

Stepping Into Leadership

A career roadmap for Accounts Payable professionals ready to lead

Presented by Sherrie-Gay Brotemarkle

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SUMMARY

Executive summary

Leadership readiness is built *before* the title changes.

01

Know your readiness

Shift from being the person who fixes every issue to the person who develops people, standards and priorities.

02

Build visible evidence

Use AP projects—controls, automation, vendor experience and close discipline—as proof of leadership impact.

03

Launch intentionally

Use the first 90 days to create trust, clarify pain points and establish a repeatable operating rhythm.

For AP professionals considering leadership: start by leading work, then build the credibility to lead people.

ROADMAP

Today's leadership roadmap

A practical path from AP expertise to AP leadership.

1 Assess fit

What leadership requires, where you already show readiness and which gaps matter most.

2 Accelerate growth

Skills, experiences, mentors and AP projects that create leadership momentum.

3 Lead the transition

People, process and performance moves that help new leaders build credibility fast.

AP leadership lens

Lead with process discipline, controls awareness, stakeholder service and measurable improvement—not just transaction expertise.

READINESS

1 | Recognize your leadership readiness

Use readiness signals and gap areas to decide whether leadership is the right next move.

Signals you're ready

- You translate AP detail into priorities and decisions.
- You help colleagues solve exceptions without taking over.
- You stay steady during close, audit and supplier escalations.
- You invite feedback and own development gaps.
- You care about team outcomes, not only individual output.

Gaps to close before you step up

- Delegating without losing visibility.
- Handling difficult conversations constructively.
- Communicating with leaders in business terms.
- Guiding change when processes or tools shift.
- Using metrics to coach performance and improve flow.

Decision question

Do I want accountability for outcomes through other people—not just ownership of my own work?

PERSONAL PATH

Navigate personal obstacles to leadership

Turn real-life constraints into a plan that protects energy, relationships and opportunity.

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|---|--------------------|--|
| 1 | Family | Name non-negotiables, ask for support early and block protected time before workload expands. |
| 2 | Health | Protect the routines that keep you steady; leadership pace is sustainable only with recovery built in. |
| 3 | Education | Map credential or degree gaps into smaller milestones, tuition options and realistic deadlines. |
| 4 | Social life | Set expectations with your circle so networking, study and leadership reps do not feel hidden or ad hoc. |
| 5 | Opportunity | Create visibility by raising your hand for stretch work, mentors and cross-functional AP improvements. |
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Leadership goal: make the path practical enough that ambition can survive ordinary life.

STRATEGY

2 | Build a career acceleration strategy

Convert ambition into a visible, measurable development plan.

- 1 Assess** Name your strengths, gaps, costs and time required for the next leadership move.
 - 2 Invest** Use targeted learning, credentials, mentoring and cross-functional exposure to close the gaps.
 - 3 Lead** Own a small AP improvement effort—controls, automation, vendor experience or cycle-time reduction.
 - 4 Measure** Document results: fewer exceptions, faster approvals, cleaner controls or stronger stakeholder satisfaction.
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Set 30 / 60 / 90-day development targets and revisit them monthly with a manager, mentor or sponsor.

TRANSITION

Three challenges for new leaders to overcome

The title changes quickly; credibility is earned by managing relationships, change and accountability.

01

People

Former peers may still expect the old relationship. Reset roles, delegate clearly and coach without taking over.

02

Process

Sustainable improvement needs sponsorship, budget, buy-in and change discipline—not just a better workflow.

03

Peer leadership

Influence other managers, adapt to styles, handle personnel issues and own team wins and mistakes.

New-leader insight: the hard part is not knowing the work; it is building trust while changing how work gets done through others.

LAUNCH PLAN

3 | Launch leadership with a 30–60–90-day plan

New leaders earn credibility by listening first, then prioritizing visibly.

30 days

Listen & map

Meet the team, stakeholders and internal customers. Learn what works, what hurts and where risk is hiding.

60 days

Align & prioritize

Clarify expectations, choose two or three priorities and define success measures with your leader.

