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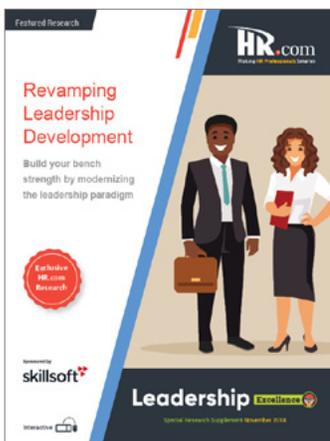
HOW LEADERS CAN MASTER AGILITY IN A CHAOTIC BUSINESS WORLD

Three helpful strategies

- Alexandra Levit



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**LEAD Award
Winners 2018**



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EDITOR'S NOTE

As today's leaders are exposed to uncertain and constant changes in the market, organizational agility is fast becoming a key indicator of a successful business.

How do you know when the best thing for the project is to change the plan, and how can you execute and communicate changes without destroying team motivation and momentum? Read Alexandra Levit's article, ***How Leaders Can Master Agility In A Chaotic Business World***, for three helpful strategies. She also points out how important it is for leaders to receive feedback from team members and be willing to re-adjust and re-evaluate!

Organizations with poor leaders sometimes survive for a time, but they seldom thrive. Poor leadership can be attributed to many causes, such as lousy talent acquisition processes, dysfunctional corporate cultures or inferior leadership development programs. HR.com in partnership with Skillsoft conducted a study that focused on the leadership development part of the equation. To learn more and to take home key tactical and strategic takeaways, we invite you to download and read the complete research report, ***Revamping Leadership Development***, in this issue.

Whether in sports or business, focus on the team is paramount. Somehow,

in business we have forgotten this. There is a better way. Many leaders experience that, when reaching a certain executive level, success becomes less about their own capability and more how to galvanize and motivate others. No matter how smart, talented, or experienced you are, true achievement only comes with getting others to execute, deliver and win, and creating a team with high TQ. Read Douglas R. Gerber's article, ***Why Leaders Are Only As Good As The Teams They Build***, for more insights.

Volumes have been written about the traits of successful leaders, but in an age when toxic workplaces are leading to health problems, distrust, and lost profits, organizations need leaders who are more than just effective. They need Evolved Executives. Read Heather Hanson's article, ***The Six Traits Of The Evolved Executive***, to know more about what makes the Evolved Executive so effective in today's workplace:

If you aren't finding ways to connect with your workforce, you may be seriously hindering their commitment to the organization. Effective leaders prioritize being accessible because



Debbie McGrath
Publisher, HR.com



Babitha Balakrishnan
Editor, Leadership Excellence

it is imperative for building trust and can be a key driver of employee engagement. Where to start? Read Holcombe's article, ***Senior Leaders, You Can Be Private And Accessible***, for more insights.

Also included are exclusive interviews with top winners of LEAD 2018 Awards. The winners share details of their award winning programs and plans ahead.

This is just a sneak peek into what we have in this edition of Leadership Excellence. We hope you enjoy reading all articles and look forward to hearing from you!

Last but not least, we believe that there is no better way to connect with people than by sharing your leadership story. If you have one, send it to us and don't forget to mail us your feedback.

Happy Reading!

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ePubEditors@hr.com

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How Leaders Can Master Agility In A Chaotic Business World

| Three helpful strategies

 By [Alexandra Levit](#)

In today's rapidly changing business world, an agile business is a successful business. But how do you know when the best thing for the project is to change the plan, and how can you execute and communicate changes without destroying team motivation and momentum? The following three strategies may prove helpful.

Agility Strategy #1: Create and Challenge Assumptions

Any major strategic initiative should involve the upfront establishment of goals, milestones, and success metrics. But, as Tim Berry pointed out in his article for the [Small Business Administration website](#), assumptions should also be considered in your initial planning. "Tracking your results, you want to be able to compare them to what you had planned or expected to see," he said.

"Get your team members together once a month to review your plan and its results. "Take a hard look at your underlying assumptions and assess whether or not they've changed. If they have, there's no virtue whatsoever in sticking to the plan you built on top of them."

Berry suggests you look at the difference between what you planned and what actually happened. Some results will be better than planned, and some will be worse. "For each key difference you discover, and all of them combined, use your best judgment to determine whether the differences were caused by false expectations or unexpected good or bad execution."

"Also, consider external and internal factors that may have influenced the results. Maybe your expectations were too conservative, or too optimistic. In

that case, you revise your plan," he said.

Common sense, remarked Berry, is critical. Although the project may be close to your heart, you want to remain pragmatic: for example, asking yourself if you were wrong about the whole thing, or just about the timing? You also want to consider if something else has occurred in the market to change your assumptions.

Agility Strategy #2: Let Go of Attachment

There are times in every project's lifecycle when things just don't feel right. You've done everything you can to ensure good results, but nothing is happening. Every task feels insurmountable and you start to lose faith.

According to Lisa Marie Jenkins at the [Huffington Post](#), in this situation, one effective approach is to let go of your desire to make



it happen. “When we become attached to having something in order to be okay or at peace, then we actually create an energetic block that keeps it at bay. Attachment is a block to creating what you desire. It’s the universal law of attraction,” she said.

Letting go of attachment means that you stop obsessing over your

results and simply watch to see what unfolds. When you back off and allow some space, said Jenkins, one of two things will happen. “Either the opportunity will magically start flowing again, or something else will transpire to show you a new direction.” You may even realize, at some point, that getting the exact outcome

you thought you wanted wouldn’t have been for the best.

So if a project isn’t proceeding the way you hoped, try loosening your reins. You can still do your job in managing it, but you can stop reacting emotionally and trust that the universe will eventually provide the right answers.

Agility Strategy #3: Time and Execute Your Communication Properly

[Changing course](#) can be difficult not only for company leaders but also for the employees who have dedicated themselves to the original vision. "It can be very emotional for the team members involved," said Raj De Datta, who is working on BloomReach, his third startup, and spent four years at Cisco. As he told Mike Cassidy, one thing he learned from Cisco CEO John Chambers was to clearly articulate the big picture, the overriding mission, and then at every opportunity explain how the new direction serves that mission.

Timing and executing your pivot properly can reinforce the veracity of a risky decision. Even if you're still not sure you are doing the right thing, getting people behind you can make you feel better during this period of uncertainty.

First, although there are times when a pivot itself must be

rushed, try not to rush your communication about it. Don't spring upsetting news on your people when your group is under tremendous stress. Be thoughtful in outlining why the pivot is a good development and carefully compile data that shows how and why everyone (including individual team members) will be better off. This will likely involve the production of supplementary materials like snazzy slide decks, infographics, and revamped, easy-to-digest, project plans.

If you are the decision-maker, make sure that all of your team members, even those who report to other managers, hear about any intended pivot directly from you. You can, however, enlist the help of popular employees who vocally support your direction and can work on your behalf to energize the rest of the team.

Remember that pervasive change takes time. Don't expect your entire organization to be as

nimble as you are. After a few months, enthusiasm may wane and people will try to revert to the original strategy. Putting increased pressure on employees to move faster and more independently is likely to backfire. Instead, be constantly available to shepherd the pivot through its first year. Make sure to sustain your communication efforts and reward those who are adjusting well to the new direction.

Last, while you certainly don't want to be wishy-washy or the kind of leader who changes strategy all the time, you should remain open to tweaking your pivot. Listen to feedback from team members who are on the ground, in the market, seeing the effects of the change firsthand. And most of all, be willing to re-adjust and re-evaluate!



Alexandra Levit is the author of the new book [Humanity Works: Merging Technologies and People for the Workforce of the Future](#) (Kogan Page). A partner at People Results, she helps Fortune 500 and government organizations and their leaders prepare for the future of work through proprietary research, consulting, and program development.



▶ Would you like to comment?





Betty J. Jackson



Ceretha León



Organization: **St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC)**

Program: **IGNITE Leadership Program**

Program Director: **Betty J. Jackson, Leslie Jones**

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Best Use of Team Building



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Inspire, Grow, Navigate, Innovate, Transform and Empower Leadership

Our editorial team interviewed Betty J. Jackson and Ceretha León from St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners at the LEAD2018 Awards this past February. Here are some excerpts from the exclusive interview.



What is the overall objective of your program?

IGNITE Leadership is a 10-month program designed to foster leadership development for current and future leaders within St. Lucie County through dynamic presentations, interactions and activities. Participants gain key leadership qualities that cascade throughout our organization igniting culture change within work environments. Program offerings were enhanced in 2017 with the addition of a DiSC 363 assessment;

John Maxwell Company live simulcast event - Live2Lead; Process Improvement Workshop with renowned author George Labovitz; Leadership development with former NASA Astronaut, Captain Winston Scott and CPR Certification Training which were made available to all IGNITE participants and extended to other organizational leaders. Effective collaboration between IGNITE program participants is key to creation of an environment that supports the achievement of great results, therefore team building is a key component of the program.

Who do you impact with your program?

The target audience for IGNITE Leadership Program participants is Organizational Directors, Managers, Assistant Managers and Program Managers. This includes local government leaders from neighboring municipalities. The target audience impacted by the program may in many ways be defined as the entire workforce of St. Lucie County BOCC as we have purposed within the overall program design. IGNITE Leadership Program participants will develop key leadership qualities that will cascade throughout their organizations to ignite positive culture change within their work environments.

What are the lessons you've learned this year from facilitating your program?

Connection, collaboration, team building and dynamic program structure are key to the success of IGNITE Leadership.

In the face of Hurricane Irma, the largest storm to hit the continental USA, IGNITE Leadership Participants and Alumni rallied their teams and departments to ensure the safety and sustainability of our Treasure Coast community. Citizens trust that local government leaders are trained and equipped to protect and restore the people, property and resources of the region. IGNITE Leadership Program has produced a collaborative team of more than 30 organizational leaders committed to continuous

Video 



professional development and deployment of the vision and values that align their goals with St. Lucie County's strategic perspective.

IGNITE Leadership participants collaboratively analyze, design, develop, implement and evaluate a community service project that positively impacts St. Lucie County. In service, departmental boundaries transform into a vibrant team spirit that IGNITE participants identify as one of the most coveted program benefits.

St. Lucie Leadership Education and Development Talks (SLLED Talks) provide a forum for organizational leaders to evaluate creative ideas, amazing stories and brilliant presentations by our most promising leaders. It not a competition but a developmental opportunity. This key program component encourages sharing institutional knowledge and innovative thinking.

