

# LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: THE CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE EXPECTATIONS

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This article discusses the common themes in this special issue of *Consulting Psychology Journal* on “Leadership Development” and summarizes some of the current issues in leadership development. A particular focus is on using an integrated model or framework to guide leadership development efforts. Emphasis is also placed on assessment of leadership development programs. Finally, expectations for future research and practice are discussed.

*Keywords:* leadership, leader development, assessment

There are literally thousands of books written on leadership, and even a greater number of journal and magazine articles. Many of these leadership books regularly appear on best-seller lists. For example, among the current 100 best-sellers on Amazon.com are Covey’s (2004) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, and Tom Rath’s (2007) *StrengthsFinder 2.0*, a book and online test to identify your personal strengths—both books that are used in leader development programs. Leadership books, authored by famous leaders, ranging from Jack Welch, to Rudy Giuliani, to coach John Wooden, are also top sellers. Why are books and articles on leadership so popular? The simple answer is that their popularity is similar to that of self-help books. Most readers are interested, not in the intricacies of leadership or in the histories of great leaders, but in how they themselves can develop into better leaders.

Of the billions of dollars spent worldwide by organizations in all sectors (private, public, nonprofit) to train and develop employees, a large share of training resources is devoted to management and/or leadership development. I have argued elsewhere that the reasons for spending so much on leadership development include the perception that leaders play an essential role in the operations of organizations and that leadership skills are more abstract (in comparison to training “line” workers), complex, and difficult to learn (Riggio, 2008). Leaders seem to understand this because even experienced and

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seasoned leaders are engaged in personal leadership development, whether it be from attending formal leadership development training programs or workshops, undergoing a developmental 360 degree feedback program, enlisting the aid of an executive coach, or simply reading some of the hot leadership books to try to find a few tips on how to be a better leader.

In short, most leaders, and the organizations that they lead, believe that leadership development is important and worth the investment of resources and their personal time to work on their own leadership development. There is a shared belief that leadership development works. Moreover, thanks to the meta-analytic efforts of Bruce Avolio, Sean Hannah (contributors to this special issue), and their colleagues, there is good empirical evidence that most leadership development efforts do indeed have a positive impact (Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, Walumbwa, & Chan, in press; Avolio et al., 2005).

Still, despite the faith that so many have in leadership development, many scholars, including some of those in this special issue of CPJ, lament the relative lack of research on leadership development, and the fact that there is no agreed-upon theory of leader development (e.g., Avolio & Hannah, 2008; see also Day, 2000). Yet, this is not entirely true. There are general models that govern employee training and development (e.g., Goldstein & Ford, 2001; London, 2002; see also Hrivnak, Reichard, & Riggio, 2009) that can be applied to the development of leaders. The model begins with assessing developmental needs and establishing training objectives. Comprehensive needs assessment begins with the organizational-level analysis, and should be driven, in part, by the mission of the organization. Many organizations that pay close attention to leadership development do a careful analysis of leader development needs, and consider how leadership is aligned with, and helps to achieve, the company's mission and strategic vision. For example, Toyota's strategic goal to manufacture the highest quality automobiles drives its management/leadership development to ensure that leaders at Toyota are focused on ensuring that quality is the preeminent concern of all employees (Liker, 2004). Likewise, Ritz-Carlton, a hotel chain known for its stellar customer service, which received *Training* magazine's number one rating in 2007 for employee training, has a leadership training program that is fully aligned with the organization's mission and based on a needs analysis that focuses on getting all employees to concentrate on the customer. One of its Leadership Center courses is entitled, "Legendary Service at the Ritz-Carlton." In short, the goals of the group, team, or organization play a part in the construction of systematic leadership development programs.

