

THE ESSENTIALS OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

By Russell D. Bredholt, Jr.
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Background and Purpose of the Study

For two years as part of a multi-client study, I examined the subject of leadership development. The purpose of the study was to see what, if any, were the differences between the popular subject of leadership and the concept of leadership development.

For most of our clients, their thinking on the subject of leadership development has been limited to the latest best selling book or seminar. All are definitely interested in leadership but the context in which discussions about it have taken place has been primarily the individual. As we discovered in the study, effective leadership development must be placed in the context of a group purpose of which leadership then becomes an important subtopic.

Methodology

In order to get at the insights we were seeking, we did a literature search, read a wide variety of books and case studies on leadership development, attended conferences on the subject, and spoke with experts in the leadership development field. While we looked at for-profit, nonprofit and military models, we believe that the principles identified in the study have application for churches and religious organizations as well.

A Definition of Leadership Development

Our working definition of leadership development is "an intentional effort to provide leaders and emerging leaders with opportunities to learn, grow and change." Its purpose is "to produce individuals over time with the skills to function effectively within the organization." (The Lessons of Experience)

Key Findings of the Study

Leadership development is seen by those who practice it well as a key strategic priority, not an appendage to everything else. It is a missional issue, not a human resources issue or a time and budget casualty.

The capacity to develop leaders begins with a strong sense of organizational definition. Identity is who you are and built on one's beliefs as opposed to image or what other people think about you. Since we are trying to develop people and help them function successfully within a specific organizational culture, group identity is very important. This is foundational to effective leadership development.

Organizational definition is more than a mission statement. It is what makes the group unique or different. It is what lies at the core of everything, even if it is

unspoken by the members of the group. It is somewhat like a secret code. So often, the passion is missing because people are trying to inculcate something that belongs to someone else and there is little or no attempt at self-discovery. Pastors tend to follow the calendar and denominational programs. They parrot what others think about "church" and incorporate that as their own understanding. Clarity of your organizational definition is essential, especially in times of major transition and change.

The core issue of leadership development is found in the purpose of the group. John Gardner in his writings was the first person to call my attention to this key aspect of leadership development. Leaders, even entrepreneurs, must function with other people. Therefore, leadership development is best understood in the context of the particular group to which a leader or emerging leader belongs.

There is an inherent tension between the values of the organization and the individual. Organizations, like people, have values. To be effective in an organization (or a church), a person's values must be compatible with the organization's values. They do not need to be the same, but they must be close enough to co-exist. Otherwise the person will not only be frustrated but will also not produce the intended results (the goal of development). It is always a balancing act or continuum. On one end is the individual and on the other end the organization. The goal is to develop both and manage the tension that is inherent rather than to pit one against the other. What is often best for the organization is not best for the individual and vice versa. This helps explain why some pastors do well within a faith group where they may not agree with everything in the administrative manual or guidelines. However, they agree with enough of its key components to function successfully within that particular denominational culture.

The last thing we need or want are robots. This is where a leader can miss the point when someone disagrees with them. They fail to understand that people can differ and still reside in the same tent as long as the overall values are compatible and complementary. Effective leaders know how to be discreet with their thoughts in settings with others.

Life is a developer of leaders. The notion that people develop whether it is planned or not is instructive. We discovered that a common perception is to think that a leader has to be in a formal program in order to develop. A response to this finding is to think of ways we can shape and influence that development so it positively impacts the church and the individual. Our tendency is to want to control things, including people. The study indicates that we should be spending time molding the clay, not controlling it.

It is important to recognize that we are talking about improving performance/results with leadership development. We are not trying to change how someone is wired. Too much time is wasted on trying to change an individual's composition rather than focusing on developing their unique abilities and talents.

Finally, the individual is ultimately responsible for their development. As much as we have emphasized group context and formal programs, ultimately the individual is responsible for his or her own development. The second most important person is the supervisor if one exists. I found that most people believe as I do, that leadership can be learned but it cannot be taught. This is arguable to be sure, but the seminal

thinkers have good reason to believe this is so. My own experience confirms this. Therefore, we have a major responsibility to help people know how to learn.

Learning Is Education, Training and Experience

Learning has three categories and they are not all weighted equally.. Additionally, we must clarify the distinction between education and training. While they are related, they are not the same thing. Each has a different premise and a different outcome. This is news to most people. It also helps to explain some of the frustration between practitioners and those involved in seminary or theological education. There are limitations as to what can be done in each category.

