





TALENT MANAGEMENT ESSENTIALS

REAL TIME LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

PAUL R. YOST and MARY MANNION PLUNKETT



 WILEY-BLACKWELL

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Praise for *Real Time Leadership Development*

"This book is a highly accessible, comprehensive compendium of leadership development strategies and a 'must read' for anyone trying to improve his or her own skills or those of another."

Nancy T. Tippins, Senior Vice President and Managing Principal, Valtera Corporation

"Drs. Yost and Plunkett have achieved a great feat - delivering practical developmental advice that is rooted in research. I highly recommend their book to anyone who wishes to develop stronger leadership skills."

Robert E. Lewis, PhD, Director, APT, Inc.

"Mary Mannion Plunkett and Paul Yost did something remarkable in the exploration of leadership and career development: they asked leaders themselves about development experiences; they did it in a systematic and scientific way; they applied it to a diagonal and diverse slice of company managers; and they tracked careers through a longitudinal study over many years. *Real Time Leadership Development* provides unique insight into seminal career events that produce real learning, provoke actual behavior change, and cause leadership evolution. It also shows real insight into the responsibility of leaders (and the tools they can use) to develop successors.

We should have known this all along; ask a retired executive what she/he remembers of their career and rarely will you hear about a course they took or a book they read. Mostly they will recall the challenges they experienced in their first staff assignment where they had responsibility without authority; the time they presided over a task force to fix something that was broken; the time they gave themselves a failing grade (even if the organization gave

them a pass) for lacking the courage to speak truth to power; and so on.

Real Time Leadership Development is more than a distillation of career change pointers from the authors' own research. In it you will also find best practices in traditional tasks of leadership development: performance management, mentoring, networking, leadership training, high potential and succession management, and systematic human resource development.

Kudos to Mary and Paul for shining a spotlight of facts and data on previously mysterious and opinion-laden processes, and on what stimulates authentic evolution of leadership potential latent in most of us. And for providing useful, easily assimilated tools and processes in an accessible format to implement best practices they have seen in human resource and leadership development."

Peter M. Morton, VP Leadership Development (retired), The Boeing Company; VP Human Resources (retired), Boeing Commercial Airplanes

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Real Time Leadership Development

Paul R. Yost and Mary Mannion Plunkett

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**Paul R. Yost and
Mary Mannion Plunkett**

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Foreword

Getting Development Out of the Little Box at the End of a Form

Some years ago I was asked to review 200 development plans generated by high potential managers and their bosses at a Fortune 100 corporation long considered a benchmark for developing executive talent. The development plan was one part of a fairly typical performance appraisal form. The form was two pages in length and started with a list of specific business objectives on which the person was rated from “far exceeded expectations” to “below expectations,” followed by a routine list of competencies rated from 1 (low) to 5 (high), then a section for comments. At the bottom of the second page was a box labeled “development plan.” My task was simply to read the plans and see if I thought they were effective.

The company, though extremely well regarded for its development of managerial talent, clearly was not living up to its reputation through what was in those little boxes. First of all, most of them were empty. Of those containing an entry, the most frequent plan was a stated intention to do more or less of something (for example, communicate more, be less autocratic) or to attend one of the many courses offered by the company or by an outside vendor. Only occasionally was someone to get a coach, and rarely did anyone mention a job assignment or project as a developmental activity. Not all company development plans are confined to a little box on the last page of the appraisal form, but they often share the characteristics I saw in this

sample. They are superficially done, almost exclusively about participating in programs, encompass six months to a year in duration, and are unconnected in any meaningful way to the strategic aims of the business. And - not that it matters for such plans - rarely is anyone held accountable for their implementation or success.

It was over two decades ago now (perish the thought!) that we began at the Center for Creative Leadership to explore how executives developed through experience. That work, which identified 16 types of experience and the lessons they could teach, has been replicated in numerous organizations in the United States and abroad. The accumulated evidence makes a solid case that superficial activities have little developmental impact and that challenging experiences, not programs, should drive the executive development process. Subsequent work has identified what makes experiences powerful, suggested ways that developmental experiences can be linked to the business strategy, and conjectured about how to help people learn from the experiences they have. The resulting conceptual model of development offers an alternative to the vacuous box at the end of the appraisal form, an approach based on the systematic use of experience to develop the leadership talent required to execute the business strategy.