At the individual level, needs assessment for leader development may focus on the specific competencies that leaders at certain levels, in certain industries, need to possess to be effective. There are, however, a number of factors at the individual level that should be taken into account in delivering successful leader development programs. As the contributors to this issue suggest, the success of leadership development efforts are dependent on factors, well-known in the training literature, such as the trainee's "readiness" to learn, or in Boyatzis' words the "desire," or "intention" to learn, or in Avolio and Hannah's terms, the trainee's "developmental readiness," or what Thompson, Grahek, Phillips, & Fay (2008) call "commitment to lead." It is also interesting to note that Hopkins, O'Neil, Passarelli, & Bilimoria (2008) suggest that men and women leaders may have different motivations, with women motivated more by intrinsic factors (i.e., learning for learning's sake) and men by extrinsic factors (e.g., as a route to promotion/raises). In short, for leadership development efforts to be successful, careful consideration must be given to trainee readiness, desire to learn, and also the capacity to develop into better leaders.

If we apply this systematic approach to leadership development, we instantly realize that in many programs there is an assumption that leadership is a sort of generic set of skills or abilities that all leaders, regardless of the organization or the situation in which they lead, need to possess to become more effective. To put this in training terms, there is an implicit belief that a training needs analysis is not necessary because all leaders can benefit from learning some designated set of leadership skills. Therefore, a prestigious business school can offer an executive leadership development program that focuses on leadership skills A, B, and C, and promise that all participants will benefit from hearing famous leaders from business, government, and the sports world talk about how they used Skills A, B, and C to achieve their successes (and you can too!). When it comes to leadership, which is a complex and multifaceted construct, there may be some truth in this approach. As some of the contributors to this special issue have suggested, development of certain broad leadership skills/characteristics, such as emotional and social intelligence (Boyatzis, 2008), reasoning and decision making capacity (Thompson et al., 2008), and the effective use of power (Thompson et al., 2008), may be beneficial to most or all leaders.

Although many leadership development efforts focus on specific, “universal” leadership skills, it is true that the best leadership development programs in organizations do indeed use the training model. Rather than following the one-size-fits-all approach to leader development, these organizations base their programs on the assessed needs of the leaders and the teams and organizations in which they lead, they set specific and measurable training goals, they take into account factors such as participants’ motivation, readiness, and their existing and needed competencies.

### Is It *Leader* or *Leadership* Development?

In his oft-cited review article in *The Leadership Quarterly*, David Day (2000) notes the distinction between *leader development*, and *leadership development*. Leader development focuses on the individual leader and increasing his or her capacity to lead through the acquisition of skills, self-awareness, and motivation to lead—a primary focus of many of the articles in this special issue. Leadership development, on the other hand, focuses on the collective leadership capacity of the organization—how leaders and followers together increase the shared leadership capacity of the group or organization.

I recently worked with a company where the CEO invites all employees, from the top executives to the ground-floor receptionist, to its annual leadership development program. The theme of his leadership development program was “Be Your Own CEO,” by which he meant that he was challenging employees to take ownership of their jobs to figure out ways to innovate and to provide exceptional service (to customers and fellow employees). A large part of the program involved developing the leadership skills of interpersonal communication and empathy with the intention of enhancing the quality of working relationships among employees at all levels. Driven by the strategic goals of the company, he was increasing the collective leadership of the organization by empowering workers to be innovative and to build skills so that they could better communicate and collaborate with one another. This is an example of organization-wide leadership development, but in a very traditional format of leader skill development. The intention is to empower employees to take ownership of their jobs and to participate more fully in the shared leadership and decision making in the company.

Using Day's distinction, less attention is given in this special issue to *leadership* development, although Boyatzis moves Intentional Change Theory (ICT) from individual leader development to multilevel development at the team, group, organizational level, and beyond (culture, global). He argues that leading sustainable change is a multilevel process, but one that begins with leaders. Likewise, Avolio and Hannah, in their discussion of developmental readiness, suggest that organizations must also be ready to allow organizational members to grow in their jobs, by allowing risk-taking behaviors and taking ownership of shared organizational goals. This is very similar to the notion of the "learning organization" popularized in the early 1990s (e.g., Garvin, 1993; Senge, 1990). These authors also emphasize the importance of the support for leader development offered by the group and organizational climate.

