



Ask Stephen Covey

Stephen R. Covey is co-founder of FranklinCovey, a management consulting and training company, and the author of 10 books, most recently The Leader in Me: How Schools and Parents Around the World Are Inspiring Greatness, One Child at a Time.

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Q: My company is young and in the early stages of developing a culture. How can I make sure that we are building leaders?

Laura Rangel
CEO and co-founder Kidsgive
Los Angeles

True leadership comes from moral authority, not formal authority. Unfortunately, most of our culture is based on competition and control, and most organizations still operate on outdated models of leadership.

Today's workers no longer respond to a top-down hierarchical management structure. If you ask them, most Gen-X and Gen-Y employees will claim they don't need to be supervised. They are partially right: In the age of knowledge workers, accountability shouldn't be directed toward a single boss. Instead, you should organize your company around group decision-making processes. Try taking a step back as a manager, and let employees collaborate on key strategic decisions.

One way to break up your company's hierarchy is to divide your employees into complementary teams — sales working with marketing, for example, or customer service working with product development. Each team should have a few key strategic goals, and each employee should focus on a smaller subset of those goals. Make sure employees know they are accountable to the entire group, not just a few top-level managers. This way, leaders will naturally emerge.

This requires transparency. Keep a daily, running tally of the strategic goals and visions that your company is trying to achieve, as well as very specific sales-based goals. Make all of this information public, and incorporate it into each of your teams' meetings. Once people realize they aren't serving just one boss but an entire company, they will either begin pulling their oars or they will leave.

The principles of leadership are universal, and, believe it or not, they can be taught to anyone, even kids. In my new book, *The Leader in Me*, I have detailed how schools across the country have begun implementing some of the basic leadership principles that I have written about. The effects of these principles are powerful. One school improved its scores on state exams 10 percent in one year alone.