

Find Your Leadership Team

One of the great American stories of an overlooked opportunity is the man who sold his land in the east to move west and dig for gold, only to discover later that the land he sold was one of the biggest oil fields in the United States.

This story has a direct correlation to the development of your school's leadership team; for many school owners long for the kind of leadership teams they see at other schools, while completely overlooking the vast untapped, and rich, resources that lie just below the surfaces of their schools.

This leadership report provides some additional strategies you may use to discover the potential leaders "buried" in your student roster.

Look for the following attributes in your potential team members.

- Good students.
- Teachable.
- Cooperative with and supportive of their classmates.
- Good attendance record.

Undoubtedly, more of your students qualify than you have space for them on your team.

The primary reason why many school owners find it difficult to recognize potential leadership team members is that they are fixated on their abilities and/or those of their current instructors. School owners too often expect potential leaders to have the same well-developed skills, so they overlook less visible leaders who are qualified to join a leadership development program, but still have plenty to learn. Teachers and leaders take time to develop. A better strategy is to observe and evaluate your students from a new perspective. Ask yourself, "With three to six months of steady training, do I think student A or B will be able to serve a valuable leadership role in my school?"

The second common mistake too many school owners make (even when they select qualified candidates) is the new leadership team members do not receive the training they need to upgrade their skills continually. Untrained leadership team members are simply standing in place, failing to advance their skills and contribute to the quality of your classes. Without a continuous leadership training program, no one improves and succeeds: the potential leaders, your students, your school and even your current instructors. The selection of potential leadership team members is only the first step. Developing and implementing a staff development program, combined with an investment of your time, knowledge and careful eye, will result in growth for your school and advancement for everyone.

Implement the following simple steps to develop a leadership team for your school.

Step #1: Create a list of all the students that fulfill the qualifications listed above.

You may be surprised to learn that there are a large number of qualified leadership team members in your student body. List everyone who you think qualifies; don't eliminate anyone just because you think they may not be interested. Create a leadership program that will attract students, one that provides something missing from their regular training. Be proactive and be prepared to explain the benefits of being a leadership team member. Let them qualify or eliminate themselves and you'll create more enthusiasm and energy for your leadership program.

Step: #2: Start dialogues with each of the students on your list.

Let the students you've selected know that you've recognized a potential for leadership in each of them. Test their interests; ask them if they have ever thought about teaching the martial arts as a career. Listen to their responses carefully. Be prepared to provide them with a brief description of your plans for the future,

and that those plans include selecting new leadership team members to help you grow your school. Talk briefly about the potential of your school and the great opportunities for those who qualify for a leadership position, and are able to prove their commitment.

Step: #3: Invite the candidates to attend a leadership training class.

Nothing will highlight the benefits of being a membership team member more than to invite your candidates to train with current team members. You want to create an atmosphere and a rapport that is infectious. When they're able to experience the energy of the team, and are moved by your leadership mission, you will have accomplished the next step in finding a valued team member.

Step #4: Clearly review the rules and your expectations for the leadership team.

Every school has leadership team operational procedures. Those procedures, or rules, should be clear, concise and complete, but the contents of those procedures are less important than having procedures to follow. State your rules and expectations so there is no possibility for confusion. Include the following in your procedures:

- Team members' schedules.
- Team meeting times.
- An exact description of each team member's role in class.
- Team members' responsibilities on and off the floor.
- Explain the minimum requirements for being a team member.
- Explain what constitutes "going over and above" for the team.

Be precise and exacting: if meetings start at 5:00 p.m., then make it clearly understood that everyone should be present, prepared and attentive at 5:00 pm, not 5:02 pm. Teach your team members that leaders must set an example for those they lead, so no one must follow the rules more exactly than leaders.

Step #5: Provide each new team member a class schedule.

This step was listed as a bullet in step #4, but it's important enough to present as a separate step because it will require thought from you in advance. Although you selected your candidates according to the criteria above, you must also consider the practical necessity of scheduling. Review your candidates and make sure you've selected individuals whose availability matches your need. Selecting 12 new team members who are all only available for the same class on Monday and Wednesday leaves no one available for the remainder of your classes throughout the week. The best strategy is to determine, prior to your candidate interviews the team schedule your classes require and then select qualified candidates to assist you for each class.

Step #6: Continue your leadership team members' training to upgrade their skills.

Nothing is worse than the stagnation of your leadership team. To excel in their roles, every teacher, instructor and team member need to be continually replenished with new information and ideas and, improvements in techniques. Otherwise, their teaching abilities and passion to help their students advance diminish. As the trainer of your leadership team, your job is to provide them constantly with new information that challenges them and makes them want to excel; and, most importantly, pass that passion for excellence to their students. Nothing motivates a team more than continuous training that is fresh, invigorating and exciting. This is your point of control of your leadership team's future: Make their training continuous and rigorous, and the positive results will be clearly demonstrated in their performance on the floor.

Leadership must be a living, breathing entity in your school, if you expect your school to grow and excel beyond the limitations of one competent instructor, you. Today's successful school owners have acquired the skills and developed the training programs to provide their instructors with the same or greater teaching abilities than themselves. It is the next step in the evolution of our school ownership: recognizing leaders and giving them the training and opportunity to excel, even if they are able to excel at a higher level

than you. That is only a positive for your school and business. Create a comprehensive leadership team training program, select the best candidates and provide continuous training, and you will discover hidden leadership resources at your school. Teach them and nurture them, and you will ensure a better future for them, your school and yourself.