
Training for Leadership

ANN M. FITZMAURICE

ABSTRACT

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY will bring change and with that change comes challenge. From Fortune 500 companies to human service agencies, each organization knows that, in order to survive and thrive, they must have competent leaders. By focusing on the field work and educational opportunities offered by the Center for Creative Leadership, this article explores current market trends and organizational practices in the area of leadership development.

INTRODUCTION

The path to leadership is a universally theorized and much explored topic. Organizations promote their individuality through their products or services, but have one important thing in common—people. It is this human resource that keeps an organization vital and prosperous in any environment—government, business (private and public), or educational. In recent years, more organizations have realized that corporate potential is very largely dependent on human potential. The key for organizations is to cultivate this resource. Traditionally, organizations have relied on chance that leaders will emerge and take them on to success. In more recent years, organizations have focused on nurturing and developing that human potential.

It is predicted that labor shortages in the coming decades will make it more difficult to find high caliber individuals in sufficient numbers. This, coupled with the realities of harder economic times,

Ann M. Fitzmaurice, Center for Creative Leadership, One Leadership Place, Greensboro, NC 27410

LIBRARY TRENDS, Vol. 40, No. 3, Winter 1992, pp. 543-52

© 1992 The Board of Trustees, University of Illinois

means that organizations will be relying on existing structures. For training development, this means equipping people with more cross-functional skills, such as providing technically skilled workers with the management techniques they require to lead a work team or execute a new project. Increasing the organization's current resource pool through cross training also means cultivating potential leaders and recognizing and developing more women and ethnic minorities to take on demanding positions.

Training employees to be better leaders has become a rule rather than an exception over the past decade. Development training in organizations can take several forms, from week-long courses that examine individuals' strengths and weaknesses as leaders to skill-based seminars designed to teach new technology.

Ralph Frederick, general director of personnel development at General Motors, tells of GM's leadership training program for top executives. His company "recognized a need for cultural change"; with the use of leadership training programs, individuals are given the opportunity "to reflect on and re-examine things that they have come to believe about themselves, the organization, and other people" (Lee, 1989, p. 21). The in-house program offered by GM focuses on communication skills, empowering subordinates, practicing effective teamwork, and personal decision making.

Somewhat similar programs have been implemented by General Electric (GE) and IBM. GE trains managers at its center in Ossining, New York, through month-long development programs, and other programs are held at several field offices. Each year, IBM sends almost all of its 42,000 managers for forty hours of general management training that focuses on leadership skills. Most also participate in "issue-oriented" training programs (Kotter, 1988, p. 150).

John Kotter of Harvard University has identified several supplementary training tools that corporations can use to enhance an individual's professional development:

- new job assignments (promotions or lateral moves);
- task force or committee assignments;
- mentoring or coaching from senior executives;
- attendance at meetings outside one's core responsibility;
- special projects; and
- special development jobs (e.g., executive assistant jobs) (Kotter, 1988, p. 92).

These programs represent practices in "big business" in America, but leadership development is important in all sectors, public and private, for-profit and not-for-profit, large organizations and small. Strong leadership is needed as much in the library setting as it is in the business setting.

Education is one area in which leadership training is badly needed. Administrators and teachers alike experience frustration as

budgets are cut and teachers must take on more responsibility with little or no added compensation—e.g., larger classrooms filled with children who require individual attention due to physical or mental limitations. More often than not, teachers are given new responsibilities without the training they need to do their job effectively. As school districts merge, more principals and superintendents become responsible for new areas and more people—both subordinates and students—in addition to taking on added financial responsibilities.

Unfortunately, formal training for these institutional leaders is difficult to acquire due to limited funding. To continue growth in the future, organizations must be willing to allocate the financial resources needed to develop their human resources. That is one reason the Center for Creative Leadership, through a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, offers *Dimensions in Leadership*—a three-day program for educators at a subsidized cost. The program, offered three times a year at various locations around the country to reduce participants' travel expenses, introduces educators to leadership practices they can share with their peers and subordinates.

BACKGROUND

Over half a century ago, the son of a drugstore owner came to the realization that people are the foundation of a successful business and that this essential human resource needs to be nurtured and developed.

In 1905, Lunsford Richardson, a small town pharmacist and chemist, took a risk by investing his life savings in a drugstore to sell his home remedies. Richardson had developed a product using the drug menthol which was foreign to most people in the early 1900s. He created an ointment base with ingredients that acted like a vaporizer when rubbed on the chest to relieve congestion.

