OpenSesame®

Level Up:

The Quick-Start Guide
for Building a Leadership
Development Program

One of OpenSesame's newest learning categories is also one of our most in-demand. Leadership & Management training has quickly become a crucial part of organizations' professional development and retention strategies, to the point that employees have come to expect it from a potential employer. It's as core to their work experience as safety and compliance training.

We know that building a new program from the ground up is daunting, so we've created this guide to help you design and implement a comprehensive Leadership Development program–with course lists and supplemental tactics based on core competencies of effective leadership.

This guide will help you understand how to build Development Journeys based on Key Skills and Principles (AKA core competencies) and even how to think about development for different levels of leaders. We've included some tactics our customers have found successful in their programs, even providing some best practices for engaging learners *outside* the LMS.

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Identifying competencies and designing your framework

The guidelines and resources provided in this summary are developed in accordance with current research in leadership development skill-building as well as 10+ years of direct consultation with a diverse set of customer organizations.

OpenSesame has identified 50 key skills and principles attributed to a leadership skillset - like managing conflict and sparking creativity - and sorted them into **three distinct development journeys: Know Your Business, Nurture Your People and Lead Yourself.** Our curation team then selected courses from the OpenSesame Plus catalog that cover each of the skills and created distinct learning paths that are ready to be adopted as a turn-key training program.

1. Know Your Business: Strategic Mindset, Planning and Execution

Covering topics like business acumen, strategic alignment and succession planning; skills most associated with the operational and strategic elements of business management.

2. Nurture Your People: Performance Management and Talent Development

People managers are the backbone of any organization. Courses in this path cover topics like delegation, coaching and handling difficult conversations with empathy.

3. Lead Yourself: Personal Development and Leadership Excellence

Skills associated with your own leadership journey for personal growth. Examples include self-awareness, resilience and growth mindset.

Your organization may also have a pre-existing framework or core competencies that will need the right training coverage, those can also likely be found in the OpenSesame catalog. You can then leverage these development journeys in their entirety as a standalone learning program or select and customize a subset which best supplements your training needs or strategic goals. Your framework should ultimately be informed by your mission, vision, values, and strategic organizational initiatives.

For organizations that want a higher degree of specificity, consider addressing different leadership levels in your training program with a customized learning path for each group. In the 50 Key Leadership Skills and Principles worksheet, the topics have been annotated to suggest relevance for new (Emerging Leaders), mid-level (Team Managers), and senior leadership (Directors and Executives) experience levels. These levels can help drive efficiency in training, but as always, consider what's right for your program and remember that some skills and principles are universally good to have. "Leading without Ego" could be a skill/principle you want to deliver across all levels, not just senior positions.

To make it easier, we included links to the level-specific lists for each of the Development Journeys below. Looking for further support as you navigate the objectives or rollout of your leadership development program? Connect with your OpenSesame Customer Success Manager, we're here to help!

Explore OpenSesame's 50 Key Leadership Skills and Principles to see each Development Journey in detail.

Know Your Business: Strategic Mindset, Planning and Execution

Covering topics like business acumen, strategic alignment and succession planning; skills most associated with the operational and strategic elements of business management.

Emerging Leaders
Team Managers
Directors and Executives

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Emerging Leaders
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Structuring your Leadership Development Program

Where do we begin?

The most common miscalculation that occurs when structuring a leadership development program is building learning journeys based on general assumptions vs. the needs of specific individuals in your organization. The well-established foundational elements of leadership development programs are great starting points, however, in order to truly create impactful (and unique) learning experiences it's imperative to fully understand your learners. This may mean discovering commonalities in their needs, abilities, interests, trends in their careers, past experiences that shape their views, and what they hope to accomplish by developing their skills.

This may not be a realistic view for organizations with thousands of learners, but understanding how learning is viewed within the company culture will define a program's most effective strategy. There is no one-size-fits-all solution, and a combination of different learning tactics may be necessary to achieve your goals.

A strong elearning program is a powerful tool for developing leadership internally. Ideally, learners are able to access content at any time from any location, with the ability to review key concepts as often as needed to support their ongoing growth. When combined with 'learning by doing', elearning can be a powerhouse for knowledge transfer and long-term retention.

