



District  
Management  
Group

10 MISTAKES TO AVOID

# Unlocking Leadership Capacity

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# 10 Mistakes to Avoid

## Unlocking Leadership Capacity

Learning by doing has long been regarded as a powerful method of learning. The Breakthrough Team Approach (BTA) leverages precisely this method in that it seeks to develop leadership capacity while having staff work to achieve tangible results for the district. This approach can be highly effective, but keep these lessons in mind:

### Don't forget to identify the root cause.

When we are asked to address a problem, many potential solutions come to mind. But often, these solutions address symptoms rather than the root cause of the problem, which limits impact. Before brainstorming solutions, take the time to correctly identify the root causes of the problem by asking the 5 Whys.

### Don't mistake an activity for a measurable goal.

Too often, activities are mistaken for goals. Conducting a study, writing a report, and holding meetings are examples of activities. A measurable goal must be specific and have tangible impact.

### Don't forget the power of urgency.

It is human nature to rush to meet a deadline or to address the urgent even at the expense of the important. Setting aggressive goals in a short time frame creates the urgency and focus that drives results.

### Don't forget the power of going public.

Participating in a high-visibility initiative and going public with the goals not only creates accountability but also provides the motivation and momentum that help to drive success.

## **Don't forget the importance of just-in-time coaching.**

The effectiveness of coaching in the classroom is well acknowledged. Similarly, coaching can be highly effective in developing leadership capacity if tied to specific, immediate challenges that staff are encountering.

## **Don't deliver professional development without context.**

Targeted professional development tied to real-life challenges in real time can be the most useful professional development of all. Its relevance is clear and it can be put into practice immediately.

## **Don't underestimate the power of measuring progress.**

As the saying goes, you are what you measure. Incorporating weekly measurement of progress toward the stated goal keeps the team focused on achieving results.

## **Don't be afraid to innovate, iterate, or pivot to identify what works.**

Finding solutions to intractable problems is hard work. It may mean trying a solution, tweaking it, and iterating; or it may require abandoning one solution for another and trying an entirely different approach.

## **Don't overlook the power of peer dynamics.**

Allowing staff time to collaborate with peers can provide a support network, help unlock ideas, and help forge strong working relationships. It can also unleash a spirit of friendly competition.

## **Don't forget to celebrate small wins.**

Educators typically do a wonderful job of celebrating students' successes. Don't forget to celebrate the success of your management team. Acknowledging small successes builds confidence and enthusiasm, and inspires your team to persevere in the work.