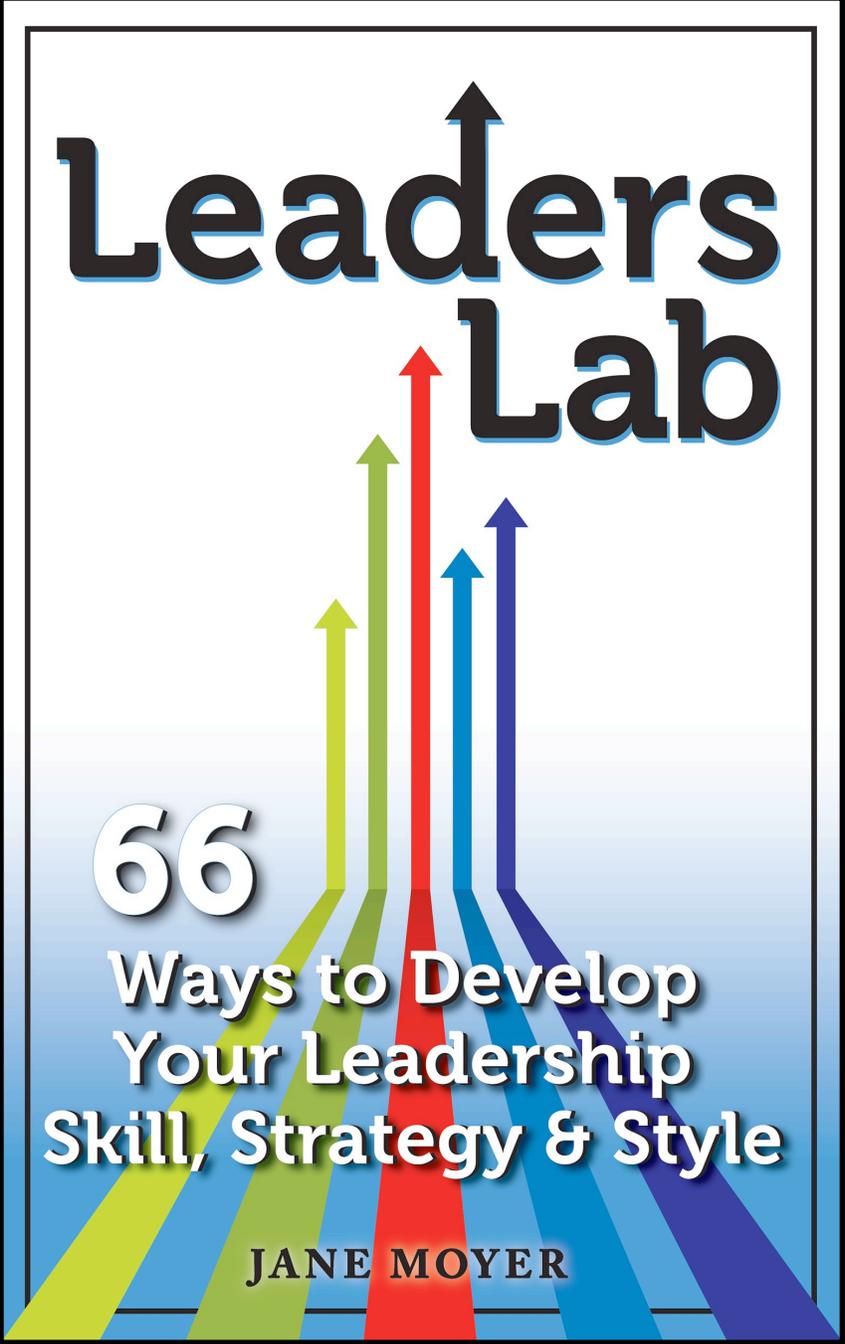# Leaders Lab

66
Ways to Develop Your Leadership Skill, Strategy & Style

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Leaders Lab Facilitator's Guide

Contents

Leaders Lab can easily be used as a resource to start a Leadership Learning Group or use with an existing Business Book Club or Leadership Development Group.

Starting a Leadership Learning Group or Business Book Club

First, consider your purpose, participants, and process.