Two years later, H. Smith Richardson, Sr. joined his father's endeavor and became the sales manager. Richardson believed that his father should concentrate his business on the one product many seemed to use—i.e., Vicks VapoRub. Through his innovative marketing, including traveling to the mountains of North Carolina and giving out free samples, he greatly expanded his father's company. By the time he became president of the company in 1919, Vicks VapoRub was being sold throughout the United States and had begun to expand into the overseas market.

During his time as president of Vicks, H. Smith Richardson, Sr. became increasingly interested in what made a company evolve and grow creatively. In 1929, he handed the presidency over to his younger brother, Lunsford, in order to pursue his own interest in

leadership and creativity. Recognizing that companies were failing even in the economically strong years, Richardson tried to understand what should be done to keep a company from becoming stagnant and from losing its ability to meet the changes and challenges of the future.

In 1933, he wrote a special report to the stockholders of his company to share the important findings he had discovered:

The life curve of a professional man is also the life curve of the business executive, and what is true of one man holds true for a group of men. The stronger the man, the less likely he is to feel the need of new blood under him. No man recognizes old age in himself, and even his best friend won't tell him. By old age we do not mean physical or mental deterioration...not at all. We mean the lack of ability to create new ideas conforming to changed conditions. From a corporate standpoint, the danger is that the management group—presumably for many years aggressive and successful—gradually and insensibly to themselves, loses the ability to recognize and adjust themselves to new and changing conditions in that business. (Richardson, 1980, p. 4)

He concluded that, to maintain the power of an organization, senior management must “find and train an adequate number of outstanding young people each year, develop ways to evaluate them fairly and impartially, and promote those who have potential to positions of constantly increasing responsibility” (Richardson, 1980, p. 4).

Richardson was an innovator in promoting the belief that leadership is not necessarily an innate quality with which one is born but rather, that leadership is cultivated through participative developmental activities. This cultivation would both enhance the individual and give the organization the ability to grow and prosper.

In the early 1930s, The Vick's Chemical Corporation developed a post-graduate course for college seniors called the Vick School of Applied Merchandising. For a period of eighteen months, students practiced and studied salesmanship, advertising, and marketing. This produced knowledgeable and energetic managers and reinforced Richardson's belief that creativity needed to be cultivated. In 1935, he set up the Richardson Foundation, renamed the Smith Richardson Foundation in 1968, to concentrate on the development of leadership and creativity.

Richardson's son, H. Smith Richardson, Jr., following in his father's footsteps, also interested himself in management and leadership research.

This strong family interest eventually led the trustees of the Vick's Chemical Corporation to pass a resolution in 1963 stating: “That the field of creativity be the major operating project of the [Richardson] foundation” (Richardson, 1980, p. 7).

The foundation, from which the Center for Creative Leadership was established in 1970, adopted an ambitious mission—to encourage and develop creative leadership for the overall good of society. Through the years, the center has maintained a high standard of excellence in adapting the theories and ideas of the behavioral sciences to the practical concerns of managers and leaders in all business applications.

THE CENTER'S FOCUS AND PROGRAMS

As the only research-based facility of its kind, the center continues to maintain its niche by constantly challenging itself to answer encompassing questions relating to how managers learn, grow, and change; how leaders select and nurture successors; how the complexity of organizational success relies upon the daily activities of leaders throughout all levels of the company; and how climates of innovation and creativity can be successfully encouraged within all types of organizations. Although the topics of creativity and leadership are broad and complex, it is the center's belief that its research efforts provide the knowledge and skill needed to allow leaders, managers, and organizations to adapt to ever-changing conditions.

The center's research efforts help shed light on the concept and practice of management and leadership in order to provide effective management training to organizations. Currently the center has twenty-two separate, although overlapping, research projects. Throughout all the projects, a common strategy remains—asking questions that may take years to answer; encouraging a diversity of projects; using rich resources that the center has to offer through the thousands of managers that come to the center each year; seeking external sponsorship for early testing to see if a project has merit; and peer criticism from members of the educational and scholarly community.

