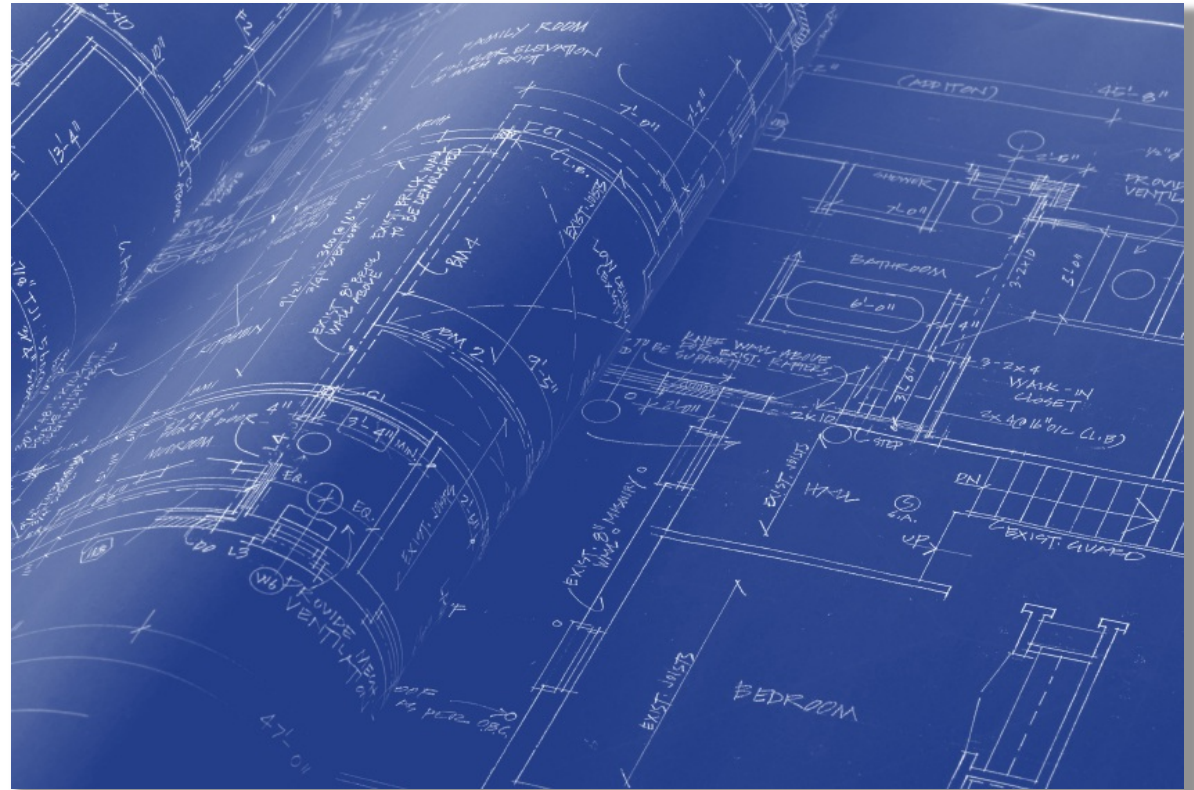


THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT BLUEPRINT



*What to do when you're tired of useless training
and you want something that actually works*

Mitchell Phoenix 2012

“We Need a Leadership Development Program”

You are sitting in your office, getting on with your job, when the CEO walks in and drops this bombshell: “We need a leadership development program for the whole business – there’s no cohesion out there, people just aren’t good at getting things done. Can you sort something out?”

Mentally you consult your to-do list: *...review the appraisal system, chair a disciplinary meeting, sit on the interview panel for the Ops Director role...* and you add this:

Sort out the leadership in the business

It’s going to be a busy day.

Even as the CEO walks away from your desk, questions are running through your mind:

- Exactly what change does she want to see in the people?
- What development is going to be required to create this change?
- How will we show ROI out of this process?

