Effective Leaders Are Trained—Not Born!

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In this study, we reviewed the relevant literature on leadership training programs. The used secondary research analyses as our method; from which we synthesized relevant literature on leadership training programs. We used Google Scholar, university libraries, scholarly books, and recently published peer-reviewed articles to gather information. As a result, we came to the determination that recurring leadership training programs are essential to competitiveness. We concluded that effective leaders are trained—and yes, not born. The literature revealed that managers value leadership training programs. Leadership training programs are essential to maintaining profits by formula. Therefore, based on our findings, we present four simple, easy to implement, recommendations for recurring leadership training programs.

Keywords: coaching, communication, competitive advantage, culture, leadership, programs, training

INTRODUCTION

"Anything that can be measured can be improved" – Michael Dell

Heads of organizations are expected to show up on day one with a skill set that includes the ability to lead others. Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of most publicly traded companies must maximize profits while executing the Board of Directors' strategic plan. Educational institution leaders must maximize their students' academic outcomes while achieving the institution's organizational goals. Military commanders need to meet the mission while operating within budget, all while understanding that the *theory of authority* is dictated by recipients' willingness to comply with orders in the command hierarchy (Barnard, 1968). Managers should too be aware that Drucker (1954) is known for arguing that tasks for managers is to *motivate with communication*, and as teachers they *develop people*. Bell and Bodie (2012) wrote that Peter F. Drucker (1954):

Attempted to teach managers lessons on leadership by means of how they use communication to make change happen one worker at a time. In this sense, managers can transform themselves into leaders of the change process through communicative actions they take when dealing with each individual worker at all levels (p. 59).

Leadership development is a "process through which leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities are created" (Callahan & Rosser, 2007, p. 269). There are benefits for public and private sector organizations to have Leadership Training and Development (LTD). In this paper, we explore the options available to deliver LTDs, evaluate the value of LTDs, and identify the challenges associated with implementing them, because "LTD programs are worthwhile investments for public organizations" (Seidle, Perry, & Fernandez, 2016, p. 603). Managers often receive leadership training as they seek and achieve higher roles and responsibilities within their chosen professions. Some organizations have structured leadership training programs, while others expect leaders to show up well-trained and ready to execute. How do leaders, however, attain the ability to lead?

Leaders Are Trained—And Yes, Not Born!

Are leaders born or trained? Eighteenth and 19th Century myths and beliefs included such notions as the *elocutionary movement*, where it was firmly believed that a speaker could tailor his or her gesticulations to speech in advance; however, the practice was discredited because speakers who violated all their concepts of bodily and vocal delivery were equally or more effective in speech delivery (Sandford & Yeager, 1942). Modern management theory has taken us far away from Thomas Carlyle's book, "On Heroes, Hero-worship and the Heroic in History" where Carlyle made popular the notion of a "Great Man;" it was a common belief for 19th Century thinkers to attribute leadership to innate, inherited traits, because "No great man lives in vain. The History of the world is but the Biography of great men" (Carlyle, 1840, p. 34). People on both sides of this argument can agree that training plays a major role in developing leaders. Those who believe that leaders are made place more value on training than those who believe leaders are born. While some leadership qualities are inherent, becoming a good leader is an exercise in continued character growth while maintaining personal integrity.

Some organizations today continue to expect that managers they hire already possess the leadership skills necessary to succeed. Other organizations invest early and often in developing their leaders, and all leaders within the organization attend the same training courses at crucial points in their careers. These investments in leadership development programs support their internal business goals to produce effective leaders. Leadership development appears to be continuous, and due to the dynamic nature of the business environment; leadership training appears to be emphasized in competitive advantage. Therefore, the research question we asked that operationalized our study was as follows:

RESEARCH QUESTION

What role, if any, does recurring corporate leadership training programs play in developing effective leaders?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Our literature review was undertaken on October 11, 2022, and completed on November 27, 2022. The literature has a hodgepodge of meanings; however, careful synthesis of leadership training programs literature revealed some convincing evidence that training programs are essential and need to be recurring.

Some authors believe that leadership training does not necessarily translate into leadership learning. "Billions of dollars are spent annually on leadership training and development courses. Unfortunately, this training, both at organizational and university levels, does not appear to consistently result in significant adult learning or better organizational performance" (Samuel, & Durning, 2022, p. 191). On the other hand,

Ericsson et al. (2007, p. 116), believed that "consistently and overwhelmingly, the evidence showed that experts are always made, not born." Recent assertion confirms that "leadership development has never been more urgent. Companies of all sorts realize that to survive in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment, they need leadership skills and organizational capabilities different from those that helped them succeed in the past" (Narayandas & Moldoveanu, 2019, p. 4).

