

## A Leadership Development Activity With Immediate ROI For Your Organization

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Companies of all sorts – not just in the AEC world - are reluctant to institute professional development/training because they can't see an immediate return on investment (ROI).

This month I'll share an activity you can ask your up-and-coming leaders to conduct that will not only develop their thinking, planning, organizing, analyzing, decision making, and writing skills, but will return an immediate result for the organization as a whole.

That activity is to ask each individual to write a new hire "training manual" for their role.

But first, a story to illustrate how powerful this activity is.

In my first job out of college I took over a one-person department at a radio station. I had a week's training with the person leaving the role and then it was all up to me. I had everything in my head and was afraid I would forget how or when I was supposed to do things. I quickly set up a binder for myself with tabs for each day of the week. As I logged what I was supposed to do – and why – I realized there were some gaps I could overcome by instituting new procedures. For instance, new contracts needed to be entered into the computer by EOD on Thursday, but often the salespeople would forget that a contract was renewing and it would get kicked out of the system, which caused a lot more work for both the salesperson and me, to re-enter it. So, I created a new procedure of running a report of about-to-expire contracts



for each salesperson and dropping them a reminder in their mailbox on Tuesday afternoon. Often times the salesperson simply called and asked the client if they wanted to renew, but the process also offered them a reason to show up and visit the client which could lead to more sales. Within a month, not only did the salespeople thank me profusely for helping them stay on top of their contracts, but I was able to leave the office by 6:00 p.m. on Thursdays rather than the 8:00 or 9:00 p.m. that had been standard. And a year later, when I left the job, training the new person was a breeze because she had a step-by-step manual to follow.

By asking your future-leaders to write a new hire "training manual" for their role, you'll cause them to think critically about the work that they do and why they are doing it. When

you review what they've designed you'll understand how much they know about their role, and also where they have gaps. And, if you're lucky, a few of them will realize they can fix or streamline a process which will benefit the company immediately.

I suggest making this request on a one-on-one basis by calling each individual into your office and following this script: "I'd like you to make a training manual for someone who is new to your job/role. What do you do each day? Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. Don't forget the things that might be done quarterly or annually as well.


- » What resources are needed to do those tasks (reports, forms, computer applications)?
- » Are there deadlines?
- » Are you dependent on a process or a person in the workflow ahead of you, before you can do your job? Identify those dependencies.
- » Create step 1, step 2, step 3 procedures if/then tables as appropriate.

"Let's meet back in two weeks so we can review what you've created and you can fill me in on any ah-ha moments you had during the creation process."

Now, be forewarned that some people might think you are asking them to do this so that they can be replaced, and in part that is true. If the person seems skeptical about the request simply say, "We are working to standardize operations around here and that starts with having replicable procedures. But in addition, I'd like to see you advance your career with us and that won't be possible if you are the only person who knows how to do your job."

Further into my radio job, I also instituted a cross training process – all on my own – in which I "borrowed" the sales department secretary for two hours a week to help me enter new contracts. Not only did this help to get me out the door earlier on Thursdays but it also meant there was a backup for me, because how else was I going to take a vacation? As a thank you, I learned the critical tasks of her job as well, so that I could cover for her, which worked out perfectly because she became pregnant that year and needed time off for doctor's appointments and such.

Too often, individuals leave a job and take their knowledge and processes with them. This leaves their replacement to figure things out on their own based on "evidence" left by the former employee, but often times there is no evidence because it is all on their computer and gets "wiped" when the employee leaves.

This activity is a great starting point for your organization to develop individuals' leadership capabilities, as noted at the start of the article, develop SOPs for your organization, and identify gaps in skills or processes along the way. 



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## About the Author

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Dr. Nanette Miner is a leadership development and workplace-learning strategy consultant. Through her firm, [The Training Doctor](#), she has revolutionized the way that individuals are prepared for leadership roles in their organizations. Rather than a chosen few, her process is aimed at ensuring everyone in the company has the skills and business acumen of a leader. This approach ensures both immediate and long-term return-on-investment (ROI) for an organization.

She has written articles for *Chief Learning Office magazine*, *Forbes*, and *MBA World* and is a frequent guest on workplace training and career podcasts and talk radio such as *Inc. Radio* and *America's Workforce Radio*.

Nanette regularly speaks at industry conferences and corporate learning events on how to integrate leadership capabilities throughout an organization. An author of eight books, her most recent is *Future-Proofing Your Organization*.

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