You think back over your own experiences of leadership training and begin to wonder:

- Does leadership training ever create ROI?
- If we are going to do something on leadership, how are we going to find someone who can really do it?
- What was that rumour about a leadership training program that my predecessor booked...
- ...that was so bad the CEO stormed out of it at lunchtime?
- Who can I delegate this to?



Red Pill or Blue Pill?

The crucial decision – the decision that will determine the entire success of your leadership development project – is the next decision you take.

Even as the CEO walks away from your desk, you are faced with a choice. You can take the red pill or the blue pill, you can go left or right.

One option – let's call it the Red Pill – is that you **develop the leadership capabilities of the people in your organisation**. This will take some determination at the beginning to:

- formulate the results you want from the initiative
- persuade the relevant people to take part
- find a provider that can really do what they say
- shepherd the project through its various stages

The pay-off will be huge - increased leadership skill will lead to:

- a more robust, dynamic and flexible culture
- higher levels of motivation
- more time for senior people
- more interesting things to do for junior people

- lower stress for everyone
- increased pride in the organisation
- higher productivity
- better business results

Of course, results like these will build your reputation.

You will be known as the person who helped the senior people build their skills and create a high performance culture.

You will be a rare individual - someone who ran a soft skills project that really delivered. Others will want to know how you did it!



You might be wondering why we are labouring this point – surely the thinking behind any leadership development project is to **develop the leadership capabilities of the people in your organisation?**

Strange to say it, but often this is *not* what people are trying to do...

The Blue Pill – a Waste of Time

The second option is that we will not *really* try to develop the leadership capabilities of the people, we will just run **a leadership development project**.

What's the difference?

If we develop the leadership skills in the people, we will see the results listed on the page above, and we will be able to measure them.

When people decide to just run **a leadership development project**, they describe the “results” like this:

- We ran a series of development activities, which everyone attended. These included:
 - an introductory address from our CEO
 - several workshops on leadership styles and coaching, run by a local training company
 - a talk from a famous sportsperson
 - a lecture from a professor at a business school
- At the end everyone said how interesting and enjoyable the sessions had been

You will notice these are not really results, they are the *input*. What happened as a *result* of the talk from the sportsperson, or the workshops on leadership styles, is not mentioned.



Why not? Because it is quite likely that *nothing* happened as a result of these activities!

This is what we call the Blue Pill. Why do people choose it?

Because it looks easy at the beginning.

Nobody has to be persuaded to really *do* anything apart from turn up to a series of events. The organiser is just that – an organiser. They book a set of workshops, and that's their job done.

At the end everyone can tick off the “leadership development project” item on their year-end targets, and carry on as if nothing had happened.

The Blue Pill – a Waste of Time

In fact, the blue pill this is the hardest route possible.

As it becomes apparent that nothing is going to change:

- it gets more difficult to influence senior people
- morale goes down
- cynicism about you and your project grows
- it becomes difficult to persuade people to carry on attending the workshops
- it becomes more difficult to secure budget for future training
- your reputation is damaged: you become known as another person who ran a soft skills project that was all *talk* and no *result*



The Red Pill

No prizes for guessing that there really isn't any choice between these two routes.

One of them is easier to manage and delivers a bucketful of results. The other is much more difficult to sustain, and doesn't produce any tangible benefits.

We laboured the point because so many organisations *do* take the Blue Pill.

No prizes to *us* for guessing that you will have decided to really develop the leadership capabilities of your people!

Now you have taken the major decision, there are three further things to be clear about:

1. Decide what you want the project to achieve – the **results** you are looking for
2. Find out what **structure** will be needed to go around the leadership development project – a structure that will support the achievement of the results you want

3. Decide how to engage a **leadership development provider** which really can create the results you want



What Results Should the Project Create?

