

Insuring the Future

Developing Leaders and Managers Who Leave a Lasting Legacy Through Mentoring
An Interview with David A. Stoddard



As a leader in a Christian organization or church, you've probably spent ample time making certain you're sufficiently insured. We insure our lives, health, property, cars, homes, personal and professional liability, as well as other things. But have you ever considered the need for leadership insurance?

In the following interview, David A. Stoddard, founder and president of Leaders Legacy, Inc. in Atlanta, Ga., an organization that focuses on developing leaders and managers through executive coaching and mentoring, offers his unique perspective on why "leadership insurance" is so critical in securing the future of our ministries.

■ What do you mean by leadership insurance?

When we purchase insurance, for whatever purpose, basically we're trying to protect and preserve what we have. We have a mission to protect, along with a culture that reflects our values and practices. Basically the board, CEO and perhaps a few other selected leaders, serve as keepers of these values that make our organizations what they are. But how do we make sure these values are properly passed on to the next generation long after its current leaders have passed from the scene? The answer is simply: leadership insurance.

■ So exactly how and where do you get this kind of insurance?

Let me start with an example. Recently I met with a group of top business executives and asked them, "As a CEO, what's

your No. 1 responsibility?" Without exception, they said it was to make a profit and build satisfactory shareholder value. Then I asked how they sought to accomplish that. Without hesitation, they agreed it can only be done through people. Even with the right financial model, right products or services, and right processes, without the right people they will still eventually go out of business.

"Leadership insurance" boils down to people. If we develop the right people, giving them the tools, processes, products and services they need to satisfy the customer, we have a much better chance meeting the goals of our organization. So the No. 1 role of the leader and manager is to develop his or her people.

The heart of effective leadership is a focus on people and a genuine desire to be effective stewards of their gifts, experience and talents.

In *The Leadership Engine*, Noel Tichy stated, "The ultimate test of success for an organization is not whether it can win today but whether it can keep winning tomorrow and the day after. Therefore, the ultimate test for a leader is... [to teach] others to be leaders and build an organization that can sustain its success even when she or he is not around. The key ability of winning organizations and winning leaders is creating leaders."

■ But this "insurance" isn't sold by your local inde-

pendent agent, or even Lloyds of London. How do you attain it?

The heart of effective leadership is a focus on people and a genuine desire to be effective stewards of their gifts, experience and talents. People want to be developed and involved in something significant at work. To help people reach their full potential, they need to be mentored—but not mentoring as we typically see it.

Today, mentoring typically follows a fixed time frame and is task- or project-oriented, with the “expert” imparting knowledge to a lesser experienced or skilled person. My experience, however, has shown mentoring works best when it’s relationship-centered rather than task-centered, has no time limits, and is oriented to the needs and interests of the “mentoring partner,” rather than the mentor.

■ How does this kind of mentoring move an organization forward and “protect” the values it holds dear?

No leader has everything it takes to make an organization succeed, and even if he or she could do it all, that would end when they passed from the scene. Any organization based on one person will not survive to the next generation. It’s crucial to develop your managers and supervisors who not only will assist in building what exists at present, but also will preserve the legacy once the senior leaders are gone.

I’ve had many opportunities to help people start businesses that are “one-man shows.” But as they grow, the leaders need to complement themselves, recruiting people with gifts and talents they don’t have. This enables them to concentrate on their own strengths and be more strategic for the future. But safeguarding

an organization’s values that have made it distinctive and undergirded its success is where mentoring comes in.

We’re working with a large, family-owned business that was founded in the early 1900s. This corporation has a rich history and reputation for putting people ahead of profits. However, instead of developing the next generation of leaders and family members from within, key senior-level people have been recruited from outside the company, introducing different corporate cultures, and this has started to adversely affect the existing environment. For the first time in decades, the corporation is failing to experience the double-digit growth it has enjoyed for so long.

Our role has been to start a mentoring process with the board, executive committee and fourth-generation family members, many of whom will become company directors and top executives in the future. We have just one goal in mind: preserve the family values and practices that have made the company great. These individuals have told me a big part of the problem is no one has mentored them, showing them how to sustain the strong values that have built the corporation. Through mentoring, we’re starting to bridge the gap.

■ If safeguarding cherished values is important for a secular company, wouldn’t this be even more important for Christian organizations?

Exactly, mentoring—investing in the lives of people who work with us, our leaders of the future—is more critical for us as believers and far more significant because we’re talking about things that matter for eternity.