How do you measure the return on investment and success of the program?

IGNITE Leadership applies a Plan – Do – Check – Act (PDCA) model to ongoing program development and evaluation. Regularly scheduled program evaluations are conducted on a monthly basis to allow course correction during implementation. Upon conclusion of the program, an evaluation and focus group produce feedback applied to the continuous PDCA cycle.

The SPARK Mentoring Program is designed to extend further developmental opportunities to IGNITE Program graduates who wish to serve as mentors. IGNITE and SPARK will help to bridge leadership gaps resulting from organizational attrition of baby boomers approaching retirement age. SPARK participants are paired with seasoned organizational leaders who will serve



as their mentors over a 10-month period. The mentoring program was launched in December 2016.

What lies ahead for the program and how will it continue to succeed?

We will sustain and grow the IGNITE Leadership Program through an ongoing commitment embedded in our organizational mission to “Build a team with the right people in the right jobs that will be laser focused on serving the customer and building a strong community not only for today but for tomorrow.”

A key strategic objective of St. Lucie County BOCC is to “Develop and Train our Workforce”. Therefore, the County has committed to the initiative of Employee Development with accompanying performance measures.

St. Lucie County recognizes that each of our employees must be fully supported and developed in order to fulfill our responsibility as public servants. If our beautiful Treasure Coast community is to be sustained as one of the “Best Places to Work”, St. Lucie County BOCC must lead the

way by championing the continuous development of the finest leaders available through IGNITE where we – Inspire – Grow – Navigate – Innovate - Transform and Empower Leadership ■

▶ **Would you like to comment?**

Why Leaders Are Only As Good As The Teams They Build

Focus on the team is paramount

 By [Douglas R. Gerber](#)

The Golden State Warriors domination of the Cleveland Cavaliers in the 2018 NBA championship series was cringe worthy. The 4-0 sweep makes us pause. It became clear that while Cleveland relied on LeBron James, the Warriors played as a team. When Stephan Curry fell flat, Kevin Durant and others stepped up.

In Super Bowl LII, Tom Brady and stars of the New England Patriots withered against the Eagles superior team cohesiveness, spirit and determination, led by Nick Foles, the back-up quarterback. As Philadelphia's Head Coach Doug Pederson affirmed to the champions in the locker room after the title win, "An individual can make a difference, but a team makes a miracle." This was the battle of team vs. stars; again, no contest.

Most of us intuitively recognize

the power of the 'team' in sports, proven over and over again by championship teams. The peril of the 'anti-team' in politics is also readily evident. Yet business leaders often don't apply the lesson. Focus on building a sustainable "high performance team" often takes second fiddle to individual performance. Individual leaders are incentivized to deliver and perform, and the accolades of success often go to the leader or to individuals. The lack of attention paid to developing the team leaves team members fending for themselves. The upshot can be high turnover, backbiting, unhealthy competition and low engagement. Or, more commonly, a team which is not really a team, but just a group of individuals operating from their own silo agendas.

Why don't most business leaders prioritize on building unbeatable

teams? Based on 15 years of research working with over 100 leadership teams in Fortune 500 and Global Companies, I have found three primary reasons. The first has to do with insecurity; most leaders don't know how to nurture high performance teams; they rarely learn it in business school, nor as executives rising through the ranks. If executives don't possess the know-how, they will be reticent to develop their teams. After all, being a team leader puts one on the spot, and the way in which an executive communicates, manages and interacts with the team is a highly visible affair, with many leaders opting to manage teams within their comfort zone. Therefore, the imperative for business leaders to become adept at nurturing their teams to high performance.

Next, most leaders haven't translated championship sports



team learnings to their own business teams, meaning they may not have experienced or know the power of a high performance team. Truly high performance business teams are rare, therefore leaders often are blinded by their lack of reference points. Yet stellar examples are well documented. The Alan Mulally story at Ford during the 2008 auto crises is a poignant example of the power of the team to turn around a business. Ford refused the government loans offered to GM and Chrysler, and still came out ahead in terms of sales growth, profitability and market share. It was CEO Mulally's "One Team" culture, integrated throughout the company that turned Ford from a laggard to a leader at the time. A truly engaged, effective, supportive, cohesive, and high-spirited team will consistently win.

Third, my research has shown that leaders don't have a good measurement of high performance

in a team. If you can't measure it, you'll be less likely to focus on it. This is why, based on our research we derived ten key elements of high performance teams, culminating in a score which we call the Team Quotient or "TQ". Teams members can collectively measure their TQ to form a current baseline, focusing on the ten key elements, including vision, values, collaboration, effectiveness, results and more.

Moreover, they have clear areas to work on and develop. Then 6 to 12 months later, they measure their TQ again, tracking progress. Having a collective measure to high performance works wonders for the team and provides the leader with a clear view of team performance. The aspiration to achieve high TQ is a compelling motivator for the team. The side benefit is that the leader is not always having to push team members. Rather, team members collectively pull themselves up to high performance.

Whether in sports or business, focus on the team is paramount. Somehow, in business we have forgotten this. There is a better way. Many leaders experience that, when reaching a certain executive level, success becomes less about their own capability and more how to galvanize and motivate others. No matter how smart, talented, or experienced you are, true achievement only comes with getting others to execute, deliver and win, and creating a team with high TQ. The imperatives for leaders are clear; become strong team leaders, realize the power of a high performance team, and measure your success. Leaders are only as good as the teams they build.



Douglas R. Gerber is Founder and CEO of Focus One, a consulting firm that helps leaders create High Performance Teams. The former Vice President of PepsiCo Greater China, Douglas is an IAF (International Association of Facilitators) Certified Professional Facilitator, and an ICF (International Coach Federation) Professional Certified Coach. He earned a Masters degree in International Management from Thunderbird School of Global Management, and is a graduate of the Penn State Executive Program. Douglas innovated the concept of "Team Quotient" (TQ). His book is *Team Quotient: How to Build High Performance Leadership Teams that Win Every Time*.



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Best Social Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing

Aiming for Success Through Social Collaboration

Our editorial team interviewed *Shikha Rastogi* from *iTV Network* at the *LEAD2018 Awards* this past February. Here are some excerpts from the exclusive interview.



What is the overall objective of your program?

Performance acceleration and connecting dots through thread of social collaboration as a way of life at iTV Network.

Who do you impact with your program?

Mid to senior news and sales leaders of organisation.

Video





What are the lessons you've learned this year from facilitating your program?

Leadership Excellence and success factors can be magnified six times more when personal disruption join hands with social collaboration. It is easy to connect dots of success through the thread of social collaborations, as it brings alignment

between organisational and individual goals.

How do you measure the return on investment and success of the program?

ROI of program is directly linked with product ratings and increase in revenues.

What lies ahead for the program and how will it continue to succeed?

This year, the program is focused on aligning CEOs priorities through three-layered implementation with the support of AI driven approach.

▶ Would you like to comment?

How Do You Spot A Dedicated Scrum Master?

| Top 6 attributes

 By **Donna Howard**

Scrum is a demanding project management framework. Every team member must be dedicated to the goal of continuously improving, pushing the limits on what they can achieve. Scrum Masters lead the charge, keeping a consistent and even pace for demanding, complex projects.

Here are the top 6 attributes of the best Scrum Masters:

1. A Passionate Leader and Mentor

Scrum Masters aren't authoritarian bosses. They aren't simply collaborators, either. Scrum Masters take full responsibility for the project and any missteps that may occur along the journey. They take responsibility for the success of the team. The enthusiasm for the project never dies, either, even when the team is struck by failure.

Great Scrum Masters are well-versed in the art of servant leadership. They [act as supporters and mentors](#) to the entire team, ensuring project success through steady and compassionate leadership.

2. An Emotionally Intelligent Collaborator

Scrum Masters must [facilitate complex project activities](#) for cross-functional teams. This means they have to be in tune not only with project deadlines but the emotional state of the team as a whole and for each individual.

Lowered morale has an overall negative effect on productivity and on collaboration. Getting morale high requires a highly-trained sensitivity. Scrum Masters need to get a feel for the team and for the flow of the project. Adept project managers know when to push the limits of the team's abilities, rallying the team, and when to

reign in expectations, reducing stress on workers.

3. An Assertive and Knowledgeable Professional

[Dedicated Scrum Masters](#) need an extensive breadth of knowledge of the Scrum project management framework as well as the product being produced, the value it will generate in the market, and the development process that will bring that product to market. They are a jack-of-all-trades, spotting small technical issues and establishing overarching marketing goals.

4. A Continuously Improving Problem-Solver

The agile methodology is at the heart of the [Scrum management framework](#). Agile purports constant improvement through continuous communication, evaluation, and an unabashed acceptance of change. A



dedicated Scrum Master should adhere to the core principles of agile.

Experienced Scrum Masters understand that each sprint is another step closer to the end product. The end product should be as perfect as possible – barring any feature that causes scope creep. Each sprint is an opportunity to better the product, the team, and the processes they use.

5. An Observant Mediator

Scrum projects often involve the work of multiple departments. Developers talk with business people, marketers, and product owners, for example. With all of this communication comes a massive risk of miscommunication and disorganization, however.

Tasks could easily get scattered, lost, traded or unfinished without proper communication protocols. Team members could easily feel overburdened, embittered, or

angry if they feel too much work is being heaped on them and avoided by others.

Scrum Masters should ameliorate communication issues and hostile feelings before they arise among the team. Project managers have to be observant in order to catch these issues. They must be willing to mediate any rough spots between employees as well, promoting cohesion among team members.

6. A Responsive and Resourceful Manager

Responding to change is one of the most vital parts of the [agile management methodology](#) that is built into the Scrum framework. Expert Scrum Masters are not only accepting of change but welcome it, even if the project is quite far along. Therefore, good Scrum Masters are adaptive rather than reactive.

Scrum Masters are resourceful, coming up with solutions to

problems in creative ways. They value the rhythm of the project, but also know how to carefully adjust the course to respond to unexpected changes.

Scrum Masters should be enthusiastic, emotionally intelligent leaders and observant mediators, catching issues before they bubble up. They ensure a project's success with their extensive knowledge in development and management. Devoted to improving and accounting for change, Scrum Masters are responsive, adaptive managers. Exceptional Scrum Masters guide change effortlessly, keeping a steady pace for the project even when unexpected bottlenecks hit.

