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Developing Leaders and
Leadership Development

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Developing Leaders and Leadership Development¹

by

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¹ Part of the introduction to *Critical Writings on Business & Management: Leadership Development*, an anthology on leadership development.

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ABSTRACT

In this introduction to a book on leadership development, we argue that leaders in the 21st century need to recognize that building their organization's leadership capabilities is going to be a major differentiator for future success. We emphasize that organizations that do not have properly structured leadership development processes in place will be at a disadvantage. Organizations that take leadership development seriously outperform the competition. Furthermore, we also put forth that as the world is changing, leadership is no longer defined by what a single leader does (the "Great Man" trait theories) but by the ability to collaborate, motivate and to manage networks. In this day and age of highly diverse teams, matrix structures, and global organizations, the talent in network building is key to creating collaborative teams and a boundaryless organization. We suggest that due to the changing nature of organizations—a more distributed view of leadership will be needed thus shifting the focus from the traditional single leader to an intricate and complex web of leaders who possess a range of abilities and experiences necessary to ensure that the leadership function is carried out to the benefit of the wider organisation.

From what we have learned from our own experience, we argue that the best approach to developing leaders is through various forms of self-assessment, action learning, and apprenticeship activities. Furthermore, with the emergence of the knowledge economy, we explore the fact that companies are now playing an increasingly active role in the continued education of their own workforce—one example being the creation of corporate universities. In this context, we also discuss the leadership development 'toolbox' that is needed to make leadership development activities a success. Some of the more commonly used tools in this toolbox include classroom lectures, leadership exercises, an outdoor adventure training, case analyses, simulations, and 360-degree evaluations (which is basically a technique involving the evaluation of leader by his/her boss, peers, subordinates and the leader himself/herself).

KEY WORDS: Leader and leadership development; distributed leadership; network building; boundaryless organizations; talent management; corporate universities.

A community is like a ship; everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm.

—*Henrik Ibsen*

The final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on.

—*Walter Lippman*

What makes leadership is the ability to get people to do what they don't want to do and like it.

—*Harry Truman*

Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.

—*John Kennedy*

Introduction

The historian Thomas Carlyle once said, “The history of the world is but the biography of great men.” While history chronicles the lives of well-known leaders such as Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Peter the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Winston Churchill, and Nelson Mandela, most of us realize that our life stories are not going to be read in the history books. Although leaders come in all shapes and forms, very few of us are going to be, or will be, leaders with a big “L.” This doesn’t mean, however, that we will be strangers to smaller acts of leadership. It might even be true to say that all of us are in the leadership business, be it at work or in our personal lives. As the challenges of leadership are all around us, a leader is anyone who successfully drives the accomplishments of a group of people or even to the success of an organization, a community or a country. In the organizational world, effective leadership and organizational success are closely intertwined with no organization stronger than the quality of its leadership. Naturally, these observations beg the question of what is this leadership business all about.

The “Great Man” theories

For centuries, political scientists, philosophers, sociologists, psychologists, and management scholars have tried to pinpoint the essence of leadership. Some wits have said that leadership is like pornography— you know it when you see it! Although we may recognize leadership when we see it, describing what it is all about is another matter altogether. Leadership is a complicated concept and the struggle for a more differentiated understanding has been an on-going process. For example, with mixed degrees of success, scholars of leadership have been trying to isolate leadership attributes, or traits, from an analysis of history's most successful and prominent military, political, religious, and business figures (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Bass and Stogdill, 1989; Bass, 1990; Kouzes and Posner, 1995) The assumption is that certain people possess inherent qualities and traits that make them better suited to leadership. These trait studies have contributed to the concept of the “Great Man,” theory of leadership. Under this theory, leadership is born, not made and privileged to that “exalted” personality who has the rare ability to direct, command, or guide an activity or a group. The Great Man theory of leadership also carries the implicit assumption of hierarchical relationships: it suggests the existence of a hierarchy of power, organized into ranks, with the leader at the pinnacle.

