

Leadership FAQs

a newsletter from www.leadershiptraq.com

Missive 4

the
issue

How Can I Tell If a Leadership Training Program Is Worth My Time and Money?

by Dan E. Maltby, Ph.D.

Leadership Is Not Just An Accident Of Birth...

Last issue, we learned that leaders are not just genetically gifted people who are a complete accident of birth – the majority of researchers today believe that the origins of leadership go beyond genes and family to other sources. Work experiences, hardship, opportunity, education, role models and mentors all go together to craft a leader. An important assumption in this theory is that the raw material essential in people in order to lead is not scarce. Rather, the lack of needed leaders is a reflection of neglected development rather than a dearth of abilities.

...But Accidental Opportunities Can Be Great Learning Experiences!

But the role of chance is not entirely ruled out! Many times, circumstances beyond your control will give you an opportunity to develop and display leadership. Author and researcher John Kotter surveyed 200 executives at highly successful companies and also performed in-depth interviews with some of those individuals. His research (and the studies of other analysts) showed that certain *work experiences* are ideal forces for developing leadership ability.

For example, challenging and multi-functional work assignments teach self-confidence, toughness, persistence, knowledge of the business, skill in managing relationships, a sense of independence, and leadership. Hardship teaches personal limits and strengths. Success breeds confidence and an understanding of one's distinct skills. Diversity in experiences develops breadth.

And different bosses (bad or good) model values and teach key lessons. This mix sets the stage for leadership ability to take hold.

You Gotta Want It

Author Jay Conger and others in the "leadership is learned" (to some degree) school see opportunity in two lights. There is the opportunity of unforeseeable circumstances mentioned above and there is the opportunity that can be designed and managed by those responsible for leader development. But he cautions that the best designed programs of leadership development – whatever their structure or intensity – are contingent on the motivational desire of the candidates. It appears that many gifted leaders choose not to lead when given the opportunity. The price is too great, the timing not right, the rewards too small and they settle for something else.

Move from Accidental to Intentional – Take Charge of Your Training

Elements of leadership can be taught. But to be successful, training must be designed to (1) develop and refine certain of the teachable skills, (2) improve the conceptual abilities of managers, (3) tap individuals' personal needs, interests, and self-esteem, and (4) help managers see *and move beyond* their interpersonal blocks.

The Key – How Many of the "Big Four" Does A Given Program Give You?

The leadership training programs now available throughout the U.S. (and the world) can be broken down into a similar four-point emphasis. Each of the leading companies providing leadership

development seems to emphasize one of the following four factors over the others (though all tend to include some aspects of the other three as well): (1) leadership skills development, (2) conceptual thinking, (3) personal growth experiences, or (4) feedback.

Use this four-point list to evaluate any leadership training program that *you* are contemplating. Your investment of time and money should be leveraged with the program that will give you the greatest return! This consideration was at the very center of our concern at *Biola University*. That's why our new *Master's Degree Program in Organizational Leadership* is designed to incorporate all four of these leadership development emphases while it focuses on those elements of leadership that can most effectively be taught in a highly dynamic university setting.

This edition of Leadership FAQ's has been adapted from a previous article. For the complete text of the original document, use the following link:

http://www.biola.edu/academics/scs/leadership/born_made.cfm

And for more information on the training program Dan describes in this article, contact him at...

Daniel E. Maltby, Ph.D.
Director, Master's in Organizational Leadership
School of Continuing Studies, Biola University
(562) 944-0351 Ext 5365

The Grace Center
For Leadership Development
www.leadershiptraq.com