Expert Scrum Masters are therefore one of the most highly-prized professionals in any organization. Without great Scrum Masters, scrum projects fall apart. They are loyal leaders, who are fiercely intelligent, knowledgeable, and empathetic.

• • •



Donna Howard is a business consultant working with high growth companies for their business development. She has worked with companies in scaling their business operations from Europe, Asia and Africa.



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Innovation in Deployment of Leadership

Leadership Program Based on **Servant** Leadership Model

*Our editorial team interviewed **Debbie Deissroth** from **Jefferson Health** at the **LEAD2018 Awards** this past February. Here are some excerpts from the exclusive interview.*



What is the overall objective of your program?

The program was designed in partnership with Saint Joseph's University to develop each Jefferson leader's intrapersonal, interpersonal, and team leadership skills, following

a Servant Leadership model. The four-day in-house program is delivered by Jefferson operational leaders who have previously participated in the program and completed facilitation skills and content training through a "train-the-trainer" approach. Program

Video



Debbie Deissroth
Jefferson Health

components include fundamental leadership principles, ethics, values and authenticity, risk and perspective taking, effective communication and conflict resolution skills, team leadership, and change and culture change leadership.

Who do you impact with your program?

The in-house program is focused on newly hired or promoted leaders within the Jefferson New Jersey organization. Along with senior leaders, we have also been able to reach down further into the organization to include supervisor level associates, as well as department managers and professionals who influence leaders but have no direct reports themselves. In addition to developing leadership skills, one of the great interdisciplinary outcomes achieved through cohorts is to encourage interdepartmental communication and collaboration. To date, we have had more than 150 leaders participate in the in-house program, which began in January 2017. Some 400 additional leaders participated in the program since its 2014 inception.

What are the lessons you've learned this year from facilitating your program?

In order to develop the skills of Jefferson NJ faculty members, we provided content and facilitation skills in a train-the-trainer model. We have also used co-facilitation to balance learning styles and provide flexibility, when needed, to cover for

each other when one faculty member has a scheduling conflict. Using teaching teams of four leaders per session day, there are two assigned to the morning session, and two assigned to the afternoon. We have various executive ambassadors kick off each session before the day starts, sharing their personal journey and some thoughts on the importance of this program to the organization's success.



How do you measure the return on investment and success of the program?

We are fortunate to have fairly sophisticated annual employee engagement data, which has shown incremental improvement in all leadership indicators every year since the program launch in 2014. Organizational health scores have risen 50% in the past five years; average manager scores have increased by 20% in that same time period, and training scores have risen by 31%. Statements include: how associates feel about ideas being

encouraged, whether managers are making associate jobs easier, the quality of communication and interdepartmental collaboration, and managers showing concern for associate well-being. We were thrilled to see incremental improvements in all measures continuing through all the merger activity in 2017.

What lies ahead for the program and how will it continue to succeed?

We've just completed a merger with Jefferson Health, which is the 16th ranked top hospital in the country. There is strong interest in the New Jersey culture by the larger Jefferson organization. We believe that our culture is rooted in the Servant Leadership model, and we hope to expand the program to the larger enterprise as we work further into our integration. There are multiple strategies being considered; however, ideally we would follow the same delivery model used in New Jersey. This would mean cascading through the leadership levels - starting at the top with our partners from Saint Joseph's University as faculty for the director levels and above - then, working our way deeper into the organization until we can deliver an in-house program, such as we have now in New Jersey ■

▶ Would you like to comment?

Everything I Need To Know About Your Culture Is In Your Parking Lot

It's time to break down your change barriers

By **Bridget Stallkamp**

In my 12-plus years as a consultant, I've rolled up to the front door of a lot of companies. Within the walls of these buildings are at least a few folks who want to create big change and invigorate their people – it's a beautiful thing. Those people will come up against a number of obstacles. Overcome one and the next barrier to change will be waiting, because change is hard and changing a corporation is even harder. For most of those barriers, [Root has a plan and a process](#) to bust them down and drive real change. Easy peasy, we got this.

However, there's one barrier – one tell-tale sign – I fear the most. When I see it, I shake my head sadly knowing that in this company, people will be less willing to open themselves to change, to be vulnerable and take the leap. In this company, it will take every tool in the arsenal to make even the smallest movements. Do you know what it is? Executive parking.



Executive Parking Is a Barrier to Change

Yes, those five sweet spots right by the door. Perhaps your executives get custom signs. Or like one company I visited, perhaps the sidewalk in that one section has radiant heat so that the executives never have to walk on ice. Or like the company I interned with in college, the executives have an air-conditioned garage just for them (that CEO went to jail, by the way).

When I see executive parking, it is almost certain three things exist in the company culture that will act as barriers to change:

1. Pleasing the executive team is the top priority

These are the companies where people are clawing their way to the top. At these types of organizations, you can bet the Senior Leader Committee meeting is hallowed ground few are deemed worthy to tread ... bad news doesn't get to the top without a glossy veneer of "positioning" ... and the PowerPoints shown in management meetings have file names like *Q3_results_v56.pptx*. The executives don't mix it up; they don't hear unvarnished truth, and most certainly don't have the [open conversations to make needed change happen](#) in an efficient way.

2. Servant leadership isn't embraced

When the best parking spots are reserved for the chosen few, you're making a statement: you put the needs of the SVP of Widgets above those of your employees. And that theme can carry through the business in many subtle but important ways. To drive change, you need a cadre of people that have your back and who believe you truly have theirs because achieving a business goal won't happen if only your most senior level executives are on board. [You need the masses!](#) All of your people need to join you on your journey and that will only happen if they believe they play an important role. They need to see the actions you take every day are directed towards their ability to be successful. If they don't feel like they're important to the whole, you can be sure they aren't following you anywhere but out of the parking lot at 5 p.m. on the dot.

3. Inauthentic power

When I see Executive Parking I expect to walk into a company where title outranks everything else. Believe it or not, some people embrace inauthentic power and believe a title gives you more authority, knowledge, and power than others. Ha! As Root's co-founder Jim Haudan and CEO Rich Berens say in their forthcoming book, "inauthentic power is the mindset that: I have more than you do, I know more than you do, I am more than you are." This way of thinking couldn't be a bigger barrier to change. If your executives believe they are better than their people and aren't ready to roll up their sleeves alongside those on the frontline, successful change is nothing but a pipe dream.

It's Time to Break Down Your Change Barriers

Culture isn't words on a wall or a party thrown once a year, it's the day in and day out actions of the people in your organization – especially the ones everybody is watching, who currently park 20 steps from the door. What would happen if tomorrow your C-suite gave their spots to the guy with the best safety record? To the woman who tried something new and failed in spectacular fashion? That message would spread like wildfire and perhaps do more to help your company create change than any other action this year.

• • •



Bridget Stallkamp is Vice President at Root Inc. She believes wholeheartedly in the power of research to unlock complex problems. Her brilliant team at Root Inc. uses proprietary (and sometimes unorthodox) research techniques to thoroughly understand the challenges and path to success for a whole slew of happy clients from local health systems to international retail brands and everywhere in-between. A champion of the underdog, she is passionate about the potential of the average employee to be a superstar and enjoys proving naysayers wrong.



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Valarie Willis



Organization: **Valarie Willis Consulting**
 Program: **The Leadership Challenge**
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Developing **Effective Leaders** at all Levels

Our editorial team interviewed **Valarie Willis** from **Valarie Willis Consulting** at the **LEAD2018 Awards** this past February. Here are some excerpts from the exclusive interview.



What is the overall objective of your program?

To use an evidence based leadership model that develops leaders at all levels within an organization, so that organizations achieve their goals and vision. The goal is to

create more effective leaders in the organization. We want something that is simple, but effective that will allow organizations to leverage their talent to achieve goals and objectives. Leaders make a difference. Great leaders make an extraordinary difference.

Video

Valarie Willis
Valarie Willis Consulting

Who do you impact with your program?

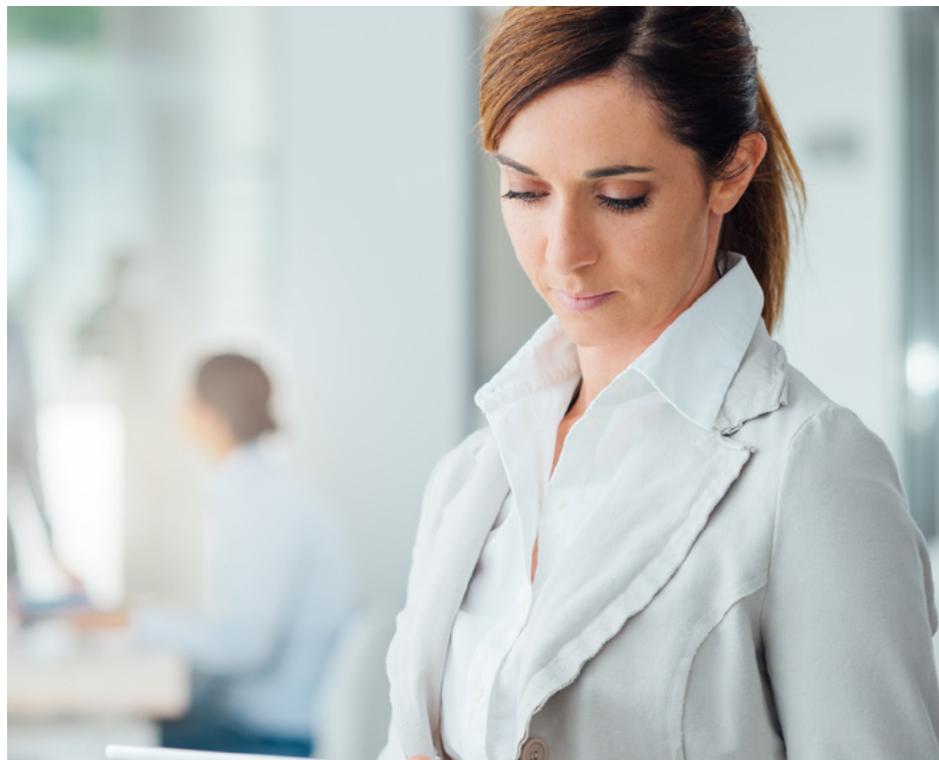
The beauty of this program is that it crosses all levels in an organization. It can be tailored for individual contributors as well as used at the senior executive level. The Five Practices of Exemplary Leaders™ are the same, it is how they are implemented/executed that makes the difference.

