



# Keep your compass handy



**Eric J. Lindberg**  
is president and founder of MSI International

MAP guides the way for future leaders.

By Eric J. Lindberg

For any organization to grow and prosper, there must be a consistent commitment to identifying, grooming and retaining leaders. As the president and founder of a 40-year-old recruiting firm, I know how important that is.

Attitude may not be everything but it is an essential element for anyone in a leadership role. They might have the credentials and experience to do the job, but if they don't have a positive attitude, they won't be good leaders.



Our firm had four offices with \$2 million in sales. We were ready to grow, so we created the Management Associate Program (MAP), which has evolved into a three-day, twice-a-year course designed to groom future leaders within our organization.

MAP features lively class discussions on leadership concepts and theories, like Maslow's Theory on Hierarchy of Needs and McGregor's Theory "X" and "Y," and how to apply them to case studies. Each participant is assigned a book to read and make a presentation to the class. These range from the classic "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" and "Good to Great" to lesser-known works like "Leadership Lessons of the Navy SEALs."

Our vice presidents discuss sales, situational leadership and finance. One board of advisors member, an accomplished mergers and acquisitions consultant with offices in Atlanta and London, shares his inspiring global perspective on closing the big deals. We also discuss the history of the company and our short- and long-term plans.

We eschew micromanaging and value autonomy, so each participant learns our backyard rule. Leaders are encouraged to make their own decisions as long as it's

within the "four posts of the backyard." It must be legal, moral and ethical, within policy, and within budget. This empowers them and ensures important decisions are made quickly.

The program concludes with a test, which can take up to three hours to complete. They are asked to differentiate between a manager and a leader; list the various styles of leadership and which they think is best; and apply the traditional leadership concepts and theories to the challenges and opportunities at MSI. They also answer a series of questions related to a fictitious case study.

We grade their class participation, presentations and written test. I meet with them in person or by phone to give them their grade and talk about the experience. We are always fine tuning the program and ask for written feedback from the group on how to do that.

The MAP strategy works. When Hurricane Katrina shut down our New Orleans office in 2005, it was a MAP graduate who quickly established an office in Baton Rouge to keep the business going. That office continues to thrive under his leadership.

Investing in your future leaders through programs like this can pay big dividends. MAP provides me a rare opportunity to discover each person's leadership style, as well as how they think and reason. I learn what's happening in the trenches and that helps me make better decisions. **EB**

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Good leaders inspire others to be their best. Preeminent management consultant Peter Drucker wrote, "Leadership is not magnetic personality – that can just as well be a glib tongue. It is not making friends and influencing people – that is flattery. Leadership is lifting a person's vision to higher sights, the raising of a person's performance to a higher standard, the building of a personality beyond its normal limitations."

It was 1980 and my 12-year-old