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Personal Leadership Is The Key To Long-Term Success—And How Organizations Can Support It

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Personal leadership is at the heart of long-term success.

I tell the executives I coach that the most important thing they need to know to be successful is that the leaders who succeed are the ones who lead themselves. (No one can lead you to success other than yourself, because you're the only one who knows what success means to you!) When leaders embrace personal leadership, everything shifts—but they shouldn't have to do it alone.

In this article, we'll look at the important role organizations play in supporting leaders in practicing personal leadership.

Even the most driven individuals need the right conditions to thrive. That includes having organizational support and a culture that invests in leadership at all levels. Leaders need the time, space and encouragement to reflect, grow and align their work with what matters most.

Originally Published in Forbes Coach Council

July 29, 2025

<https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2025/07/29/personal-leadership-is-the-key-to-long-term-success-and-how-organizations-can-support-it/>

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And perhaps most importantly, they need a support system—whether that’s a coach, a mentor or a trusted team—who can help them stay grounded and focused as they pursue that growth.

Many organizations recognize the value of personal leadership and embed it into their values statements, encouraging employees to take ownership of their own careers or drive their own learning and leadership. But not everyone knows how or, frankly, has the time and space to do that in a way that is effective.

For that reason, organizations that want to support their leaders also have an important role to play. If organizations want to have the best talent, they need to invest in their leaders. It’s that simple.

What does that mean? If you're a leader who wants to support talent in your organization, focus on these three areas.

1. Invest in executive coaching.

One of the major tech firms I work with provides an executive coach for every member of the executive committee, and those executives arrange coaching for their top leaders and teams. Another company has an internal and external stable of coaches that employees are encouraged to access. A third has decided that anyone in a leadership position should experience executive coaching at least once in their career, so they understand the resources available to them.

The organizational executives who champion these efforts all do so because they know that talent is the key to business success, and executive coaching is a powerful way to develop that talent.

2. Invest in leadership development.

Organizational leaders who want to advance strong cadres of leaders also look for programs and design cohorts of leaders to attend the program together. Advocates for these programs look for alignment between the goals of the organization and a program that helps them achieve those goals.

Investing in this way creates actual change—something that doesn't just happen by simply setting a clear vision and goals and hoping that leaders will somehow rise to the occasion. Leaders need learning; an effective way to get them that learning is to give them opportunities to learn together.

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3. Invest in well-being—supporting leaders so they feel valued and appreciated.

When talented leaders feel unappreciated, they will leave. The companies known for retaining their talent invest in beautiful spaces for employees to work, give them opportunities to express their needs and describe what helps them work best, and design policies that respond to their requests.

Organizational leaders and executives need to prioritize the interests of their employees and do their best to show their ability to deliver.

All of these are for organizational leaders to invest in their talent, giving them the opportunity to do the essential “inner work” of leadership that will help them succeed. Efforts like these give leaders the chance to experience a sense of engagement and fulfillment that creates success for the company and for themselves.

Not every organization has the ability, budget or infrastructure to invest in all of its talent, and not every individual organizational leader is empowered to initiate widespread efforts to do so. However, one approach to supporting leaders that is extremely accessible is executive coaching.

Executive coaching is especially beneficial for supporting leaders in practicing personal leadership.

All of us benefit from having someone listen to us, be a sounding board, help us generate ideas and find our own solutions. It’s the opposite of the well-intentioned but often ill fitting advice most of us get. Advice tells you, “This is what you need.” Coaching asks you, “What’s right for you?”

As one of the women I work with put it, in coaching, “I feel less crazy. I know I’m not alone. I have a lifeline.”

Coaching is a very validating process, because you’re discovering and honoring the best in yourself and learning to leverage it to become who you most want to be and do what you know you want to do—to make the important and impactful contribution that you and only you can make.

One of the simplest ways I've seen companies offer executive coaching is to provide individual employees with an annual stipend to use for their learning. Those individuals can then find the coaching model that works best for them.

Coaching and other initiatives related to leadership development and the well-being of leaders all combine to create an environment in which leaders can focus on themselves and, in so doing, benefit the entire organization.

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