What's Your Leadership Process?
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In this month's 60-Second Email™, we discuss the value of having a proven process to develop your current and next generation of leaders.

I've run one marathon in my life; it was in New York City, November of 2001. And I approached my first marathon with two goals in mind: First, don't get trampled by the thousands (literally thousands) of other runners when the race starts (my friend Tom and I were near the starting line, and there was an ocean of people behind us). Second, and a little more optimistically, finish the race in any shape or form. Whatever it took, just finish.

Four hours later, I had accomplished both.

Now, I had run before. I've been a runner most of my life, since I was about 14. But I'd never run the 26+ miles of a marathon. Not even close. The furthest I had ever run was 10 kilometers (a "10K" race), which for non-running non-metric readers is just north of 6 miles. So effectively, the goal to run a marathon came down to running 20 miles more than I'd ever run before.

When you start training for a marathon, you think, "I must be nuts!" You can't imagine you'd ever be able to run for 3 to 4 hours non-stop. It doesn't seem humanly possible.

And it isn't. It isn't if you just showed up at the starting line, never having trained. When people asked me how long it took to finish the race, I'd playfully reply "3 months and 4 hours". A small bit of humor, but a larger dose of truth.

You can't run a marathon in 4 hours (or whatever time you do) if you haven't been running for months prior. There truly are no shortcuts. No matter what cardio-vascular talents you've been blessed with, you can't show up "cold", and expect to run 26+ miles on your own, sans taxi.

The same is true about leaders and their ability to lead others. I recognize that competencies and competency models are incredibly popular and useful these days. And I don't deny their utility, but leadership "muscle-building" is not only about a set of traits or qualities; it's also a well-designed process, much as training for a marathon is a process. There are no shortcuts.

True, some leaders may "train" faster than others. Some may seem to have a God-given talent to lead, but if you ask them, most great leaders will tell you about the experiences that forged their leadership ability, the experiences and process they went through to become effective.

I was able to complete a marathon because I had a proven, reliable process to follow that, with my commitment, built my capability and capacity to run for 4 uninterrupted hours. Certainly, there were challenges along the way, both during training and during the run. But having a training process that was proven to work provided the confidence to get through those moments.

Companies need a similar process for developing their current and next generation of leaders. Competencies, traits, and skills only go so far. Companies must provide the process for leaders to test and live those out in real-world challenges and experiences. From the moment great talent enters an organization, the senior leadership must be able to provide that talent with a proven process that will grow their capability, commitment, and performance.

There are no shortcuts. What proven process do you provide your leaders?

You can access this and previous issues of our 60-Second Email™ newsletter via the following link to our website: http://www.advisoryalliance.com/newsletter.php

Until next month,

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