Other authors, such as Margaret Hopkins and her coauthors remind us "for leadership development to have maximum impact, programs must focus on two levels of learning simultaneously—the individual level and the organizational level." (p. X). Yet, the bulk of the emphasis in leadership development, in this special issue, and in actual practice, is on the individual leader. This is not surprising, however, given our tendency to "romanticize" leaders (Meindl, 1995; Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985), and our obsession with learning the "lessons" offered by famous leaders ranging from Washington to Giuliani, from Genghis Khan to Ulysses S. Grant, and from Jesus Christ to Harry Potter. Clearly, however, the future of leadership development needs to focus more broadly, beyond the leader-centric approach, to the shared leadership capacity of organizational members. This trend is evident both in the attention given to the concept of shared leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2005) and the recent interest in the role of followers in leading organizational efforts (Kellerman, 2008; Riggio, Chaleff, & Lipman-Blumen, 2008). Yet, it is not reflected by a great deal of research that looks at organization-wide leadership development. Although there are some recent efforts to focus on team-based leadership development (e.g., Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004; Stagl, Salas, & Burke, 2007), much of the research on the effectiveness of leadership development efforts still focuses on the leader as the target of development programs.

### Leadership Development Techniques: Is There Anything New?

Most collections written about leadership development (e.g., Day, Zaccaro, & Halpin, 2004; Murphy & Riggio, 2003) include a focus on the efficacy of particular techniques, such as 360-degree feedback, action learning, or developmental assessment centers. This collection is no exception. Boyatzis (2008) discusses an MBA program designed to develop individual leader competencies through assessment, feedback, and traditional training methods. Executive coaching is the main topic of Karol Wasylshyn's contribution (Wasylshyn, 2008). Avolio and Hannah present a rather novel aspect of leader development, namely the importance of "trigger," or "crucible" events in a leader's personal development. According to these authors, leader development is not a slow and steady process, but one that is punctuated by these "high-impact experiences" that lead to accelerated leader development.

Hopkins and colleagues (2008) take a different tack. Using well validated and useful methods for leader development, they indicate how these apply differently for women leaders. Covered in their contribution, Hopkins et al. offer suggestions of how women leaders can use 360-degree feedback, coaching, mentoring, networking, and experiential learning in particular

ways to further their individual leader development. Noticeably lacking, however, is a piece that concentrates on new techniques, or new variations on techniques, for leadership development. Yet, in our world of an ever growing and expanding reliance on technology, one can envision that in the future, through interactive web-based technologies, leaders and potential leaders will be able to practice and hone their leadership skills in a wide variety of simulated virtual organizations (see O'Neal & Fisher, 2004; Reeves, Malone, & O'Driscoll, 2008).

So, the answer to the question of whether there is anything new in leadership development methods and technologies is “no” and “yes.” “No,” there have been no significant methodological breakthroughs. We still consider simulations, such as assessment center exercises, leadership/management games, and working on company-based, action learning projects (see Conger & Toegel, 2003; Horan, 2007) as state-of-the-art methods. But, “yes,” there are new and emerging technologies to better deliver simulation training to leaders—and the Web offers unlimited potential.

### Self-Awareness, Introspection, and the Practice of Leadership

A key theme in this collection is the importance of leader self-awareness in promoting leadership development. Nearly every author mentions that leaders must develop awareness of their own leadership strengths and limitations to capitalize on strengths and overcome shortcomings. So, leaders need to be open to feedback from assessment tools, to take note of ratings of their leadership from superiors, peers, and subordinates, to heed the advice of their executive coaches, and to personally reflect on and self-critique their leadership. In short, organizational leaders are “practitioners” of leadership, in every sense of that word. Although practitioners are experts, they are also students of their profession. The practice of leadership, just like the practice of medicine, or law, or any other profession, is a continual learning process. The complexity of these professions means that one can always improve and learn how to do it better. The wise leader accepts this and goes through the sometimes-painful process of personal leader development. As many of our contributors suggest, however, the motivation to develop and the ability to accept constructive criticism are prerequisites for positive change to actually occur.

