

# White Paper

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# Supporting Growth

Solution Focus Areas:

**Engagement / Morale**  
**Productivity**  
**Leadership / Supervision**

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**“You must elevate the growth and development of people from a ‘means’ to an ‘end’ goal of equal importance to the product or service mission of the organization. Servant leadership requires a level of intimacy with the needs and aspirations of the people being led that might be beyond the level of intimacy an ego-driven leader is willing to sustain.”**

**- Ken Blanchard**

Nothing is more important to the success of an organization than the quality or professionalism of its staff. According to the Rising Sun model, “Supporting Growth” is defined as: “Providing support for an employee’s professional, as well personal growth and development.”

All too often, organizations approach professional development from an issue based or single minded perspective rather than from a comprehensive perspective. Creating a professional staff requires more than just a hiring process, or more than just a training program, creating a professional staff requires a *holistic or systems approach*.

In order for any professional development program to be truly effective, it is essential that it be directly connected and related to the outcomes or products of the organization and that it be based on a fundamental belief system that values learning throughout the organization. More specifically, in order for a Professional Development program to be truly effective: 1) it must be directly linked to the organization’s stated objectives, and 2) the organization must create, develop, embrace, and maintain an environment rooted in life-long learning. As such, organizational training and development needs to be operationalized in a Professional Development program which is sustained, systemic, and systematic:

- A “sustained” professional development program is one which occurs over time. Professional development is not a single event, but a series of interrelated learning opportunities that supports individual growth and organizational success.
- A “systemic” professional development program is one which plays a critical role within an organizations culture. The focus of learning opportunities remains consistent and aligned with organizational goals and does not change depending on who is responsible for professional development. In other words, professional development needs to be integrated throughout all aspects of the organization and needs to remain consistent over time.
- A “systematic” professional development program is one which is developed and implemented in a methodical and intentional manner. It is directly aligned to the mission, vision, and guiding principles of the organization. Systematic professional development programs provide consistent themes across all work groups, while providing support for specific departments and individual needs.

How well integrated is your organization's current professional development program? Is it designed as a series of interrelated learning opportunities that supports individual growth and organizational success? Is it integrated throughout all aspects of the organization and consistent over time? Does it provide consistent themes across all work groups, while providing support for specific departments and individual needs?

### **Commitment to the Growth of People**

In addition to focusing on growth from an organizational perspective, servant leaders look beyond the workplace to see staff members as individuals with specific needs. By understanding what each individual needs in order to grow outside of and within the workplace community, and providing for those needs, the organization also reaps the benefits. Coaching and mentoring are valuable tools in providing what is needed to assist individual employees in both their personal and professional growth.

In coaching to improve the performance of others, effective supervisors encourage employees to both learn from and be challenged by their work. This can be accomplished by helping to create a "learning community" and by helping employees to define and achieve both individual and organizational goals and objectives. Supervision in this case is focused on the present and the future accomplishments, not solely on past mistakes. Creating and maintaining a coaching environment not only allows for, but encourages wise risk taking, as well seeing mistakes and failures as opportunities to learn and develop.

Focusing on both individual development and creating a learning community are key factors to organizational success. Employing such strategies as orientation training, use of professional development plans, strength based performance appraisal systems, tuition reimbursement for continuing education, increased involvement in committees, increased involvement in professional associations, writing for newsletters or journals, providing opportunities for advancement, etc. are all critical steps in supporting growth.

Perhaps one of the most important steps in the long term success of any organization, however, is having the courage as servant leaders to ensure the future of the organization through the effective use of a conscious system of internal succession planning. The key to successful succession planning is creating a match between the future needs of the organization and the skills and aspirations of individual employees. By investing time, attention and professional development dollars in your top employees, you reduce the likelihood that your best people will leave for "greener pastures." When you continue to challenge and reward talented employees, you eliminate their need to seek opportunities elsewhere.

### **Recommended Strategies:**

1. Strength Based Performance Appraisal Systems
2. Tuition Reimbursement for Educational Advancement
3. Utilize Staff Expertise to Train Other Staff
4. Find Opportunities to Step Outside of the Comfort Zone
5. Cross Training Meetings and Seminars, both Internal and External
6. Encourage Participation in Industry Conferences/Associations
7. Sharing Trends and New Concepts with all Levels of the Company or Team
8. Invest a Significant Amount of Time in Advising, Counseling, Coaching, and Training
9. Develop an In-House Business Training Library
10. Provide Opportunities for Advancement