The apostle Paul referred to this when he wrote, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I’m to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? ...I desire to depart and be with Christ...but it’s more necessary for you that I remain in the body” (Philippians 1:21-24). He knew his work on earth was not yet done; his task of mentoring and equipping future leaders for the work of Christ remained and needed to be completed.

We also see in Acts 20 how Paul underscores his eternal perspective for

10 Powerful Principles for Effective Mentoring

1. **Effective mentors understand that living is about giving** their time, energy and personal resources unselfishly.
2. **Effective mentors see mentoring as a process that requires perseverance.** It’s a journey two people take together.
3. **Effective mentors open their world to their mentoring partners,** telling about their own struggles and failures, so the mentoring partners will feel free to share about their own world.
4. **Effective mentors help mentoring partners align passion and work.** Work that involves one’s strongest interests will be the most fulfilling and rewarding.
5. **Effective mentors are comforters who share the load,** letting mentoring partners know they don’t have to face their challenges alone.
6. **Effective mentors help turn personal values into practice,** showing that things that are truly important receive priority treatment.
7. **Effective mentors model personal character** by demonstrating genuine humility and a concern for others.
8. **Effective mentors affirm the value of spiritual transformation.**
9. **Effective mentors recognize that mentoring + reproduction = legacy.** For mentoring to have an impact, it must be passed on from generation to generation.
10. **Effective mentors go for it!** It’s never too early, or too late, to get started.

everything he did. As he said farewell to the Ephesian elders, he reminded them he had remained in the tentmaking business so that “these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions.”

Paul desired nothing from the leaders in Ephesus, other than that they remain true to their calling in Christ. “Be shepherds of the church of God...after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock” (Acts 20:28-29).

Put in corporate terms, he was exhorting the leaders he’d mentored to stand firm and maintain the values they had learned from him. For a Christian organization or church, when our work is over, what will be left? To leave a lasting legacy, we need to start mentoring our people today, preparing them to take up the baton and pass it on to yet another generation.

My friend Larry has started several successful, private and publicly traded companies. A few years ago I began mentoring him, and through this process he committed his life to Jesus Christ. Today Larry’s view of his companies is radically different. He now sees no other purpose for them than to serve Christ and point others to him. By starting to mentor emerging leaders in his organization with a Christ-centered worldview, he is having a long-term impact on his employees, customers and others. And his companies are now prospering far beyond his expectations.

■ **Sounds great, but how does**

someone get started in mentoring?

Here are five helpful ideas for getting started:

▲ **Remember, it begins with you, the mentor**, committing to modeling mentoring, even if only with one person. If you don’t model what you teach, you’re teaching above where you’re living.

▲ **Look for “high potentials” within the organization.** This includes people with the passion, character and motivation to become leaders. If you don’t immediately think of someone, keep looking—they’re all around us.

▲ **Once you find someone, start with an informal relationship.** It will become more formal, but begin by “hanging out,” getting to know each other over a meal or cup of coffee, outside your organization. Let the person know you offer no job-related guarantees, but you see lots of potential and you’d like to help him or her reach that potential.

▲ **Stay committed to the process.** It’s the journey that counts, building a relationship, not following a schedule or limited time frame. Mentoring isn’t something you can do in just a few months, or by meeting five or six times.

▲ **Don’t wait—get started right away.** Believe me, many people are dying for the wisdom and experience you have. Step out in faith, and trust God to bless your willingness to serve another person in his name.

David A. Stoddard is founder/president of Leaders Legacy, Inc., Atlanta, Ga. (www.leaderslegacy.com), a nonprofit organization that focuses on developing leaders and managers

5 Outstanding Reasons for Mentoring—Starting Today!

- Enhances organizational competence and leadership skills in a cost-effective way.
- Leverages and sustains your ministry model for the next generation of leaders.
- Creates a loyalty effect, helping you to attract and retain a pool of talented and committed people.
- Builds better relationships for you, your managers and your staff.
- Enables you to establish a legacy, impacting generations of people.

through specialized training, executive coaching and mentoring. He is also the author of *The Heart of Mentoring: Ten Powerful Principles for Developing People to Their Fullest Potential* (www.theheartofmentoring.com) and personally involved in mentoring for more than 20 years. You may email him at dstoddard@leaderslegacy.com or call Leaders Legacy (770) 313-4650.

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