What are the lessons you've learned this year from facilitating your program?

Organizations that decide up front to re-assess leaders within 10 to 12 months increase the 'stickiness factor.' Leaders know that the assessment will be coming back around, so they tend to be more focused. From an emerging leader's program perspective, an application and interview selection process may be better than someone nominated. It was interesting that we saw better results from a group that had to apply for a program position themselves, vs the group that was nominated by others. Something to keep a watch on. This is not a new learning, but I always remind myself to follow the energy in the room, and link leadership development to current challenges.

How do you measure the return on investment and success of the program?

Organizations set different metrics. It will depend on why they want to invest in leadership in their



organization. As an example, one organization wanted to develop emerging leaders, so one metric was how many people were being promoted after completing the Emerging Leaders program. Other clients used Sales or Engagement scores. For some it is retention. For the leaders who completed the Leadership Practices Inventory™ (LPI), it is important to reassess these leaders within 12 to 18 months. This allows leaders to see the areas of improvement and opportunity. It is also a metric that measures leadership behaviors.

What lies ahead for the program and how will it continue to succeed?

To keep learning and finding new and different ways to facilitate the

concepts. The 6th edition of The Leadership Challenge was published last year. I am always thinking about how to leverage the authors Kouzes and Posner's great stories with the leaders in my sessions. Every organization needs great leaders to be successful, and we have to continue to provide access to leadership development. The continued success of this program will be based on truly getting organizations to take it through all levels ■

▶ Would you like to comment?

The Six Traits Of The Evolved Executive

Empowering workers to take ownership of their work

 By [Heather Hanson](#)

Volumes have been written about the traits of successful leaders, but in an age when toxic workplaces are leading to health problems, distrust, and lost profits, organizations need leaders who are more than just effective. They need Evolved Executives.

An Evolved Executive leads boldly out of a spirit of soulfulness, humanity, and concern for the greater good. These leaders continuously expand their awareness to positively impact and serve others. They do not lose track of profit but are rather intentional, testing both the new and old ways against common sense and practice.

Instead of focusing on power and control, an Evolved Executive focuses on the growth and potential of the team in pursuit of the shared vision.

Traits of an Evolved Executive

While “successful” leaders may demonstrate a wide variety of traits, the following six traits are what make the Evolved Executive so effective in today’s workplace:

- **Authenticity:** the ability and desire to show one’s true identity and the willingness to accept our own (and each other’s) beautiful brokenness in the journey of learning and growth.
- **Humility:** an honest understanding of one’s strengths and weaknesses, the ability to listen first

and ask meaningful questions, the practice of deep appreciation for others, and the ongoing capability to bring out the best in others.

- **Compassion:** the emotional connection to care for another at work. Compassion is the internal orientation to be other-centered, kind, forgiving and accepting.
- **Expanding Awareness:** engaging in the continuous process of deepening one’s self-awareness, consciousness, and personal growth to be in greater service to others.
- **Accountability:** being able to accept personal responsibility in a collaborative way. To frame work as a way to learn and become individually and collectively responsible.
- **Courage:** being open to risk and assertively standing up for what one believes is right for the greater good. This can take the form of tough love, as what may be best is not always easy.

One trait you don’t see listed here is fear. While once thought to be a hallmark of an effective leader who kept their employees in line, studies have now shown fear to be a progress stopper that costs companies hundreds of millions each year.

Demonstrating Servant Leadership

Looking at these traits, you can see that Evolved Executives are servant leaders.

Servant leadership is a concept first coined for the business world by Robert K. Greenleaf in an essay published in 1970. In it, Greenleaf said:

The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?

A servant-leader focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the "top of the pyramid," servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible.

Studies have now shown fear to be a progress stopper that costs companies hundreds of millions each year.

While fear is still used to drive behavior in some workplaces, servant leadership is about demonstrating love in action at work. Love in action does not mean that we're afraid to do hard things, or to confront others with their responsibility.

Love in action means we value the wholeness and humanity of others, and we trust and empower them to move their work forward to benefit everyone involved.

Evolved Executives Care About People

In traditional organizations, we've lost the ability to simply "be" with people.

I like to say we are human "beings" for a reason. Can we stop treating each other as human "doings"? Simple, genuine questions can make all the difference:

How are you? What are you struggling with? What can I do to help?

Checking in with others often gets pushed aside to deal with the next crisis, but these conversations that connect leaders with employees are vital. They build trust, provide feedback, and create alignment between individuals and organizations.

Notice that Greenleaf also mentioned servant leaders care about the autonomy of employees, which is something that's been stripped away in many organizations in favor of bureaucracy and policies that have replaced common sense.

Traditional management mindsets quickly tell you what to do, what you can't do, when to show up, where to work, and who to work with. In contrast, organizations and leadership of the future are moving to a place of trust.

Each one of us is intelligent, knowledgeable, driven, and can be trusted to be a valuable member of the team. How, when, and where we work is up to us.

Working under that kind of trust is an incredibly freeing experience and one that often fosters deep commitment, engagement, and meaning in the work at hand.

When Evolved Executives release the power and control they once held and empower workers to take ownership of their work, amazing energy and drive emerges.

• • •



Heather Hanson Wickman, PhD, specializes in organizational change and in evolved executive coaching and has coached executives and organizations worldwide in evolved business practices, transformative awareness, and servant leadership.



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RESEARCH REPORT SUMMARY

Revamping Leadership Development

Survey conducted by *HR.com*

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ARTICLE

Skillsoft and MIT Launch Research Initiative on the Science of Learning

Heide Abelli

SVP of Content Product Management, Skillsoft

Mark Onisk

Chief Content Officer, Skillsoft.

Revamping Leadership Development

Build your bench strength by modernizing the leadership paradigm



Exclusive **HR.com** research sponsored by **Skillsoft**

Though some believe that true leaders are born that way, we must agree with American football coach Vince Lombardi, who famously said, “Leaders aren’t born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work.”

Organizations with poor leaders sometimes survive for a time, but they seldom thrive. Poor leadership can be attributed to many causes, such as lousy talent acquisition processes, dysfunctional corporate cultures or inferior leadership development programs.

Our new study focused on the the leadership development part of the equation. HR.com in partnership with Skillsoft conducted a study with three primary goals in mind:

- To gauge the state of leadership and leadership development programs in today’s organizations

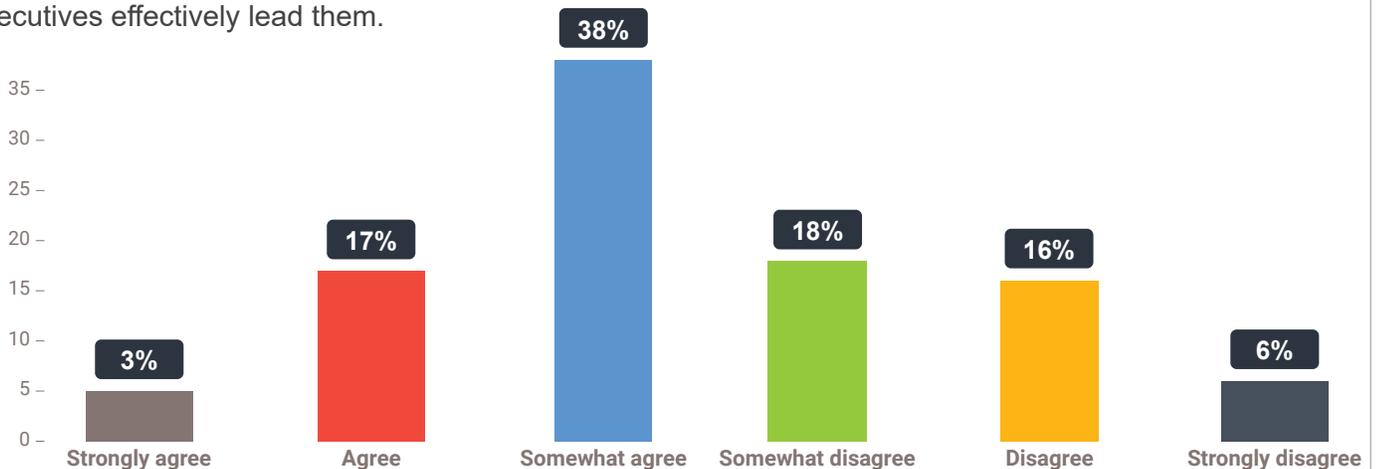
- To learn what stands in the way of improved leadership
- To gather evidence on the best ways of improving leadership development

How Good Is Leadership?

Only 20% of respondents give a high rating to their organizations’ leadership skills (that is, at least 8 on a scale of 1 to 10). However, 57% of respondents rate their organizations’ overall leadership skills at 6 or lower on the 10-point scale.

On asking HR professionals to look at leadership through the perspective of employees, the results were similar. The good news begins with the 20% of HR professionals who predicted that their employees would agree or strongly agree that their leaders are effective. These findings indicate that, while it is rare, it is indeed possible to have great leadership skills in organizations.

Survey Statement: Generally speaking, employees in your organization feel that managers and executives effectively lead them.



Leadership skill levels are not changing quickly in most organizations. About 90% of respondents saw little or no change in their organizations over the last two years. This suggests that few organizations are able to improve leadership skills dramatically over a short period of time. Most companies will likely have better success if they commit to a sustainable, long-term and well-thought-out plan of leadership improvement.

What Is the State of Leadership Development?

One of the main mechanisms for improving leadership skills is providing leadership development programs. Yet only about a third of HR professionals indicate that their leadership programs are excellent.

Leadership development programs directed at executives are more likely to be rated “excellent” (37%) than programs aimed at other groups, perhaps because those executive programs tend to receive the most funding.

There are many potential barriers to leadership development, but the most widely cited barrier is lack of time. This perceived lack of time and competing demands may influence which type of leadership development programs should be deployed. Brief but frequent learning opportunities might fit many managers’ schedules better than occasional long programs.

The second most widely cited barrier, a lack of interest among leaders in creating leadership development programs, is more worrisome. This is a different kind of problem, and it requires HR professionals to engage in a kind of change management process that will, over time, create leadership interest.

There are many different types of leadership skills, and few HR professionals think their leaders excel at any one of them. Over a third of respondents believe their colleagues view top management as trustworthy. Only 29%, however, indicate that their organizations’ leaders are good at listening, and a meagre 17% claim their leaders are good coaches.

