

Business Insights

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3 BENEFITS OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONALS



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For professionals intent on moving up within their organization, or who find themselves suddenly in a position of authority over others, it's not uncommon to wonder whether leadership training in the form of a course or workshop could be beneficial to their career.

The answer to that question is a resounding “yes.”

“Leadership is sometimes misunderstood as a mystical quality that some people embody and others don’t,” says Harvard Business School Professor Joshua Margolis in the online course Leadership Principles.

While many people claim they are “natural born leaders,” leadership skills can be learned. With enough discipline, understanding, and practice, anyone can become an effective leader within their business or organization.

To help you decide whether leadership training makes sense for you, here are some of the benefits it can have on the trajectory of your career and your ability to succeed in your current or desired role.

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3 BENEFITS OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING

1. Assess Your Effectiveness as a Leader

To improve your leadership skills, you must first understand your current abilities. What are your strengths, and how you can lean into them to become a more effective leader? What are your weaknesses, and how can you work to fill those gaps and be more well-rounded? Developing this insight can help you prioritize the best strategies for improvement. It can also enable you to identify your personal leadership style, which you can reference and build upon throughout your career.

High-quality leadership programs, like the Leadership Principles course offered by HBS Online, build this self-assessment into the curriculum. In addition to facilitating self-evaluation, the course solicits feedback from colleagues and managers to gain a deeper understanding of participants' emotional intelligence—a critical characteristic of all leaders.

2. Learn (and Practice) Important Leadership Skills

To be effective, leaders must understand how to set direction, design teams, coach colleagues, deliver feedback, and build robust, trusting relationships with their direct reports. They know how to influence others, empower employees, handle stressful situations, and sense when to delegate tasks or tackle a project on their own.

“Leadership is all about bringing out the best in others to get the work done,” Margolis says in Leadership Principles.

Perfecting these skills requires hands-on experience. Completing leadership training allows you to not only learn and understand these skills, but put them into practice in a collaborative setting.

3. Get Real Feedback from Experienced Leaders

One of the greatest benefits associated with leadership training is the exposure you get to other leaders—both faculty and peers—from whom you can learn and grow. Discussions, debates, and the general free exchange of ideas with others can offer insights and feedback that are hard to come by when trying to develop these skills on your own.



WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM LEADERSHIP TRAINING?

While you might think you already need to be in a position of leadership to benefit from leadership training, individuals in a range of roles or career stages might find value in such a course. Below are four examples of the kind of professionals who tend to realize the most significant benefits.

1. Early- and Mid-Career Professionals

Early- or mid-career professionals who are currently working as individual contributors or specialists within their department or organization stand to benefit from completing leadership training. This is especially true for anyone who has a desire to eventually move into a position of management or leadership, but is unsure of how to get there. By taking a leadership course and proactively developing your leadership skills, you're priming yourself to be ready when the opportunity arises to make a change.

Similarly, leadership training might also be helpful for individuals who don't necessarily want to work in a leadership position, but occasionally take on managerial tasks and responsibilities, such as a project manager.

2. New Leaders

Many established organizations follow a strict hierarchy in determining who to hire or promote into a leadership position. Applicants, whether internal or external, must typically meet a certain level of education and experience even to be considered.

But in smaller or more nimble organizations, this hierarchy may not be formally established, which can enable an individual to move into a position of leadership even if they don't yet have experience in such a role. (This can be particularly true for many [startup environments](#).)

If you find yourself suddenly and unexpectedly thrust into a position of leadership, pursuing training can be an effective means of getting oriented to your new role.

3. Aspiring Entrepreneurs

Many small business owners start as self-employed individuals. They don't have any employees or team members to manage. They are only responsible for managing themselves.

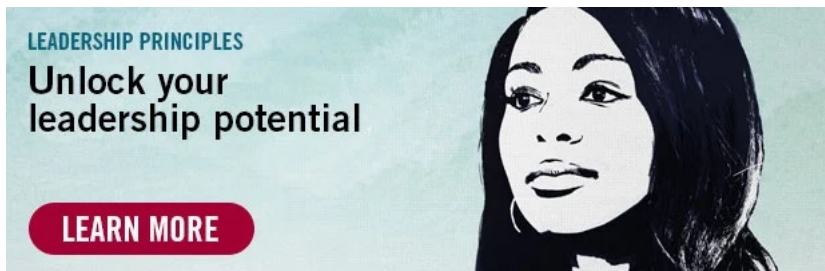
But as soon as you take the seemingly small step of hiring your first employee, the entire dynamic of your business is liable to change, because you're no longer only responsible for yourself. That's why it's often claimed that success as a solopreneur does not necessarily equate to success as an entrepreneur.

If your ultimate career goal is to be a successful entrepreneur, developing your leadership skills is an essential piece of the puzzle, and can help you gain the skills necessary for building and managing high-performing teams.

4. Businesses and Organizations

While some businesses and organizations with open leadership positions look outwards for job candidates, there are benefits to promoting from within. On the one hand, it's often cheaper, because you no longer have the expense of recruiting, screening, interviewing, and otherwise evaluating applicants. On the other, promoting internally often allows for a shorter ramp-up period because the employee likely already knows how the business operates.

To realize the benefits of promoting from within, companies need to provide a pathway for their employees to develop the skills necessary for success. Investing in professional development initiatives, such as leadership training, is an effective way of doing so. It can also improve employee retention: Up to [94 percent](#) of employees state they would stay with a company longer if it invested in helping them learn and grow professionally.



TAKING THE FIRST STEP

So long as you're approaching the course with an open mind and a willingness to learn, leadership training can be a highly effective means of learning new skills, improving what you already know, and laying the groundwork for a successful career. The biggest hurdle is taking the first step.

"The research is clear: Leaders are made, not born," says Harvard Business School Professor Ethan Bernstein. "And they are increasingly self-made."

Do you want to enhance your leadership skills? Download our [free leadership e-book](#) and explore our online course [Leadership Principles](#) to discover how you can become a more effective leader and unleash the potential in yourself and others.



About the Author

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