

LEADERSHIP LEARNING FRAMEWORK

Personal Leadership Development

Leadership Thurston County Class of 2012

Overview

LTC Challenge Days provide an opportunity to meet leaders from various sectors of the community and learn about their organizations, issues and leadership styles. The Leadership Learning framework outlined below provides a means to connect these experiences to your own life and career situation. The goal is for you to enhance your personal leadership skills by drawing upon the rich and complementary set of experiences provided in this program, including the Challenge Days, Leadership Learning Journal and Guiding Questions, Case Study, and Leadership Interview.

LTC Leadership Learning Framework

The Challenge Days provide a broad spectrum of valuable information packed into one day. The next day when you are back at work solving pressing problems, much of what you heard the day before may get pushed aside. So how do you incorporate and apply the insights, ideas and approaches that you have just learned?

The key to this leadership framework is first to consider what you know about a topic or set of issues before accessing new information, so that you are tuned in to the insights provided during the Challenge Days. Then at the end of the day, you return to the Guiding Questions and record your revised thoughts, along with how you might utilize this new information in the future. This results in deepening your understanding of these topics and related issues, making connections to your own situation, and building new skills.

In addition to providing your initial and revised thinking to the Guiding Questions, you also may wish to delve deeper into the issues by answering some of the questions provided below, essentially treating each Challenge Day as a mini-case study. Overall, this framework is crafted to provide a dynamic approach that allows you to provide a quick initial analysis of a new situation (using the Guiding Questions), access a variety of resources during each Challenge Day, and then further consider the complexities of the issues presented and how what you learned may relate to your own situation. Wherever you are on the “leadership ladder,” this approach will allow each of you to see real results. As you progress through the year, you will discover that your reflections are more nuanced, sharper, and more strategic, and that you have an impressive network of new colleagues and resources to draw upon.

LTC Leadership Learning Framework (cont.)

1. Before each Challenge Day – Journal initial thinking.
 - a. Review the Guiding Questions provided for that session (located in your notebooks).
 - b. Journal your initial thinking – how would you respond to each question? Jot down thoughts, ideas, and other questions you may have.
 - c. *Optional:* To prepare for the day, scan the questions below, and if time, answer a few of them. This is particularly helpful if you are new to a topic being presented that day.
 - d. Identify what information resources might be needed to answer these questions.
 - e. You may journal your initial thinking at any time before each Challenge Day.

2. During each Challenge Day – Access resources. *Listen, question, observe, engage.*
 - a. As you meet leaders and learn about issues, pay attention to what you see and hear as it relates to the day’s Guiding Questions. Come prepared to ask questions of your own.
 - b. Tap into your classmates’ skills and experiences. People in the program come from a variety of organizations and backgrounds and are a good resource in providing and processing information.

3. After each Challenge Day – Journal revised thinking.
 - a. Journal your revised thinking – how would you now respond to each question?
 - b. Pause to reflect on the day – identify what you learned, what you continue to wonder about or are concerned about, and what might be useful to you in your job and life.
 - c. Questions you might consider include the following:
 1. How does what I learned relate to past or present issues I (or my organization) face?
 2. What skills, ideas, and approaches might be useful in my own work/life situation?
 3. Would I choose to participate in this sector in the future to enhance my community? If yes, what are the opportunities, and how might I add value and contribute? If no, what do I want to know more about as a knowledgeable community leader?

4. Case study.
 - a. For one Challenge Day, you will be asked to develop a case study with a group of your peers. Before beginning work on the case study, journal your initial thinking using the Guiding Questions and Case Study questions.
 - b. This case study includes interviewing others and accessing a variety of additional materials. Journal your revised thinking after you complete your portion of the information collection, before meeting with your peers to prepare the presentation.
 - c. At the end of the Challenge Day, jot down your final thoughts to the Guiding Questions and any revisions to the Case Study questions. Note what additional information changed your thinking after hearing from the leaders during the Challenge Day.

Additional Leadership Learning Questions to Consider

In addition to the Guiding Questions posed for each session, scan the case study-style questions below. These questions might help you develop questions of your own to ask leaders during each session. You also may choose to select a few and, very briefly (1-2 sentences), provide some thoughts.

- Prior to the Challenge Day, provide your understanding of the following:
 - Who are the “actors” involved (service versus product providers, customers, stakeholders, supply chain, regulatory environment, etc.)?
 - What are the primary objectives of this sector?
 - What are the drivers, demographics, and/or needs that must be addressed?
 - What might be some parameters for basic market research (or an environmental scan) to identify and assess the needs and the opportunities to address those needs?
 - What types of decisions must be made in this sector?
 - What challenges, opportunities, and risks do leaders in this sector face?
 - What evidence/data exists to base decisions from? How might it be improved?

- For particular issues or problems discussed during the Challenge Days, consider:
 - What evidence was drawn upon to make decisions? Is it convincing?
 - What alternative courses of action were identified and considered?
 - What criteria were used to judge the alternatives?
 - What are the strengths and limitations of the choice(s) made?
 - What methods were used to convince others that the approach taken was best?
 - What was learned in the process of problem solving?
 - Was a means for collecting feedback implemented? Was flexibility built into the system to respond to the feedback?

- What are your observations of the leaders you have met during each Challenge Day concerning:
 - How they exercise leadership.
 - Their problem-solving approach and/or decision-making process.
 - The success of their implementation.
 - How they use partnerships/collaboration.
 - Their evaluation, feedback, and follow-up methods.
 - Their approach to continuous process improvement.

Additional Resource Page

Leadership Learning Framework for Future Application

The modified leadership learning framework above developed for Leadership Thurston County draws on theory that recognizes leadership learning and decision-making is a dynamic cycle. This theory essentially provides a flowchart with prompts for how to expand your understanding of issues and apply it to the decision making process. The steps below are provided for your own use in the workplace to add to your problem-solving tool belt. Use this approach when you need to consider a problem or issue, gather information from a variety of sources, and then reassess and respond to new information and feedback for continuous process improvement:

1. Consider the “challenge” you need to address.
2. “Journal” your initial thoughts – Identify your initial assessment & assumptions.
3. Access various resources – Seek out different sources of expertise, data, and information, and keep in mind potential limitations and “bias” from each source.
4. Journal your revised thinking – Reassess and revise your approach, comparing it to your initial assumptions and identifying what changed and why.
5. Teamwork – Share ideas among a few others involved in solving the issue, delving into the experiences, assumptions, and perspectives each person offers. Come to agreement upon a response and approach. Report out to others to evaluate and decide upon a final decision.
6. Develop feedback mechanisms to capture target audience responses, and a process to evaluate and adapt implementation based on responses.
7. Maintain a history of the learning and improvements along the life-cycle of the issue.

Note: It is important not to be critical of your initial assumptions and thinking, as this is simply part of the normal learning process. Allow for access to multiple resources, and consider sources that may be new to you. Be sure to identify each resource’s veracity, limitations, relevance, (potential) bias, and currency. In the group work, ask what forms the basis for others’ thinking. Often, it is not about finding the “correct” answer, but the one that is most manageable and viable in the given time. What is important is to know how you came to the solution you chose, what alternatives you opted not to pursue, and how to sustain the effort by being flexible to new information, feedback, and changes in the external environment and internal organization.