Leadership Development and Business Needs

Only 30% of HR professionals say that their organizations align leadership development with business needs. Clearly, alignment is something that HR must demonstrate if it seeks strong support for their leadership development program.

These weaknesses indicate that most organizations are developing leaders in an *ad hoc*, rather than strategic, manner. The study’s results also imply that training is siloed and poorly connected to crucial business plans.

Survey Statement: Please rate the following statements as true or false, as they pertain to your organization: (% answering true)



The previous chart shows what organizations *are* doing—and failing to do—in the area of leadership development. But what *should* they be doing?

First, respondents believe that leadership development needs to be more frequent rather than sporadic. Second, respondents say leadership development should be more inclusive rather than restricted to a few. Another reason to make leadership training more inclusive is to ensure that employees have solid leadership skills by the time they are promoted to the next level.

Where Are We Going in the Future?

As per the current demographic trends, it's understandable that there is near unanimity among HR professionals (96%) that it's important to transfer leadership skills to younger generations. What's more surprising, however, is that over 90% of respondents also believe in the importance of egalitarian, changing, and informal leadership training. In this evolving paradigm, it no longer makes sense to limit leadership development to a select few. Instead, HR professionals believe it's crucial for many people across the organization to have the skills to act as leaders when the situation calls for it.

One might have expected that leadership skills related to digital technologies or virtual teams were growing in importance. That's not what most HR leaders think, however. Less than half agree that

those two skill sets are growing in importance. Instead, over three-quarters of HR professionals point to change leadership as an area on which they are increasingly focusing on.

Change management, of course, is related to “leadership that results in innovation,” the second most widely selected response. In both cases, leaders must inspire more than direct.

The most common modality of training is still traditional instructor-led training (56% of organizations). Such training seems inadequate to today's needs, but it's even more disturbing that 51% of respondents say their organizations rely on coaching as a major means of development. Coaching can certainly be a powerful means of leadership development, but only 17% of survey respondents said their leaders were good at coaching.

The solution is to invest in development programs that turn average leaders into capable coaches. Not every single manager has the innate ability to be an excellent coach, but most can make great strides with the right training and ongoing support.

The third most common method of leadership development is eLearning, though it's used in less than half of organizations. If organizations can master the art of developing better leadership skills via eLearning, they can make leadership development both more continuous and more widely distributed.

Are We Seeing a Change in How We Define Leadership?

One approach to leadership focuses almost exclusively on the top team, whereas another emphasizes “leadership at all levels” or the “democratization of leadership.” The latter approach suggests a more distributed and fluid form of leadership.

There are three distinct camps when it comes to moving towards the more democratized model of leadership. The largest camp (39%) expects low or very low movement in this direction. Almost as many (37%) expect a moderate move in this direction, while the remaining 23% believe there will be high or very high movement.¹



What Makes a Difference?

To gain insight into what makes a difference in leadership development, the respondents were divided into two cohorts: Well-led organizations² and poorly-led organizations³. The following findings are based on comparing these two cohorts.

- Well-led organizations tend to report much better financial performance and are much more likely to say leadership is improving.
- Poorly-led organizations are generally not getting any better. If those organizations want to improve leadership skills, then they must commit to drastic change.
- Well-led organizations shape their leadership development programs differently and tend to be more balanced in their investments in development across all leadership levels.
- The biggest difference between the two cohorts in learning modalities is that well-led organizations are about twice as likely to use coaching and mentoring as poorly-led organizations.

This study shows that organizations vary in terms of how leadership development programs are used

in their organizations. To learn more and to take home key tactical and strategic takeaways, we invite you to download and read the complete research report here

Notes

¹As often occurs in this kind of analysis, numbers do not add to 100% due to rounding.

²Well-led organizations: The organizations of respondents who agree or strongly agree that employees view their leaders as effective.

³Poorly-led organizations: The organizations of respondents who somewhat disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement that employees view their leaders as effective.

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Skillsoft and MIT Launch Research Initiative on the Science of Learning

Phase 1 results correlate a “Growth Mindset” with a greater capacity to learn new skills

skillsoft

By Heide Abelli and Mark Onisk

Have you ever wondered what makes one instructional video interesting and another not so much? How can we make learning “stick” for our employees?

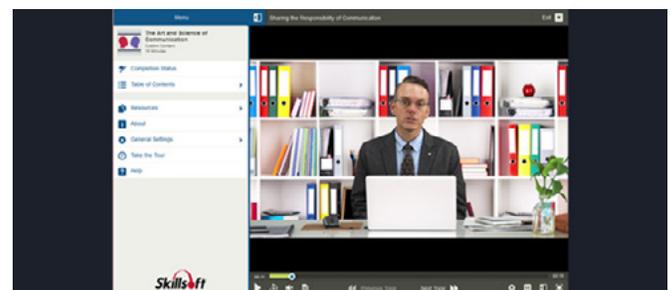
As the leading global provider of eLearning, this naturally intrigues the learning specialists at Skillsoft. To approach this challenge, Skillsoft and Accenture are sponsoring a neuroscience research initiative with MIT. The goal of this research is to scientifically validate which instructional design methodologies have the greatest impact on the effectiveness of video-based instruction.

There are three phases of the research:

- **Phase I** surveyed and evaluated learners who consumed instructional content using six different instructional scenarios. The survey gathered learner reaction to the video, a brief personality profile (growth mindset, etc.) of the participants, and a targeted knowledge assessment.
- **Phase II** includes brain scans of study participants as they engage with the sample learning content in the neuroscience lab at MIT.
- **Phase III** will involve brain scans of participants as they consume learning content amid the distractions in the workplace.

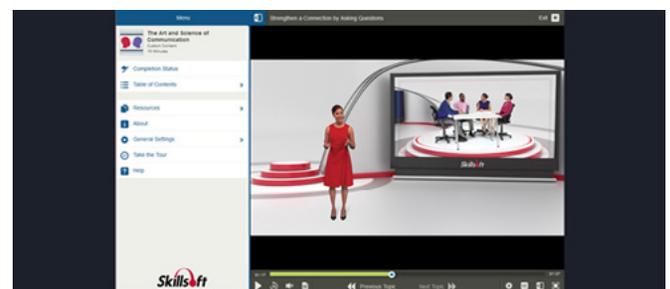
During Phase I, the research team conducted a rigorous evaluation of six different video instruction strategies within the subject areas of both Business Skills and IT. The instructional strategies, or “interest factors,” included the following:

1. **Instructor-led Baseline:** The baseline video, against which all others were measured, featured an instructor, on camera, delivering the material in lecture form.



Baseline Instructor- Led Video Example

2. **Scenario-based:** In this video, Skillsoft’s scenario-based, role-play video was used for testing purposes.



Scenario-Based Video Example

3. **Pre-Test:** Learners started the instructional video with a pre-test.
4. **Interpolated Quiz:** Learners took quizzes that were woven into the instructional video.

5. **Course Outline:** The instructional video started with an outline of the video course content.
6. **Social Shares:** Researchers altered the number of “likes” and social shares of the video example to understand if peer recommendations stimulate interest in the video.

In each case, one Business Skills training video (The Art & Science of Communication – introductory level content) and one IT video (T-SQL – content which requires some level of SQL competency) were used to study the effectiveness of the instruction. With the participation of more than 700 Accenture employees, researchers completed Phase I in the spring of 2018.

Phase I revealed several intriguing results:

1. For the Business Skills example, the instructor-led video treatment proved to be the least interesting approach. Instructional strategies, such as introducing an interactive outline, as well as presenting

the content within a scenario-based format, materially improved the overall learner interest.

2. For the Business Skills example, the presence of a growth mindset directly correlated to the expressed level of interest in the video and improved performance on the final assessment. Interestingly, this turned out to be more of an influencer than the selected instructional strategy. Participants who exhibited “grit” also found the videos to be more interesting.
3. For the IT content, there was no direct correlation between the instructional strategies and the interest learners expressed in the video. However, when looking at the subset of IT video participants who rated themselves as less familiar with the content (1-3 out of 5), there was a positive correlation between their expressed level of interest and the outcome of the final assessment.



4. For the IT example, participants in the pre-test instructional strategy had significantly higher exit scores than participants in the baseline. Interest positively correlated with “grit” and “growth mindset” overall. “Growth mindset” positively correlated with exit scores in the course outline and interpolated quiz instructional strategies, but not with any other IT interventions. This again suggests that the presence of a “growth mindset” can influence the performance of the learner.

What Practical Insights Might We Draw From These Initial Findings?

For Business Skills, the treatment and design of the video materially influence the expressed level of engagement by the learner.

Simply delivering an instructor lecture on camera, interspersed with bulleted concepts, is the least engaging way to present critical business skills content. **The findings suggest that learners crave a storyline, a narrative, and some degree of self-directed, progressive disclosure of the concepts.** While buyers are drawn to “instructor-driven” videos, they may compromise the engagement of the learning.

For IT Instruction, Substance and Depth Prevail

For IT instruction, recommending the appropriate level of instruction is critical to overall cognitive engagement. This is a fairly intuitive concept. One would expect those who already know the subject matter of the video to find it less appealing than those who are filling in gaps in their knowledge. However, this finding may suggest something even more profound: IT learners crave depth and richness of the instruction to fill self-perceived skill gaps. When considering the relative indifference to the instructional strategy, the research implies that substance and depth prevail. IT audiences may value learning modalities beyond video alone, such as digital books, to provide deeper context.

Mindset Is Paramount

Regardless of the subject matter, a learner’s mindset (“growth mindset” vs. “fixed mindset”) is ultimately the greatest determinant of success. Again, this is a relatively intuitive concept. If a learner is

motivated and believes they *can* learn, then they are more likely *to* learn. Much of [Carol Dweck’s research](#) centered on this very point. However, the more provocative question is whether a growth mindset is something that can be instilled at scale. Said differently, if leaders can effectively influence or change one’s mindset to turn their organizations into hyper-learning machines, then this may yield the most significant impact on learning effectiveness.

What Questions Are Next?

- Can we materially influence a learner’s mindset, so that they become better learners?
- Can we scientifically validate that their level of engagement is improved, as evidenced by an EEG signature?

In the coming months, Skillsoft and Accenture will be in the lab at MIT working to understand this. They have jointly developed a “growth mindset” intervention, which they will test in the lab. *Fully understanding this dynamic could lead to one of the most profound breakthroughs in digital learning design in recent years.*

[Watch the video](#) about Skillsoft and MIT’s research study, and learn more about [Skillsoft’s Leadership Development Program](#) – the only leadership training based on brain science.