Why Are Leadership Training Programs Valuable?

According to Abner et al., the performance improvement resulting from a leadership development program has a monetary value that should be accounted for as a company investment return (2020). Organizations must understand how to calculate the value of their LTD programs to justify their existence. "Considerable financial outlays by public sector organizations are made yearly on leadership training and development with little understanding of whether there is a return on investment for these efforts" (Seidle, Perry & Fernandez, 2016, p. 611). Organizations can assess the value of their LTD programs the same way they assess the value of other ventures, with return on development investment (RODI) (Avolio, Avey, & Quisenberry, 2010; Abner, Valdez, & Perry, 2020). Leaders value an analysis that identifies the financial impacts of investment. Cascio and Boudreau (2008) provide a monetary value to human capital investments, with a formula that calculates RODI as:

$$[\text{RODI} = NTdSd_y - C]$$

N = number of participants in the leadership program
T = expected time for leadership behavior changes (converted to a fraction in years such that a year and 6 months would be 1.5)
d = effect size of intervention (average difference in outcomes between trained and untrained employees)
Sdy = standard deviation of dollar-valued job performance among non-participants
C = total cost of training

According to Mark Beese (2022) "For example, for an Amlaw 100 firm that put 24 people through a three-day on-site leadership development program, expecting an improvement over a two-year period, with participants averaging compensation of $1,000,000 each and a program cost of $150,000, the RODI would be $9.5 million." And, if the partners make "$700,000, the RODI would be $6.5 million" (para). Table 1 shows some of the broadly accepted leadership training variables.

TABLE 1
COMPONENTS OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS

COACHING	CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION	FEEDBACK	EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING
Intentional	Effectiveness	Direction	Affirmation
Motivated	Practical	Correctional	Practicums
Constructive	Relational	Adjustable	Cohesive
Concise	Physical presence	Objective	Constructive

Coaching and mentoring have become increasingly popular, in part because of the limitations of classroom education. Many leaders do not have the time to commit to a formal program delivered in a classroom setting. Coaching allows for tailored support to address a specific shortcoming or achieve a specific goal. Many executive coaches were also successful leaders, and their guidance can help the recipient avoid costly mistakes and make decisions with more confidence.

Classroom instruction for leaders, also referred to as executive education, is important because it gives leaders an efficient way to improve their management skills and expertise. It is still used extensively as a method of leadership development (Conger & Benjamin 1999), in large part because it is easy to implement and offers significant economies of scale. These courses can be tailored to a specific organization, industry, or challenge.

Feedback in formal leadership development programs is typically accomplished through multisource feedback, which provides feedback from supervisors, peers, and direct reports. It is used to identify the strengths and opportunities for improvement of those being surveyed with the purpose of impacting employee engagement and professional development.

Experiential learning is used to develop a skill or a set of skills. It can both produce real, transferable results more rapidly than traditional classroom training. Types of experiential training include apprenticeships, role-play, games, case studies, internships, simulations, problem-solving and on-the-job training.

Alumni Results Are Positive

Participants see an immediate return after participating in an LTD program compared to non-participants. As new skills are acquired, participants can apply them to their daily tasks and assess the impact on their team members, receiving immediate feedback on their effectiveness. Improved leadership competency also has a motivational influence on team members and contributes to organizational improvements. LTD programs have positively impacted the company's balance sheet. Improvement in the quality of work, increase in productivity, and employee retention directly translates into a substantive impact on the organization's financials. Figure 1 is based on Klein's (2016) Theoretical Triangular Leadership Model and forms the basis of a successful LDP support structure.

FIGURE 1
THEORETICAL TRIANGULAR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Corporate dollars spent on leadership training and development positively impacts performance, verifying the necessity of leadership training as a critical component of success (Seidle, Perry, & Fernandez, 2016). "Practically, this means that spending budgetary dollars on leadership training and development can have a positive impact on organizational performance, lending credence to the idea that leadership training and development are necessary and critical components of organizational success" (Seidle, Perry, & Fernandez, 2016, p. 611).

Leaders Influence Culture

Transforming existing organizations require effective leadership. Leaders of organizations must become agents of change to create a culture that will meet the demands of a dynamic and adaptive work environment (Turner, Baker, Schroeder, & Johnson, 2018). Communication shape culture: therefore,

communication clearly falls within the leadership function of management (Bell & Muir, 2014), and culture informs the climate (mood) of culture, trust, openness, etc. (Bell & Martin, 2019). Leaders are framers of emotional intelligence in managerial communication at every organizational level for the vision of cultures they promote (Bell & Kennebrew, 2022; Nguyen, et al 2019). Etzioni's (1975) organizational typology describes the effective results Bennis and Nanus (1985) suggested that leadership has on an organization's social architecture/culture. "Social architecture is an intangible, but it governs the way people act, the values and norms that are subtly transmitted to groups and individuals, and the construct of binding and bonding within a company" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 102-103). Leadership influences an organization's typology and employees' willingness to buy into the positive or negative culture in response to the attributes of their leader. "Culture is created by shared experience, but it is the leader who initiates this process by imposing his or her beliefs, values, and assumptions at the outset" (Schein, 2004, p. 225).

