

Wildly Successful Leadership Programs – for Associations

How would you like to share with your board that you have an additional revenue stream for your association? How would the board react if that revenue stream was also providing measurable leadership development to the sector you serve? What if this service provided an avenue to build membership numbers?

Wildly successful leadership programs achieve multiple goals for associations that use them wisely. Running them successfully requires your existing project management and marketing know-how. It also requires a focus on these three key areas:

- Innovative delivery
- Full buy-in of every participant, and
- Demonstration of program impacts to your important stakeholders.

Barry Murphy learning and Development Manager, Autism Spectrum Australia says: 'in a fast growing organisation like ours many leaders have experienced the 'secret promotion'. Their role and responsibilities have grown threefold without a job-title change or promotion. Our 4 month leadership program is resourcing our people to meet these challenges. We are ensuring our growth is sustainable so we can continue to meet the growing needs in our communities.'

Let's look first at innovation in delivery. Off-sites have also become popular over the past two decades. One European bank went so far as to ship all executives to a castle in Scotland and stage a capture of the CEO. The executives had to work out how to free their boss who was taken 'hostage'. Considering he was 'in' on the plan - let's hope they were motivated to free him! The sort of innovation that associations are seeking is cost effective delivery that achieves positive and sustained behavioural change. This usually does not include a budget for castle hire in Scotland. To give your leaders the best chance of sustained behavioural change try a mix of delivery methods including; face-to-face training, work place projects, one-on-one coaching, tele-classes and webinars. The accessibility provided to regional attendees through coaching, tele-classes and webinars can mean a group experience that spans 4 to 9 months with only two lots of fly-in fly-out expenses. That's maximum positive change for minimum expense.

Andrew McCallum CEO, ACWA says: 'For our members, we are focussed on retention of high calibre people for the sector and capacity building for the future. A combination of facilitation and coaching supports our 9 month leadership program to bring home astounding results for attendees and their organisations.'

So how do you gain full buy-in of every participant? Participants need to earn their place on the program. Being told to attend by the CEO is about as motivating as being told to eat your vegetables, when you were 5 years old. There are always criteria for attendance over and above paying a fee. Give yourself the time to get clear on these criteria. For internal programs it may be:

commitment to the time required for attendance and reading time, or

a recommendation from their general manager.

One of my clients assesses attendees on seniority and their ability to demonstrate their commitment to the sector. They don't want to be skilling people up who then take their new skills to an imagined greener pasture. The process should be brief, uncomplicated and leave applicants knowing why they really want this opportunity. Now you have a group who are ready to gain the most from your offering and report their experience as wildly successful.

Finally, think ahead about the legacy your program will leave. How do you know you are really capacity building in your organisation/sector? There are plenty of world class models and frameworks that can support pre and post measures of various leadership dimensions. Make sure your team are present to this legacy up front and throughout. Your board, program alumni and your growing membership base will start to understand why your programs are wildly successful.

Good luck!