

Leadership Imparting Strategy for Senior Developer in an IT Organization

Maria Divya J, Jibreal Jos

Abstract— Present paper focuses on the Leadership strategies that need to be implemented in the IT Organizations which will help in nurturing the Senior Developers to become good leaders. The main intention of this research is to identify the leadership traits in the youth, help them impart the leadership skills and motivate them in achieving the same. Several workshops are conducted to identify the traits that need to be included in the organization so that every individual grows along with the leadership skills. Assessments, feedbacks, job assignments are made to examine the technical knowledge of the senior developers and have a career growth for achieving leadership qualities and in turn good leaders.

Index Terms—Feedback, Mentoring, Leadership, Strategy, Traits, Training.

I. INTRODUCTION

Every organization needs to groom the next level of leaders. The challenges in IT organizations are slightly different. Changing technologies and high attrition rates in a growing organization constantly creates vacuum in the leadership layers. There is a need to take care of this vacuum for senior developers of two to three years of experience.

It has been observed that most of the module leads have been given leadership roles without any formal training.

They learn these skills on the job after making serious lapses due to lack of experience. IT organizations needs to deliver quality products every time, there is no scope for an on the job trial and error mode of learning. Hence the need was felt to develop leadership strategy for senior developers in IT organizations.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

John C. Maxwell [1] has described leadership qualities in his 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, which says that a true leader cannot be awarded but should be earned by influence and also emphasizes on the factors that make a good leader. The author also says that every leader should have an inner person which can sense the depth of a person. We need to have the deep relationships with the members in the organization to become a real leader. We should be able to vision the future and work towards achieving the same. The

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author also says that the more challenges we have the more experience we gain towards letting other to lead us for the knowledge we would have gained in the past.

Gilbert Amelia [2] states that we need excellent communication skills which are absolutely essential to develop an individual as an effective leader. The leader should also be able to transfer the knowledge and ideas he has to others.

Robin Sharma [3] in his book 'the lead without a title manifesto' describes Leadership as Leadership not only about the kind of position one holds influence but also about doing an excellent work and nurturing people better than they were before to portrait as a leader without a title.

According to Stephen Covey [4] the most important attribute to become a successful leader is to by being principle centered. Centering the principles provides a foundation to guide each and every decision that needs to be acted upon. He also states that leadership is all about communicating to the people the potential they hold within themselves so that they view the same which they are unaware of. We need to help them discover themselves in finding their own voice and to make them uniquely contribute and release their potential which defines leadership.

In the book Leading Minds, co-authored by Emma Laskin, Gardner [5] describes the characteristics of being positive and energetic to become an exemplary leader.

The characteristics of such a leader include the following:

Being Energetic and resourcefulness

To be Tough to have the sense of competition

Ability to construe every defeat by treating it as an opportunity.

Being able to handle the concern with moral issues

Being Flexible enough

Hardworking

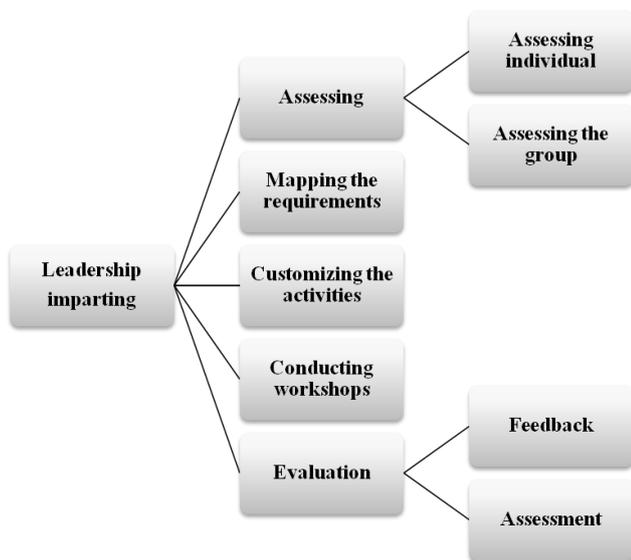
Gardner identifies six constants of leadership, key principles that emerged from his study of exemplary 20th century leaders, which states the actions of the leader should embody their message and speak loudly as their words. Gardner, as a psychologist envisions leadership as a cognitive enterprise process which happens between the minds of leaders and their followers. Kevin Kelloway [6] in his book, 'Enhancing transformational leadership: The roles of training and feedback', says that both training and feedback are effective means of improving leadership behaviors. In 'Journal of Organizational Behavior', John J. Sosik and Veronica M. Godshalk [8] states talks about the linkages between mentor and leadership behaviors. Greg L Stewart [7]