Remember: individual learners have preferred ways of learning based on their specific preferences and needs. When structuring an initial leadership program, it might be best to incorporate a few different modalities with the understanding that there will be some trial-and-error to find the ones that resonate with your learners and their particular experience.

Does launching the program seem daunting? Check out our timeline example in Getting Started: Leadership Development Program for tips on rolling it out.

80% Completion Rate with TED

It's likely your workforce is already familiar with the TED brand. Their programming of heavy-hitter thought leadership and innovation presentations can help boost engagement for any learning program. OpenSesame has helped TED turn more than 700 presentations into actionable, accessible learning experiences in multiple languages covering Leadership and other workplace-related topics. What's more, the TED courses being used by our customers have an average completion rate of 80%!

Check out:
How to manage for collective creativity, featuring Linda Hill

Beyond the LMS: Elevate Your Program

Embedding complementary learning activities in your program will satisfy a diversity of learning styles, while allowing for flexibility to optimize learning paths. Consider designing 3-5 of these elements into your program using the tips and resources below!

Peer-Led Book Club

Building a culture of learning is more than automating a stream of email reminders. Establishing a book club program can introduce employees to new skills, keep the organization up-to-date on industry trends, and build collaborative connections across teams. It's an easy case to make that more informed decisions and a better understanding of different perspectives can result in more successful outcomes. When integrating a book club into your program, it's crucial to foster participation, rather than force it.

1. Create energy - A designated book club lead should be enthusiastic about the initiative. An obligated, or 'volun-told' host can actually hinder the experience for participants and result in less engagement. The lead should share why they are personally excited to embark on this journey with participants and the benefits they anticipate. Consider sending a welcome communication outlining basic details, but avoid setting too many specific expectations as this may create a barrier to their genuine interest.

Have FUN! Actually enjoying the book club meetings will drive participation and the group is more likely to come back for future meetings. Try creating meeting themes, giving prizes, initiating a group challenge, or brainstorming a fun name for your group–the more informal, the better.

2. Timing - A consistent time or cadence for the book club will help ensure that everyone is able to attend the meetings and that the group stays active. Use your best judgment on how long or short you think is appropriate for the particular audience you are hosting. Be sure to send a calendar invite as well as an enthusiastic reminder a few days before your meeting with a loose agenda for that particular meeting. Consider some other questions in advance to help set participants' expectations: How long will the book club run? Do the meetings run all year, or is it semi-annual? Is it exclusive to participants in the leadership program or can alumni attend? Is it concurrent with your program or a closeout activity?

3. Relevance - Making sure that the books the group reads are interesting and engaging will obviously help people want to participate and engage in the discussion, but remember to choose books that are applicable to the skills and principles outlined in your leadership development program. Also consider: are there any unique or specific activities happening in your company? Are there any books that will help the group better cope and understand the things happening around them in the organization? Are there opportunities to bridge gaps with other initiatives like DEI or Wellness?

4. Structure - Establishing clear expectations for how the group will function and how discussions will take place will ensure that everyone is aligned and the group will stay focused on the topic. This shouldn't hinder open discussion, everyone should be able to share their thoughts and ask questions to foster open dialogue and different perspectives. However, be prepared to start and help facilitate the conversation, as some attendees

may have some reservation or differing comfort levels for participation. Having thought provoking questions ready to go will help get the momentum started, and allowing space for everyone to answer will help support more timid participants. Also, ensuring your meeting has a defined beginning, middle and end will help participants know what to expect each time and properly prepare themselves.

5. Consistency - This is important to the credibility of your program; few things will kill enthusiasm more than canceled meetings or lack of agenda. Be consistent in your book club. If someone joins your club at any point, they should be able to jump right in with ease as every meeting has a predictable flow. It can also be a barrier if participants have to buy their own books, so ideally the company should provide the books for participants. However, if that is not an option, consider incorporating library visits or get creative by using employee development funds or partnerships you may have inside or outside of the organization.

Not sure what books to consider? Check out our list of recommended books for each of the Leadership Development Journeys.