The analogy of viewing leaders as students of leadership seems to work (at least for me). The better students realize that learning is a continual and lifelong process, and although they take pride in what they know, they are aware of and humbled by all that is still to be learned. There are students, however, who already think that they know it all—or at least all that they need to know to get by or to reach some level of success. Such is the case with leaders. Some are the good students of leadership. They reflect on their leadership and devote time to their personal development. They are also supportive of organizational leadership development efforts. Others believe that leadership is something that you either have or don't have (the “born vs. made” issue that Avolio and Hannah discuss). They don't believe that they can benefit from leadership development programs, so they don't participate, and they don't support organizational efforts to develop leaders. For example, I've spoken to some executives about emotional intelligence/competencies, and they say, “I know all about emotional intelligence. I've got it and I look for and hire leaders who have it, too”—an odd statement because they had to have read some report

about research on “emotional intelligence” because the term itself was only coined in 1990 (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), and only reached the popular press several years later (Goleman, 1995). I’ve been studying emotional competencies for more than 30 years, and I certainly don’t think I “know all about it.”

### The Importance of Assessment of Leadership Development Efforts

The last stage in a systematic training model is evaluation of the training’s success. A few of the contributions assembled here touch on the assessment of leadership development programs. For example, Boyatzis (2008) discusses the effectiveness of some programs to enhance leaders’ emotional competencies/intelligence. He presents a chart documenting the improvement of MBA graduates in emotional and social intelligence over a 7-year span. So often, however, evaluation efforts of leadership development programs are either never undertaken or they are limited in scope.

The complexity of the construct of leadership presents a hefty challenge to those trying to assess the outcomes and impact of leadership development programs. For some of the leadership development programs mentioned in this collection, such as executive coaching and mentoring, it may be nearly impossible to measure both the “treatment” and the outcomes. In other words, how does one quantify the amount and quality of coaching or mentoring interventions? Similarly, if there is improvement in a CEO’s or upper-level executive’s leadership from a particular developmental program, how does that translate into measurable improvements at the individual, group, and/or organizational level? Targeted and mission-driven organization-wide leadership development programs, such as those at Toyota or Ritz Carlton, designed to improve the shared focus on quality or customer service, are likely easier to evaluate by measuring such variables as reductions in customer complaints, repeat business, and surveying customers.

In any case, there needs to be greater attention to the evaluation of leadership development programs. For the most part, leadership development efforts are evaluated based on perceptions of success, what is called in the evaluation literature, *reaction criteria* (see Kirkpatrick, 1959–1960). These involve the participants’ perceptions of whether they did indeed learn anything and/or believe that the leadership development program was successful. So, participants are surveyed about their reactions to the training, and the executive who is footing the bill likely also makes an informal evaluation of the training program’s success (hopefully after reviewing the survey data).

A step further is what is referred to as *learning criteria*. These involve measures of retention of training material—whether or not the participants can remember anything about the leadership development program at its conclusion, or at some later time. Sometimes this is presented as a lessons learned summary, or even a test, at the conclusion of a session or program. Of course, there is decay of learning over time, which argues that leadership development should be an ongoing process, with regular review of core material. As executive coaches will affirm, often leaders must be reminded about what they have learned (“That’s right. I’m not supposed to do that.”).

*Behavioral criteria* refers to whether the leadership development efforts are indeed retained and put into action. Most commonly, these rely on observations (from supervisors, peers, subordinates) that the leader has shown some concrete improvement, or is demonstrating the targeted leader behaviors. For example, reports that the leader is listening better, being more empathic and supportive, or doing a better job of empowering followers through effective delegation and/or participation in decision making.

The bottom-line, of course, is referred to as *results criteria*, and these address what was mentioned earlier: is the leadership development program responsible for increased revenue, better performance, higher quality, better customer service, and the like? In short, did the investment in the leadership development program actually pay dividends to the organization?

In summary, those of us involved in efforts to develop leadership need to be very concerned about evaluation of our programs. We need to demonstrate the effectiveness of what we are doing and, in short, justify our existence. Organizations should be assured that their investment in leadership development does indeed pay off. Because of this, it is somewhat disheartening that there is not more attention to evaluation, both in the research literature and in practice.

### The Future of Leadership Development

Several years ago Susan Murphy and I published a collection with this title (Murphy & Riggio, 2003). Shortly thereafter, we vowed to never use “The Future of. . .” in any title again, because it immediately dates the work, and your predictions will likely never materialize. However, in the immortal words of Ray Charles, “Here we go again. . .”

