

Physician Leadership Development Opportunity Cheat Sheet

Note on Use:

The following grid outlines several leadership development options to help physician leaders gain hands-on experience and leadership perspective. Use this guide to identify which opportunities are the right fit for your organization's physician leadership development strategy.

	External Coaching	Internal Mentoring
Description	Contracted outside expert on personal development provides one-on-one guidance and support to high-potential physician leaders and rising executives	Formal or informal relationships with senior or peer physician leaders who can offer guidance on how to develop specific leadership competencies
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly customizable to individual challenges and leadership development needs Coaches tend to be experts at assessing personal needs and communicating improvement strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual attention allows for precise targeting of specific skills, knowledge, and attitudes Mentor can assist in overcoming leader's unique personal challenges and derailers Interactions with a more tenured leader help avoid pitfalls by learning from others' experiences Helps physicians build their leadership network
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expense prohibits widespread use Outside sources lack insight into organizational culture, politics, and values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be difficult to make a match that results in a productive relationship Difficult to find leaders who are both willing and able to mentor effectively; requires mentor training
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize external coaches for high-potential physician leaders Develop long-term relationship with coaches so they can become more familiar with organizational norms Focus coaching sessions on specific competencies in need of development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train mentors and provide clear expectations for what the mentor role entails Ensure mentor has expertise in specific area in which mentee requires assistance and can effectively communicate that knowledge Secure a long-term commitment from both mentor and mentee
Applicability	Most applicable for rising senior executives	Applicable to all levels of physician leadership
	Appropriate for all types of organizations	Appropriate for all types of organizations
Time Commitment	Significant; requires frequent and in-depth meeting time for coaching conversations and debriefs	Variable; typical mentoring relationships can consume anywhere from one to ten hours a month
Recommended Uses	Best for a limited number of high-potential leaders being groomed for executive leadership; direct cost is a limiting factor	Potentially the most effective method for developing senior leaders; however, nature of one-on-one relationships makes success highly variable

Source: HR Advancement Center research and analysis; Physician Executive Council research and analysis.

	Executive Exposure	Shadowing	Lateral Job Movements
Description	Dedicated time for physician leaders to meet with top executives or members of the board	Time-limited, direct observation of more tenured leaders or other hospital functions and departments	Permanent or interim transition to department to which leader has had limited exposure; may include job swaps or expansion of job to include responsibility for new areas
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The only investment required is top executives' time Provides leaders with access to senior-level thinking and ideas Offers insight into the organization's strategic decisions Increases physician leaders' visibility among executives and helps build a stronger network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited disruption to workflow Direct exposure to the decision-making and day-to-day operations to departments or functions to which physicians might not otherwise be exposed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases leaders' familiarity with other parts of the business, enabling them to learn new skills and form cross-departmental relationships New job (rather than extra project work) limits distractions
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fails to go deep on any one topic or skillset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation method does not require shadowee to practice competencies or learn from own mistakes and successes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities for movement limited to vacant positions Often most relevant for operational leaders, and/or may only apply to a physician leaders' administrative time (not clinical)
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule series of meetings or interactions with a variety of top-level executives rather than a one-time event If possible, arrange one-on-one lunches and sessions to personalize the experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure shadowing occurs around meetings, events, or settings that are most aligned with the specific knowledge, skills, or mindsets physician leader needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide leaders with support from expert leaders fluent in the area into which they are moving Assess risk of the move on overall business outcomes for the new department, disruption to the old department, and leader's personal well-being
Applicability	Applicable to all levels, especially to leaders who need greater exposure	Appropriate for all levels; especially effective for exposing physicians to leadership careers	Most applicable to mid-level leaders whose next role requires mastery of several areas
	Appropriate for all types of organizations	Appropriate for all types of organizations	More appropriate for larger organizations
Time Commitment	Limited; interactions can be as simple as a lunch meeting, or can be incorporated into other leadership development events	Limited; typically occurs in sync with natural workflows	Significant; requires front-end planning, onboarding time, and is generally a longer-term strategy
Recommended Uses	Most useful for networking, recognition, and exposure; also an easy way to personalize group-based leadership development by offering one-on-one interactions	Most useful for developing greater perspective into areas of the organization to which physicians aren't already exposed	Very effective for helping mid-level clinical leaders gain new skills; potential retention strategy in face of limited promotional opportunities; success hinges on organizational willingness to move talent across traditional boundaries

	Project Work	Classroom Training
Description	High-impact, far-reaching assignments designed to provide opportunities to coordinate across multiple departments and partner with senior leaders at the organization	Classroom-based training designed around clearly identified skill gaps, knowledge, and attitudes critical to the organization's success
Pros	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time learning, application, and accountability allows leaders to see results of successes, failures • Increases physician leaders' visibility within the organization • Direct benefit to organization from successful projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incremental cost relatively low given most organizations already allocating some resources to physician training • Most efficient and scalable leadership development option; consistent concepts can be taught repeatedly to multiple leaders
Cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires participating leaders to take time from, or to do work on top of, their day-to-day responsibilities, which is especially challenging for practicing physicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fails to meet individual needs in terms of learning style and understanding of each topic • Rigid schedule may not accommodate different physician leaders' calendars
Critical Success Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overwhelm leaders with support to offer the best chance of a successful experience for physicians and the organization • Select projects based on balance of leader's strengths and specific development needs to make sure they are not in over their head • Where possible, backfill day-to-day responsibilities so that leaders are freed to dedicate time to project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a deliberate program strategy and curriculum to address physician leadership development needs • Provide leaders dedicated time and coverage to prevent distractions while attending courses • Consider segmenting sessions by leadership level to facilitate networking among peers
Applicability	Applicable to all levels, especially physician leaders who need greater exposure	Applicable to all levels; effectiveness declines the more senior the leadership level
	Appropriate for all types of organizations	Appropriate for all types of organizations
Time Commitment	Significant; even short-term stretch projects can require a large amount of time and effort to complete—at the expense of, or in addition to, regular job responsibilities	Moderate; classroom time may be limited, but practice assignments and skill application take longer
Recommended Uses	Most customizable method for developing and practicing a broad range of skills and competencies outside of current scope of job; great for skill application after or between leadership development classroom sessions	Useful for teaching tangible knowledge, skills, or attitudes that should be consistent for all leaders; most effective for frontline physicians

Source: HR Advancement Center research and analysis; Physician Executive Council research and analysis.