The problem was that it was mostly conceptual. To be sure, pieces and parts had substantial empirical support, but missing was the boldness to apply the ideas in an organization and the patience to develop the tools people needed to make effective use of their experiences. That missing piece is precisely what Paul Yost and Mary Mannion Plunkett have provided in this remarkable book. In their work across several organizations, they not only have identified the experiences that matter and what can be learned from them, they also have developed a framework

and the tools needed to put that knowledge to use. They offer a concrete way for individuals to grow and develop at the same time they are running the business.

No one can make someone else grow, and no one cares as much about growth as the person it benefits most. For that reason the authors decided that the best place to start was with people who wanted to develop themselves. But when it came to how to empower individuals to take charge of the process, the authors (despite their knowledge of what the significant experiences are) essentially had to start from scratch. Adding to the challenge, they were trying to get the attention and commitment of busy, pragmatic, action-oriented people who weren't always receptive to the garden-variety human resources fruit salad of offerings. Therein lies the genius: Not only did they generate a strategically relevant, data-based understanding of experiences and the lessons they offer, presented in managerial language, but they were able to develop a set of fun and easy-to-use tools, create a need for those tools, and then make them available.

What you will find in the pages ahead goes a long way toward getting rid of the box at the end of the form. There are questions that will help individuals understand how the business strategy links to development, think through their own sense of purpose and what they hope their legacies to be, and consider the balance they want between work and the rest of life, thus breaking out of the parochial and ineffective year-at-a-time perspective on development. There are other exercises that guide self-assessment and diagnosis not only of development needs but also how to use one's strengths to leverage development. There are guides to help with analyzing one's network and using other people as resources, and a section devoted to the interaction between the boss and the developing person. In short, a person who takes this book seriously will end up

with a serious development plan that, if carried out, will make a real difference. There is nothing superficial about the development plans that result from using these tools (though creating a plan is fun because the questions are interesting and there are frequent self-scoring questionnaires planted strategically along the way).

A final note about the authors. Both Paul and Mary are industrial-organizational psychologists, a fancy way of saying scientists who are trained to take a research-based approach to understanding people and organizations. Don't let the easy-to-digest way this book is written fool you. This material rests on a solid behavioral science foundation and years of intensive work on the part of the authors with unprecedented involvement by a large sample of managers and executives. It is a real testament to their skill that they have been able to translate the knowledge gained from their research into such a helpful collection of tools and guides for developing talent.

Morgan McCall,
Professor of Management and Organization,
Marshall School of Business,
University of Southern California

Series Editor's Preface

The *Talent Management Essentials* series presents state-of-the-art thinking on critical talent management topics ranging from global staffing, to career pathing, to engagement, to executive staffing, to performance management, to mentoring, to real-time leadership development. Authored by leading authorities and scholars on their respective topics, each volume offers state-of-the-art thinking and the epitome of evidence-based practice. These authors bring to their books an incredible wealth of experience working with small, large, public, and private organizations, as well as keen insights into the science and best practices associated with talent management.

Written succinctly and without superfluous “fluff,” this series provides powerful and practical treatments of essential talent topics critical to maximizing individual and organizational health, well-being, and effectiveness. The books, taken together, provide a comprehensive and contemporary treatment of approaches, tools, and techniques associated with Talent Management. The goal of the series is to produce focused, prescriptive volumes that translate the data- and practice-based knowledge of I/O psychology and Organizational Behavior into practical, “how to” advice for dealing with cutting-edge organizational issues and problems.

Talent Management Essentials is a comprehensive, practitioner-oriented series of “best practices” for the busy solution-oriented manager, executive, HR leader, and consultant. And, in its application of evidence-based practice, this series will also appeal to professors, executive MBA students, and graduate students in Organizational Behavior, Human Resources Management, and I/O Psychology.

Steven Rogelberg

Preface

Your Job is the Classroom!

Research over the past two decades consistently indicates that over 70 percent of your development as a leader occurs on the job in trial-by-fire experiences that push you to the edge of your comfort zone.¹ The purpose of this book is to provide guidance and tools that you, as a line manager or human resource (HR) professional, can use to develop yourself, develop your team, and build an organization where leaders at all levels are using experience to drive their development.