As can be seen by the more practitioner-oriented pieces in the present collection, leadership development is a big, and growing, business. For instance, Wasylyshyn reports on an extensive and diverse client base for executive coaching. With the increased emphasis on leadership in organizations (and also in the universities and business schools that supply organizations with new leaders), the demand for leadership development is likely to grow. As a result, there is increasing demand for leadership development services and techniques.

On the other hand, many leadership scholars, including some represented here, lament the relative lack of good research on leadership development. In addition, although there are general frameworks to govern leadership development programs, there is a noticeable lack of integration of theory in much leadership development work. For example, Day, Harrison, and Halpin (2008) state that “[A]lthough there is no shortage of leadership theories or developmental practices for leaders, what is missing is any form of a comprehensive theory of leader development, (p. xi)” and their recent book is an attempt to bring more theory to bear on this issue. Drawing on theories of adult development, moral development, along with what is known about cognitive development, theories of self development and self-regulation, these authors are attempting to move from the traditional focus on leadership competencies or skills, to a more integrative model that focuses on the whole development of the person as leader. A similar goal is apparent in the recent work of Bruce Avolio (Avolio, 2005, 2007), who also integrates theories of adult and self-development, but incorporates the role of followers, the leadership context, and culture to represent a more “holistic” view of leader development.

Another line of research is focusing on the early developmental experiences that represent the “seeds” of leader development. This work, represented in a new collection by Murphy and Reichard (in press), that exams how early life experiences, from early childhood, through high school and college, influence emergence and effectiveness in positions of leadership later in life. It is hoped that blending together research from developmental psychology, education, and other disciplines will add to what we know about potential for leadership and how to best develop the next generations of leaders.

## Conclusion

The collection in this special issue offers a nice cross-section of work that is being done in leadership development in organizations. It represents a nice balance of scholarly and practitioner perspectives. Importantly, these articles touch on the main issues in leadership development: the readiness and motivation to develop as leaders, leadership development techniques, the role of individual differences in leader development, and the need for systematic development programs guided by research and theory. Yet, despite these exhortations by leadership development experts, many leadership development efforts in organizations continually fall short. All too often, companies seek the expedient course, using “canned” programs, delivered in a few short hours, to a wide range of employees, without taking into account individual differences such as developmental readiness and motivation to learn. Moreover, there is no guiding philosophy behind many of these development efforts and rarely is there integration of the leadership development into the larger picture of training efforts. In addition, evaluation rarely moves beyond the level of trainee reactions in a brief self-report survey.

So what is the prescribed future for leadership development efforts? There is every reason to believe that leadership development programs in organizations, particularly in the United States and Europe, *must* get better. The mass retirement of the baby-boom generation, coupled with lower birthrates, means that the supply of potential leaders for organizations is dwindling (Ready & Conger, 2007). Rather than hoping to compete for seasoned leaders in the selection process, it will make more sense for organizations to put their energy into leadership development programs—to “grow” their own leaders (Fulmer & Conger, 2004). This means that organizations will put greater resources into leader development, and related areas such as succession planning. Assisting organizations with leadership development efforts will likely be a growth area for consulting psychologists with expertise in leadership development. However, as we have seen in this special issue, leadership development programs need to fit the requirements of both the organizations and the leaders undergoing development. They need to be theory-driven, use proven methods, be integrated into ongoing organizational processes, evaluated for effectiveness, and substantial. It is quite likely that the success of organizations will depend on their ability to nurture and develop leadership capacity for success in the new millennium.

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(2)	Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)		
(3)	Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Rates Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®	104	85
(4)	Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)		
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))		1298	1280
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(2)	Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3541		
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(4)	Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	143	168
a. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))		143	168
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15d)		1441	1448
g. Copies not Distributed (See Instructions to Publishers #1 page #3)		52	52
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		1483	1500
i. Present Paid (15b) and/or (15c) (Sum 15b)		90%	88%

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 If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the December 2008 issue of this publication.  Publication not required.

17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: *Richard S. Service*, Director, Service Center Operations. Date: 10/6/08

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

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