

CREATING LEADERSHIP SPACE FOR OTHERS TO FILL

In my decade-long journey of growth as a leader so far, I've come to firmly believe that one of the greatest impacts I can have as a leader (and a developer of other leaders) is to create leadership space for others to fill. Creating this space, enabling others to fill it, and supporting their growth throughout the experience truly is one of the best things we can do to nurture others' leader development. This directly supports the 70-20-10 Model for Learning and Development (70% of learning occurs from challenging experiences and assignments), cultivates ownership and responsibility within those leaders, gives them experience to expand their perspectives, and creates rich opportunity for follow-on reflection and learning (even from failure).

But this discovery has been a journey in-and-of-itself for me. Through it, I have learned to clarify what leadership space is, come to understand what I can do as a leader developer to best foster it, and gained a variety of insights about it through extensive reading about this topic. So, I aim to explore all of that here by defining what leadership space is, outline behaviors we can enact to make it an enriching opportunity for others, and offer eight book recommendations that have shaped my thinking around creating leadership space for others the most.

What is Leadership Space?

Simply, it is the opportunity for others to actually lead. By space, I mean time to practice and build momentum, physical space as in an area of responsibility like a process or project, and the complete authority and responsibility to carry it all out. In creating leadership space for others, I clearly define the boundaries of their responsibility and authority, communicate expectations tied to that, and enable the leader to have free reign to lead within those boundaries as they see fit. While there is a whole other conversation regarding the boundaries that I should define (how expansive they are, how high the boundaries are, consequences, etc.), that is a unique consideration you must make as you endeavor to create leadership space for others (risk analysis, etc.) within your own organizational context.

In this leadership space, I enable others to practice demonstrating things like ownership and responsibility,

communication, problem solving, and decision making all for their deliberate growth. This is an exercise in building junior leader self-sufficiency to establish sustainable, long-term leadership capacity ultimately leading to improved organizational performance and viability. Creating leadership space is teaching leaders how to fish, not merely feeding them fish.

What I Do

There are several behaviors and attitudes that we can enact to encourage others' growth as they operate in their own leadership space. These actions help shape and maximize growth through the developmental experiences. These suggestions aim to enable, support, and encourage – not micromanage or overshadow. I offer these ideas as simple references to encourage further exploration into the topics as desired. These are not complete definitions or explanations of each.

- Give intent to provide “the what and the why,” not prescriptive instructions like “how.”
- Coach and ask questions to ensure leaders are fully thinking through decisions, options, and challenges.
- Empower with both responsibility and authority. Creating developmental leadership space is useless here if we cannot (or will not) fully provide the necessary authority to match delegated responsibility.
- Give challenging assignments (reference back to the 70-20-10 Model for Learning and Development)
- Provide the appropriate balance of challenge and support to the developing leaders.
- Build psychological safety across the organization; reduce fear of failure.
- Guide and encourage reflection to enable sense making through experiences.
- Give feedback.

My learning on creating leadership space for others has been significantly shaped by several books. I'm sure there are numerous other titles that could/should be on this list, but these are the ones that have impacted me the most to this point on this topic; I think they can do the same for other leaders too. These recommendations are not offered in any particular order but provide different perspectives on how we can best de-

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velop other leaders through creating leadership space for them to fill.

The Effective Manager, by Mark Horstman. This offers detailed tactics on how to have developmental one-on-one meetings, give quality feedback, and stretching others' skills through challenging assignments for continuous growth.

Radical Candor, by Kim Scott. A great read packed with so many ideas on how to apply Scott's model for approaching leadership – challenge others directly while caring personally.

Leadership is Language, by L. David Marquet. Simple model that explores the importance of leaders' language – what we say, how we say it, and even what we don't say – and the impacts all of that can have. This can help inform the language we use in creating leadership space for others.

Mindset, by Dr. Carol Dweck. This book is based on the author's research on a "growth mindset." It offers valuable perspectives on our willingness to learn and

how to encourage that in others as well.

The Coaching Habit, by Michael Bungay Stanier. A great and very simple model on how to implement a coaching approach as a leader. The author designs the model as a series of seven questions that we can use to coach critical thinking in others while ensuring they retain responsibility through the situation.

Daring Greatly and Dare to Lead, by Brené Brown. Both books dive into the importance of vulnerability and empathy, which will help shape our attitudes around the emotional toll that exercising within new and/or larger leadership spaces can have on others.

Turn the Ship Around!, by L. David Marquet. A fantastic primer on intent-based leadership and how to leverage it to create leadership space for others. It is also a wonderful story.

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