

Leadership Academy vs. Training. How to choose?

I have the best corporate clients in the world. What makes them the best, you ask? **They truly value three of the most important assets they possess: time, people, and attention.** They realize that helping people to succeed helps the organization succeed.

Last year, I worked with 3588 participants over 132 program days. The best return on investment for organizational success and renewal came to organizations investing in intensive leadership academies.

Lancaster Consulting's leadership academy includes a cohort of 12-27 participants who spend 30-80 hours together over 2-6 months diving into about 65 leadership topics. There is typically an application process and each individual is willing to work from a growth mindset.

Why leadership academy over training?

1. Relationships. Relationships. Relationships.



First, the participants commit to authentically connecting with one another. They mentor each other, they listen to and relate to each other's successes and challenges and support and inspire each other. They go deep or go home. The open and honest communication and willingness creates strong bonds and a network of trusted and valued relationships.

Shannon Vieira, Administrative Senior Manager at Coconino County Adult Probation, and graduate of a 2019 leadership academy says it best, "The benefits of an 8-day leadership academy model is multi-fold; this approach allows for the **opportunity to develop relationships within the cohort that will endure long beyond the academy.** Attendees benefit from the additional time to **hear about other's experiences, absorb and reinforce all of the excellent information provided, and the multi-day approach best fosters the opportunity for vulnerability, self-reflection, practice, and best of all, fun."**

2. Skill-building and accountability.

All trainers know about the danger that can happen with a "one-off"; even if the one-day event is a great experience, everything can return to status-quo after the event. **Leadership academies maximize action and the potential for future success.** Participants implement homework connected to their learning; being proactive to identify opportunities and then follow through. Each participant is held accountable to initiate application.



Nicole Kiddoo, Executive Director of Lewis Mason Thurston Area Agency on Aging shares why she dedicates valuable resources, "My philosophy is that an organization should wholeheartedly invest in their number one asset, which is their team - their staff. **Being able to provide opportunities for growth, fostering a culture of leadership and giving people the tools, training and support to empower them to bring their best each day is what brought the leadership academy to our agency.** If there is one person that

can successfully support us in doing so with her expertise, positive energy and her interactive approach – it's Julie Lancaster!"

3. Real problem-solving & empowered solution-orientation.

Want to work on your “work culture”? Have a united vision? Have a team of critical thinkers? Navigate change better? Have a feedback-seeking environment? Run more effective meetings? Influence and negotiate and have “difficult conversations” better? Here is the lab for employees to learn effective “how-tos”, be empowered, and gain the support to move forward. Every day, the participants are engaging about their hot topics and solving issues together that currently exist in their work environment. They don't receive passive instruction on abstract leadership topics; they dive in headfirst to the most applicable issues for them today.



Joanne Keene, Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff at Northern Arizona University shares, “Julie has been a key component to growing leaders at Northern Arizona University. Julie’s work with the President’s University Leadership Program is helping **to develop the next generation of leaders** at NAU. Her work with the program participants is bringing this program to the next

level.”

4. Staff retention & succession planning.

Countless times, I have heard feedback about how grateful participants are to their organization; **affording them this opportunity makes them feel valued.** Before making the commitment, I ask decision makers to consider these 4 questions:

Do you value workforce development?



- Could your existing and emerging leaders use an opportunity to inspire and support their teams to get even better results?
- Is engagement, job-satisfaction, and workplace culture a priority to you?
- Do you strive to retain quality staff that are driven to learn and grow?

The research is clear; employees who feel valued stay. And valuable employees get promoted. James Jayne, County Manager of Coconino County, the second largest geographic county in the United States, says it well, “In Coconino County, **the next generation of leaders are eager to learn, develop and serve** our County. These public servants are taking advantage of the opportunities that our organization provides for professional development through our Executive Leadership Academy & Supervisors Development Academy. **Our county is better served with strong leaders**, enriched by the professional and personal development opportunities we **offer, to transform our work and deepen the engagement** of our team in service to the residents of the County. Thank you, Julie, for your partnership.”

Partnering with us and investing in leadership academies are these visionary teams: Coconino County, Northern Arizona Council of Governments, Grand Canyon Conservancy, Lewis Mason Thurston Area Agency on Aging, National Park Service, North Country Healthcare, Northern Arizona University, Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Public Transportation Authority, and Coconino County Career Center/Page Lake Powell Chamber of Commerce. If you are curious to see if this is right for you, you know who to call.

In the light of helping you connect with others, yourself, and your future

Julie