Define Your Purpose
What will be the purpose of your Leadership Learning Group?
Who is it for?

Typical purposes include:
- General professional development
- Exposure to and exploration of new ideas
- Specific subject matter learning
- Networking

Your group may be targeted to serve specific types of members, such as:
- **Women's Leadership Group**: Address challenges of particular interest to women.
- **Foundational Leadership Group**: Boost the effectiveness of early-career professionals.
- **Breakthrough Leadership Group**: Explore issues of interest to forward-thinkers, change agents, and innovators.
- **Working Teams**: Improve collaboration and performance.
- **Focused Learning Groups**: Upgrade skill in a specific leadership area.

Sample programs for each of these targeted groups using *Leaders Lab* are included at the end of this guide.

Whatever your specific group's purpose, a discussion group provides significant learning benefits:
- Active engagement with content increases retention.
- Members learn from each other.
- Continuity increases the likely application of learning.

Form The Group
Who will belong?
What is their common need or interest?
How will they contribute to and benefit from group membership?

The success of the group depends on active participation. Invite members who have genuine interest in your purpose. To produce the most interesting and fruitful discussions, aim for common purpose, but some diversity in background.

Discussions are usually most productive when the group is large enough to include participants with a variety of experience and viewpoints, yet small enough so that each person feels their

contribution is important. A group of 6–8 is ideal. A large group can easily be broken down into smaller sub-groups.

Determine Your Process

Where and how often will you meet?
How will books or topics be selected?
Who will lead each session?
What process will be used for discussion?

Make participation as easy as possible. Schedule your meetings at times and places that are as convenient as possible for group members. Ask for a manageable amount of reading and preparation.

Continuity is a critical factor for both learning effectiveness and group cohesiveness. Typically, groups meet monthly, but working groups may find it productive to meet for a shorter time weekly, covering smaller amounts of content. Regularity is the key; if needed, adjust the amount of reading.

It often works well to launch a learning group with a pre-planned popular topic, speaker, or book selection to create some visibility and excitement. Then, increase ongoing engagement by soliciting members' input: *What topics are of most interest? What books would they like to read? If appropriate, whom would they like to invite as guests? What format, timing and location work best?* Adjust as the group evolves.

Designate a facilitator for each session. Some groups have one person take on this role for a season, while others rotate the role to a different member for each session.

Get Off to a Good Start!

It's particularly important that members have a good experience with your first meeting. Choose a compelling book or topic. If members don't already know each other, give them an opportunity to get acquainted. Briefly review your purpose and process. Solicit input for future meetings. Make sure participants take away something useful. Have a little fun, too.

Tips for Members

Your group's discussions will only be as productive and interesting as the participants make them. Come prepared to share your point of view, insight, and questions. Listen deeply. Be open to other points of view. Share the floor. Challenge prevailing opinions tactfully: *What if …. ? Would you be willing to consider another point of view? I wonder if … In my experience … From my perspective, …*

Facilitator Guidelines

For each meeting, designate a facilitator to organize and guide the discussion.

Suggested process and facilitator tips:
- Read the book, chapter, or article the group will be discussing.
- For some topics, the discussion will be more productive if participants have not only read the material in advance, but tried out some of the ideas. Determine the specific preparation needed.
- Send out an invitation to group members, including information on the meeting time and place, process, and expected preparation. Send your initial invitation out enough in advance to give members ample time to complete the reading and any suggested pre-work. Then remind them a week or so in advance, and again a day or two before the meeting.
- Develop a handful of questions to stimulate discussion. Open questions—ones that begin with *What, Why* or *How*—usually work best. See below for few questions that generally work well for business book discussions, as well as a suggested format for use with *Leaders Lab*.
- Your role is to draw out a productive discussion. Resist the temptation to "tell"; instead, ask.
- Aim to involve all group members in the discussion. Make it comfortable for people to express contrasting views. Encourage quieter members without putting them on the spot. If one or two members are dominating the discussion, redirect it: *Who else? Is there another way to look at this? Other thoughts?*
- If there's a lull in the conversation, consider stirring it with a provocative question, or, if appropriate, share your observation or the insight of a third party (for instance, another author's supporting or contrasting view.)
- If your group is large, divide into sub-groups for the majority of your time, coming back together at the end.
- Wrap up in order to end at the designated time. Collect and summarize insight. Determine any relevant action steps.
- Provide a brief preview of your next meeting, along with the date, time, and location.
- If appropriate, send out a summary of key points and discussion insight after the meeting.

