

Kick-Start Your Leadership Development Plan

“Is there a potential gender challenge in entrepreneurship? The image of the successful entrepreneur is masculine, and so the qualities attached to entrepreneurship are risk taking, achievement oriented, independent, decisive, etc. These may not be associated with qualities perceived as ‘feminine.’ Women entrepreneurs need to be aware of the stereotypes, but not let these stop you from moving forward.”

Candida Brush, Babson College

As a small business owner and the leader of your organization, it’s safe to assume that you’re pulled in a million different directions on any given day. In addressing what often seems like an unending stream of urgent matters, some important items may get pushed to the side—for example, enhancing your leadership capabilities.

Feeling busy and overloaded is natural. However, how did your business get started? How does it keep going? Who is the glue keeping it all together? You—you are your business’s most important asset. Take this time to invest in your own leadership development.

This tool will help you prepare your leadership development plan step by step.

- In Part 1, you’ll review the overall structure and components of your leadership plan along with guidelines, resources and tips to help you create your plan.
- With an understanding of what goes into a leadership plan, in Part 2, you’ll begin creating your plan.

1. MY LEADERSHIP VISION

Reflect on these guiding questions as you think about your vision for your business and yourself as a leader:

- What do I hope to create?
- What is my dream for my business?
- What would I want to be remembered for?
- What is the difference I want to make? A difference in the work and lives of my team and customers? A difference in the community?
- What is my purpose?
- What motivates me?
- What additional things do I want to accomplish in life and business? What skills and resources would I need to accomplish these things?

2. MY LEADERSHIP APPROACH

To figure out where you should be heading, you first need to know where you are. So, what kind of leader are you today? What are your top strengths? What might others in your organization share about you if asked? If you haven't already, check out the **What Kind of Leader Are You?** path to help identify the answers.

3. CURRENT CHALLENGES

When you consider your personal leadership vision, what challenges come to mind? Are there specific things that are holding you back?

These questions will get you thinking about some of your current challenges:

- **Time:** Is there not enough time to accomplish everything you want to do?
- **Money:** Are there financial concerns?
- **Skills:** Are there specific skills and competencies you'd like to develop—for example, negotiating effectively, financial understanding, communication, or decision-making?
 - Check out the **Assessing Your Business Skills** path for more on skills needed for growth.
- **People:** Do you have the help you need? Are you hiring and retaining the right people?
 - Check out the **Your People** journey for lots of handy information on attracting and retaining top talent.
- **Stress:** Has your stress level moved beyond productive to counterproductive?
- **Work/Life:** Are there conflicts between your personal and professional life?

4. TARGETED SOLUTIONS

Develop targeted solutions to each challenge you've identified.

To get started, consider these items:

- Match your skills and traits as a leader (Parts 1 and 2) with challenges (Part 3) as a first pass at solutions.
- Where there is a gap, is there a specific mentor who can counsel you on a challenge area?
- Consider what you may be doing (or not doing) and saying (or not saying) that could be enabling those challenges.
- Is there a fast (not necessarily easy) remedy to that?
- Can you reframe your challenges as opportunities for improvement and growth?
- How can you use these opportunities to become proficient at core skills that you may be lacking today?

5. GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

"I always did something I was a little not ready to do. I think that's how you grow. When there's that moment of 'Wow, I'm not really sure I can do this,' and you push through those moments, that's when you have a breakthrough."

Marissa Mayer, Former CEO of Yahoo!

Using Parts 1 through 4 above as inspiration, create three or more personal leadership goals in Part 2, below.

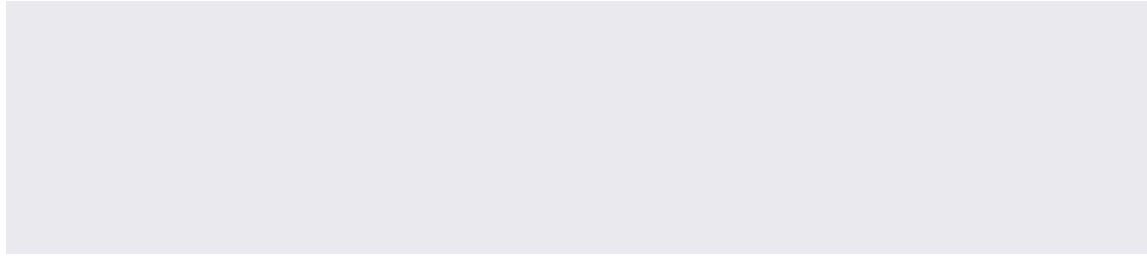
Tip: Consider using a framework for writing your goals that are specific, achievable, have "due dates," and have a check-in or accountability plan. For more on this, search for "goal-setting frameworks" or "SMART goals."