This hierarchical point of view held sway for decades into the twentieth century, and is reflected in the dominant form of organizational structure: each superior exercises authority over their subordinates, who in turn are expected to do exactly what their boss wants of them. But as organizations and society have evolved, so have the requirements for and definition of leadership.

A changing landscape

The changing nature of the workforce and the dramatic rise in organizational complexity (with many organizations shifting to matrix management and other more organic configurations) has necessitated a more collaborative outlook vis-à-vis organizational leadership (Covey, 1991; Block, 1993; Heifetz, 1994; Kets de Vries, 2006). Moreover the greater dependency on technologies and the rise of distributed work arrangements have placed new demands on how leaders interact with their people. In our post-industrial society, the shortcomings of command-and-control hierarchical structures have become ever more apparent. Many companies, recognizing the fact that they may be handicapped by their current organizational and leadership systems, have started to question the way they need to manage themselves. A distributed view of leadership is on the rise, shifting the focus from the traditional single leader to an intricate and complex web of leaders who possess a range of abilities and experiences necessary to ensure that the leadership function is carried out to the benefit of the wider organisation.

The focus on relationships

Apart from the study of the attributes that characterized “Great Men”, another prevalent theme in leadership research is the distinction between task- vs. relationship-driven leadership (McGregor, 1960; Blake and Mouton, 1964). Obviously, one of the criteria of leadership effectiveness is the completion of vital tasks and objectives. However, if leaders do not spend the time to create relationships and bonds among their followers, they will not be able to mobilize their people to successfully complete these tasks. Thus a key challenge for leaders is to find the appropriate balance between task and relationship management, given the specific organizational context in which they work.

The focus on context

Under contingency and situational theories of leadership (Fiedler, 1967), leadership is subject to a number of variables, including the leadership style, qualities of the followers, and aspects of the situation. No one leadership style is best in all situations. Instead, leadership is the ability to be flexible and to adapt leadership styles according to changing variables.

The focus on transformation

In considering the different approaches to leadership, we need to realize that previously, no real distinction had been made between leading and managing. A leader was anyone in a position of power and authority. However, given the changing world we live in, a further distinction has been made between two forms of leadership: transactional and transformational (House, 1977; Zaleznik, 1977; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). The transactional form of leadership can be viewed as an exchange relationship between two parties to accomplish a set of specific tasks through a set of requirements, conditions and rewards (or punishment). This is the equivalent to managing the status quo of organizational life. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, is more transcendental in nature. It is concerned with the implementation of new ideas; providing compelling visions of a better future and inspiring and motivating employees to achieve higher levels of commitment. Exercising transformational leadership implies a capacity to define oneself to others in a way that clarifies and expands their vision of the future. Transformational leaders are leaders who continuously reinvent themselves; individuals who stay flexible and adaptable, and improve those around them. A transactional leader takes people where they want to go, while a transformational leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go, but where they ought to be. They take organizations to a higher level. The transactional leaders work within the organizational culture as it exists; the transformational leader changes the organizational culture (Schein, 1992).

A process of mutual influence

What is becoming increasingly clear is that the key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority (Hesselbein, Goldsmith et al., 1996). Leadership is defined not by what a single leader does but as the ability to collaborate, motivate and to manage networks. Where there is constant change, where organizations need to operate globally, where technology is transforming the ways in which people interact, the focus of our understanding of leaders has shifted towards a process of influence between a leader and followers to attain group, organizational, or societal goals. Today, hierarchy is out and influencing skills are in. Contemporary leaders don't force people to follow—they invite people on a journey. Moreover, contemporary leaders recognize that organizations are communities in their own right, where people develop a sense of belonging and find ways to develop their full potential.

In order to have an empowering influence on their people, a new set of qualities, going beyond traditional managerial skills and knowledge, is needed. 21st century leadership requires a deep understanding of the nature of influence processes, an understanding of the forces of cooperation, and the ability to build collaborative cultures (Block, 1993). These leaders must also lead by pathos through the creation of a shared understanding, engaging and inspiring their people, and paying attention to their professional and personal growth.