90 days

Execute & establish rhythm

Deliver one visible improvement, create cadence and coach ownership across the team.

Leadership transition principle

Do not try to prove you know everything. Prove that you can create clarity, trust and momentum.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Use the 4 R's to prioritize your 30–60–90 plan

Choose projects that create visible business value—not just activity.

R1 focus

Revenue growth

Prioritize improvements that speed cash flow, remove AP friction or improve working-capital visibility.

R2 focus

Risk mitigation

Reduce financial, control or process exposure by fixing exceptions, approvals and audit pain points.

R3 focus

Reputation

Strengthen credibility with colleagues, leaders, suppliers and industry peers through reliable service.

R4 focus

Retention

Improve the team experience by removing rework, clarifying ownership and coaching capability.

Strategic filter

30 days: learn which R matters most. 60 days: align one project. 90 days: show progress on at least two R's.

CONFIDENCE

Avoid imposter syndrome as a new leader

Replace self-doubt with evidence, feedback and small repeatable leadership behaviors.

- 1 Name it** Treat doubt as a signal to prepare—not proof that you do not belong in the role.
- 2 Use evidence** Keep a leadership log: decisions made, problems solved, feedback received and outcomes created.
- 3 Reframe the role** You do not need every answer. Your job is to ask better questions and create clarity.
- 4 Build support** Use manager, mentor and peer check-ins to test assumptions and practice difficult conversations.

Credibility is built through consistent behavior, not a feeling of perfect readiness.

LEADERSHIP TANGO

Leadership Tango: switch styles with intent

Sound leadership is knowing when to lead from behind and when to lead up front. The best leaders don't protect their seat; they prepare someone else to sit in it.

Lead from behind

- Build trust by letting others own decisions.
- Stay quiet so others find their voice
- Create safety to step up, fail, learn and try again.
- Coach learning without taking the work back.
- Grow capability and confidence over time.

Lead up front

- Provide direction and set the tone and pace.
- Visibility when uncertainty is high and demands confident leadership
- Give clarity on priorities, standards and trade-offs.
- Drive momentum when the team is stuck or uncertain.
- Take accountability when things go wrong.

Switching question

Does this moment need space for others to own and learn—or clear direction and pace from me?

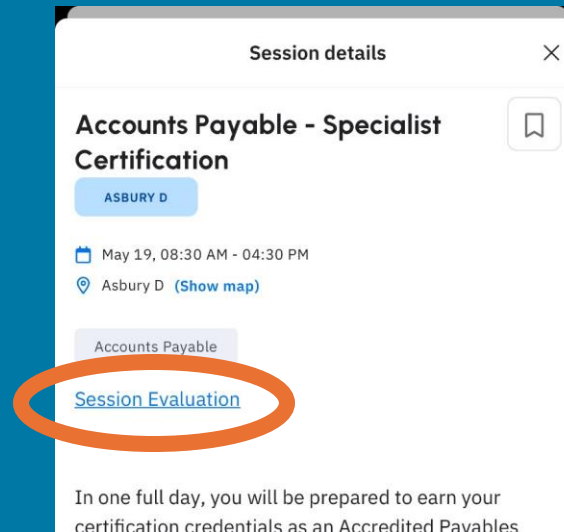
Actionable Takeaways

1. **This week:** Complete a leadership readiness self-assessment and ask one manager or mentor for specific feedback.
2. **This month:** Choose one AP process, controls or stakeholder problem where you can lead a small measurable improvement.
3. **This quarter:** Build a leadership portfolio: outcomes, lessons learned, stakeholder feedback and criteria for your next role.

Bottom line: the next leadership role is not a leap; it is a sequence of visible leadership behaviors practiced now.

Please tell us what you think!

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QUESTIONS?

What leadership move will you make next?

Thank you | Speaker: Sherrie-Gay Brotemarkle

Discussion prompts

Where are you already leading without the title?

Which leadership gap would create the biggest career lift?

What is one measurable AP improvement you can lead next?

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