

Building New Young Leaders **Critical Skills for First Time Managers**

SUMMARY

Every new leader at any level must go through a process of assuming authority, establishing communication with direct-reports, and managing workflow. This is a challenging process for any new leader of any age. It is especially challenging for new leaders who are younger and less experienced.

RainmakerThinking's research shows that most new young leaders do not get enough structured guidance, direction, and support in taking on their new management/leadership responsibilities, especially when it comes to assuming authority, establishing communication with direct reports, and setting up an ongoing process for managing workflow. Further, this results in lower performance rates and higher turnover among teams led by new young managers, as well as lower performance and higher turnover among new young managers themselves.

DETAILS

Many organizations today are suffering from a gap in bench-strength for senior leadership. At the same time, there is a serious gap in mid-level leadership talent. And, today's best young talent are increasingly less likely to follow the old-fashioned career path that used to lead to mid-level leadership roles and served as a guaranteed succession plan for those mid-level positions.

Now more than ever, the Holy Grail of retaining young talent is identifying, developing and building the next generation of leaders. How many people have both the technical ability and the desire and ability to lead?

When you are looking for new leaders, you must focus first and foremost on those with real technical talent, those who are really good at their jobs. These are the individuals who have demonstrated their commitment to their work and careers. That commitment is the first essential piece when it comes to identifying new prospects for leadership roles.

The problem is, especially among the best young technical talent, that there are a lot of people who are committed to their work and career but are reluctant to take on supervisory roles. Why? The main reason, according to our research, is that they can see with their own eyes the experience of their own managers and their slightly more advanced peers. What they see is that managers, especially new young managers, are often given loads of additional responsibility with very little additional support.

Don't be lured by charisma, passion, enthusiasm, and energy. Don't look for those young people who are comfortable slapping people down. Don't look for those who love the power. Don't look for the biggest egos or the loudest, most confident voices. Look for young people who love the responsibility and the service. Look for those who consistently practice the basics of management with discipline. Look for those who spend the most time patiently teaching. Look for those who want to lift people up and make them better. They will likely be your future leaders.

BEST PRACTICES

There are several immediately actionable takeaways and best practices to developing new young leaders:

- Surround them with teaching-style managers, advisers, organizational supporters, and maybe even mentors. When you ask young stars to step up and make the transition to leadership roles—at any level—teach them back-to-basics best practices for managing and then support and guide them in this new role every step of the way.
 1. Manage every day.
 2. Talk like a performance coach.
 3. Take it one person at a time.
 4. Make accountability a process, not a slogan.
 5. Tell people what to do and how to do it.
 6. Track performance every step of the way.
 7. Solve small problems before they turn into big problems.
 8. Reward exceptional performance extra.
- Formally deputize any new leader, no matter how small the project or how short the duration of the leadership role. Announce the new leadership to the whole team, articulate the nature of this person's new authority, and explain the standard operating procedures for management that you have asked the new leader to follow.
- Check in daily (or every other day) with new leaders. Regularly walk through the standard operating procedures for managing people. Ask about the management challenges she is probably facing. Take every opportunity you can to help the new leader refine and improve her management techniques.
- Pay close attention every step of the way and evaluate the new leader in her new role. With this kind of sustained low-tech hands-on leadership development effort and constant evaluation, you can develop your future leaders.



Bruce Tulgan is internationally recognized as the leading expert on young people in the workplace and one of the foremost experts on leadership & management practices and supervisory relationships. He is an advisor to business leaders all over the world, and the author/co-author of numerous books including the best-seller *IT'S OKAY TO BE THE BOSS* (Revised Updated 2014). His newest book, *THE ART OF BEING INDISPENSABLE AT WORK*, is available now from Harvard Business Review Press. Since founding the management training firm RainmakerThinking, Inc. in 1993, he has been a sought-after keynote speaker and seminar leader.