• • •



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is the Chief Content Officer at Skillsoft.



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Jodi Atkinson

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Program: **LEAP—Leadership Engagement with Awesome People**

Program Director: **Jodi Atkinson, Director, Global Learning**

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Innovation in Deployment of Leadership

Developing Current and Future Leaders



Our editorial team interviewed Jodi Atkinson from Deltek at the LEAD2018 Awards this past February. Here are some excerpts from the exclusive interview.



What is the overall objective of your program?

The object of the Deltek LEAP program is to develop current and future leaders of the company to ensure success now and in the years to come.

Participants in this six-month program work with our leadership team in a series of facilitated discussions and self-directed curriculum, to practice director-level competencies and present proposals on solutions that have real business impact.

Activities are designed to empower participants to meet Deltek's strategic objectives.

Who do you impact with your program?

The LEAP program is designed to develop high-performing leaders at the director level. These are leaders who demonstrate the qualities that will drive strategy with internal and external customers, grow the company, and meet the challenges that lie ahead. As a result, participants learn to network across the organization and drive real solutions to enhance business growth.

What are the lessons you've learned this year from facilitating your program?

There is a synchronicity between competencies the program is



seeking to develop and the program requirements – one being strategic planning and taking action. Participants are learning to be strategic with time, they learn to refine this skill vs. being responsive to only short term demands.

Having individuals from across the organization come together to work in teams has proven to be invaluable for the participants. Due to the relationships built, they have acquired knowledge to close more deals, enact initiatives with cross-functional support, and expedite projects through increased networking. To enable growth, participants are given real problems to solve and are able to develop competencies and foster innovation through interaction across the business and with our senior leadership team. It's really about succession planning.

How do you measure the return on investment and success of the program?

For the program specifically, we use the Kirkpatrick Model and query our leadership on the impact graduates make to the organization over the course of one year.

At Deltek, the real measure of success we see is within our engagement scores. Enabling graduates to set a vision for their teams and propose solutions that have real business impact has led them to be part of something they feel passionate about.

The result is an amazing culture of learning and growth. Even when the program ends, our participants reinforce their skills, and the value of learning, to their teams. By doing

so, we're creating a company that is constantly learning – and therefore are agile. We are developing this culture and it keeps us competitive to have this growth mindset—to ask what if and to empower everyone to do more.

What lies ahead for the program and how will it continue to succeed?

We've now had five cohorts complete the LEAP program. With each iteration, we team with a Steering Committee that also includes program graduates to design the most effective program.

This year feedback has been “I feel like I've won the lottery by having been selected for this program.” While the program includes a set of competencies at the director level, participants can work with their managers to review their Strengths and Opportunities and select a program that addresses their unique areas of growth. Similarly, we'll continue to seek program graduate feedback and incorporate/improve each cohort to provide the richest experience possible for participants ■

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You're The Boss And The Executioner

The toughest reality of leadership and
an opportunity to message your team

 By **Dudley Slater**

“I’m above the rest of you and I’m too important to deal with this - good luck.”

Would that message inspire you? Would you trust an organization to successfully navigate the next challenge, if you were given that message in response to an organizational crisis?

Of course not. Yet, that is exactly the message most leaders communicate when facing many of the inevitable, difficult people decisions that eventually show up in every organization. Think of that chronically under-performing manager, who hangs around because he also happens to be the boss’s friend. Even worse, think about that team of hard working people who may need to go, because of an economic downturn or because their product or department is no longer necessary.

So whose job is it to be the executioner when that difficult day comes? Of equal importance, when terminating people (or teams of people), what message do you want your organization to retain going forward? And what distinguishes success from failure when communicating such a gut wrenching decision to your organization?

Early in my entrepreneur’s journey, once my board and I digested the full impact of the recession that was ravaging our national economy, I faced the horrible task of closing a regional office that employed 50 people. Our rapid growth consumed cash and

our financial survival required that conserving cash became my new top priority. I had traveled the CEO’s road for a few years and unfortunately gained experience in terminating underperforming employees. At the time, however, this was new. I had never terminated 50 people. Making matters worse, these 50 people were not underperforming. They had done nothing wrong.

Fortunately for me, my VP of human resources was a superstar. She had deep experience dealing with the good, the bad and the horrible, like the job of terminating 50 people. As we prepared for that dark day, she walked me through the form of termination letter she would deliver; she explained the out-placement services we would provide; she summarized our severance policy and helped me understand the window of time each terminated employee would have to find a new job, that frightening runway that every family dreads before they run out of money and face real hardship.

I marveled at her composure, her preparedness and her ability to lead this difficult process. As I listened to her, I thought to myself, “this is why she is here, this is her job.” Moreover, we employed hundreds of people- perhaps I should stay at headquarters and focus on those hundreds of employees who would remain with the organization. Besides, I was the CEO. If I stayed back at headquarters I would better prepare to address the media and our key customers.



This decision as to whose job it is to assume the role of executioner is where most leaders fail, missing a critical opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the Mission while falling victim to their selfish need to “delegate” and avoid the painful experience of taking ownership of the human crisis. When leaders delegate this task they unwittingly communicate the message that “I am above the rest of you” or “this is your problem” or, even worse, “my needs come first and my underlings merely show up on Monday morning to make me more powerful and more wealthy.”



On the other hand, when a Fusion Leader assumes responsibility for terminating under-performing or unnecessary personnel, they communicate the message “we are all responsible (to some degree)” and “we are in this together” and, most importantly “I (as the leader) am handling this crisis because this is necessary to achieve our Mission.”

When I ultimately decided to get on the plane and deliver the news myself, I did not appreciate the powerful moment I was about to experience in my own leadership development. I did not realize that my team and I would move through this crisis and

ultimately build one of the ten largest companies in the United States fiber-based telecommunications industry, Integra Telecom.

The internal struggle as to whose job title includes the role of executioner is one of many opportunities leaders have to “fuse” their teams together around a shared Mission, a leadership process I came to describe as Fusion Leadership. Fusion Leaders obsess over the question as to how to inspire the following of others, how to earn the loyalties of an organization and ultimately how to motivate teams of people to manifest an organization’s Mission.

When leaders fall victim to their selfish ego needs, like delegating the act of terminating employees, they drive a wedge between their team and the organization’s mission. They provide evidence to their team that their personal needs are more important than the organization’s Mission. That is demotivating. People want to work toward a Cause or Mission. People are repelled by the notion of working toward simply fulfilling their boss’ ego needs.

Fusion Leaders look for every opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to the Mission. Consider the question- when you conduct a meeting, who becomes the smartest person in the room? Or, whom do you prioritize on your calendar when you allocate your precious time? Or, how much do you pay yourself compared to how much you pay others who are also working to realize the Mission?

Next time your organization must terminate one or many employees, ask yourself “is this an opportunity to demonstrate my commitment to our Mission” and “whose job is it to become the executioner?”



Dudley Slater, a co-author with Steve Taylor, of *Fusion Leadership Unleashing The Movement of Monday Morning Enthusiasts*, co-founded and served as the 15 year CEO of Integra Telecom



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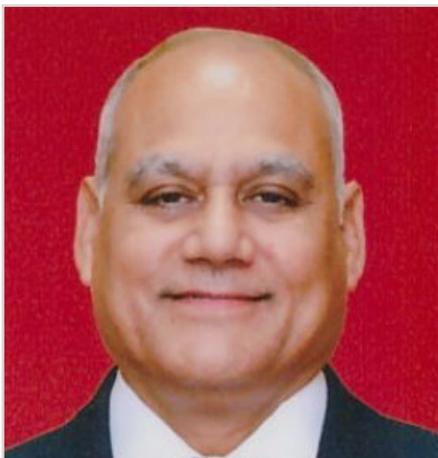
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Organization: **Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited**

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Innovation in Deployment of Leadership

Helping Employees Discover Areas of Their Strengths

Our editorial team interviewed *Anil Pande* from *Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited* at the *LEAD2018 Awards* this past February. Here are some excerpts from the exclusive interview.



What is the overall objective of your program?

Project Daksh is a techno-behavioural leadership development intervention aimed at providing focused developmental inputs to the Depot /

Terminal Heads in a phased manner enabling them to make a positive and sustainable impact on people, Depot / Terminal performance and contribute effectively to the bottom line of the organization.

Video



Anil Pande

Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited



Who do you impact with your program?

The target audience of this program were the Location Heads of our Depots and Terminals. Heading a Depot/ terminal is like running a small organization with a turnover 50 - 100 crores. They have experience of at least 15 years, and are in the age group of 35 to 45 years.

What are the lessons you've learned this year from facilitating your program?

Most of the times, development programs are aimed at making impact on the performance of the organization, hence inputs imparted are also basis meeting business requirements, however my key take away is that while designing such interventions, we should look at holistic development of the Officer aimed at grooming them personally, socially, financially and professionally so that they are able to excel at work and in their personal arena.

Following are key sessions held during the contact programs.

- Personal Mastery
- Managing Finances and its Implications
- Leadership Traits
- Performance Feedback Process
- Behaviour based safety processes.

Also, our location heads are working in a high stress environment, and self-introspection is just not in their list of priorities. Daksh gave them a platform that enabled them to invest considerate time in self-discovery, thereby helping them with identifying areas of their strengths and ways of leveraging their potential.

How do you measure the return on investment and success of the program?

As a part of Project Daksh, 25 high impact business projects are under implementation. The Tank truck filling time has reduced from 110 min in 2015 to 45 min in 2017, thereby increasing productivity by more than two folds.

Also, we have achieved a Zero delay in start of shift across all locations.

The HSE Index has improved from 89% to 96% and the behaviour based safety index has improved from 72% to 84%.

What lies ahead for the program and how will it continue to succeed?

In order to make the intervention more sustainable in the long run, following steps have been taken:

The first batch of participants of Daksh 1.0 have completed the year-long development program in Dec 2017. In order to take their development journey to the next level, it is now planned to invite them for a series of Advanced Daksh Programs which will be structured around mentoring and coaching skills, that they would practice hands-on with their teams, and also with the new batch participants of Daksh 2.0, Daksh 3.0 (for the remaining Terminal / Depot Heads)

Daksh 2.0 (2018-19), Daksh 3.0 (2020-21) are being planned for the remaining 77 Depot / Terminal Managers.