Moving beyond the “Great Man” theories

Hence, leadership is becoming more enabling, participative and distributive in nature as opposed to remaining directive and performing. “Great Man” theories of leadership, fixed leadership traits and simple dichotomies like being task- or relationship-oriented have become hopelessly outdated. Furthermore, leadership can no longer be viewed as the prerogative of a single or a few people at the apex of an organization. To be effective in a changing organizational landscape, leadership capabilities need to be distributed and developed throughout the organization. The new approach to leadership, then, is to produce more leaders, not more followers.

Taking leadership development seriously

In this context, leaders in the 21st century recognize that building their organization's leadership potential is going to be a major differentiator for future success. For them, the development of a leadership pipeline in their organization will be a top priority. These leaders know that they must venture into new waters for concepts, processes and practices to enable their people to develop the qualities necessary for success today and in the future.

But what makes for a good leader? We can't simply say, "If you have a combination of such and such qualities, you will be a great leader." This is because leadership always needs to be seen in context. Due to the different and changing parameters of leadership (i.e. national and corporate culture, industry, level of education, organizational life cycle), leaders have to possess a wide range of competences and approaches to be able to execute their role successfully (Kets de Vries, 2007). Contrary to the "Great Man" cookie-cutter recipe of leadership, present-day leaders recognize that in order to be effective, they need to be able to adapt their style to suit the different situations they will face. Moreover, leaders do not operate in isolation. Just as there is no baby without a mother, there is no leadership without followers. Hence, the leadership paradox is such that although leaders need to be strong, their strength comes not from commanding their people but from the ability to inspire them to follow. They also need to be aware of the darker side of leadership; leaders can have a very toxic influence on their organizations (Kets de Vries, 2001; Kets de Vries, 2006).

Additionally, many leadership scholars have suggested that the most effective kind of leadership has a values-driven base (Greenleaf and Spears, 1998; Kets de Vries, 2009). The assumption is that authenticity marks the difference between effective and dysfunctional leadership. Here, authenticity refers to qualities such as openness, honesty, transparency and being real. It refers to the kinds of leaders who feel "good in their skin", who do not feel a need to impress or please others, and whose effectiveness comes from being open and authentic with themselves and with others. Furthermore, such leaders not only inspire those around them, they also know how to bring people together around a shared purpose and a common set of values, and motivate them to create value for everyone involved. Moreover, they work hard at developing self-awareness through persistent and often courageous self-exploration (Kets de Vries, Korotov, and Florent-Treacy, 2007; Kets de Vries, Guillen, Korotov, and Florent-Treacy, 2010). They are reflective practitioners, who take the time to examine their experiences and learn from their failures. In the context of self-development as a leader, they strive for qualities such as courage, confidence, care, self-efficacy, decisiveness, honesty, and integrity.

Leadership development starts at home

The aforementioned qualities, however, do not mysteriously appear when the leader becomes an adult. Many of these qualities are in fact cultivated early in life. Indeed, adulthood may already be too late a stage to begin work on some of these qualities, as an individual's character is largely formed by then and hence more difficult to change. Ideally, leadership development begins in the home environment. Parents play a key role in setting the leadership

development process in motion. They are the ones who impart key values and who cultivate the potential that exists inside every human being that once unleashed can make any vision, dream, or desire a reality. The implication is that if we are serious about leadership development, we may have to start rather early by providing ample opportunities for cultivating young ‘potentials’ to become truly effective future leaders.

But while developing leadership skills at an early stage has many advantages, there will be many opportunities during the human life cycle when a person’s leadership capabilities may still be explored and developed. To quote the American football coach Vincent Lombardi, “Leaders aren’t born, they are made.” Like many other things in life, leaders are the product of experience, hopefully starting early and involving a lengthy and rich developmental journey over the course of a lifetime.

