

Creating a leadership legacy

by John R. Brophy

SUPPORTING GROWTH AND ENCOURAGING strength in your people is at the core of leadership development in any organization. If you're a leader now, think back to a time before you held your first official leadership position. What made you aspire to step forward and take on the challenges of leadership? How prepared were you when you made that transition from buddy to boss? Did anyone invest their time and talent in your development or did you just figure it out as you went?

The answers to these questions will provide you with a mini self-analysis and, depending upon the answers, a look at how investing or not investing in leadership development impacts both the individual future leader and the organization.

Strong leaders think and act beyond their tenure. They challenge themselves and their people to do more and to be more. One of the most important responsibilities of a leader in any position is developing the leaders of the future. Sharing ideas, challenges, and credit for success with the people around you increases success in the present, fosters loyalty, and sets the stage for the future. Providing meaningful assignments, relevant and timely constructive feedback, and challenging the people around you to achieve more for themselves and the organization tends to heighten their interest and motivate them to not simply accept the status quo.

Motivation comes from the leader's ability to listen to and observe the needs, interests, strengths and weaknesses of their people. Through this understanding and connection with their leadership protégés, the leader can develop job assignments and collateral duties that serve to benefit both the protégé and the organization. Improvement-oriented feedback that is provided in a positive and reinforcing way is essential to effectively maintaining trust and motivation. Integrating leadership development in everyday activities provides a level of responsibility for the protégé with respect to both organizational need and their own personal and professional growth.



Developing future leaders

When using developmental activities to groom the leaders of tomorrow, it is important that the level of complexity be challenging, but not overwhelming. Using delegation and empowerment in this regard can be very effective in creating a sense of ownership of the project and beginning to shift your emerging leader's perspective from one of follower to one of leader. An important component of these developmental activities is making sure the assignments are diverse so your leaders gain varied experience. Holding multiple positions of increasing and diverse responsibility provides a solid foundation for anyone in leadership.

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If you're a leader, think about the steps you take or might take to encourage upcoming leaders. If you're looking to step into a leadership role, think about how you might step up and offer to take on some leadership responsibilities so you can begin to grow into the role with your leadership's support.

Providing leadership training

In addition to everyday integration of leadership development, your organization can provide more formalized training and educational programs for leaders, present and future. Ask yourself, do you have a tuition reimbursement program and are you and your staff taking advantage of it? Do you have subject matter experts within your organization that you can tap into to provide internal leadership seminars? Do you encourage and support your leaders in attending regional and national conferences? Can you budget for bringing in an occasional guest speaker or doing some "fun" team-building activity for your leadership team? While not every organization can do all of these, perhaps with some creativity and networking every organization can provide some level of formalized leadership training for their staff.

Encourage the people around you to ask "Why?" Their feeling comfortable doing so facilitates open dialogue, gives them a window into your thoughts and vision, and perhaps even helps you catch something you otherwise may have missed – thereby improving the organization now while continuing the grooming process for the future.

If you are growing into a leadership role, be sure to ask relevant questions so you fully understand the organization

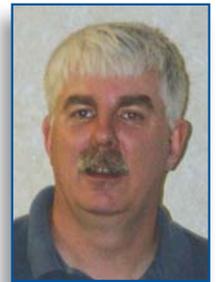
and can grow it, and yourself in a leadership role, from there.

It is not enough for a leader to have a vision – the leader must successfully share that vision and help others see it and understand it. Once people begin to grasp the concept of vision through the eyes of their leaders, they too will begin to develop vision skills of their own. When this occurs, the leader of today has successfully bridged the gap to the future and has developed a legacy that extends beyond their time in a position or even within an organization.

Assessing, challenging, and supporting our future leaders is vital to our organizations and our industry. Leadership development must be an active part of every leader's portfolio of responsibilities. In developing the future leaders of EMS, the leaders of today must provide opportunities, feedback, and counseling to the EMS leaders of tomorrow.

Doing what was done yesterday is no longer a formula for success in the future. We must challenge ourselves to reach further and engage those who will succeed us to strive for even more.

John R. Brophy is Director of Operations and Communications at Community EMS in Southfield, Michigan. He is the author of Leadership Essentials for Emergency Medical Services, which is a continuing education text designed for the development of new and aspiring EMS leaders. Brophy is a former U.S. Navy Corpsman and Fire Department Captain with 29 years of experience in EMS.



Brophy

Squad membership program brings great benefits to practitioners, EMS services

NAEMT welcomes several new squads to our Squad Membership program:

Baldwin Area EMS, Baldwin, Wis. - 10 members

Blount County Rescue Squad, Alcoa, Tenn. - 11 members

Delmar EMS Squad, Delmar, New York - 41 members

EBR EMS Paramedic Association, Baton Rouge, La. - 59 members

Event Safety Service, Henderson, Nev. - 10 members

Golden Heart EMS, Rugby, N.D. - 12 members

Lifewatch EMS, Houston, Texas - 8 members

Village of Scottsville (New York) Rescue Squad - 10 members

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