



Council of Firms Knowledge Community

September 10, 2018

Topic: Leadership Development

How do we identify, cultivate and grow potential new leaders within our firms? In September, we watched a video from the Leadership Pipeline Institute¹ and discussed how the firms in attendance uniquely approach leadership development.

One firm utilizes the book *The Leadership Pipeline*¹ as required reading for their leadership team, as a guideline for their leadership development, and adapting the tenets to fit their roles and levels of leadership. One key takeaway from *The Leadership Pipeline* is that there are many different levels of leadership, from leading yourself, to leading others, to leading leaders, to leading a functional team to leading a business or enterprise. At each step along the way, leaders must set new priorities that align with their new role, and determine what to start, stop and keep doing. As a new leader begins to lead others, it is important for them to recognize what they can and should delegate to help their team grow and give them room for new responsibilities. If someone jumps ahead on the pipeline, it creates a skills gap and that can cause problems later as other leaders start to move up.

As firm leaders, how can we best help our teams to grow?

- Clarity in the leadership path: clearly defined roles and responsibilities on the progression ladder.
- Firms in leadership transitions especially need clearly defined roles and expectation for their new leaders.
- What skills does your team need to perform these roles successfully? Utilize development plans to define the path for individuals, and determine their coaching, mentoring, or specific training needs.
- Understand generational issues and recognize when Baby Boomers are blocking Millennials and Gen Xers from moving ahead.
- Understand the challenges and potential gaps in leadership when pulling people up too early.
- Be careful about utilizing checklists for the leadership path - some people mark the boxes complete and move on. Think about skills like Project Management, if you led a few small projects, you probably would not be ready to lead a large complex one without some additional support or training. And to lead a team of project managers, you may not be ready even after leading your own projects fifty to one hundred times.

Leadership development varies within firms:

- Internal formal leadership programs - some are inclusive of all staff, while others are open to a selected group.
- Some firms favor a project management leadership path, based on the business skills that PMs bring.
- One firm's program includes: Integrity, Discipline, Perspective, Stewardship and Inspiration.
- One firm is working with an industrial psychologist, facilitating discussions with a selected group of leaders.
- A couple of firms focus training on the financial side – multipliers, monthly financials – with their finance partners.

AIA-MN has several ongoing and significant leadership efforts:

- AIA-MN Leadership Forum – endorsed by many in the room who participated and/or supported their staff – focuses on individuals understanding themselves, their strengths and team leadership
- Intercultural Leadership Program (new)
- Mastering the Future Business of Architecture (MFBA) program: business and soft skills focus, based on client feedback about what skills were missing on their architecture teams
- University of Minnesota/AIA-MN – in discussions for future training offerings for architects.

One of the biggest takeaways from this discussion was the idea of knowing what to let go as you move into a new level of leadership in your career.

AIA Minnesota Council of Firms

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