We are planning similar development interventions, which have techno behavioural personalized inputs for Officers heading Projects / Pipelines / Lubes Terminals and Depots ■

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Senior Leaders, You Can Be Private And Accessible



It's time to prioritize being an accessible leader



By [Kyla Holcombe](#)

Imagine this scenario: As a senior leader, you find yourself spending most of your time in your office, going from one meeting to the next and trying to keep up with your to-do list.

It's not that you are intentionally avoiding talking with employees, but it just doesn't come naturally to you. You get it — being available for employees helps build relationships and trust, but there's

just not enough time in the day. You are busy, demands pull you in many directions, and there are too many people to meet within a single day. Being overly friendly results in perceptions

of favoritism. Plus, you are a private person, so you aren't overly excited about small talk or sharing the details of your life. Sound familiar for yourself or someone you know?

While being accessible and approachable is a common leadership challenge, it is easier than you think. It doesn't require revealing overly personal information and it doesn't have to take a lot of time. Effective leaders prioritize being accessible because it is imperative for building trust and can be a key driver of employee engagement. Accessible managers are critical to an employee's work experience, and seeing senior leaders as accessible creates confidence in the future success of the organization. If you aren't finding ways to connect with your workforce, you may be seriously hindering their commitment to the organization. Sounds like it's time to learn how to be accessible.

Where to Start? Understand Why Are You Resistant

One suggestion for becoming more "accessible" is to reflect on any resistance you may have to being so. Two of the most common reasons I hear are described below:

Many leaders are results-oriented. Many leaders are naturally more results-oriented (focused on the "doing" and achieving results) than relationship-oriented (focused on interpersonal interactions). This results-orientation can

cause leaders to overlook the importance of people-focused competencies like listening, communication, coaching, or modeling values. High performers typically advance in organizations because of their strong technical and execution skills, but these skills become less and less important as people take on more leadership responsibility. It is difficult to shift from task-focused behaviors that have been positively reinforced to other skills like valuing people, encouraging risk taking, or demonstrating respect — all of which make you a more accessible leader.

If you're introverted, you may have a harder time talking about yourself. If you are introverted, it may be difficult to strike up conversations with people, feel comfortable sharing personal information with those you don't know well, or meet new people. Extroverts may be more likely to emerge as leaders (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002), but plenty of research that shows introverts can make highly effective leaders and are well-equipped to be accessible to their teams (Kahnweiler, 2009). It is a misconception that being accessible requires more talking on your part; it actually requires more listening, something that introverts may find easier than their extroverted counterparts.

How to Be More Accessible

Now that you've thought about why you may be resistant to making yourself more accessible, here are a few simple tips

geared to help make social interactions easier.

Look for opportunities to ask questions. Find brief opportunities to interact with your employees. This may be during elevator rides, walks down the hall in-between meetings, or intentional breaks where you visit particular groups. Carve out time to run into people or take five minutes and give one of your employees a call. Rather than doing all the talking, *ask people questions*. Spark conversation by asking how work is going, what's top-of-mind, or what's new and exciting outside of work.

I was recently reading Fredrik Backman's New York Times bestseller, "A Man Called Ove," where he describes the uncomfortable situation of a man about to meet his future father-in-law. As I read the scene, it reminded me that connecting with others is actually pretty easy. It's really about inviting others to share something about themselves: "He cleared his throat and looked around with a certain desperation to find something to ask this old man about. Because this was what Ove had learned: if one didn't have anything to say, one had to find something to ask. If there was one thing that made people forget to dislike one, it was when they were given the opportunity to talk about themselves."

The lesson from Ove? Invite others to share with you. Get to know a thing or two about the

people who work for you. This is how you become accessible.

Address people by name and remember things about them. Whenever possible, remember and use people's names. If a name escapes you, kindly ask for a reminder. This shows a clear value for someone as a person, not just as one cog in the inner workings of your company. Additionally, as you get the opportunity to meet people and ask them questions, remember some of the details people share. These can be great conversation-starters next time.

One CEO I worked with who led a hospital with 3,000 employees took time to round every single day for the last 25 years. He made it a point to know one thing about each employee. Sue tries to drink a gallon of water every day. Bill just had his first grandbaby. Mary hates spicy food. Working these facts into hallway greetings made employees feel connected and special.

Find one topic of conversation that feels safe to share about yourself. When you ask questions, it's natural for people to ask something in return. Do not panic. Come up with at least one topic that you feel comfortable discussing with others. Maybe you have a passion for horseback riding. Maybe you have a hilarious two-year-old (children are great for endless stories!). Maybe you have a new interest in gardening and cooking. There is at least one topic, something that does not feel overly sensitive or personal,

that you can talk about. It is easy to forget that people are likely intimidated by you or nervous for the opportunity to talk with a senior leader. When people see you as a normal, every-day human just like them, it is easier to make a connection.



Warning: Be Authentic

People aren't stupid; phony attempts to appear "approachable" may hurt you more than doing nothing at all. You do not have to befriend all people, but your efforts to connect with others need to be sincere. Listen to what people say, be present in the moment while talking with them, and be honest.

As a leader, it is your job to influence people towards accomplishing the goals of the organization. You will be more effective as an influencer when you are familiar, draw similarities between yourself and others, have positive interactions with

others, and are likable, i.e., **are accessible** (Cialdini, 2009). Being accessible builds trust, and trust strengthens your influence. It sounds like it's about time to prioritize being an accessible leader.

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Kyla Holcombe, Ph.D., is an Insights Consultant & Organizational Psychologist at Newmeasures. Kyla focuses on customized survey design and development, client partnerships, project execution, and building understanding around results. Her goal is to use innovative tools and insights to transform organizations, leaders, and employee experiences. Kyla balances best practices from both research and application to deliver practical solutions that have real and measurable impact.



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Damian Ferguson



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Best Sales Leadership Program (non-store/restaurant)

Helping Customers Achieve Their Business Objectives

Our editorial team interviewed *Damian Ferguson* from *Schlumberger* at the *LEAD2018 Awards* this past February. Here are some excerpts from the exclusive interview.



What is the overall objective of your program?

Today's customers want a trusted business partner, someone who can help them see the path forward and make educated buying decisions. Customers want standouts who are more consultative and more engaged in their success and prosperity. Our Business Acumen training course developed with Acumen Learning helps you to gain a deeper understanding of how Schlumberger and your customers make money, and how to help your customers achieve their business objectives using the Five Business Drivers Model. In this course, we emphasize practical and proven techniques based around day-to-day interactions

with customers and understanding their business.

Course Aim

- Use the Five Business Drivers Model to understand what motivates purchasing decisions
- Learn how to diagnose business challenges and opportunities prior to a sales call
- Align solutions with specific business needs and help clients make effective business decisions
- Listen and communicate with increased business confidence

Who do you impact with your program?

Classes are targeted toward all levels of our Sales and Commercial team

including Sales Managers, Global Account Managers, Global Account Directors, Account Managers and Operations Managers who have (or influence) a client-interfacing sales and commercial organization. Registration and certification are managed through the company learning management system. Additional classes can be run at the request of a sponsoring organization.

Although we have focused our training program on our Sales and Commercial leaders, the concepts are very applicable for all organizations within Schlumberger.

What are the lessons you've learned this year from facilitating your program?

Acumen talks our talk; they understand our business and have

become trusted partners in training our people to meet our objectives. We have learned that with a trusted partner we are able to have Acumen Learning run the program and no longer need our own instructors to introduce them or remain in class to add context.

Bringing external, industry expertise has simplified our approach and enabled our leaders to learn



more about the business of their customers. The Business Acumen provides this crucial knowledge while exceeding participant expectations. This course brings value and meaning into our leader's day-to-day activities.

How do you measure the return on investment and success of the program?

Repeat business is one indicator of a successful program and since we started the pilot program at Schlumberger in October of 2016, we have managed to fill the rosters. Anecdotal evidence of the impact is evident through the feedback sheets. Below is the feedback from a Schlumberger vice president:

'The length of the class and the structure went well. The content is very applicable, and I liked the way that he related it to the Schlumberger financials. The section where we reviewed the financial statement was excellent, and really opens your eyes to the messaging of each company and what it means to different people. Excellent class, I feel very privileged to have attended and am looking forward to digging into my customer numbers.'

Additional Feedback

"This training takes sales, marketing, and operations to the next level. It was very interesting and enjoyable. Greg used great examples. Excellent coaching!"

"This course exceeded expectations! It brings the value and meaning into my day-to-day activities. The flow of the session was spot on. We had plenty of time for conversations that bring the new look into the financial analysis. I can't wait to sharpen my knowledge through the drills."

"Awesome! One of the more practical courses I have attended. Can apply this inside and outside Schlumberger. I think it will be very beneficial to understanding the drivers and health of my current clients."

"Wonderful course. Broke down financial statements into easily understandable and meaningful information. A great tool to take back to my team and help me advance in my career."

"Very interesting course. I think that we should have taken this course a long time ago, possibly with some refreshers through web-based quizzes or certifications. The sales team should take this too!"

"Excellent content. The instructor was very capable, engaging the audience and applied the concepts to our business. The tools received will be very useful in our day-to-day activities."

Dashboard

- Net promotor score average: 85+
- Average score range: 4.6-4.8 on 5-point scale

Statistics

- First two-day course Oct 2016
- Completed 18, two-day courses in 2017
- Four in Texas
- Fourteen internationally
- Eight courses scheduled (so far) for 2018
- Five Schlumberger Quarterly Earnings Release Debriefs with hundreds of participants where the fundamentals of the course are reviewed in the context of the company's data

What lies ahead for the program and how will it continue to succeed?

The Sales and Commercial Training arm of Schlumberger has sponsored this course for all of our business units, delivering an average of 15 classes per year throughout the world. We will adjust the number of classes to suit training saturation but expect that the natural ebb and flow of the business will maintain the program in our portfolio for years to come.

We look forward to all employees having a chance to build their business acumen and help us grow our business ■

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Innovate, Improve And Discover To Be A True Leader

Stop searching for “best practices”

 By [Marcia Daszko](#)

“Best practice” has become a commonly used term in past years to describe the most efficient and effective way to accomplish a task or procedure. Organizations are always on the lookout for “best practices” they can replicate and implement, but just the phrase “best practices” alone sets up unrealistic expectations throughout the organization, from the top down. Some proper terms an organization that wants to improve, innovate, and survive could use include “better” or “new” or “different” practices, meaning that the organization’s leadership is continually striving to develop. The collective energy then shifts from complacent to dynamic.

