

Leadership Insights



Professional Development and Leadership

Why did we change the name from Manager's Tips to Leadership Insights? And what does that question have to do with developing employees?

We are asking leaders at Middlebury to step into the role of leadership rather than focusing solely on managing employees. We changed the name of this newsletter to signal this call to action. The intent is to provide insights into Leadership that may help you or your team continue to grow, develop, and inspire others. A leader understands that developing employees is not merely managing their work but leading them through their career progression, from learning to growing to thriving, and yes eventually to leading themselves and others (even if only in an informal capacity).

In this Leadership Insights we will discuss:

- [What is a Leader](#)
- [Why Focus on Professional Development](#)
- [Survey - How many conversations about professional development have you had with your employees this month](#)

What Is a Leader?

Management skills are critically important to the success of the institution. Great management ensures smooth and optimal day-to-day operations and achievement of targeted outcomes. Leadership skills are equally important to drive a culture of highly engaged, motivated, and top-performing employees who consistently support and deliver on our mission.

“Probably one of the most enduring models of pre-engagement business culture is the idea that leadership flows downward only. The longer you stick with this form of gravity-bound management, the longer you’ll be enjoying only partial engagement. Engaged employees ready to take the lead on projects they own chaff under old leadership styles. Let your people take the lead, and you’ll be amazed at how far they’ll take you.” *Getting the Best From People*, Martha I. Finney.

A leader creates a vision and strategic plan for the future, creates alignment within and across functional areas, and guides and empowers others. If your employees are not progressing, or feel stuck, it is fair to ask if you are doing enough as their leader to show them the way.

Why Focus on Professional Development?

“The German author and philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote ‘Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and you help them become what they’re capable of being.’ In the same light, treat people as if they are already the leaders they’re capable of being, and they’ll help you become the manager of a team of inspired change makers.” *Getting the Best From People*, Martha I. Finney.

Professional development provides individuals with the opportunity to expand their skills, stay up to date with rules/regulations/policies/laws relevant to their profession or position, perform at a higher level, and opens the door to future career opportunities. Employees who feel like their long-term goals are supported are more likely to be highly engaged and high performers.

It is always true, but especially in the current labor market, that it is easier, cheaper and faster to develop talent that perfectly suits a role than to recruit and hire that perfect match. However, an added “bonus” is that your positions will be more attractive and aid in the recruitment process if there are established professional development opportunities should you have a vacancy.

In an ever-changing world keeping up with the latest best practices requires continual learning. A robust focus on professional development and training leads to a culture of learning and a more responsive, agile workforce.

Want to encourage professional development but feeling a little lost on specifics? Be on the look out next week!

Up Next...

We’ll be building on this conversation to share strategies for developing employees as well as some internal and external resources to help guide you and your team.

Leader Pulse Survey

How many conversations about professional development have you had with your employees this month? Share with us using this link to the Leader Pulse Survey: [Leader Pulse Survey](#)