Education is focused on the individual first and the organization second. Its purpose is to draw out the learner, to help the individual develop their ability to learn and to learn how to think for themselves. Education exposes the learner to different points of view as opposed to a single perspective.

Training is focused on the organization first and the individual second. Its purpose is to equip the learner with the skill or skills to do a particular job or task. With training, the end is known. Training also assumes a right and wrong way to do something.

Experience uses both education and training and may involve starting something from scratch, fixing something or a turn around situation. It might include assuming increased responsibility or assignment to a special project or task. It may often involve hardships.

Education and training, if properly understood, can help us learn more from our experiences. The greatest teacher of all, experience receives little attention. According to the research, experience is 70% of learning. Experience alone, however, is not sufficient. The value of experience lies in both what kind of experience you have and what you take away from it. Not all experiences are created equal. In leadership development, the challenge is to be aware of certain kinds of experiences that tend to contribute the most to a leader's development.

Additionally, we found that colleagues, friends, spouses, coaches and mentors aid leaders through their experiences. However, few people have a mentor and most do not have a coach. That leaves it to the others to provide help along the way.

For those who might be concerned at this point about too much secular thinking in our approach to leadership development, it is important to acknowledge the significance and distinctiveness of spiritual growth. Understanding the purposes of God, working out one's faith in actual situations, and mastery of spiritual disciplines are essential. One could argue that spiritual growth comes through education, training and experience, all hallmarks of becoming a disciple, or a lifelong learner. Dr. Robert Clinton has written extensively about the phases of a leader's development and notes the sovereignty of our Lord in how someone grows and develops.

Objectives of an Effective Leadership Development Program

An effective leadership development program has three objectives. One is to define leadership development within the unique context of the organization and its culture and mission. A second objective is to identify the organization's leadership development needs and match the solution to the need. For example, a church's needs include spiritual leadership, leaders that match its values, requirements related to mission, and developing healthy leaders. The individual's needs include personal and spiritual development, developing a philosophy of ministry, and balancing family, church and individual needs.

Finally, an effective program of leadership development helps individuals learn about themselves and others, grow in their personal skills and abilities, and change and adapt to new circumstances and opportunities.

Postscript for Vendors of Leadership Development

I think that to be complete, the process of leadership development needs to have moments of motivation, inspiration and insights from gifted speakers and writers. I believe these individuals are a part, but never the whole, of a leadership development effort. There are places in the overall process where they will fit but it is almost impossible, for example, for them to get into organizational definition and concept except in the broadest of terms.

A Final Thought

A final thought comes from Dr. Jay Conger, at the University of Southern California, who believes that it takes ten years to become an expert at something. In my own experience as a consultant, I have observed that real expertise can result from ten years of focus. This provides some perspective to those working their way to senior leadership positions or leading a judicatory.

Author of the Report

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Key Findings

- ◆ The capacity to develop talent begins with a strong sense of corporate identity (organizational definition)
- ◆ Development is strategy
- ◆ It is dependent on understanding the concept of the organization (church)

A Definition...

- ◆ Leadership development:
 - An intentional effort to provide leaders (and emerging leaders) with opportunities to learn, grow and change
 - To produce individuals over time with the skills to function effectively within the organization

Source: *The Lessons of Experience*

Find the need

Match the solution to the need

Back to Basics

- ◆ A program is but one of many solutions:
 - Experience
 - Performance
 - Mentoring
 - Recruitment

Why the demand for leadership programs?

- ◆ Catchy title
- ◆ Divine intervention
- ◆ Rites of passage
- ◆ Growth
- ◆ Work to be done
- ◆ Flavor of the month

Leadership Development-- The Diagnosis

◆ The Church's Need

- **Spiritual leadership**
- **Close values match**
- **Mission requirements**
- **Talent compared to requirements**
- **Healthy leaders**

◆ The Individual's Need

- **Personal development**
- **Spiritual development**
- **Philosophy of ministry**
- **Balancing family, church and individual demands**

Leadership Development-- The Remedy

- ◆ Education
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Experience
- ◆ Spiritual Growth
 - The purposes of God
 - Faith worked out in actualities
 - Understanding spiritual disciplines

*“Development happens whether
planned or not.”*

--Morgan McCall

If development is going to happen anyway, why not plan it?