As suggested, to be an effective leader requires more than putting them into a position of authority over a group of people. Many other qualities are necessary: the ability to inspire and empower the members of their team to achieve their full potential, the ability to provide focus; the possession of interpersonal, communication, team-building and motivational skills, and the ability to develop other leaders. As the German writer Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe said, “Treat people as if they were what they ought to be and you help them to become what they are capable of being.” As history has shown, people like to be guided by a person whom they respect, a person who inspires trust, someone who provides a clear sense of direction. Such an individual is the outcome of a continuous process of self-study, education, training and experience. And that’s what developing leaders is all about.

Leader and leadership development

At this point it may be useful to comment on the recently accentuated difference between leader development and leadership development (Day, 2000). Leader development focuses on the development of the individual, or human capital; the emphasis is on cultivating desired attributes in a leader in terms of behaving, thinking or feeling. Leadership development, on the other hand, concerns the development of social capital; it focuses on the development of leadership as a process of influence. This process encompasses interpersonal relationships, affective experiences, social influence processes, and team dynamics between the leader and his/her team, the contextual factors surrounding the team such as the perception of the organizational climate, and the social network linkages between the team and other groups in the organization. It involves helping groups of people become more effective in problem solving in a wide range of situations. Such fine distinctions are rarely made; more often than

not, leader and leadership development are bundled together, with leadership development serving as the most common denominator.

As a caveat, it needs to be said that there is now a growing recognition that leadership development involves more than just developing individual leaders. As mentioned before, focusing only on the development of individual leaders precludes the complex interface of communities of people, and the role of reciprocal relationships in social settings. Because either approach is incomplete on its own (leadership development transcends but does not replace the development of individual leaders), the systemic point of view—taking the total system into consideration—has become the widely accepted approach. This in turn has led to a greater focus on the context in which leadership is developed, a thoughtful consideration about how to best use leadership competencies, and how to deal with work/life balance issues (McCall 1998; Conger, 1999; Charan, Drotter et al., 2000; Tichy and Nancy Cardwell, 2002).

Putting aside possible confusion in terminology, the fact remains that nothing is more crucial to an organization's performance than the cultivation of its future leaders. Leadership development has turned into a key strategic issue for contemporary organizations and there is now considerable evidence to suggest that organizations that do not have properly structured leadership development processes in place are at a disadvantage in the present competitive landscape (Jaques, 1989; Tichy, 1997; Ulrich, 2007) In contrast, organizations that take leadership development seriously, outperform the competition.

It is not always clear, however, what the best approach is for developing leaders, nor how to distinguish among the existing parade of leadership development programs those that are useful from those that bring little return on investment. In the current landscape of leadership development programs, learning modules may take place in the classroom, in the outdoors, on the job, or in an intermediate space between all of these. Opportunities for learning can be of a “McDonald-like” nature—meaning highly standardized—or of a “haute couture” variety, being highly personalized.

Generally, leader development occurs when a conceptual understanding of leadership is provided, when leadership skills are practiced, and there is an awareness of skills that are not easily taught. A considerable amount of leader development occurs in the early career stage when the participant has time to engage in this type of training. However, at this career point, participants often lack the context for the training material, as their actual leadership experiences tend to be minimal. Latterly, we have seen greater efforts to develop people at later stages in the career life cycle (after all, we are living and working longer). Whatever the

approach or combination of approaches taken, leadership development initiatives must be a systemic and organizational endeavor in order for companies to keep producing viable leaders (Ulrich, Zenger et al., 1999).

The leadership development pipeline

As the name of the leadership development game has changed over the years, today's businesses compete on the strength of their intellectual rather than financial capital. While many companies used to view leadership development as a once-in-a-while activity like training programs or workshops, this attitude is changing. Leadership development has become a more continuous, holistic process that is at the heart of everything that leaders do. Great companies realize that developing more leaders is one of the top priorities in the business today.

Leaders in such organizations create systems that encourage, reward and support the development of leaders at all levels. There will be a highly structured process for developing future leaders depending on the context the organization is operating in. There is no copybook style of how leaders are developed in an organization; the fact is that each company has their own way of doing it. No two organizations go about this important process in the same way. The objective of the leadership development process remains the same, however: the creation of sustainability.

