



PREPARING THE NEXT LEADER:

Professional Development for Pools

Chad Roedder | Senior Principal Consultant, Leadership Advisory
Human Resources & Compensation Consulting





Introduction

Professional development is an important component of a successful workforce. Beyond keeping up with technical skills, professional development can support and promote leadership, and be a key component in your pool's succession plan. Developing existing employees requires avoiding promotion pitfalls as well as creating a plan to develop leadership skills.

Busting the Myth: The Best Performer Makes the Best Leader

A common professional development myth is that the best performer makes the best leader.

As an example, perhaps your pool has a great claims adjuster on your claims team—or member services rep on a team of member services reps, or actuary on a team of actuaries. The mythical thinking is that if you're the best at your technical job, you will also be the best leader of that team. So, when a claims manager role becomes available, the best claims adjuster moves into the role, whether or not they are the best leadership fit.

This can create problems in a number of ways. First, the new role likely requires new skills in which the best claims adjuster may not be strong. Second, the best claims adjuster may not enjoy—and

may even avoid—some of the responsibilities of the new position (e.g., coaching, motivating, inspiring and delegating work to others). Third, the claims adjuster may accept the leadership role simply because it appears to be the only means of career progression, and not because he or she is truly driven to move into leadership. All of these factors may negatively impact the performance and development of the rest of the team.

Your pool can avoid these problems if you utilize a development model that recognizes the distinction between general leadership and technical expertise.



Overcome the Myth: The 70-20-10 Model of Development

The 70-20-10 model advocates that 70% of an employee's development time and resources be devoted to experiential growth (i.e., on-the-job experiences), 20% of time and resources be allocated to social engagement (i.e., mentoring), and 10% of time and resources be dedicated to formal activities (i.e., classroom).

This model makes a distinction between general leadership and technical expertise. The nature of the developmental activities between general leadership and technical expertise will vary depending on the skills you want to develop.

The following examples apply the model to the development of leadership skills and technical expertise in order to illustrate its practical application.

DEVELOPING GENERAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS

To develop general leadership skills, employees need to engage in a role with significant strategic demands. Such a role might require the participant to rethink and realign against changing member needs, new competitors or new technology. A specific example of a 70-20-10 framework for developing general leadership might include the following:

- taking on a six-month role with significant operational demands, such as managing the reorganization of an important business process (70%);

- receiving mentoring in effective leadership transitions, e.g., moving from a team member role to a team leader role (20%); and
- participating in a webinar on personal resilience (10%).

The primary skills developed through this type of experience may include strategic thinking, business transformation, and analysis of competitors or new technology.

DEVELOPING TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

To develop technical expertise, ask an employee to serve as the head of a specialized team focused on one or more technical issues, such as development of a new line of coverage. Sample activities within the 70-20-10 framework might include:

- evaluating possible coverage terms, limits, costs and market options (70%);
- getting coached on how to present recommendations to executives (20%); and
- engaging in formal classroom instruction on applicable industry regulations (10%).

The primary skills honed through this experience would include setting technical direction, influencing other specialists, and applying expertise.

Implement 70-20-10 Best Practices

When adopting the 70-20-10 approach, it's important to follow a handful of best practices:

- 1. Make the experience meaningful.** Simply adding more responsibilities to someone's existing role is unlikely to drive any real development.
- 2. Provide context.** Participants need to fully understand what they are being asked to do, why they are being asked to do it, and how their performance will be evaluated.
- 3. Create a moderate degree of risk.** If the assignment is too easy, it will not drive development. If the assignment is too difficult, the participant is unlikely to succeed, and development will be minimal.
- 4. Provide a support system.** This could include a mentor with insights and expertise relevant to the development assignment, or necessary time and money allocations.
- 5. Explicitly link experiences to expected skills development.** An employee being given an experience with significant strategic demands, for example, needs to understand that this is intended to develop skills in strategic thinking, business transformation and analysis of competitors/technology.

In the business world, professional development is often utilized as a draw to employment as well as a way to keep good employees over the long term. In the pooling community, we can learn from that approach even if we are applying it to a smaller scale. Implementing a 70-20-10 development strategy at your organization, and being mindful of the differences between general leadership skills and technical expertise, can help prepare key performers for the next step in their careers.



About the Author

Chad Roedder works in the Leadership Advisors practice within Gallagher. He has helped numerous clients with succession planning and related issues (e.g., high potential identification and development, leadership assessments). Prior to Gallagher, Chad held internal consulting roles at Verizon and the Tennessee Valley Authority. He also held external consulting roles with firms specializing in assessment and talent management. In his most recent role at the Tennessee Valley Authority, he was responsible for organization-wide leadership and organizational development programs that received external recognition from multiple national organizations including Chief Learning Officer and the Association for Talent Development. Chad's work has been featured in several publications, conferences and webinars.

Chad has a B.S. degree in Psychology from Birmingham-Southern College. He also holds an MBA degree from the University of Tennessee with an emphasis in Finance and a Ph.D. degree from the University of Tennessee in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Chad has certifications in Hogan and DiSC assessment products, as well as Center for Creative Leadership 360 feedback products and Better Conversations Every Day™. Additionally, he is a certified facilitator by Development Dimensions International and is certified in Situational Leadership and as a Lominger Competency Architect.



Let's Connect

RPAAdmin.com

info@RPAAdmin.com