A normative organization results from a positive culture where committed members' goals are aligned with the organization (Schein, 2004). Support and commitment of executive leadership is necessary at the lower leadership levels of the organizations to ensure that the company's leadership culture is thoroughly integrated and effectively managed at every level of the organization (Scott & Klein, 2022). These change agents must demonstrate the following:

- ✓ Commit financial and human resources to leadership development initiatives.
- ✓ Champion the benefit of leadership training within the organization.
- ✓ Value coaching and mentorship as an imperative within the organization.

Trained Leaders Foster Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is the term that many economists and business scholars use, and it is also the term that every organization dreams of having the tag in their respective fields. Old management theory is still relevant today, especially the leadership theories from the greatest thinkers and contributors to management thought (Bell, Kennebrew, & Blyden, 2015; Bell & Roebuck, 2015). Organizations will always skirmish to identify their strategic focus, narrow or broad, low cost or differentiation, within the five forces which determine competitive advantage (Porter, 1985). Competitve advantage is selecting one of three generic strategies: a broad industry leader as the low cost producer; or be broad differentiator, among a few in an industry; or be a narrowly focused low cost leader or differentiator in a niche market, tightly focused specialized in a limited marketplace.

Wallace, Johnson, Mathe and Paul (2011) found the leadership climate is significant and positive when accountability and empowerment are high. Many organizations view leadership as a source of competitive advantage, and are investing in its development accordingly (McCall, 1998). In a 2014 study, Azhar & Hassan found a positive relationship between leadership training and competitive advantage. A conceptual framework from Azhar & Hassan's theory is presented in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND COMPETITIVENESS
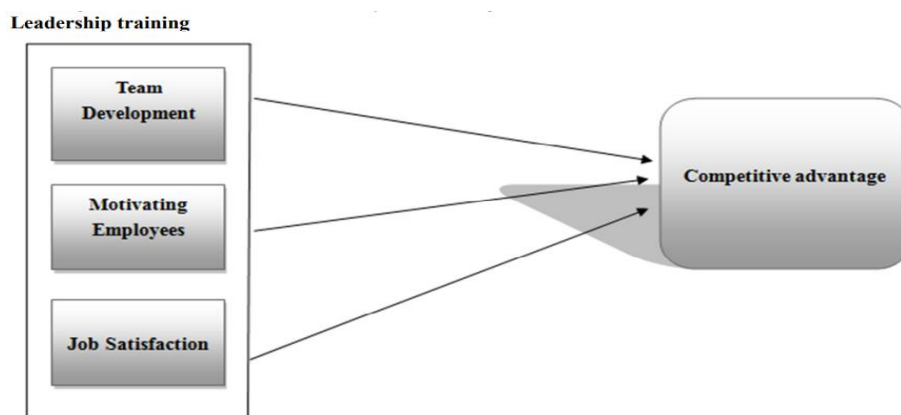
CHALLENGES WITH IMPLEMENTING A LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Leadership Training and Development programs face several challenges. More than 50% of senior leaders of large-scale industries do not believe that critical skills are built, or organizational capabilities improved by talent development programs (Moldoveanu, 2019). Leadership development programs are in a disjointed state. Many fail to accomplish program goals or adapt to meet complex problems because of skewed motivation, insufficient skills development, and limited skills transfer. "Organizations invest in executive development for their own long-term good, but individuals participate in order to enhance their skills and advance their careers, and they don't necessarily remain with the employers who've paid for their training" (Moldoveanu, 2019, p. 4).

Organizations often fail to identify the program's proper strategic purpose, focusing on short-term gains or implementing programs like successful companies. The misaligned program material inadequately trains participants to meet organizations' expectations and increases the likelihood of former participants departing the company for positions associated with their new skill set.

Issues of Training Program Misalignment

The gap between executive development programs' competencies and the capabilities required by firms may not be properly aligned. The leader as an effective communicator is inextricable with channel selection for formal and informality messages for the accurate transfer of meaning (Chatman et al 2020). Traditional leadership program providers focus on improving participants' cognitive skills in a collegial format and less time enhancing an effective ecosystem around teamwork and diversified communication skills (Moldoveanu, 2019). Using an institutionalized pedagogy focused on pre-set dyadic leader-in-training development practices (Turner, Baker, Schroeder, & Johnson, 2018).