The Problem of an Unclear Brief

Imagine you are asked to organise a development initiative on dealing with change. You ask around the company, and everywhere you go people say to you:

- *“the business is going through a lot of change, we need something to help us deal with this...”*
- *“yes, change is the big thing at the moment...”*
- *“my people are all complaining – have you got any good programs on how to deal with change?”*

As a responsible training manager/HR professional/executive you dutifully go off and organise a set of workshops on dealing with change...

... and right now, before a projector has been powered up or a flip chart page turned over, you are dead in the water.

The requirement is not clear. The provider does not really know what to deliver.

The chances are that every single person you spoke to had a different idea about what *“something on dealing with change”* really means. It could be:

- How to use Prince-type project management tools
- How to keep people engaged in times of uncertainty
- How to have the conversation where you make people redundant
- Personality profiling to make teams function better under stress
- How to take decisions with minimal information, etc.

“We need to run a leadership development project”

is as unclear as

“We need to do something on change”

so the first stage is to create a clearer understanding about what is actually required.

How to Define the Results You Need

Talk to Senior Management

Somebody has decided that leadership development is needed – this could be the CEO, a senior manager, you yourself, or somebody else.

They have also decided *who* needs the leadership development – this could be the whole organisation, a particular department, a group of up-and-coming managers, etc.

Whatever combination of the two factors above you are facing – whether it is the CEO prescribing leadership development for the whole organisation, or a middle manager asking for some input for her team – your first port of call should always be senior management.

Why?

1. They *are* the leaders of your business right now - they will have the clearest view of what the whole business needs from its leaders.

2. They set the leadership example for your organisation – any development you provide will have to fit with the example they are setting, otherwise it will not survive.
3. You will need their support at later stages of the project – to influence others, to champion new ideas, and to judge how successful your initiative has been – so start engaging them with the process now.

Choose the senior manager(s) you are going to approach, find an opportunity, and ask them to define what they would like to see from the people who will go through leadership development that they don't see currently.

This is often tricky to articulate, so be prepared for a long conversation, and have a number of questions ready so that you can explore the subject from a variety of angles until you have a clear picture you both understand.

Typical Senior Management Concerns

Example Questions for Senior Management

- *What are the areas where you would like to see an improvement?*
- *What is it about XYZ that could be better?*
- *What is an example of where this group could be more influential?*
- *What would convince you that you could safely delegate more to this team?*
- *What is an example of a result that you want to see from this?*

Here are typical examples of senior management concerns that are likely to come out of a conversation of this kind:

- Ownership of initiatives and/or goals is patchy
- Staff tend to delegate upwards – they bring problems not solutions
- Some people / teams are highly resistant to change
- When things go wrong, there is a blame culture
- There is little trust and cooperation between teams, departments, divisions
- Gaining commitment is like herding cats

- People are full of excuses – “Yes, but...” begins every sentence
- Nobody is ready to take on more responsibility and step up to the next level

Whatever you find out in this conversation, define it, capture a number of examples, agree what the desired outcome of your leadership initiative should look like, and commit it to paper. This is the result you are aiming for.



If possible widen the picture by talking to other senior managers, some of the prospective delegates for the programme, and any others whose input will be useful. Based on these conversations, refine the result(s) you have noted down for your programme.

Now You Know What You Want

After a number of conversations like the ones mentioned above, you should have a set of desired results in front of you.

These are the goals for your project. Keep them where you can see them, measure all performance against them. As the leader of this project, you will manage it through all the set-backs and difficulties that any project goes through – keep your focus on these goals, because it is on their achievement that you will be judged.

It is no exaggeration to say that you are now ahead of most people who are tasked with developing the leadership capability in others: because you took the time to establish exactly what you want to achieve.

Opposite are example results agreed at a group level for a leadership development programme.