The heart of development is providing the right opportunities to the right people at the right time

Leadership Development...

- ◆ This is a missional issue not a human resources issue
- ◆ It is a strategic priority not a time or budget casualty
- ◆ It is an opportunity to identify and encourage emerging leaders

The Challenge

- ◆ Define the goals for leadership development in missional terms
- ◆ Leadership development = Achieving intended results
- ◆ What you measure...improves; what you reward...returns

The Barriers

- ◆ Quick fix
- ◆ No underlying philosophy of leadership or development
- ◆ Time and money
- ◆ Blind leading the blind
- ◆ This too shall pass

The Concept of Learning

◆ Education

- **Individual first, organization second**
- **To draw out**
- **To learn to think**
- **Develop the ability to learn**
- **Exposed to different points of view**

◆ Training

- **Organization first, individual second**
- **A skill to do a particular job or task**
- **With training the end is known**
- **Training assumes a right and wrong way to do something**

Concept (continued...)

◆ Experience

- Start something from scratch
- Fix something/turnaround situation
- Enlarged responsibility
- Special projects/task assignments
- Operations to staff
- Hardships

Experience is the best
teacher of all

Even though books, seminars and
formal programs get the most
attention

Experience Alone is Not Enough

It's what kind of experience *and*
what the leader takes away from it
that counts

Insights from Experience

- ◆ Education & training
- ◆ Mentors & coaches
- ◆ Books & articles
- ◆ Co-workers, spouse & friends

The primary responsibility for leadership development resides with the leader.

Leadership cannot be taught but it can be learned. There is a responsibility to help people know *how* to learn.

Advantages of Program

- ◆ Strengthen motivation to develop capabilities
- ◆ Common understanding of organizational vision and intended culture
- ◆ Clarify roles and responsibilities
- ◆ Foster community—emerging leaders into history and values

The Sign of a Good Program

- ◆ Address issues of competing values
- ◆ Acknowledge apparent contradictions in value, strategy and objectives
- ◆ Resolve them by establishing specific priorities

A single, well-defined model or framework of leadership.

Improves participant learning

A single model does not mean the same aspects of leadership are taught across all levels of the organization.

There is a need to offer education and training for different settings

Problems with Multiple Models

- ◆ **Forget essential components of leadership**
- ◆ **Confused about different frameworks**

Shortcomings of Programs

- ◆ Work is essentially a collaborative experience
- ◆ Insufficient time spent on skill areas
 - How to...
- ◆ Little or no follow-up
- ◆ Few or no links to job assignments

Leaders Require Socialization

- ◆ Rules of thumb
- ◆ Specific language
- ◆ Unwritten norms
- ◆ Customs
- ◆ Expectations of how to interact
- ◆ Reward system

Socialization (continued...)

- ◆ Subtle differences in interpretation of purpose and mission can slow things down or mix things up
- ◆ Differences become apparent only after the fact
- ◆ Pitfall—while socializing leaders can lose sight of changes in culture

Coursework with Impact

- ◆ Deals with a relevant issue
- ◆ Occurs at a good time for the leader
- ◆ Confidence more than content from classroom experience
- ◆ Content does makes a difference
(back on the job)

The Role of the Supervisor

- ◆ The immediate supervisor or contact is the second most important person in leadership development (the individual is first)
- ◆ Terrible supervisors can have a positive development impact
- ◆ Variety of supervisors over time is what matters developmentally

Leadership Development...

“Talented people need great supervisors.”

Source: Gallup Study of Management

A Continuous Process...

- ◆ Rather than a single event
- ◆ Socialize the vision and values throughout
- ◆ For strategic intervention
 - The need to have ownership for leading initiatives

Effecting Change

- ◆ Provide structural experiences that focus on agenda and intended results
- ◆ Improve individual's understanding of how that agenda can be implemented in local day-to-day activities

Change (continued...)

- ◆ Learning must be oriented toward solving practical challenges and problems
- ◆ It needs to be action oriented

Change (continued...)

- ◆ Human wiring is fixed
- ◆ Individual performance can be improved
- ◆ Know the difference between the two

Summary

- ◆ Define leadership development within your context
- ◆ Identify the need--match the solution to the need
- ◆ Help individuals learn, grow and change

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