

John C. Maxwell

**The Leader's Greatest Return:
Attracting, Developing, and
Multiplying Leaders**

Made by Blinkist



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Maybe these blinks will inspire you to dig deeper, or maybe they're enough to start you thinking and then on to something new. However you read blinks, we hope they help you become an even brighter you.

What's in it for me? Create a culture of leadership within your organization!

What makes an organization successful? There may be many secrets, but one is crucial. And it is good leadership. A global study published in 2011 said that organizations with great leaders were much more likely to beat their competitors in areas like profit, product quality, and customer satisfaction. To be precise, 13 times more likely.

Naturally, this means that good leaders are in high demand. But they're also in short supply. So, if you want better leadership within your organization, where does that leave you?

The solution is to develop new great leaders, and these blinks aim to show you how to do just that. Best of all, when you invest in leadership, your effort will spread across all levels, strengthening your organization.

In these blinks, you'll learn

- how to spot leadership potential;
- what leaders can learn from writers;
and
- how to put together a supergroup of leaders.

Having many great leaders is the secret sauce of any successful organization.

Do you remember how frustrating it was to do group projects at school? People endlessly throwing ideas around, forever talking in circles, forever failing to make decisions.

Such pointless conversations can go on and on and on unless someone steps up and takes charge. This person brings structure to the discussion, helps connect the dots between ideas, even assigns tasks and responsibilities. Suddenly, finishing the project seems a lot more realistic!

The key message here is: Having many great leaders is the secret sauce of any successful organization.

There's power in numbers, and this is also true of good leadership.

Sure, there should be a key leader in charge, but this doesn't mean that her team shouldn't also have leadership abilities. In the words of management expert Peter Drucker, "No executive has ever suffered because his subordinates were strong and effective."

Developing leaders within your organization has many benefits. For one, the more leaders you have, the more resources at your disposal.

Can one person keep an eye on everything? Solve every problem, generate and execute every bright idea? Clearly, they can't. So a great leader needs to delegate. And for this to work, there needs to be a whole organizational network of leaders. They will make sure the organization is in good hands; but they will also offer access to a new set of perspectives and insights. And there's more. A team of impressive leaders adds to your organization's reputation. That

helps you recruit other talented people, who will contribute to growth.

And speaking of growth, a team of leaders will give you the momentum you need to get going. Think about it like this; if one strong person tries to push a heavy car up the hill then, well, of course they'll struggle. Now, imagine a group of equally strong people joining in. That car will get moving really quickly. And that is the kind of advantage you gain when you invest in developing leaders.

So, how do you develop the sort of leaders who will give your organization the upper hand? Well, first you need to find people who can take on those roles. And then, you need to nurture them. We'll learn more about this in the following blinks, so keep listening.

Look for people who have both the skills your organization needs and the makings of a leader.

Let's say you need to find a new player for a high-school basketball team. How would you go about it?

You could ask the first tall kid you see. But what if he is no good on the court? That won't work. Or maybe you've heard about a really good point guard. You sign them up only to find out that the team already has someone who's great in this role.

Finding a decent new player in this manner is like trying to hit a target you can't see: virtually impossible. There is a better way. First, you assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current team, and then, you look for a talented player who can fill in the gaps. This is also how you should identify potential leaders.

The key message here is: Look for people who have both the skills your organization needs and the makings of a leader.

Here are some questions for you. What is your vision for the organization? What are your goals for it? What resources will help you accomplish those goals?

And can you name people who will be a good fit in all these areas? It's them you should be developing. As the author explains, if your organization's mission is to climb trees, you should be hiring squirrels, not training horses to do the job.

You'll know that someone is right for your organization by their track record. They will have a history of achieving stellar results in the right areas.

Remember: squirrels not horses. A track record is important because it shows potential to help others produce great results.

When you know what kind of people you need in your organization, you can hone in on those who have leadership potential. So, how do you find them?

Well, people with a knack for leadership are good at taking charge and they enjoy it. They also have the ability to draw others to them and to influence them. These skills are essential to get people working towards a common goal.

But leadership talent alone is not enough. The people you choose should also want to lead and should be prepared to work hard – to persevere in the face of defeat. They should also be passionate and good-natured enough to convince others to follow them.

Motivation will get your future leaders started, and forming good habits will help them go the distance.

In an earlier blink, we learned that talent and a good track record are some of the qualities that will help you spot a potential leader. But these two things alone won't turn a potential leader into a great leader. After all, there are many talented people whose careers fizzle out.

Aspiring leaders need something to push them and keep them moving forward. This is where motivation and habit come in.

The key message here is: Motivation will get your future leaders started, and forming good habits will help them go the distance.

Let's start with motivation. Different people are motivated by different things. So, when you are developing a leader,

you need to know what motivation is right for them.

During a long leadership career, the author has identified seven common motivations. Let's go through them one by one.

There's the *sense of purpose*, there's a need for *autonomy*, and there's the promise of *forming relationships*. People can also find motivation in the idea of *personal and professional growth*. Some are driven by the desire to *master a skill*, the need for *recognition*, and, finally, by the promise of *financial reward*.

