

# INDOCTRINATE, EMBRACE AND MEASURE!



If you ever have the opportunity to hear Jack Zenger speak at a conference, take it. There is perspective that comes with 63 years in the arena of leadership development that, quite frankly, is next to impossible to replicate.

As you might imagine, Zenger is a thought leader who has “been there and done that.” He not only understands people at a level most of us can only aspire to, but also understands the organizations that employ them.

In general terms, and in active acknowledgement of the alignment between Zenger’s thinking and our own, we offer the following observations:

## INDOCTRINATE EARLY

This is a partial list of leadership skills most often worked on by C-suite executives participating in executive coaching:

- Building trust
- Listening
- Delegating
- Collaborating
- Holding others accountable
- Taking appropriate risks
- Matching one’s leadership style to the specific needs of others

Do any of these skills strike you as development needs reserved solely for the top echelons of management? As we have addressed in previous columns, one of the most significant professional advances many of us ever make is our first promotion into people management. That’s the career juncture where we transition from being responsible for

“doing it” to a position where we are responsible for seeing that someone else “gets it done.”

Each of the skills listed previously are as critical to front-line supervisor success as they are to orchestrating targeted results in middle or upper management. Therefore, introducing core, foundational leadership and influence constructs as early as possible must become a priority.

Is leading people more complicated in the C-suite than it is at the base of an organization? In a word, yes. But, distinguishing achievement at either level — and all of those in between— is the product of executing simple strategies in an effective manner.

## EMBRACE REALITY

Understand that leadership has very little to do with being an effective leader. Effectiveness is focused on having the courage to take definitive action and becoming a catalyst for productivity.

In that regard, building leaders in an organization is a function of translating vision into targeted action. In large part, the key stewards of that migration are the managers of the people going through leadership training. That is the reality. Ultimately, leaders develop leaders. That process can be significantly accelerated with effective leadership training, of course, but the best leadership training program ever developed, deployed in the absence of reinforcement post-training by line management, leaves you with little more than a random chance of training transfer and targeted behavior change.

Further, systematically developing leadership skills is one of the most iterative processes

imaginable. It requires the courage of the trainee to engage in a real-world setting, the intentional availability of the trainee’s manager to observe and provide feedback, and the willingness of the trainee to receive that feedback and act upon it — repeatedly.

**ULTIMATELY,  
LEADERS DEVELOP  
LEADERS.**

## MEASURE RELENTLESSLY

To tap into the wisdom of Zenger one more time, consider that organizations that are serious about leadership development measure their efforts actively and experientially as opposed to passively and educationally. Stated differently, those organizations place a premium on what leaders practice and produce, as opposed to what they ponder and pontificate.

Typically, measuring the impact of leaders has always been a function of bottom-line results, employee engagement and employee retention. If the organization is achieving objectives, that has something to do with leadership — likewise if they are not. It is the same with engagement and retention of key talent. Attrition and 360-degree survey trends are real, measurable data that indicate the degree to which leadership truly understands their people. 🍷

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