



Forbes / Leadership

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# Throw Your Old Plan Away: 6 New Ways To Build Leadership Development Into Your Job



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Every leader I know is extremely busy getting

their job done. At the same time, they also realize that investing effort in their own leadership development is good. The problem is that when faced with a choice, work seems to always trump personal development. Everyone runs fast and hard, and personal development is put off as executives wait and hope for a break in the schedule.

I'll argue that this is a false dichotomy. First, work and development should not be seen as competing activities. Here's the reason to combine them: Doing one can accomplish the other. You can make your daily job into a practical leadership classroom and laboratory. If you choose to do this, you can constantly improve your leadership skills while getting your job done. That, in turn, benefits your organization, your working associates, and most certainly, you.

Here are some specific ways you can bring your personal development and your job closer together:

### **1. Learn new information.**

There are bodies of information that are highly



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relevant to your job. It may be the latest trends in the industry or some new technology. It could be about competitors. Or it may be technical information that would make you more knowledgeable about your company's products.

## **2. Build new relationships.**

This might involve people external to the organization, such as suppliers, customers, those in academia or other parts of the business community. Or it could be your relationship with other department heads, or with various staff functions within your organization.

## **3. Organize colleagues who share a common interest.**

This may be a mutual interest in a new product or project. It may be a group interested in a specific subject matter such as strategic planning. It could be a group dedicated to increasing diversity within the organization. Many organizations have groups of women leaders who meet to further the role of women in the organization.



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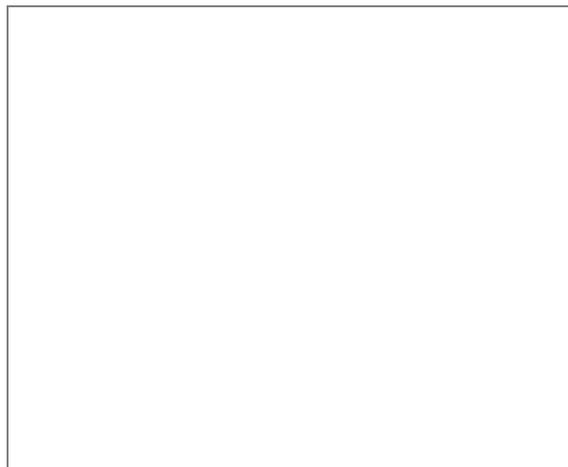
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**4. Take time to plan and review your day.** Some leaders set aside the first 15 minutes in the morning to note the tasks to be accomplished in that day. Others do that as they commute to work. Then they finish the day by reflecting on what went particularly well and where they could see ways to improve their performance. Others use the commute home to reflect on what went well and how conversations or meetings could have gone better.



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**5. Create new feedback mechanisms for yourself.**

We know there is great power and value in leaders seeking feedback from those they work with. It strengthens the organization and it makes their leadership better. It may be as simple as Ed Koch, the former mayor of New York, asking “How and I doing?” or team building sessions that allow a group to reflect on how well it

functions. New feedback mechanisms may also involve getting information from groups you typically don't get feedback from, such as staff groups or people in other divisions of your company.

**6. Restructure your job.** As a manager you have the choice of doing certain things yourself or delegating to others. You can put more emphasis on one activity and less on another. You can elect to take on a task because you want to learn and understand it better as a part of your development.

### **70/20/10**

Combining development and work makes even more sense if you believe the long accepted maxim that there is a 70/20/10 formula that applies to leadership development. (That formula suggests that 70% of what you learn about leadership comes from on-the-job experiences. Coaching from your boss and others gives you the next 20% and the final 10% comes from formal class-room development.) While those exact numbers can be debated, most would say it is directionally correct. Why, then, do organizations spend virtually no time trying to gain a higher return from the 70%, a minimal effort on the 20%, and focus most of their resources on the 10%? Willie Sutton, the bank robber, explained that he robbed banks "because that's where the money is." Willie's statement is humorous, but he makes a valuable point. Applying that primitive logic, it becomes more obvious that you receive a much greater benefit from the time, energy and effort you spend building development into your job than on the time you spend on anything else. For example, job related feedback from a 360 degree instrument is a powerful tool to help combine development with work. Like Willie, you should focus your effort directly on the largest payoff at hand.

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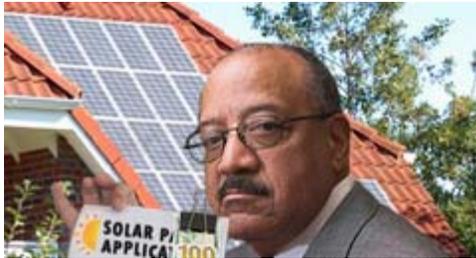


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