When you know what motivates your potential leaders, you can give them exactly what they need. For example, if someone is motivated by money, you can give them a raise if they do well. Or if they're driven by mastery, provide opportunities to hone a particular skill. Many people will have more than one

motivator, so you may need to be flexible.

Now, motivation is useful in the beginning of somebody's leadership journey, but it's not always sustainable in the long run. One day, your leader-in-training may find that they are no longer inspired by the thought of more money or powerful connections.

What's the solution? Well, you should help them develop habits that will get them to the finish line. Show that you believe in them, give them encouragement during tough times, train them to do the right thing, and present yourself as a good example. And in return, they will consistently work at improving themselves.

Over time, this consistency leads to habit, and being in the habit of always improving is what will eventually make them great leaders.

“People don’t determine their future. They determine their habits, which determine their future.”

Budding leaders thrive when they have the opportunity to learn from established leaders and connect with them.

Have you ever heard of a writers' group?

Its members meet regularly to share their writing projects and give each other feedback. Crucially, they hold each other accountable for practising and growing their skill, and this helps every one of them improve their craft.

As someone in the business of developing leaders, you can pick up a lot from how such groups are run. Giving your aspiring leaders the opportunity to learn from others is hugely beneficial.

The key message here is: Budding leaders thrive when they have the opportunity to learn from established leaders and connect with them.

The author describes this space as a leadership table, a gathering at which leaders can learn together, share their successes and failures, and build their leadership skills.

A leadership table shouldn't be an exclusive VIP space for the best leaders in your organization. Widen it out. Invite people with leadership potential to join in; give them the opportunity to learn. And encourage every single one of them to take part. Only then will they feel truly free to challenge each other's thinking.

Members of your leadership table should apply what they learn in their day-to-day lives. And they should also report back on their progress, setbacks, and insights.

But a leadership table does more than just create a space for growth. It also allows potential leaders to benefit from something called the power of proximity.

As its members spend time with more experienced leaders, they learn new ways to think, approach problems, and take action. Put the leaders you're developing into a strategy meeting or a high-level discussion. This alone will give them so much more than simply reading about business tactics.

And there's even more that your future stars will gain from spending time with better, more experienced leaders. They'll form connections. For a leader, the right contacts can be very valuable. They can be a source of information, they can open doors, and they can offer resources.

By putting aspiring leaders into the same room as senior members of your organization, you're not only developing them, you're also giving them access to people who will do a lot of good for their careers.

To learn effectively, aspiring leaders need practice, direction, and freedom.

Picture a child learning how to swim. They start out at the shallow end of a pool, where an adult gives them some equipment, shows them what to do, and offers encouragement. The child carries on learning and practising, until, eventually, she moves on confidently to the deep end.

When you set out to train leaders, keep these swimming lessons in mind. Just like the adult in this scenario, you need to provide budding leaders with the right tools and environment.

The key message here is: To learn effectively, aspiring leaders need practice, direction, and freedom.

Imagine if the child were never allowed into the pool and instead simply watched the instructor swim? They'd never learn!

This is because practical experience is much more valuable than lessons or instructions.

A group of researchers discovered this in the 1990s when they surveyed 200 learners. The result was the *70/20/10 learning model*. Scientists found that 70 percent of learning happens during hands-on, practical experience. 20 percent comes from feedback and coaching, and the remaining 10 percent is the result of training.

So, to help your aspiring leaders learn, give them chances to get their hands dirty and work on real problems.

Now, doing the work may get people learning, but they won't grow if they simply wander from one task to another. You need to give them a roadmap. And that means setting goals.

Each goal should be challenging and stretching, but it should still be within

reach. A goal that's far too ambitious can easily be discouraging. The goals should also be measurable. In plain terms, this means that it should be easy to determine whether a goal has been met. And lastly, goals need to be clearly stated and put in writing. This will make your future leaders accountable.

So you've set challenging, realistic, measurable and clearly stated goals. What next?

Well, there's one last thing you need to do if you want to help future leaders reach their potential. You should remove any barriers they may face.

Your budding leaders need the right resources and enough authority. They won't develop if you watch them like a hawk and constantly tell them what to do. By providing them with the right tools and the necessary freedom, you make it possible for them to maximize their potential.

Empowerment and the right environment will help leaders realize their full potential.

Good leaders do not emerge overnight. A lot of time and effort goes into the process of leadership development.

After all the lessons and practice, all the losses and satisfying wins, wouldn't it be a complete waste if your newly trained leader was never allowed to do what you've taught them to? It would be like investing in a thoroughbred racehorse, training him, but never putting him in a race!

Your leaders, like the thoroughbreds, have to be allowed to run the race. This requires empowering them and creating a supportive environment.

The key message here is: Empowerment and the right environment will help leaders realize their full potential.

Firstly, it's important for you to have earned credibility and status as a leader yourself. After all, you need to have something before you can give it away. Working your way to success and influence, both in your career and in your organization, will put you in a position to empower the leaders whom you develop.

When you've achieved the relevant status in your organization, you probably feel in control. You also carry responsibility for a lot of what goes on. But after developing your leaders, you have to let go a bit. You need to share some of that control and responsibility with them.

