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Most Leadership Training Doesn't Work. Why Not?

Forbes Coaches Council member [Aaron Levy](#) has proposed that leadership training fails because of the structured way it is presented. Most leadership training programs are designed to present new skills in an easy-to-deliver, event-based format. **The big problem with this approach is that it doesn't deliver a change in behavior.**

According to Levy:



“[Habit formation](#) doesn't just happen. Our brains aren't wired to adopt a new habit that quickly. No matter how good and engaging the presentation is, habit formation takes time. It occurs when a new action, like the leadership skill of listening with intention and attention, is practiced over and over.

Each time you practice listening in this new way, neurons in your brain are firing and creating a new neural pathway. The more you practice, the stronger the neural pathway becomes

and the easier it is for you to listen.”

To truly develop leaders, to give them the tools and skills they need to progress from individual contributors to powerful leaders, Levy proposes a 3-phase process that works.

Phase 1: Learn

Workshops should deliver new skills, explain why they are valuable and how they can be applied to the workplace. But the majority of programs spend most of their time on this phase, even though it simply sets the stage for the more-important application phase. Levy suggests spending only 15% of any workshop on this knowledge-building phase.

Phase 2: Apply

Leaders should begin applying new habits right away, both during training and in real-world application after the workshop session ends. Spending 80-90% of the time applying the new skill and reflecting on how it can be improved activates and strengthens the neural pathways.

Homework assignments, where leaders apply their new skills outside the safety of the workshop setting, brings a new dimension to the learning. Real growth occurs when new skills are applied outside a comfort zone, in an unstructured setting.

Phase 3: Reflect

Debriefing after the application phase, or coaching to reflect on what worked and what could be improved, keeps leaders accountable for completing the homework assignments and helps them assess their performance for further improvement. In habit formation, the reflection process is still triggering the newly created neural pathway. This essential phase allows leaders to visualize or reflect on a single behavior hundreds of times, turning it from a skill into a habit. Habit adoption is a learning process, requiring time and commitment to be successful.

The Learn-Apply-Reflect Model

Habit change requires commitment from the organization. By practicing new skills and putting them into action, leaders can apply them to real-world situations, reflect on their success, and build new leadership habits faster than any other approach.

OUR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY

At Executive Forum, we agree with Aaron Levy's insights into effective leadership development. Real progress is made when behaviors change, and that's what our leadership pathway is all about.

Our consistent, strategic process combines powerful core content with an outstanding panel of facilitators. This facilitated learning approach is designed to address current issues, yield successful growth and set the stage for future change. **If you've wondered what a plan for leadership development can look like, and why you should consider one, our short video can show you.** [It gives you a quick overview of why our approach works and what it can do for your organization.](#)



Give your leaders a pathway for successful development and help your people reach their full potential with our proven programs. With our range of targeted solutions, we'll help you launch effective programs tailored to your needs, your culture and your budget. Find out more on our [website](#) or give us a call at 503.206.8369.

FORUM NEWS

Moe Carrick and Robin Cochran were serving a new client in Central Oregon last week. Our team travels to meet the needs of organizations throughout the Northwest, in Canada and elsewhere. We conduct workshops in open enrollment sessions as well as providing them in-house and configured to meet our clients' needs.

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