

✍ by Corrinne Armour

DOES LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

deliver bang for buck

Leaders often show a level of 'surprise' when they tell me they have enjoyed one of my training programs and that they feel confident to use their new skills to increase their workplace effectiveness.

Surely that's the point of leadership development. So why do numerous leaders experience uninspiring training that lacks relevance, is hard to apply, and yields little. Eighty six percent of human resource (HR) and business leaders surveyed by Deloitte in a 2015 study cited leadership as one of their most important challenges, and yet most HR directors agree that their leadership development programs are ineffective or do not provide lasting results.

The traditional approach to leadership development is failing because training content is not targeted, and the link between business priorities and training outcomes is weak. Solutions cater for the masses more than individual needs, and learning is not targeted at a level to create sustainable change.

The second reason that leadership

development is failing is that classroom training alone is not enough. One-off training events don't support on-the-job changes, and there is little incentive or encouragement to apply formal learning back on the job. Development budgets are directed at typical classroom-based training, which contributes less than 25% of learning effectiveness. Very little time is invested in training follow-up (for example, manager and peer support, coaching, feedback to support behaviour change), which contributes a major portion of learning effectiveness.

How does your leadership development stack up? A key role of leaders is to grow others, so instead of spending money on external leadership development for your junior managers, invest in skilling your leaders to develop performance in others on the job. If this is done well, leaders create supportive

conditions for real-time development in the workplace through providing continual learning events with multiple touch-points. Leaders can also enhance learning effectiveness by providing opportunity for practice and consolidation of learning, supplemented by on-the-job support and encouragement.

Leaders can embed development in real work, providing increased return on investment (ROI) with tailored learning for the individual and the company. Results are more readily measurable as new behaviours are linked to actual performance metrics and real business outcomes.

Great leaders also boost learning by leveraging brain science through asking questions. The "generation effect" replicated in several behavioural and neuroscience studies, shows that people are more likely to remember an idea they generate themselves. Therefore,

questions are a critical tool in a leader's development toolkit.

When leaders tell people the answers, the rational brain may be listening, but this won't help with recall or ownership of learning. Conversely, when leaders ask questions that lead people to a new understanding, insight is involved.

Insight is that light bulb moment where the brain pulls seemingly unrelated ideas together and connects them in new ways.

Insights are invaluable for learning, because an insight engages the brain's reward system and triggers dopamine: a neurotransmitter known as "happy chemical." The simple act of searching for and finding our own answers is rewarding to the brain. Insight also activates the hippocampus: the area of the brain responsible for long-term memory. Our memory is augmented by insight. We construct rich neural connections to things we already

know and can then apply the solution more broadly in the future.

What's the way forward in your workplace? Perhaps it's time to stop outsourcing the responsibility for development and capitalise on the impact leaders can have on the job. To develop performance in others, your leaders need to embrace the role of coach to support growth and learning on the job. To create the results you want to see, skill your leaders to tell less and ask more.

Corrinne Armour is the author of [Leaders Who Ask: Building Fearless Cultures by telling less and asking more](#) visit www.corrinnearmour.com