"Few executives seem to take what they learn in the classroom and apply it to their jobs—and the farther removed the locus of learning is from the locus of application, the larger this gap becomes" (Moldoveanu, 2019, p. 4). Employee well-being is the result of leader-member interactions that positively affect workplace outcomes. Organizations fail to place program graduates into influential positions after completing the program, allowing them to gain meaningful experience (Satiani, Dawson, Mehta, & Gerhardt, 2022). The inability to consistently apply the skills learned contradicts social learning theory and learning through action (Turner, Baker, Schroeder, & Johnson, 2018).

The idea of multidisciplinary training of future leaders cannot be overemphasized. Arroliga et al. (2014) identified the desired characteristics of the future healthcare leader at different stages of development (Figure 3). The crucial next step is to develop an LTD that addresses learning objectives at each stage of development.

FIGURE 3
ARROLIGA'S STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT FOR HEALTHCARE LEADERS
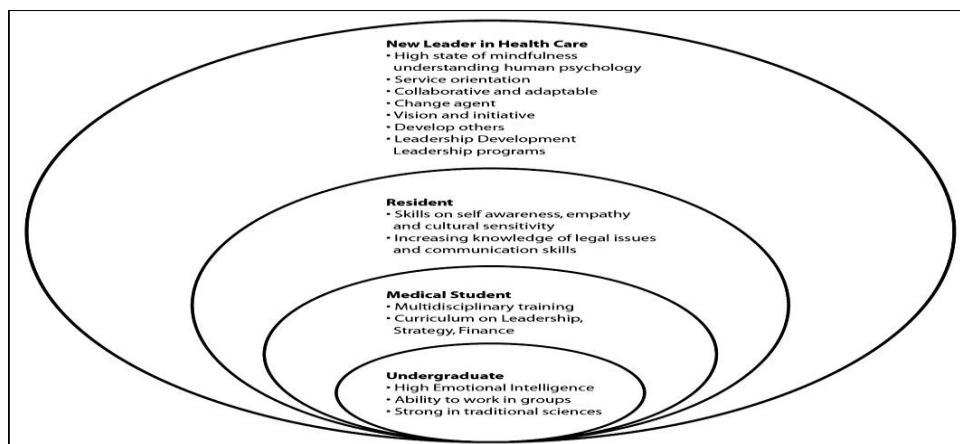
Difficulty supporting recently trained leaders as they encounter workplace challenges fails to reinforce newly acquired techniques and instill confidence to address leadership challenges (Avolio, Avey, & Quisenberry, 2010; Doherty, Gilson, & Shung-King, 2018). "Despite progress in the development of leadership development models over recent years, these models fail to account for the differentiation in LTD practices found between organizations" (Clarke & Higgs, 2016, p. 1).

CONCLUSION

The literature was convincing about the need for leadership training and sustained training that is recurring. Leaders are trained not born, and the great man theory is discredited. The RODI is formulaic and can benefit recurring leadership training organizations to calculate their benefit/cost analysis. This study found that leadership training programs are essential for the institution's success. Leaders must be trained to reach their full potential; training must be recurring to keep up with the ever-changing platform. The right people must be selected for specific training. Value added to the trainee must be measurable.

Industry Best Practices for Delivery

Leadership Training and Development programs emphasize a full-circle training curriculum. "Leadership training programs that combine coaching, classroom instruction, feedback, and experiential training can improve the performance of leaders" (Seidle, Perry, & Fernandez, 2016, p. 603). There are several providers available to provide training to leaders. Virtual courses have supplanted traditional training courses that brick-and-mortar institutions have traditionally offered. Competitors are emerging to meet the demand for customizable executive education with the ability to effectively measure the results (Moldoveanu, 2019, p. 7). Four recommendations are needed to assist decision-makers with implementing and maintaining recurring training programs.

Four Recommendations for Leadership Training Programs

Recommendation 1: Leadership training programs are necessary to educate, coach, and equip leaders for their responsibility and should align with the organizations' vision, mission, goals, and values.

Recommendation 2: Leadership training programs must be supported by the Board of Directors and represent a deliberate line item in the company's investment planning strategy to keep pace with the ever-changing business environment.

Recommendation 3: Correct management breakdowns within the company leadership training program. This approach will build manager and program creditability. "Credibility is the foundation for leadership. People must be able, above all else, to believe in their leaders" (Kouzes & Posner, 2017, p. 39).

Recommendation 4: Implement a measurement system to validate the program's financial value. Use the RODI formula to calculate benefits and costs of leadership development training programs.

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