Executive -Led Sessions and Mentoring

Developing new and existing leaders and creating an environment of growth, collaboration, and success are two sides of the same coin: it's difficult to maintain one without the other. Fostering a sense of belonging and purpose within the organization not only increases morale and productivity, it provides a safe environment for emerging leaders to grow quicker and get guidance from mentors who understand the context of their journey.

With this core value in mind, an executive leadership team must be willing to set aside time to help build their next generation of leaders. As a learning professional in your organization, you are in a position to help facilitate knowledge-sharing and provide guidelines for executives to coach leadership program participants through formal or informal mentorship. This equips emerging leaders with additional experience of team leaders, directors and executives while providing an added benefit of networking opportunities.

Mentorship can take many forms, but codifying it as a part of a broader leadership development program can provide a framework for accountability and scalability as the program grows. To that end, we've provided a worksheet to help mentors guide discussion with their mentees through a series of five meetings, with goals of: Connecting, Equipping, Empowering, Accountability, and Intentionality.

In the example below, a mentor can gather their thoughts and provide a more structured approach to helping an emerging leader learn and apply the skills and principles they'll gain in the rest of the program.

See the full template and session prompts here: Executive leadership-led sessions

SESSION 1:

Connecting

As an executive leader you know the power of human connection. In this session you will have a guided discussion on the topic of **connecting** and how as leaders it is imperative to make space in your agenda to connect with those around you to build relationships.

Begin by connecting with one another

Use this space to take notes

Use tools like a Wheel of Life diagram to gain a greater understanding of how your mentee perceives their life and determine areas for improvement and action items.

Be vulnerable

Consider using this space to jot down how you did on the wheel of life. You may also consider using this section to write down any stories or examples that will help create a psychologically safe space for you to share about how the power of connection has influenced your leadership.

Connect with others

Use this space to consider how we can connect with others outside of this space. It likely will not be practical to have this guided activity with others but how can we create safe space to make meaningful connections?

No matter how big or small create actionable items about how your mentee can create connection with those the lead or those around them.

360-Degree Feedback

Peer-to-peer feedback is a critical tool we leverage to build high performance, openly-communicative teams. The challenge often faced by leadership is how to systematically encourage the exchange of feedback and embed this in your culture across teams and roles.

The 360-degree feedback system has become increasingly utilized in recent years, in organizations of all sizes. By implementing a formalized review process where feedback can be given throughout the year, we see in impact in:

- team and personal motivation
- ability to build upon strengths
- better understanding of personal growth areas
- career development milestones

We recommend the following online learning path, accessible to you on opensesame.com, to gain a foundational understanding of the benefits and application of 360-degree feedback! This learning path will also walk you through the design and launch of the questionnaire.

Expand your own knowledge with 360-Degree Feedback Series Course List

A more immediate feedback system will enable your leaders to self-assess to identify blind spots, as well as participate in the growth of their peers. We also see great benefit to employees when they are asked to provide feedback to their managers; providing a greater sense of engagement and understanding that a leader is putting in the time and effort to grow interpersonally and be more effective in their role.

A quick internet search can yield numerous templates to adapt for the survey component of this process, or a software-driven, online tool that reduces administrative effort through a company like Eager Labs. Enlisting a 3rd party will allow you to focus on the review of collected feedback and helping your leaders turn these insights into personal development actions.

360 feedback allows for more immediate feedback, but it shouldn't be rushed. Here's a sample timeline of an ideal round of peer-oriented feedback and how to incorporate it into a Leadership Program:

Week 1: Leadership program participants request feedback through your chosen tool/template. The individuals giving feedback should be varied but have some level of direct collaboration experience with the requester.

Week 2: Leadership program participants review anonymized results and report back to their cohort on common themes for "did well" and "areas for improvement."

Week 3: Leadership program participants define 2-3 skill development opportunities to prioritize throughout the remainder of the program.

Program completion: Leadership program participants present on goal achievement for their prioritized skill development opportunities.