This strategy influences the center's research focus which has evolved to include five autonomous, yet interrelated, areas of research:

- *Education and Nonprofit Sector* which addresses leadership issues in educational, nonprofit, and service industry settings.
- *Leadership Development* which examines general experiences that have been found to be critical for effective leadership.
- *Leadership Technologies* which offer cutting edge technology to assess the development of leaders and their experiences.
- *Innovation and Creativity* which explores the opportunities within organizations to be more creative.
- *Leadership Diversity* which investigates the challenges that traditional corporations face in utilizing women and ethnic minorities as potential leaders in their organizations.

The center also produces publications as an outlet for staff to share their findings on management development and training. These reports focus on leadership, executive and managerial development, individual and organizational creativity, and human resource systems. A combination of theoretical, empirical, and practical articles is used to reach human resource professionals, organizational leaders, and managers. It is through these publications that the center continues to shape the future of leadership research and practice.

The field of leadership presents constant challenge. We still lack definitive answers to such questions as: Where do leaders come from? Are they born that way? Can they be made?

In the 1930s and the 1940s, research by psychologists on the subject of leadership looked for the common traits that made up successful leaders, including both personality and intellectual qualities. Those who were thought to possess key traits could then participate in leadership programs to concentrate and improve upon these selected traits. This suggested that the ability to lead was inherent and that leadership training would only benefit those who seem to possess the selected traits. The trait theory has changed over the years, and some researchers have failed to find "one personality trait or set of qualities that [could] be used to discriminate leaders from nonleaders" (Jennings, 1961, p. 2).

Today the more popularly held belief is that leaders can be developed. According to several well-known researchers in the leadership training field, it is not only possible to develop leaders, it is necessary. Morgan W. McCall, a senior research scientist at the Center for Leadership, maintains that: "Leadership is not a mystical thing—it consists of skills that can be practiced and improved upon" (Lee, 1989, p. 19). In the library field, the need to develop leaders, and the ability to do so, has also been recognized. For example, Albritton and Shaughnessy (1990, p. 32) have pointed out that: "Qualities of leadership, especially in democratic institutions, can and should be developed. Leadership should exist not only at the top, but at all levels if an institution is to thrive. In professions, especially, there should be no hierarchical approach to leadership. All should be leaders."

The center holds fast to its founder's belief that leaders are not born but made. Early years focused on the question of what makes a good leader. More recently the emphasis has changed—to an examination of the leader or potential leader in his or her environment, including organizational climate, peers, subordinates, bosses, and work challenges. This change in emphasis is in agreement with Hersey and Blanchard's (1982) conclusions about an individual's capability to become a more effective leader:

With this emphasis on behavior and the environment, more encouragement is given to the training of individuals in adapting styles of leader behavior to varying situations. Therefore, it is believed that more people can increase their effectiveness in leadership roles through education, training, and development. (p. 84)

It is believed that anyone can learn to lead if given the right tools and skills. Organizations that provide their people with opportunities to develop their potential are organizations that succeed. As Ghiselin (1990) points out, "The way to find good leaders is to give them the opportunity to be leaders" (p. 5). Training facilities allow individuals to focus not only on their weaknesses but also on their strengths. But training is never a guaranteed success: participants must want to become better leaders and more productive and satisfied individuals.

In 1973, the Center for Creative Leadership took its pioneering program into the marketplace as the Leadership Development Program (LDP). It would become the basis for many later research and training projects.

The Leadership Development Program began as an encompassing, exhaustive program with a battery of tests that took many hours to score and long-winded classroom work that often took months to finish. After each run of the program, researchers would convene to assess their own work. From the very beginning of the program, the belief of the scientists was:

that participants, for the most part, have the necessary skills to put into action almost any set of behaviors that they choose. The question then was: What set will they choose? Our goal is to generate as much useful information as we can for participants about their behavior in relevant organizational contexts and to help them use this information to make important decisions within the constellation of values which is embedded in the course. (Sternbergh, 1990, p. 2)

The Leadership Development Program gradually evolved into a more compact, manageable, and comprehensive program, focusing on basic principles. The program also broadened its scope to include participants from outside the American corporate setting—from the military, the legislative sector, and the education sector, including participants from outside the United States.

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND OTHER MINORITY GROUPS

The center began investigating the progression of women into the workforce as part of a study to see if nontraditional managers had unique qualities to offer organizations. Data collected from studies done on managerial and executive women showed that many women were being hired by large corporations but few were promoted.

