a non-HR senior executive to be the leadership evangelist.** Great leaders know that leadership is developed, not innate. And great leaders get passionate about developing other great leaders. Identify and make THAT PERSON the spokesperson for your program.
- B. **Cut to the chase.** Half of the content in most leadership programs is interesting but not applicable for most leaders. Building trust, barriers to listening, team building, change management, and interpersonal relations are secondary to analyzing performance, selecting the most appropriate performance intervention, giving feedback to direct and/or reinforce behavior, coaching to develop talent, having those difficult conversations when performance isn't as required, delegating effectively, etc. You can't build trust if you're not seen as a fair, focused leader who has a good relationship with team members. Teach THAT and trust will come. As will team building. As will change management.
- C. **Make sure the content is practical.** Too many leadership development programs are filled with philosophical or esoteric topics: they talk about the importance of this or the definition of that. Leaders crave practical, usable models that they can immediately apply in real life. For example, Entelechy's flagship leadership development program, ***Unleash Your Leadership Potential***, teaches leaders how to analyze performance (there are two basic reasons why people don't perform), how to coach (there are three questions you need to ask), how to provide effective feedback (there are four steps), how to tell when you're ready to have that difficult conversation (there's a checklist), etc. Ditch the descriptive and build in the prescriptive.
- D. **Bring in the experts.** If you're launching a new leadership development program, create a steering committee made up of operational leaders. Make them responsible for ensuring that the content is relevant and that skills are immediately applicable to real leaders doing real work.
- E. **Put the content to work right away.** Make sure that each module or topic ends with each participant reflecting on and documenting how they will use this skill or technique on the job.

Document with whom they'll use it, and when. Have them share their plans with fellow participants. Then ask them to share these plans with their managers. If they're struggling with how to apply the skill or technique, it probably shouldn't be in the program. Cut it.

9. "I am a senior leader with extensive experience and limited time ... so just give me the summarized version."

A Closer Look

It's important that senior leaders — the ones whose people are going through the core leadership development program — are able to model and reinforce the skills and models their people learn in the core leadership program. However, many senior leaders believe that they can skip the real work and pick up the gist of the leadership concepts with merely an overview. And, frankly, some can. However, KNOWING isn't the same as BEING ABLE TO.

How do YOU Respond?

These senior leaders need to hear, "Face it, if you WERE currently modeling the coaching, feedback, communication, and performance management skills covered in the leadership program, don't you think YOUR PEOPLE would also be modeling those skills? If THEY can benefit from leadership development, chances are that YOU could benefit from the training — in an in-depth fashion — as well."

Next Steps

- A. Involve your organization's senior leaders in your leadership development initiatives.** When implementing a new leadership development program for frontline and mid-level leaders, make sure you schedule a special cohort just for senior leaders so they can see the skills and techniques frontline and mid-level leaders will be learning. This will go a long way in ensuring everyone is using the same language when it comes to leadership.
- B. Be thorough when exposing senior leaders to your new leadership development program.** Don't just give them a watered-down learning experience to save time. Show them exactly what frontline and mid-level leaders will experience. Have senior leaders do the activities, skills practice, and receive feedback just as their more junior team members will — for the same reason: they NEED it! These senior leaders must be able to accurately model the behavior they are expecting of their managers and supervisors.
- C. Set expectations with senior leaders so they understand their role in reinforcing key learnings.** When involving senior leaders in your leadership development program for frontline and mid-level leaders, ensure that senior leaders leave the program with crystal clear expectations for how they can help their managers back on the job. Ask senior managers, "how can you help your managers implement these skills with THEIR team members?" Have senior leaders reflect on and document their plans: WHAT specifically will they do, with WHOM, and WHEN?

10. "Leadership development focuses on my shortcomings ... I would rather focus on my leadership strengths."

A Closer Look

Leveraging strengths IS important at any level of leadership; your strengths define how you show up as a leader. However, ignoring shortcomings — especially at lower leadership levels — can be deadly.

How do YOU Respond?

Leaders focusing exclusively on strengths need to hear, "Leadership development is about identifying areas of opportunity to become an even stronger leader. There is always room for improvement and growth. Every leader — even those in the highest positions of power — would benefit from addressing their shortcomings."

Frontline supervisors NEED to be able to clarify expectations, connect with people, provide feedback, coach to develop talent, deal with unacceptable performance, etc. Leaders at these levels can't NOT do things because "it's not my leadership strength." At these levels, leaders who ignore their shortcomings will cause reduced morale and productivity, greater turnover (especially of high potential team members), and overall team member disengagement with an accompanying drop in performance. And even the strongest leader can benefit from some new tips and tricks and from some hands-on skills practice. This stuff isn't easy!

Next Steps

- A. **Leverage a 360° survey** to identify each leader's strengths AND opportunities for development. Strengths will define how you show up as a leader; they define your leadership persona. However, the areas that need development will often overshadow strengths. As the saying goes, "people join companies but the leave managers," and it's often because those managers have leadership areas that required development. Have the leader focus on one or two areas for development while building on the identified strengths.
- B. **Build leadership competencies into professional development plans.** Go one step beyond a one-time 360° survey and bake leadership competencies into your organization's professional development process as an ongoing measurement of the leader's growth and development. Administer the survey annually to identify new strengths and areas for development.

Final Thoughts

There are many excuses leaders make to avoid development and many are likely based on misperception. When leaders think they don't need leadership development (perhaps a misperception), a 360° or honest self-assessment may change that perception. When leaders don't think they'll get much from the program, maybe they're not clear on the content and value of the program on them and their leadership capabilities.

Yet, except in very few cases, the excuse is simply that — an excuse.

Great leaders are continuously learning and growing.

Great leaders know the importance of “walking the walk and talking the talk” — modeling the expected leadership behaviors expected of all leaders at the organization.

Great leaders know the importance of leadership development on the business; how just a small improvement in leadership capability can significantly and positively impact productivity, innovation, and engagement and simultaneously reduce turnover of good team members.

Great leaders know that team members may join a company, but they leave OR STAY because of their leaders.

Great leaders don't make excuses.