Yearly Training Calendar

MONTH	THEME	OPENSESAME COURSE NAME	PUBLISHER
January	Purpose	Pillars of Leadership: Purpose	Mindscaling
	Passion	Grit: The power of passion and perseverance	TED
	Mindset	Ambitious Mindset	Assemble You
	Purpose	Helping Your Employees Find Purpose	HSI –ej4
February	Innovation	Commit to Innovation	FutureThink
	Creativity	Why Innovate? When the Rules Change, Creativity is King	Dr. Roger Firestien
	Collaboration	Understanding Collaboration	Management Pocketbooks
March	Leadership	Courageous Leadership	On This Topic
		Embracing Accountability in Leadership	Amplify Voices
		Idenfitying your Leadership Style	Trupp
April	Emloyee Development	Delegate Save Time and Develop Your Employees	SAP Litmos
	Career Planning	Career Resilience	7 Dimensions
May			
June			

Leadership Toolkit

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Week 3 .... Mindset
Week 4 .... Purpose

February
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Week 2 .... Creativity
Week 3 .... Collaboration

March
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Week 2 .... Leadership
Week 3 .... Leadership

April
Week 1 .... Employee Development
Week 2 .... Career Planning
Week 3 .... Networking

May
Week 1 .... Productivity
Week 2 .... Time Management
Week 3 .... Organize

June
Week 1 .... Engagement
Week 2 .... Teamwork
Week 3 .... Conflict

July
Week 1 .... Data
Week 2 .... Research
Week 3 .... Analysis

August
Week 1 .... Finance
Week 2 .... Budget
Week 3 .... Presentation Skills

September
Week 1 .... Planning
Week 2 .... Forecasting
Week 3 .... Resources

October
Week 1 .... Performance
Week 2 .... Feedback
Week 3 .... Coaching

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Training calendar and templates

Unsurprisingly, the biggest challenge we see L&D teams face is driving learner engagement. However, in a program like Leadership Development, the learners see a direct benefit and correlation between the training and its application, so the challenge becomes more about keeping up with their enthusiasm. To that end, we provide our customers with curated Training Calendars for a given topic, like Wellness, Workplace Culture, Safety and yes–Leadership and Management.

Consider using these calendars, which contain monthly or weekly training themes including:

- weekly themes (or choose one per month)
- a featured "Course of the week" for that theme
- supplemental worksheet with reflection/activity prompts

For those organizations that haven't secured full buy-in for a standalone Leadership Development program, these course lists can be a great way to generate and track internal demand for the training, allowing L&D teams to better make the case for the program's benefit.

Outside consultants

Whether your L&D headcount is one or fifty one, it's worth evaluating your organizations capacity to develop a program in-house or seek outside consultancy support. Check out these trusted partners our customers love, or connect with your customer success manager for additional recommendations based on your program's needs.

Comprehensive/multi-modality approach:
- Eager Labs: Live, online leadership development program including participant cohorts and 1:1 coaching