This correlated with the fact that few women were participants in development training courses. As research continued, it led to the first all female program at the center which was called the Executive Women Workshop. Topics are similar to those discussed in the Leadership Development Program, but other subjects unique to women are explored and discussed. This program is not intended to further segregate groups of people, but instead gives those groups with common circumstances a chance to communicate and collaborate on topics relevant to them.

Research also found that some gender differences do exist in leadership learning experiences. Women are more likely to recognize personal limits, take advantage of opportunities, take charge of their careers, and know what aspects of their jobs excite or are valuable to their careers (Van Velsor & Hughes, 1990).

Currently the center is also exploring the challenges presented by incorporating groups of people who are not treated equally for various reasons into the leadership ranks of corporations. This research is timely as forecasters look at what requirements organizations will need to succeed in the coming century.

THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP RESEARCH

Because of technological advances and the expanding work environment (e.g., interactions with businesses abroad), a need arose to study further the training that managers of the next decade would require to lead themselves and others successfully into the future. After examining other relevant studies concerning how executives learn, grow, and change, researchers from the center interviewed managers from 300 top organizations in the United States to identify the concerns facing corporations of the 1990s. Three major concerns were identified:

- managing rapid and substantive change;
- dealing with diversity of people and views; and
- learning how to think globally.

To address these concerns, it was concluded that a new program should be designed to be: "situation-focused, personally tailored, teach skills that deal with the current complexity of leader's tasks, and lead to lasting behavioral change" (Burnside & Guthrie, 1991, pp. 2-3). In 1990, LeaderLab was introduced as a program to encourage and enable participants, who already had a feel for their strengths and weaknesses, to lead more effectively in their individual situations.

To develop such an encompassing program, it was necessary to focus on the issues facing the leaders of the future rather than exclusively resting on past assumptions. It was also crucial to practice

a holistic approach in cultivating a participant's viability. While most programs focused primarily on the intellect, LeaderLab was specifically tailored to make participants aware of the aspects which make them who they are—i.e., the head, the heart, even the feet. This approach assisted participants in attaining the goal of the program which is “to encourage and enable leaders to take more effective actions in their situations” (Burnside & Guthrie, 1991). The components that were developed teach skills incorporating the whole human being and avoid focusing on one-dimensional intellectual exercises.

LeaderLab is not a “quick fix-it” solution for poor leaders. A leader who is having difficulties can be assisted by one week programs to deal with immediate conflicts; for the skills learned from these programs to work in future situations, however, the participant must actively remember the skills and practice them. In LeaderLab, the overall goal is to take leaders who are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and achieve a lasting behavioral change. What makes the program unique is that it works with participants over a six-month period. It is a two-session program. Between the sessions, and after they leave the program, participants keep in touch with a process advisor who encourages them to continue to make changes that will have positive and lasting effects.

As the program develops, researchers and designers of the program continue to learn what behaviors can help a participant become a better leader and what situations of the future will challenge the leaders of today. The major objective of every center training program is for the individual to change incrementally and substantially. The ultimate objective of the center's research is to help the training programs produce that change.

More information about the Center for Creative Leadership and its training, research, or publication offerings can be obtained by writing or calling P.O. Box 26300, Greensboro, NC 27438-6300, phone 919/288-7210, FAX 919/288-3999.

REFERENCES

- Albritton, R. L., & Shaughnessy, T. W. (1990). *Developing leadership skills: A sourcebook for librarians*. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.
- Bennis, W. (1990). The new breed of leaders: Taking charge in a different way. *Working Woman*, 15(3), 73-79.
- Bryan, A. (1986). *Leadership and organizations*. London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Boston, MA: Henley.
- Burnside, R., & Guthrie, V. A. (1991). *Developing creative leaders for the twenty-first century*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Ghislen, B. (1990). Idea and action: Twenty years at CCL. *Issues & Observations*, 10(2), 1-7.
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1982). *Management of organizational behavior: Utilizing human resources*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

- Jennings, E. E. (1961). The anatomy of leadership. *Management of Personnel Quarterly*, 1(1), 2-9.
- Kotter, J. P. (1988). *The leadership factor*. New York: Free Press.
- Lee, C. (1989). Can leadership be taught? *Training Magazine*, 26(7), 19-26.
- Richardson, H. S. (1980). *The dreams which built the Center*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Sternbergh, W. W. (1990). *LDP: A tapestry of values*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Van Velsor, E., & Hughes, M. W. (1990). *Gender differences: How women managers learn from experience*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.