Among individuals and teams in vanguard organizations there is a sense of urgency to get things done. Their leaders are preoccupied by change, and they want every employee in the organization have the same outlook. They also create the excitement needed to remain committed to change. In addition, change management processes are linked with quantifiable business results; the critical success and failure factors in change efforts are continually assessed; vision is created and communicated to give clear mandates to the people in the organization. Furthermore, resistance to change is overcome in the short and long term. In such organizations, a culture of change has become a way of life.

To enable such a culture of change, leadership development programs will be a *sine qua non*. Many of these highly successful organizations have created leadership competency models to ensure that leaders at every level are developed based on required critical skills and competencies. The competencies are well articulated and communicated across the organization. Furthermore, behaviors with respect to the desired competencies are

emphasized, assessed and developmental programs to acquire these skills and competencies are put into place.

In these organizations, a leadership development/succession-planning program is put into place that ensures a steady line-up of leaders for every critical position within the company. There will be a systematic way to progress from managing oneself, to managing others, to managing teams, to managing the overall organization (and especially the corporate culture). Each of these steps creates new challenges necessitating different developmental efforts. In these developmental programs, different cognitive skills are explored such as problem solving, locating and implementing the next generation of best practices, and developing a deep understanding of how to create superior business processes. But whatever competencies are required, the development of people skills—especially emotional intelligence—will be critical.

Leadership development requirements

Of prime concern to senior management in such organizations is the question of what can be done to help leaders at different levels of the organization grow and become more competent. What pathways can be created towards mature leadership? What needs to be done to select the best and the brightest and monitor their success over time? Furthermore, senior executives are also preoccupied with the question of where they are headed in the future and what specific challenges are coming to the fore. And, always top of mind is the question of whether they have a program of assignments to groom talent by providing the required set of knowledge, skills, and experience for the future.

Great organizations try to groom leaders who can think strategically but also possess the collaborative skills to tap into the entire organization's talent and energy. They seek out leaders who can move and respond quickly in the face of ambiguity; who are capable of dealing with immediate problems and opportunities, and who can, at the same time, deal with continuous and discontinuous change.

In these organizations, senior management realizes that the search for a “messiah” or the identification of a “heroic” leader who knows exactly what to do will be a misguided one. Today’s competitive environment is too fluid and organizational complexity too great to make the heroic leadership style effective. The focus can no longer be on a lone ranger to single-handedly solve all issues; it must be on the kind of leader who can cope with these various challenges as a team player, with an emphasis on leadership complementarity in decision-making and influencing people (Kets de Vries, 2007).

Building a leadership development pipeline

Hence, we can expect a range of leadership requirements depending on the kind of organization that is being targeted and the challenges it faces. We like to emphasize that effective leadership development in this day and age is not a generic course that can be taught the same way at all levels of the organization. People who truly understand leadership development need to assess their organization's specific contextual needs and to have a systemic outlook towards leadership development. Smart companies get the highest return on their development dollar either by investing in a systemic approach for developing the entire leadership pipeline or by identifying which level of leadership will produce the greatest return. Effective leadership development initiatives also require active participation from the top, with senior executives implicated in the process by making certain that leadership is taught appropriately at all critical levels, always keeping in mind future challenges.

Talent management

A primary challenge for leadership development is talent management. Organizations have always struggled with the recruitment, retention and development of high quality people. We have observed that linking talent management to career development can make a significant difference in recruitment and retention (Berger and Berger, 2003; Lawler III, 2008). Comprehensive leadership development pipelines that strengthen and align a collaborative leadership approach are successful because they are linked to both business results and career development. In the best places to work, senior management is heavily involved in the leadership competency identification process to ensure that competencies are aligned with the larger strategic goals of the company; this in turn creates higher stakes and better buy-in at all levels.