Focus on coaching:
- BetterUp: Match your leadership program participants with experienced coaches online for a 1:1 coaching experience.
- CoachHub: Personalized, measurable and scalable digital coaching programs to fit your business goals
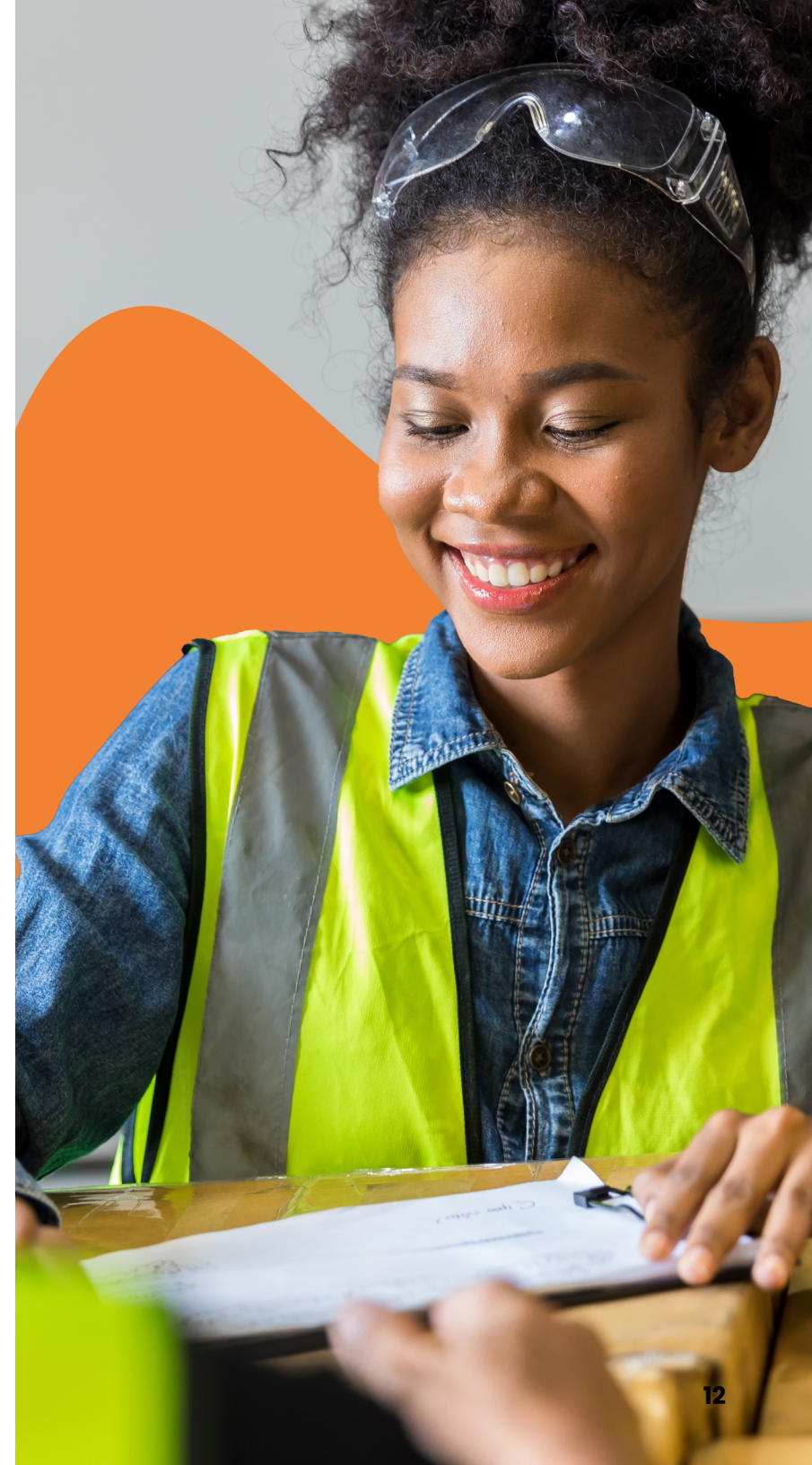
Supplemental leadership learning paths through OpenSesame

If you need some more courses and learning paths for a Leadership Program, we've compiled a list of our most popular course lists below. These lists can be delivered directly to your LMS or broken up to build a custom learning path. Remember, Development Journeys should reflect the goals of your organization.

- A Leader's Guide to Foster Employee Happiness

- Giving and Receiving Feedback as a Manager

- Achieving High Performance for Teams and Future Leaders

- Human Resources (HR) Compliance (US)

- Coaching and Mentorship at all Levels

- Make a Successful Transition to Management

- Mastering Organizational Agility

- Become a Change Management Practitioner

- Increase Organizational Success by Optimizing your Multi-Generational Workforce

- Become a Strategy Manager

- Indeed's Top Skills of Team Leaders

- Essential Skills for Early-career Managers

- Essential Skills for Entry-level Managers

- From Survive to Thrive: Leading the Organization Through Economic Hardship

- Bridge the Leadership Gap

- Leaders in Conversation: Courses to Fuel Collaborative Leadership

- Change Leadership Amidst Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity (VUCA)

- Learn from the Experts: Sparking and Leading through Change

- Performance Management for Improved Business Outcomes

- Strategic Planning and Execution for Leaders

- Tackling the Great Resignation

About OpenSesame

OpenSesame is more than a content provider—we work with our customers to help them build their most productive and admired workforces with L&D solutions that work for them. Our LMS and LXP partners are helping us remove barriers to efficiency so that learning programs are more manageable and your learners get what they need.

Have some questions about this guide or the associated resources? Want to work with our curation team on a customized approach with the OpenSesame catalog?

We're here to help!

CLICK HERE FOR DEMO

Already a customer?

Connect with your Customer Success Manager today.