explains effects of conscientiousness and self-leadership training on employee self-direction in his book, 'The Joint effects of conscientiousness and Self Leadership training on Employee self-directed behavior in a service setting'. Kram Kathy E and Lynn A. Isabella [9] talks about mentoring relationships in 'The role of peer relationships in career development', Aarti Ramaswami [10] in her book 'Dynamics of mentoring relationships in India' talks about the nature of mentoring relationships culture in India.

Though none of these papers directly talk about specific strategies to handle workshop or training for employees with two to three years' experience, these papers were the foundation of our work in this area.

III. LEADERSHIP IMPARTING STRATEGY

In the diagram below we have presented the stages of conducting and evaluating a leadership program.



1. Assessing: we can assess the target audience in two ways:

Assessing the individual:

We can assess the individuals using the below

- SWOT analysis

Which would involve identifying the strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threat? This will help identify the

- Feedback from previous managers
- Past appraisal records
- Test which can be technical, aptitude, personality (MBTI)

Technical Expertise:

Based on our experience working in IT organizations we have observed that for any individual to grow as a leader she needs to be ideally technically competent. A senior developer is

respected by her juniors and commands more followership when she is able to solve design and technical problems.

Some key areas which we have identified are Software Engineering, in depth Conceptual understanding of Programming Framework used/proposed in the project, Coding / Debugging, Exploring new tools, Performance Tuning, and Domain Understanding

Assessing the group

Some times in certain cases we have good individual leaders in the team but as a unit they do not function very effectively. The team seems to be rudderless and without a bigger vision.

- Feedback from previous customers
 - Feedback from delivery head
 - Team activities
 - One to one interaction to assess team culture
2. Mapping the requirements to training
 3. Customizing activities for training session
 4. Imparting/conducting workshops which will include the below:
 - Formal Degree
 - Training/workshop
 - Mentoring
 - Job assignment
 - Action learning
 5. Evaluation for the success of the imparting, which includes:
 - Feedback which can be mentoring feedback and training feedback
 - Assessment at the end of the session

Traits:

Based on the interview conducted with a person who belongs to a particular organization, we understand that below are the areas that need to be focused among young learners to ensure the leadership skills are developed.

- Self-belief
- Communication skill which can be written communication and oral communication
- Emotional intelligence
- Thinking
- Team building
- Mutual respect
- Getting to know each other
- Technical trainings which can be of Coding, designing, DB, configuration
- Performance tuning

We need to facilitate certain sessions which can inculcate the above areas.

1. Session on leadership traits
2. Session on leadership
3. Session on estimating and scheduling
4. Session on project management

Session on leadership traits

There is several leadership traits, to list out a few are as follows:

- Attitude
- Honesty
- Inspiration
- Confidence
- Positivity
- Delegation
- Creativity
- Sense of humor
- Intuition
- Being open
- Interested in feedback
- Being assertive
- Take Ownership
- Manage Team/Internal Stakeholders
- Manage Customer
- Communication
- Hard Working
- Punctuality
- Ability to Delegate work
- Organizing Skills
- Technically Strong
- Good Design Skills
- Ability to take decisions
- Negotiation skills

Session on leadership

This session will include the training on the concept of the leadership, leadership styles and theories that were introduced or followed by the experts/real leaders. It also emphasizes on the characteristics that a person should hold in order to become a good leader.