We have called the book Real Time Leadership Development because we believe most development occurs in the moment - while leaders are running the business. Unfortunately, much of this learning is haphazard. Sometimes leaders pass up or overlook opportunities to accelerate their development. Sometimes they are in the right jobs but they are so busy running the business that the lessons pass them by. In the most unfortunate cases, they finish the experience and are worse leaders on the other side because they took away the wrong lessons. Our experience is that running the business and developing leadership capabilities are not two separate tasks; they can occur simultaneously if leaders put themselves into the right challenges, create rich learning environments, and pause long enough to make sure they are capturing the lessons along the way.

Furthermore, as a senior leader or HR professional, a big part of your job should be to develop future leaders in your organization, and you probably leave the office at night thinking that you are not doing enough. You know that you don't spend nearly enough time developing others or developing yourself. What would be really helpful is figuring

out how to develop leaders and drive the business at the same time.

And you don't really have time to read a lot of books. What you really want is a resource with some straightforward ideas, based on research that cuts to the chase, puts key points in bold, and includes simple checklists you can use personally and pass on to others. You would like a book that is written in the language of leaders, not academics, so you don't have to translate the ideas but can focus on applying them. If you are in HR, you would like suggestions that complement and enhance your current talent management initiatives.

We have focused on general principles that will apply in a variety of situations, across multiple companies. We have avoided guidance that is contingent; that is, advice that is only applicable to leaders in certain types of companies or applicable in some situations but not others. There are, of course, many contingencies, but our book focuses on the ideas and actions that every leader should be considering as they think about their own development and the development of the leaders in their organization.

When considering development, leaders need to think and operate on three levels: (1) developing themselves, (2) developing their teams, and (3), if in a senior leadership role, developing managers throughout the organization. Good leaders model what they expect of others and this includes personal development. But modeling alone isn't enough. Leaders also need to think about and invest their time to develop the people who report to them. At senior levels, the challenge is to put systems in place that will develop strong leaders throughout the organization. In each chapter, we address all three of these levels with specific actions that can be taken at each of them.

To help accomplish this goal the chapters and tools in this book are written so they are "sneezeable"; that is, they are

self-contained so you can easily pass them on to others, and they catch them like a cold. Our hope is that as the managers in your organization see these tools they can use the ideas to accelerate their development, and “sneeze” them to others who use them to develop the people around them. We have written chapters that are short, topical, and independent so you can focus on the subjects that are most important to you or, if interested, can read the book from front to back to develop a full understanding of real time leadership development.

We have kept all these criteria in mind as we chose the topics and wrote the chapters. The chapters are designed to flow logically, but can be read in any order. In Part I: Building Your Leadership Pipeline, we discuss how, based on your business strategy, you can identify the experiences, competencies, and relationships that will be needed by future leaders in your organization. We finish this section with a discussion of the metrics that you can use to assess how effectively you are developing leaders and employees throughout your organization. In Part II: Capturing the Lessons, we discuss how leaders can capture the many lessons that are likely passing them by every day. We focus on how leaders can identify stretch assignments, navigate through them successfully, and emerge as better leaders on the other side. In Part III: Drawing on Other People, we focus on the critical role that other people can and should play in a leader’s development. We discuss how leaders can get the most out of these relationships. In Part IV: Building Experiences into Talent Management, we discuss how to make sure all of your talent management systems support on-the-job development, and why it’s important to do so. In Part V: Moving from Success to Significance, we address the question that all leaders eventually ask themselves: “Development for the sake of what?” Leadership, at its best, is never for its own sake. Leadership is always in

relationship to others. Leaders want to make a difference, to do things that matter, to serve, and to have a lasting impact.

Within each chapter, you will find four sections: The Challenge, The Bottom Line, Taking Action, and To Learn More.

- **The Challenge.** Today's leaders and HR professionals face tremendous challenges. Almost all organizations today, big and small, are facing rapidly changing, complex environments. Organizations need employees who are able to grow and adapt to meet everchanging demands. In this section, we discuss the challenges that you face in trying to develop yourself and others in such a fastpaced environment.
- **The Bottom Line.** In this section, we highlight the three to five most important things you need to know about the topic based on two criteria: (1) what does the research in industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology tell us about this topic? and (2) what can you do that will make the greatest difference in your development and in the development of leaders in your organization?
- **Taking Action.** As every executive knows, knowledge by itself is never enough - action is ultimately what really matters. In this section, we discuss the actions that you can take personally, with your team, and in your organization to develop future talent. We address issues which affect both your development and the development and growth of others in your organization. Both are important for business success.
- **To Learn More:** Any of the topics discussed could be expanded into a whole book, and in fact, many of them are! Therefore, in each chapter, references are provided to deepen your expertise in the subject matter. We've focused on readings that are research-based and written for business leaders. We have included a mixture of

books, articles, and in a few cases, interesting research studies.