The role of Human Resources

Leadership development cannot and does not happen by chance, especially if we want to achieve the standards of excellence and versatility necessary for mastering today's complex business environment. As indicated earlier, leadership development requires meaningful support from top management. Unfortunately, many senior executives still hold on to the idea that the Human Resources department is primarily responsible for developing their organization's future leaders. Taking this point of view is a serious mistake. The crucial activity of leadership development does not belong primarily to HR; indeed, it is one of the essential roles of senior management. Leader development efforts that produce the best leaders are those in which senior leaders not only plan the initiative, but also to take an *active part* as leadership coaches, mentors, teachers, and role models (Kets de Vries, Korotov, and

Florent-Treacy, 2007; Kets de Vries, Guillen, Korotov, and Florent-Treacy, 2010). Furthermore, as has been mentioned, effective leadership development is not just an event—it is an ongoing journey for both emerging leaders and senior management. If designed well, the meshing of talent management and leadership development will produce extraordinary results for both the individual and the company.

Corporate universities

Adults today can expect to change roles five to seven times in their working life, whether due to changes in technology, shifting markets or worker preference. Traditional universities and business schools will not be able to handle these fluctuating educational and training needs alone. Companies will have to step up to the challenge of maintaining and retaining their own well-trained workforce.

With the emergence of the knowledge economy, companies are now playing an increasingly active role in the continued education of their own workforce. Given the fast-changing environment in which they operate, many companies have recognized their responsibility to provide employees with learning opportunities that evolve with changing business needs in order to sustain business success. Corporate universities are on the rise to meet the specific learning needs of a company's employees (Meister, 1998; Allen, 2002).

Here we like to note that corporate universities are not a new idea. General Motors was a pioneer, with the creation of the General Motors Institute in 1927, but no other company really followed suit until the late 1950s, when a number of corporate universities were developed. General Electric introduced Crotonville Management Development Institute and Walt Disney launched Disney University in that decade. Corporate universities did not see resurgence, however, until the 1990s.

A corporate university can be defined as any educational entity that is a strategic tool designed to assist its parent organization in achieving its goals by conducting activities that foster individual and organizational learning and knowledge. It is the strategic umbrella for developing and educating its employees, customers, and suppliers in order to meet an organization's business strategies.

A corporate university creates awareness about and transmits what has been called the three C's of organizational life: Corporate Citizenship, Contextual Framework and Core Workplace Competencies. In taking on this role, the corporate university has as overriding objective to communicate the company's vision to all employees, from the clerical staff to the CEO, and

to help employees understand the company's values and culture so that they know what the company is trying to achieve and how they can help it succeed. In successful corporate universities, executives build both individual and organizational competencies, thereby improving the company's overall performance.

The leadership development “tool box”

The leadership development toolbox consists of a range of teaching methods and techniques and key components/processes that may be employed in the design and implementation of a leadership development initiative.

Some commonly used techniques during leadership development include classroom lectures, leadership exercises, an outdoor adventure training, case analyses, simulations, 360-degree evaluations (which is basically a technique involving the evaluation of leader by his/her boss, peers, subordinates and the leader himself/herself) and so on. Since different people have different learning styles, most organizations tend to draw from a variety of techniques and tools (instead of relying on a single method) to ensure that key skills are imparted effectively to the maximum number of emerging and actual leaders. If parents are pivotal in imparting leadership values during the early life of an individual, the role of top-level leaders in organizations is equally vital for reinforcing and maturing these values. Top-level leaders who are honest, who care, who demonstrate concern and who empower, will make it that much easier for new and younger leaders to develop further in their organizations.

Key components of leadership development programs

Leadership development is about *action and reflection*, and both are necessary in order to develop critical skills such as analysis, strategic planning and critical consciousness. Without space for reflection: “What did you learn from that experience?”; “In hindsight, what could you have done differently?”— one's ability to lead will not evolve. Leadership development is also about *encouragement*, recognizing that people frequently carry enormous insecurities about being good enough, having enough experience, or having anything worthwhile to say and doubting that others think they're capable enough. Hence, tipping points need to be created to change people's dreams into purposeful action. Some people may have brilliant ideas, but if they don't actualize them, they will be to no avail.