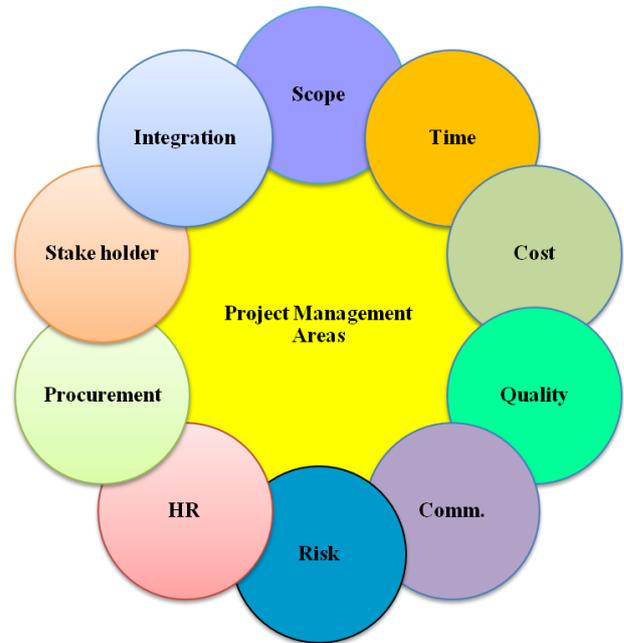
Session on estimating and scheduling

This is a part of project management activity.

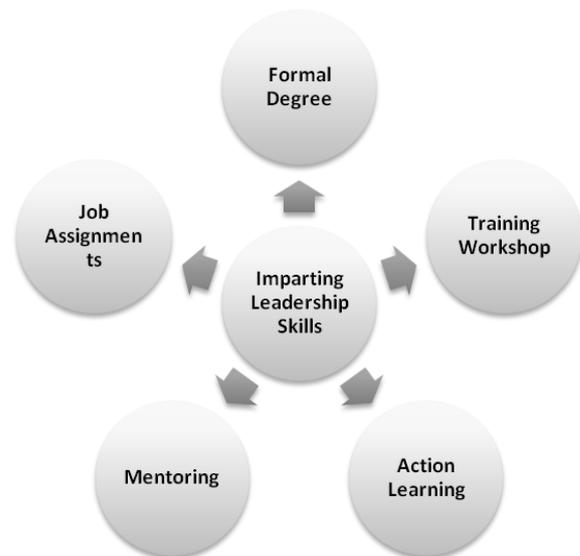
Session on project management

IV. LEADERSHIP SKILL IMPARTING STRATEGIES

The leadership skill needs to be imparted in the young people transform them into great leaders in the future.



Different approaches can be followed in organizations, in developing great leaders. Here are some approaches that can be used in imparting the leadership skill among youngsters.



Formal Degree:

Formal degree helps to gain self-confidence.

Training/workshop:

Many Leadership trainings are conducted in the organizations self-motivate and develop skills among the employees. These trainings/workshops are conducted by the management either with internal trainer or external vendor trainings. There are also programs which include certain group activities, speeches and certain number of fixed sessions which needs to be attended by the employees and upon completion of all the designed sessions/activities they are graduated. In this way the employees get recognition internally within an organization as well as become good leaders.

Mentoring:

Mentoring is usually done by the Managers for the employees. Mentoring may be a formal or informal interaction between the mentors and mentees. There are usually scores given by the mentors based on the mentee's performance at work, handling situations using leadership skills. The mentors will guide the mentees in managerial skills, improving responsibility and taking ownership etc.

Job assignment:

Based on the leadership skills the employees possess, several job assignments will be given by the management. These jobs assigned in turn will calculate the increase in leadership skill development, like responsibility, handling escalations by self, taking ownership etc.

Action learning:

Action learning involves working on real problems, focusing on learning and implementing solutions which will be a form of learning by doing. It also helps in tackling strategic problems at a broader level.

V. RESULTS

Different workshops were conducted depending on technical expertise for e.g. in the data warehousing practice we conducted leadership workshop for **ETL** module leads and **Reporting** module leads separately as a different track. The session was conducted by project manager, and along with the technical lead of 5-8 years. The session on technical leadership and leadership traits were conducted by the technical lead so that there is better buy in for all module leads, please note it is important to select a PM and technical lead who are respected by the technical community and are well connected with the management.

In certain cases the participants were selected by the assessments and sometimes the workshop is offered as an open batch on a first come first serve basis. These open workshops were normally conducted over the weekend.

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on our workshops which were conducted in the last four years we have noticed is an advantage of proposing the leadership strategies which includes conducting workshop, assessments, evaluation based on the assessments, mentoring, feedback sessions. These activities have made a significance change as per the feedback we received at the end of the next appraisal cycle.

We have realized that action learning and mentoring were the two strategies which stood out for imparting leadership skills over a period of time. Some suggestions for the organizations to include would be to have a clear cut career growth map for every potential leader and have a framework for continuous improvement.

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