Best practices—or employing a practice another organization has used to solve a problem—are often sought in an effort to save time. The “best practice” method is considered efficient to help accomplish work and get desired results. One company might research how other companies pay their salespeople, implement their rewards system, or recruit star employees, and try to introduce the same practices into their own organization. However, chasing “best practices” and bench marking what other organizations do often leads to stagnant thinking and copying.

A better practice, a better way to do something for one team is a misnomer for others. A best practice for one team or company will wreak havoc on another team. It doesn’t fit or work. Too many people think, “Oh good, we’ve found a best practice. It is the new industry standard.” Managers of an organization will often accept the new practice for months, years, or even decades. They adopt an industry “best practice” and use it over and over without asking essential questions: “Does it help us achieve our aim?” “Does it solve our issues and work in our culture?” and “Does it serve our customers?” Accepting a best practice removes the questioning, thinking, and experimenting that you need to align with the needs of your own organization and customers. Developing and implementing your own process focuses your team on engaging in and developing their own culture focused on continual learning, improvement, and innovation.

In the English language, the adjective “good” evolves to “better” and then finally, its superlative form, “best.” We might say the service at a restaurant is good. During our next visit there it is better. If it is the best, it is as good as it gets. By definition, it can’t get better. The focus is not on making it better. But if organizations are going to improve, if they’re going to survive, they must understand that there is no



“best” practice. The focus needs to be on continual improvement, not getting to the best practice and being finished with the focus on improving.

Many organizations comb through industry data so they can compare and benchmark themselves with the competition. They search for “best practices” that they can adopt in a hurry. They attend conferences to hear case studies and try to integrate and copy what others are doing, assuming their “best practices” will dovetail into their own systems well.

The pursuit of “best practices” is a poor replacement for leadership. It is important to be aware of what the competition and the industry are doing, and what lessons there are to learn, so you don’t reinvent the wheel each time you need to solve a problem. However, leadership’s job is to scan the environment and be aware of barriers and opportunities in the

market. Rather than spending precious time pursuing “best practices” and playing catch-up, leaders can create an environment where energy is spent improving, innovating, and discovering new ways to add more value for their customers.



Marcia Daszko is a leading business strategist and catalyst for leadership and organizational transformation. She believes and teaches innovation in leadership thinking. She has 25 years of proven success as a Founder and CEO of a consulting firm, Marcia Daszko & Associates, and is an executive team workshop facilitator.



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The Best Leaders Scan For Information

Balancing the active and passive scanning methods

 By **Samuel B. Bacharach**

Organizational leaders are bombarded by a massive amount of information. They are constantly caught in a deluge of data—some of it valuable, some of it less valuable, some of it worthless, and some that may be valuable down the road. Organizational leaders must take the time to actively analyze the data they come across. They must explore by scanning information sources to identify signals that suggest potential areas of innovation. George S. Day and Paul J.H. Schoemaker suggest that there are two types of scanning—passive scanning and active scanning. Leaders who help their organizations break inertia can effectively balance both scanning methods.

Passive Scanning

Passive scanning is the mundane, undirected, and largely automatic scanning of everyday information. Passive scanning implies the gathering of information from the usual sources, such as popular magazines or internal financial reports. Passive scanning is undirected in the sense that the leaders may not be looking for anything specific or seeking an answer to an identifiable question. Almost on autopilot, leaders engaged in passive scanning comb through their usual sources of information as they look for anything out of the ordinary.

Leaders in myopic organizations, such as BlackBerry, primarily rely on passive scanning. They are consumed with analyzing information emanating

from the same sources, which leads to enhanced focus yet predictable results. Passive scanning may bolster the sense that the organization is following and will not deviate from a pre-plotted direction. It may allow leaders to spot opportunities and threats, albeit in an undirected and haphazard manner. In and of itself, passive scanning is not ideal for identifying and analysing incoming signals. Simply put, the poor focus and lack of breadth of passive scanning make it likely that valuable intelligence will be missed.

Active Scanning

Active scanning can be either directed to address an explicit question or undirected with a wider and more ambiguous scope. While passive scanning is often haphazard, active scanning is deliberate, methodical, and forward-looking. Active scanning analyzes information from a wide variety of unorthodox sources, which may range from comments overheard on the street to Internet rants posted by dissatisfied customers. Active scanning implies a continuous, active focus. Leaders who practice active scanning take the initiative to assemble teams that can troll various networks and comb through the seemingly disparate information to identify relevant signals.

Active scanners need to develop the talent to uncover the information and insights that the organization's employees may have. A key to active scanning is not simply possessing bits of information, but having the cognitive discipline to understand its importance and



relevance. Another method of active scanning is to move outside of one's comfort zone. That is, diversify the content that one consumes every day. Active scanners often seek out new skills and use their newfound knowledge to inform their decision-making. Or they may attend a conference or seminar in an adjacent field. More than one entrepreneur has discovered that developments in seemingly unrelated fields are connected and valuable.

Active scanning of the market voice is improved through systematic analysis of specific client networks. Instead of looking at the behavior of every single customer, it is much more expedient to concentrate on the most important networks. For example, early adopters are the forward thinkers who immediately accept and purchase cutting-edge products. Early adopters eagerly purchase the newest technology not because of its novelty, but because of its inherent usefulness to their specialized needs.

For an organization to break the inertia, its leaders must succeed in balancing both passive and active scanning. On the one hand, they need to understand that they cannot rely on the constant analysis of routine information sources, which leads to a shallow

understanding of the environment. On the other hand, too much active scanning may drill down too deeply, resulting in a lack of focus and direction, continuous reflection, hesitation, and organizational paralysis. Therefore, contextual competence depends not only on scanning but the ability to interpret signals, whether picked up actively or passively.

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6 Tips For Women Entering The Workforce

| Believe in yourself and persevere

 By **Karla Friede**

As the **CEO and co-founder** of a leading financial technology company, I have some advice for young women graduates looking for or settling into their first jobs. The world needs balance and diversity in its leaders. Here are tips I've gleaned from both my career and from watching other women in the workforce in the hopes of helping you build your career.

1. Build Your Brand

For the first 10 years of your career, think of yourself as a product that you are developing and marketing. Think about building your brand and creating a strong product. Early in your career, your personal brand is going to be about the brands you have on your resume.

Seek experience in companies that have well-recognized brands, because some of their luster will rub off on you. If you can go to work for a bigger brand and take a lesser role, do it. If you can't, make sure that you move around

to get different experiences inside the company.

Your knowledge base is also part of your brand, so think of yourself as being in knowledge-acquisition mode for at least the first ten years, making your product—yourself—more valuable. When I worked for Mentor Graphics, a large tech company, I started in their Corporate Finance Group doing financial analysis. When I could, I moved to pricing analysis, and eventually had responsibility for pricing and packaging of the company products. Pricing was part of corporate marketing, so this allowed me to join the marketing team and then make a move into division marketing. I transitioned into as many different roles as I could, which gave me the opportunity to learn and to figure out what I wanted to do.

2. Don't Be Afraid to Change Course

Coming out of college, young people put so much pressure on themselves to find a perfect job,

but it's not an irreversible decision. You don't have to find the perfect job out of the gate because you'll have multiple shots at it. If you find yourself in a job and it's not what you thought it was, or if you don't like working in the field you majored in, do something else.

When I graduated, I started my career at KPMG. I worked at fitting in for about year before I realized accounting wasn't for me. Accounting has changed a lot since then, but at the time it was mainly score-keeping—measuring and reporting what had already happened in a business. This position helped me understand I wanted to be involved in making decisions that drove a business, so I decided to make a change. I applied to MBA programs. A year later, I was on my way to Harvard Business School. Your career is going to be a very long road. If you find you're going the wrong direction, it's easier to make a change early than it is to change later.

3. Seek Feedback

I've watched young women propel their careers forward very quickly by consistently and proactively asking for feedback. This is something I wish I'd done more. For every significant task you're assigned and every project you're on, ask the people you worked with for feedback on what you could have done better.

Be prepared to take some knocks, but keep it in perspective. Give yourself a break, because you're still learning. Also, realize **being able to give feedback constructively is a skill** few have mastered, so what you get may not always be delivered in the most diplomatic way. But, if you have the courage to consistently seek feedback, and more importantly learn from it, it will dramatically increase the trajectory of your career.

4. Meet New People

Make it a point to meet somebody new every week. Ask people out to coffee or lunch. This isn't something that comes naturally to many of us, but there's no better way to build your interpersonal skills and expand your network. You'll be surprised by how much more confident and outgoing you'll become just by doing this. Improving your networking skills now will pay off in the future since much of your success depends on your ability to work with others and find ways to put them at ease.

5. Find Women Mentors

While there are still not anywhere near enough women in leadership roles, there are more than there

used to be. Many women are willing to help others around them learn and avoid the mistakes they've made, so don't be afraid to ask. Everyone I know who has been asked to **be a mentor** has welcomed the opportunity.

Who should you ask? Perhaps you have a family member who is accomplished in her career. Maybe you had an internship in college and connected with someone or a professor you admired. Maybe your parents know someone who'd be willing to step up.

Seek experience in companies that have well-recognized brands, because some of their luster will rub off on you.

6. Find a Cultural Fit

It's clear that while women have made great strides in business since I started out, gender bias in the workplace is far from dead. It's rare today for a company's culture to be overtly hostile to women, but a more subtly biased culture can emerge over time, in random comments or viewpoints, or ways people are treated differently.

If you see this happening, think about moving on. Most cultures are deeply ingrained, and not

going to change in the short term. You don't have to silently struggle and keep working there—life is just too short to put up with bias.

Find a company where you're comfortable. There are plenty of good ones out there. Meet with the HR person at your current company on the way out. Be very clear about why you are leaving, and let them know what you experienced. If enough women communicate their experience and leave because of the culture, it may get the company's attention to change. Later in your career, when you have the opportunity to change or build a culture, **build one that welcomes everyone**, regardless of how they look.

I hope these tips help you succeed, and better yet, far exceed your goals. The world is waking up to what women leaders bring to a company, and I believe there will be more opportunities for women in the future. Believe in yourself and persevere. I'm rooting for you.



Karla Friede is the CEO of Nvoicepay



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