Business Book Clubs: General Questions
- *What was your most important take-away?*
- *What, if anything, was surprising?*
- *How would this apply in your role and organization?*
- *What do you agree or disagree with?*
- *What ideas have you implemented or will you try?*

Leaders Lab Topic Discussions

Each of the topics in *Leaders Lab: 66 Ways to Develop Your Leadership Skill, Strategy, and* Style are organized with a similar format that lends itself to discussion:

The Challenge: A problem faced by many leaders
- *How does this challenge affect you and your organization?*

The Question: A question phrased for solution-finding
- Alter the question if needed to apply to your situation.

Consider This: Topical inspiration and thought-provoking quotes
- *Who else has inspired you on this topic?*

Try This: Strategies to explore
- *How would this apply in your situation?*
- *What other strategies have you found to be successful?*
- *What else could you try?*

Apply & Evaluate: Encouragement to experiment and assess your results.
- Consider the three questions.
- *What one action step will you take?*
- *What one thing do you want to remember?*

Take Action: Now What?: A summary for further action or link to a related topic
- Identify follow-up steps, items to check in on next time, additional resources to explore.

Sample Leaders Lab Book Club Programs

Women's Leadership Group
Address challenges of particular interest to women leaders:
- Learning to Lead
- Seven Ways for Women to Come Across More Powerfully at Work
- The "Feeling Factor"
- Seven Flavors of "No"
- Make Room for the New
- During Change, Handle Fear First
- Ignite Your Creativity Capacity
- Beyond SWOT: Five Simple Strategy Models
- In a World of Too-Much-Information, Less is More
- Eight Ways to Accomplish More in Less Meeting Time
- How to Influence Someone
- Beyond Potential: How to Develop Your Talents

Breakthrough Leadership Group
Explore topics of interest to forward-thinkers, change agents, and innovators:
- Learning to Lead
- Ask, Ask, Ask: The Power of Questions
- Beyond SWOT: Five Simple Strategy Models
- Accelerate!
- Innovation: It's Not Just About New Products
- Creative Destruction: Break It
- Moving Ideas Ahead: The BRAIN Process
- Unveil Your New Idea Strategically
- Leading Change: Address Different Types in Your Strategy
- Can We Just Talk? When to Stop Arguing and Dialogue Instead
- Be a Talent Magnet
- Update Your Motivation Methods

Foundation Leadership Group
Boost the effectiveness of early-career professionals:
- Your Strengths Strategy
- Showing Up as Your Best: The Impact of Nonverbal Communication
- Your Influence Map: Who You Need to Know to Get Things Done
- The Day that Got Away
- Seven Ways to Decide
- Don't Spend More Than 10 Minutes on This
- Make Your Message Memorable
- Eight Ways to Accomplish More in Less Meeting Time

- Backward Bugs: Turn Complaints and Annoyances Into Solutions
- Remain Grounded Amidst Massive Change
- Today's #1 Success Skill: Learning
- Career Planning for a Technology-Enabled World

Working Teams
Improve team collaboration and performance:
- Collaborative Teams: How to Make 2+2=5
- Without This, You Won't Get Much Done
- The Day that Got Away
- Don't Spend More Than Ten Minutes on This
- The Single Most Effective Productivity Strategy
- HELP! I'm Not Creative!
- Should Brainstorming Be Banned?
- Moving Ideas Ahead: The BRAIN Process
- Don't Clog the Pipeline: Streamline Decisions
- How to Learn: Do it Your Way
- Career Planning for a Technology-Enabled World
- Put Humor to Work

Focused Learning Groups
Upgrade skill in a specific leadership area:
- Learning & Change
- Strategic Productivity
- Creativity & Innovation
- Communication, Collaboration & Influence
- Developing Teams & Talent