

Young Leaders: Helpful Tips for Developing Yourself

Each of these young leaders mentioned in the Bridgestar article: [Young Leaders: The Challenge of Developing Yourself](#) went through, and continues to go through, a process of growth and development, and each has benefited greatly from the advice of others. Reflecting upon their experiences, they shared the following tips for others seeking to develop their leadership capabilities:

Find advisors and coaches early on. As Hammond said, “Let yourself be coached, and do it intentionally and with regularity.” Kathleen Yazbak, Bridgestar’s National Director of Talent and Recruiting, added, “Be strategic about choosing mentors for the growth stage you’re in, or for expertise that you might not have but want to develop.”

Reach out to peers at other organizations. “EDs talking to other EDs can be a great source of support and learning,” noted Yazbak. Looking at how other organizations have handled similar challenges and opportunities can be a helpful input to one’s own learning and decision-making. Phalen noted that he found it very helpful to “spend time with other social entrepreneurs, visiting other programs and bringing new ideas back to BELL.”

Cultivate self-awareness. “A tip I would have liked to receive earlier is to have more self-awareness of my role, behaviors, and style and how they impact others around me,” said Hammond. You need to be conscious of what you are good at, where you need to improve your skills, and how you are perceived by others, both to think about your own development over time and to help prioritize skills to look for when hiring.

Be persistent. As Phalen said, “The work of leading an organization is incredibly difficult. It challenges you day in and day out, in 101 different ways. You need to have the vigilance and persistence to fight through the myriad of obstacles you will face and to be stronger than them, to stay focused on why you chose this work. If that commitment, that anchor, is strong you will be able to wade your way through any and all of those challenges.”

Bridgestar (www.bridgestar.org), an initiative of the Bridgespan Group, provides a nonprofit management job board, content, and tools designed to help nonprofit organizations build strong leadership teams and individuals pursue career paths as nonprofit leaders.

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