Creating self-awareness

As Socrates once said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” From our experience, the best approach to developing leaders is through self-assessment, action learning, and various forms of apprenticeship. To become more self-aware, we need to develop an understanding of ourselves in many areas. Key areas for self-awareness include our personality traits, personal values, beliefs, attitudes, habits, emotions, and the psychological needs that drive our behavior.

After identifying an individual’s strengths and weaknesses, he or she can then embark on a personal development plan. A personal development plan can be seen as a process through which the individual prepares a training and development course of action, and takes responsibility for its implementation. Essentially, the purpose of these programs is to increase self-awareness and emphasize self-exploration. The relationship to leader development is that leaders who are deeply in touch with their personal dreams and talents will act to fulfill them. They will also be better prepared to lead others since their self-awareness leads to greater awareness of the effects of their behavior on others. The growing interest in values such as authenticity, credibility, trustworthiness, and genuineness supports the contemporary emphasis on a leader’s emotional intelligence or the more affective component of leadership.

Action learning

The observation has been made that a desk is a dangerous place from which to rule the world. A developing leader can’t learn to do a task by merely reading a book or going to class. We believe that one of the best ways to develop executives is to place them in roles that continually challenge them to reach their full potential. To do so, we need to give prospective leaders *real* business problems and challenges to solve within their daily work contexts (Dotlich and Noel, 1998; Marquardt, 1999). We have learned also from our own experiences with leadership development that prospective leaders have to get out and about. They need to be given the opportunity to try out new skills, behaviors, and thinking. Action learning is learning based on critical reflection on concrete experiences. Reflection takes place through group discussion, trial and error, discovery, and learning from and with each other. It is a process by which groups of people address actual workplace issues and problems in complex situations and different conditions.

There’s nothing more motivating and engaging than giving high potentials meaningful and challenging assignments related to key challenges their organizations are currently facing. The search for creative solutions to these problems puts “real skin in the game”. Such challenges, at their best, push prospective leaders out of their comfort zone. They deepen their awareness of the organization’s complexity and build ownership and responsibility. In

addition, these challenges orientate their perspective on their company's future and can give senior management insights into how these high potentials think and what their leadership potential is. By involving emerging leaders in the company's real problems and challenges, their commitment, knowledge, insights, creativity, and resiliency will be tested and revealed—allowing top management to assess if such candidates possess the key qualities needed for the organization's future leadership.

Building networks

One of the important functions of leadership development is building networks—to connect people from different functions and areas. The objective is to prevent silo formation in organizations, break down functional areas, and to encourage executives to make commitments to others outside their direct sphere of influence. In this day and age of highly diverse teams, matrix structures, and global organizations, network building is key to creating collaborative teams and a boundaryless organization. It implies having executives go beyond formal structures and build networks outside their immediate ones to enhance the social capital of the organization. Strong ties will fortify loyalty, trust, mutual respect, commitment and accountability, all necessary ingredients for interpersonal cooperation and effective teams, and better performance (Kets de Vries, 2006).

Role modeling

A leader leads by example, whether he or she intends to or not. Role models in an organization, whether formal or informal, are important to leadership development. They show the way things should be done. They provide information, support and challenge to their followers so that they can meet their own development needs. Role models also influence subordinates to develop their own, unique leadership style. This will also have a reciprocal influence on leaders themselves by reinforcing the effectiveness of their own authentic approach to leading. Leadership development is thereby served from both a follower and a leader perspective.

Leadership coaching/ mentoring

Leaders do much more than just come up with new ideas and approaches to problem solving. They lead because they attract followers and are able to achieve great things through the work of others. For this reason, a leadership development program effort needs to include the mentoring and the training of prospective leaders in how to coach others, how to create attractive performance goals, how to give performance feedback, motivate and inspire others to excellence, and how to build a team (Kilberg, 2000; Kets de Vries, Korotov, and Florent-Treacy, 2007; Kets de Vries, Guillen, Korotov, and Florent-Treacy, 2010).