1. Overall Results – Group Level

- Fast and secure ownership of initiatives and goals throughout the top management team. No blame
- Problem solving distributed down the organisation
- Decisions are faster, made at lower levels and more secure
- Contact (email, meetings, telephone calls) is swift and purposeful
- Delivery dates are met or exceeded



Now You Know What You Want

Here are example results agreed at an individual level:

2. Results – Individual Level

- Forward focus, no excuses, on time delivery
- Faster commitment to group decisions
- Delivery of projects and initiatives to visibly improve
- Personal preparedness is measurably better
- More time is made available to staff
- Performance management is in place and executed to a higher standard
- Succession plans in place and kept up to date
- Development plans are in place for all staff members, and review is diarised

These may not be the results you would create for your leadership development initiative – you will formulate your own based on your discussions with the relevant parties.

The crucial part about any results you decide upon is that they can be measured.

Sub-goals can be created for any of the results agreed opposite or on the previous page.

For example: *delivery of projects and initiatives to visibly improve*

This could be refined like this:

- I will focus on the current projects we are running to implement XYZ processes
- Currently each stage of these projects takes 4 days
- I will cut the time taken to complete each of these stages down to 3 days by the end of next month

Now you have a measurable output from your leadership development program. Create 5 or 10 of these per participant, and you can imagine the impact your initiative will have.

You Know What You Want, How Do You Go About Getting It?

Now you know what you want, the next step is to go out and get it.

This will involve two things:

- engaging a provider who can really deliver your desired results

and

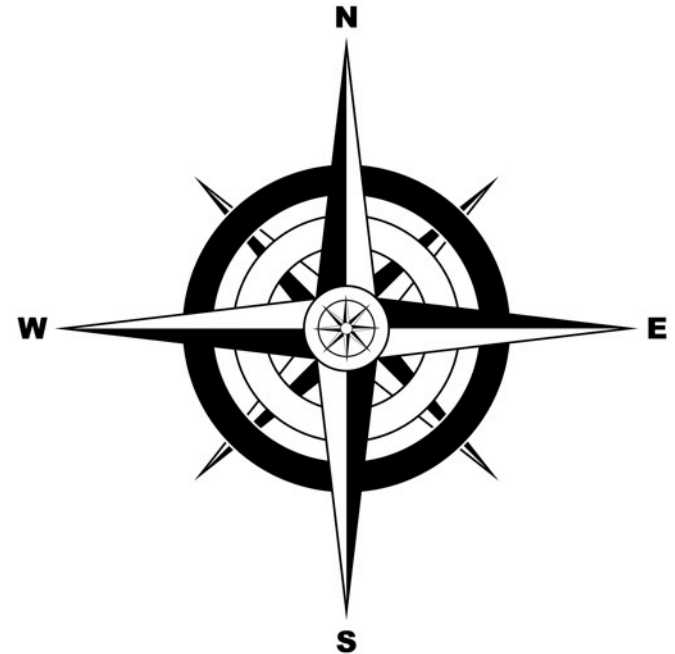
- creating a structure around your leadership development initiative that will support the creation of those results

You can find how to do both of these things in *Getting Results from a Leadership Development Initiative*

Download it at:

<http://mitchellphoenix.com/resources.htm>

Good luck!



What Next?

If you are in a situation like the HR leader at the start of this document, or you are wondering if your company's development is like the Blue Pill, or you would just like to hear more about how to put these ideas into practice, we'd like to offer you some free help.

The **Mitchell Phoenix Leadership Review** is a one-hour session providing:

- Answers to your questions about your leadership requirements
- Examples of how others have met their leadership needs
- A simple roadmap of how to progress with your project and get the results you want

To find out more, contact us at enquiries@mitchellphoenix.com or through our website: www.mitchellphoenix.com

About Mitchell Phoenix

Mitchell Phoenix has been inspiring change in some of the world's most demanding companies for over twenty years. From our offices in London and New York we work with clients from the whole spectrum of industry, from large corporates like HSBC and Microsoft through to companies in almost every sector. We are a resource to any leader who is ambitious for themselves and their organization, and who wants to see results from their investment.

The Authors

Kevin Yates – Managing Director, Mitchell Phoenix Group

Sean Lapham – European Project Director, Mitchell Phoenix