Part 2: My Leadership Dashboard

1. MY LEADERSHIP VISION

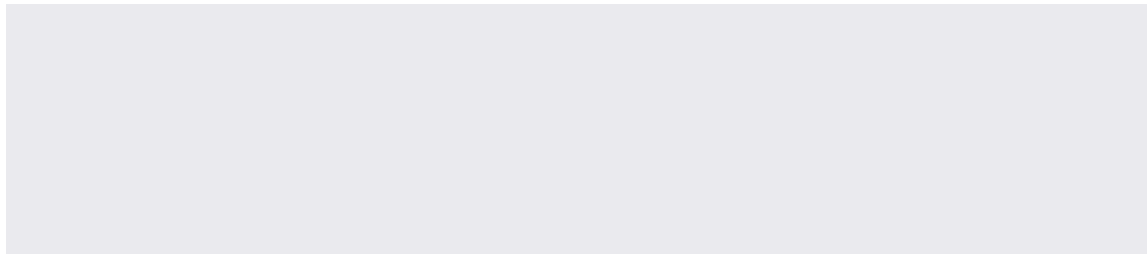
In the space below, write a vision statement describing your vision for yourself as a leader. The statement can include: *what type of leader you want to be, with what traits, and what you want to accomplish.*

Tip: If this is challenging, move ahead to the next steps and then come back to this step.



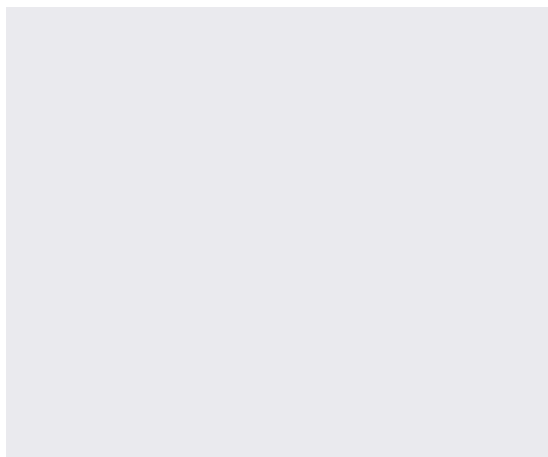
2. MY LEADERSHIP APPROACH

Write a brief description of your current leadership style. Consider what other people have said to you over time.



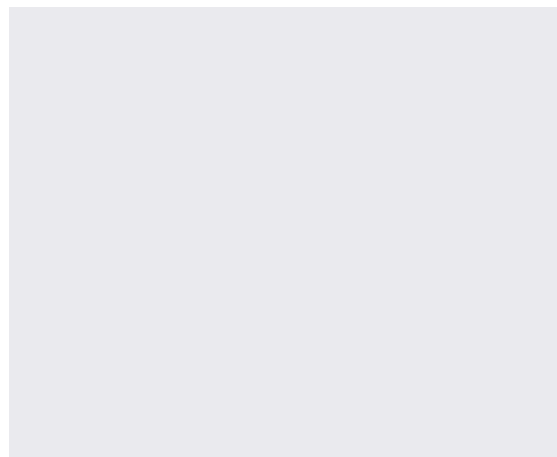
3. CURRENT CHALLENGES

List the top challenges you are facing.



4. TARGETED SOLUTIONS

Write the target solutions for each challenge.



5. GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

In the table below, write what you want to accomplish (goals), a description, and a due date. Don't let the due date deter you from completing the exercise; view it as a placeholder.

GOAL	OVERVIEW	DUE DATE AND ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN
<p>What specific actions should I take? What resources may help support my goal? What transformations am I expecting to see as a result of meeting my goal, and how will that be measured?</p>		
<p><i>Example: Improve team-building skills</i></p>	<p><i>Set up coffee with Dara, an HR consultant, about top tips and a possible session with a group of business owners. I expect to create a better team dynamic. Measurement: staff surveys</i></p>	<p><i>Review goals monthly with my business owners group.</i></p>

Conclusion:

View this plan as a living document. Review it quarterly, or according to your accountability plan, to see what elements still remain relevant, what you should change and what you need to add. By soliciting feedback, you may learn that others are seeing and experiencing the results of your focus and progress.