Mentoring can be viewed as a long-term relationship in which a senior executive supports the professional and personal development of a junior executive. Through this arrangement, which can be either formal or informal, the junior executive acquires the skills necessary for the next generation of leadership.

Executive coaching can be used to help leaders develop their coaching skills. Executive coaching can be described as a helping relationship formed between a client who has managerial authority and responsibility in an organization and a leadership coach who uses a wide variety of behavioral techniques and methods to help the client achieve a mutually identified set of goals to improve his or her professional performance and life satisfaction. It can be viewed as a collaborative effort to better understand the challenges and constraints the coachee is subjected to, while exploring new possibilities. To assist leadership coach and coachee in discussing developmental areas, a coach may use multi-party feedback assessments to help potential leaders understand their strengths and weaknesses while also experiencing personal growth by bringing out emotions. In a feedback-intensive program, development means helping a person to see significant patterns of behavior more clearly, to understand the attitudes and motivations underlying these patterns, to reassess what makes the person more or less effective relative to the goals he or she wants to attain, and to evaluate alternative ways of meeting these goals.

Multi-party feedback

Feedback really is the breakfast of champions. It provides a way to turn experience and practice into improved performance. Multi-party feedback helps executives learn to work more effectively together. (Teams know more about how team members are performing than their supervisor.) Multi-party feedback also makes executives more accountable to one another as they share the knowledge on each member's performance (Kets de Vries, 2004). A well-planned process can improve communication and team development. It can also create tipping points, by giving executives that extra push to overcoming the inertia of addressing certain leadership qualities that they know to be dysfunctional. Implemented with care and training to enable people to better serve customers and develop their own careers, 360-degree feedback is a positive addition to a performance management system. This type of feedback provides insight from multiple sources about the skills and behaviors of an individual within the organization.

Debriefing: Reflection in action

Debriefing sessions are a popular source of learning in leadership development programs. Often conducted during and after a self-assessment, team building or action learning activity, the purpose of a debriefing is to help participants make connections and to concretize learning in a number of areas including: preferred learning style, personality type, leadership, confrontation, communication and so forth.

Closing thoughts

As we live in age where the psychological contract between organization and individual has been broken, organizations can no longer offer guaranteed employment but they can offer employability. They can have a stake in the continued development of their people. As the nature of the relationship between employer and employee has changed, individual executives now hold the lion's share of responsibility for their own development as leaders. Paradoxically, taking charge of their own development will make them more desirable for their organization. The paradox of employability doesn't mean, however, that it isn't in the organization's best interest to be actively involved in leadership development. Developing the leadership potential in others enables executives to build great companies to work for—companies whose vision, direction, and inspiration is under the responsibility of many rather than dependent on a few. While there may be some top executives who remain threatened by and skeptical of the idea that people other than themselves could provide leadership, harboring such thoughts will be perilous for the company's future. Indeed, developing leaders is one of the most important things senior executives can do to advance the success of the company.

The study and practice of leadership development continues to be a work in progress. Other ways may need to be found to foster learning, notably to help people become more creative and to think out of the box. To be effective in future leadership development efforts, we should not think only on “what we know and have” but also on “what we aspire to become.” It is not cost cutting but strategic innovation that differentiates great from mediocre organizations. We also cannot emphasize too strongly that leadership development takes time. Organizations need to take a long-term systemic approach to leadership development and

create a supportive environment and culture for doing so. There's no such thing as the "One-Minute Leader" because real leadership requires years of development and hard work.

Senior management in every organization needs to come to terms with the idea that the only test of leadership is that somebody follows. The mark of a real leader today is in how many leaders are coming up behind him or her. Developing and cultivating the next generation of leaders remains a complex life-long task that takes a concerted effort from all concerned parties including parents, educators and the leaders in the workforce. The earlier this fact is recognized, the faster we will enable more of our people to become effective leaders in the 21st Century.

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