We have worked to create a book that doesn't require you to add yet another task to your already busy day because, quite honestly, if you are like most leaders, there just isn't any room. Our hope is that the suggestions in the book can be easily integrated into the work you are already doing. For example, if you are a line manager, you might want to read a chapter every week and look for ways to incorporate it into your daily work. To develop your direct reports, you could give copies to your team, assigning and discussing selected chapters during your staff meetings. If you are an HR professional, the content is designed to complement your ongoing talent management processes. For example, this book could be given to leadership development program participants to promote continued development beyond the classroom. The checklists and tools throughout could be modified and adapted to enhance the performance management and employee development processes in your organization, moving the system from "some paperwork that HR says I have to do" to become a set of resources and tools that managers and employees want to use.

We hope you find the book helpful in your own development, in the development of your team, and in releasing the leadership potential in your organization.

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Our final thanks go to Morgan McCall. His research and thinking sparked our passion and commitment to ongoing leadership development. We consider our work part of his legacy.

Part I

Building Your Leadership Pipeline

If the research suggests that experience is the best teacher, then a leader's job is the best classroom. That makes the task of developing future leaders easy, right? Just throw your best and the brightest into tough assignments and see who survives on the other side. Unfortunately, this strategy leaves a lot of carnage along the way, including several people who might have made great senior leaders if they had been given the right assignments and the right kind of support. The costs don't stop there. "Survival of the fittest" as a succession management strategy guarantees that some of these leaders will damage the business on their way down and leave a hole in your leadership team. Ironically, the leaders who emerge on the other side won't necessarily be the ones you want. All you will know is that they survived today's challenges but you have little idea if they can meet tomorrow's challenges. In fact, they are more likely to get stuck in the past - a one-trick pony, relying on the skills that got them to where they are now. This strategy might be okay if you run a business in a static environment but this isn't the reality that most businesses face today.

Leadership development should be strategic, not random and unfocused. Haphazardly throwing leaders into stretch assignments is dangerous if you don't have a clear vision of the future. Leaders need to know what they should be learning to make the most of any developmental opportunities. Even if leaders never change jobs, they will invest their time and effort more productively if they are

provided a framework they can use to think about their development; they will be able to focus on experiences in their jobs that are important, the leadership competencies that they will need, and the kinds of relationships that will best develop them as leaders. Each of these three topics will be covered in turn.

In Part I, we discuss how you can identify the types of leaders that you will need to meet current and future business challenges, and how you can systematically identify the job elements that will best develop those leaders. We discuss how you can use the business strategy to identify the leadership experiences, competencies, and relationships that future leaders will need. Each chapter includes several specific actions you can take to develop yourself, to develop the people who report to you, and - if you are a senior leader or HR professional - to develop leaders throughout your organization. We conclude Part I with some talent management metrics you can use to assess the strength of the leadership and professional talent in your organization.

Chapter 1

Linking Business Strategy and Experiences

The Challenge

If you are like most leaders, you worry about the leadership strength in your organization. For example, you might be confident that you have managers who can execute against the current strategy, but are worried that they are not prepared to take the business in new directions. You might have young leaders with lots of potential, but they lack the insight and wisdom that only experience can bring. Or maybe you are worried you don't have enough leaders who are ready to move into senior roles.

In the next three chapters, we discuss how you can identify the experiences, leadership competencies, and relationships that are most critical in the development of your future leaders. The three areas can be considered interrelated but distinct aspects of leadership development. Taken together, the experience, competency, and relationship taxonomies that you develop can become the framework that all leaders in the organizations can use to assess themselves and to identify what they can do to develop their leadership capabilities. We start with developmental experiences. Experiences are *where* leaders develop the competencies and the relationships that they need to be successful. The next question is obvious: What are the "right" experiences and where are they in my organization?