This can be difficult for insecure bosses: they enjoy the feeling of being indispensable. But new leaders will never shine if people at the top don't give them the room to do so. Give up the spotlight

if you want to reap the benefits of training new leaders.

Once you're happily sharing the power and responsibility, you also need to create an environment where leaders can make an impact.

Have you got rid of the rules that discourage people with ideas and initiative? Do you encourage collaboration between people and departments? Do you give people ownership of tasks, hold them accountable and reward them for doing well?

If you've answered yes to these questions, then you've built an environment in which new leaders can do their best work. But if the answers are no, don't be discouraged. You now know what an empowering place looks like. You can change things for the better. Your leaders, and everyone else, will thank you for it.

Powerful leadership teams are made up of differently skilled people working together toward the same vision.

What's better than one good leader? The answer is two, three, maybe even four good leaders.

The more leaders you have working together, the better the results. This is why you should encourage your new leaders to build a leadership team.

Remember that high-school basketball team from one of the previous blinks? It will never win if you randomly put people together. Great leadership is a bit like that. You need to be strategic in how you select members and direct their efforts.

The key message here is: Powerful leadership teams are made up of differently skilled people working together toward the same vision.

First of all, when you're working on your leadership team, you need to remember that the very top of your organization is not the place for potential leaders. You want established, developed leaders who have demonstrated their skills. This doesn't only allow them to get to work immediately, it also helps them gain the respect of their peers.

Next, your chosen leaders should also have clear strengths. Everyone on the team should be aware of these strengths – it's your responsibility to highlight them to the team. When everyone knows what each member of the team brings to the table, you can achieve so much more.

It's also your responsibility to give people roles that best suit their strengths. So you may need to shuffle things around a bit. It's important that team members have enough time to adjust to their new roles, however, so make sure that no one

spends too much time doing the wrong job.

The last factor that makes for a powerful leadership team is alignment. You want a match between the values and visions of your team members, and you also need those personal values to fit in with what the entire organization stands for. For instance, if your organization is eco-friendly, having a leader with no concern for the environment would make it difficult for the team to work together.

Make a point of communicating the organization's values regularly and connect this to each leader's individual values and vision. When everyone knows that they're on the same page and working toward the same goal, they become enthusiastic and supportive of each other. This makes leadership teams far more effective.

When the leaders you've trained start developing others, your organization becomes stronger.

We've already learned that having more people with leadership skills is a definite advantage. We have also gone through the steps you need to take if you want to develop leaders in an organization. But, as a leader yourself, you're under constant pressure. You never have enough time and resources. There are only so many leaders that you can personally take under your wing and develop.

Does this sound familiar? And does this mean that you'll never have more than a few leaders in your organization? Not at all. There is a way to work around those limitations.

The key message here is: When the leaders you've trained start developing

others, your organization becomes stronger.

Your freshly minted leaders can, and should, pass on their skills to others within the organization. When this happens, you end up with many strong leaders who work alongside each other. This means that your organization can get more things done more quickly. And it also makes it more sustainable in the long run. Think of it as having a sports team with an incredible starting line-up and equally talented reserves. You can trust that whoever you place on the field will do a great job.

To help everyone in the organization develop those leadership skills, make mentorship part of the culture. Encourage each of your leaders to take on a mentee. In time, those mentees should also become mentors to others. This way, people will be constantly learning from someone and also

teaching someone else. Growth and development will become the norm.

How will you know that your leaders are doing a good job of mentoring other people?

Well, you'll certainly notice improved performance. But you'll also see those leaders growing out of their roles. If they equip others with the necessary skills, they can eventually allow mentees to take over *their* roles. This frees mentors themselves to explore other areas of growth and to advance in the organization.

When you see people stepping aside, handing over to those underneath them, you will know that you have developed great leaders. People who aren't just good at what they do but who are also committed to seeing growth in themselves, in others, and in the entire organization.

Final summary

The key message in these blinks:

Good leaders are both necessary and hard to find. But you can develop your own. Identify people with great potential and turn them into leaders. You can do this if you pay attention to what drives people, if you teach them the habit of growth, and if you give them first-hand leadership experience. The leaders you'll create will push your organization to success.

Actionable advice:

Get to know the people under your wing.

People often find it easier to trust and follow those with whom they feel a connection. This is why politicians often try to relate to potential voters. This is also why you'd rather take advice from a friend than an acquaintance. Developing

leaders is no different. When you've identified the people you'd like to mold into leaders, take the time to understand them. Be curious, ask questions, and try to see things from their point of view.

Got feedback?

We'd love to hear what you think about our content! Just drop an email to remember@blinkist.com with "The Leader's Greatest Return" as the subject line and share your thoughts!

What to read next: *Leadershift*, by John C. Maxwell

You've just learned how to guide people with potential and turn them into effective leaders who can build and sustain an organization. But leadership is a continuous journey, and so every leader must keep reflecting on themselves and their leadership style in order to keep up with a changing world. In the blinks to *Leadershift*, the author of

The Leader's Greatest Return shares how he has grown, adapted, and made positive changes to his leadership style throughout the years.

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