



10 strategies that will elevate your leadership development from 'just another programme' to your greatest legacy

Leadership development isn't cheap. Not in financial terms or in time out of the business. So how do you make it work? How do you ensure it delivers what it promises? How do you ensure your senior leaders are over the moon about the investment they've made and see it as a key strategy in future growth? In this article Elke Edwards, Founder of pioneering leadership company Ivy House, shares 10 key strategies that will transform your programme into one people talk about for years to come.

Before we start, let's be clear on the one massive assumption I'm making. I am assuming you have chosen a brilliant partner, or partners, to create your leadership and talent programmes. A partner that understands the challenges today's leaders face; are experts in creating behavioural change and have a delivery team with the depth, gravitas, and talent you need.

Ok, now that's out of the way, what else is going to make your programme fly?

1. Being radically clear on the why:

You, your partners, stakeholders, and delegates all need to be really clear on why you're doing the programme. Exactly what change are you looking for? What strategic imperatives will this change support? What difference will this make to the business and the delegates? How will this change align to their personal and teams' goals?

2. Engaged senior sponsors:

Let's not be naïve, you'll never get all your senior leaders to actively support a leadership or talent development programme, but you need some. And those need to be vocal, available and advocate the change you are trying to create. Do three things: find exciting ways to engage them in content, give them structured opportunities to connect with delegates and give them stories that come out of the programme to share far and wide. Creating change is often about changing the narrative.

3. A forum for ideas to be heard, developed, and actioned:

A key reason organisations don't get maximum bang for their buck from development programmes is because there is nowhere for all the amazing new ideas to go. Learning, when done right, is catalytic. Our ability to solve complex problems increases tenfold – so setting up regular forums for these ideas to be developed and worked on is key.

4. A platform for unwelcome truths to be debated and discussed:

As well as generating a tonne of new ideas, brilliant development gives people the chance to discuss the elephants in the room. Finally, they find the courage to raise the derailing truths about your business that are currently being ignored. Providing intimate, regular forums for people to discuss these truths, with the intent of creating positive change in partnership with empowered leaders, is game-changing.

5. A courageous learning culture:

For change to happen we need to be agile and courageous learners. Firstly, catching people doing things well – enabling your talent to build on their strengths. Secondly, being really ok with what's gone wrong on a personal, team and organisational level. It means being motivated by learning and not by being right; it means creating environments of psychological courage and continuous improvement.

6. A culture of feedback and coaching:

One of the biggest complaints of high potential talent is the lack of valuable feedback and coaching they receive from their leaders. Giving expert feedback, and coaching off the back of it, is both a mindset and a skill – most senior leaders don't have either. Support your programme by taking engaged leaders through their own development, giving them the skills to play a genuine role in developing the leaders of the future.

7. A powerful recruitment process for your programme:

One of the most powerful strategies you can adopt to ensure your investment pays dividends is ensuring your programme is aspirational. Put an end to programmes that people 'just get sent on' because of the level they are at, and create a delegate recruitment process where potential delegates must prove they are worthy of the investment. This gives them the opportunity to 'choose in' to the learning and makes for a wholly different learning experience.

8. Align processes and rewards to your behavioural change goals:

Your processes and rewards must drive the behaviour you want; for example, it's harder to get more collaboration when you only reward personal performance. When you align your organisational goals and processes with the desired change - and then provide incentives and recognition for leaders who demonstrate the behaviours - everything makes sense.

9. Continuous reinforcement:

Learning and change is not a once and done event. How many times have you been on a programme, made new resolutions and then, three weeks down the line, you can barely remember the programme let alone what you committed to changing? Include in your budget ongoing, reinforcing learning interventions. Events that build on the core learning as well as expand it.

10. Space to breathe, space to think:

We've become a task-focused culture - getting a little hit of pleasure every time we tick something off our 'to do' list. Filling every moment with doing, however, doesn't make for great leadership, and it certainly doesn't make for successful learning. When you give people the gift of learning, give them the gift of time as well. Time to do the reading, time to reflect on the feedback and time to connect with new people across the business. This is how the change happens – having the time to do something differently, the time to ask how they did, and the time to hear new ideas. And if, by the way, you are noticing a slight tummy clenching as you read this and a thought running around your head saying 'that'll never happen in this business', it's even more important for you.

Here's the thing - leadership development done well is transformational, both for the organisation and individual. But it is not an island. It is a shared endeavour between your senior leaders, your L&D and talent teams, your design and delivery partner and your delegates. Holding on to your mission and being dogged in your pursuit of creating something extraordinary matters – it will change the lives of the delegates and will be game-changing for your organisation – and that is the stuff of legacies.



If you'd like to hear more about how Ivy House can support you to create a lasting legacy, get in touch with us at hello@ivyhouse.co.uk.

Radical support. Radical challenge. Radical change.