500 WORDS ON
LEADERSHIP & DEVELOPMENT

SECOND to NONE!

- designing effective learning & development interventions for top-leaders

"Positive effects of leadership development are more difficult to obtain for senior leaders!"

This '500 words on Leadership and Development' is for TOP-Leaders who want to know how to develop best within Learning and Development (LD) initiatives, and for HR/LD specialist who are interested in designing and delivering state-of the art LD solutions.

Changes in organisational strategy usually demand various changes in leadership behaviours, in order to be executed successfully. Changing leadership behaviours sustainably, however, is difficult. Whether we are Learning & Development professionals or business managers participating in L&D interventions, we know that beyond the frequent immediate positive reactions and surface learning, embedding sustainable changed behaviours ("transfer") and organizational results as a consequence of these behaviours is often not achieved.

"Leadership development contributes positively to both individual performance and organizational results."

In contrast to some past and well-publicised studies, a recent extensive meta-analysis of 335 independent studies on the effectiveness of leadership training in the Journal of Applied Psychology (1) found that, in general, leadership development did contribute positively to both individual performance and organizational results. Specifically, the study's results indicated a 20% improvement in overall job performance and a 25% increase in organizational outcomes.

The study provides confirming evidence for a number of insights from experienced L&D researchers in the field. For example, obtaining positive "transfer" and "organizational results" from training is more difficult for personal or leadership competencies than for business competencies.

Furthermore, the positive effects of leadership development are more difficult to obtain for senior leaders (i.e. C suite-1 or C suite-2) than for others, in particular, in applying learning into on-the-job behaviours ("transfer") - perhaps because their behaviours are more entrenched. That said, the study found that leadership competency training is more effective in obtaining positive organizational outcomes than business competency training.

As the individual impact of senior leaders on organizational results is proportionally greater, it is worth paying particular attention to the development of senior-level leaders, especially when leadership development is part of a strategic organizational change or transformation.

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Beyond identifying the challenges of leadership development, the researchers also explored the factors which L&D professionals can focus on to improve the effectiveness of leadership development, particularly for senior leaders. A number of findings are worth noting:

> **1. A needs analysis prior to the design of programmes which fit the particular culture and challenges of the target leaders.**
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> We at CLP and our clients have also found that a deep understanding of the business and organizational context, the current mind-sets and skill-sets of the target leaders, enables us to design programmes which are fully adapted to their specific needs. Furthermore, especially at senior levels, there is often a wide variation in competences and experiences of individual leaders, which the design must accommodate with space for individualised areas of focus. At senior levels in particular, "one size does not fit all".

(1) Lacerenza, C.N., Reyes D.L., Marlow S.L, Joseph D.L. and Salas E., (2017). Leadership Training Design, Delivery, and Implementation: A Meta-Analysis. Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 102, No. 12, 1686–1718

2. For senior leaders, it is particularly important to pay attention to the "transfer" (applying the new behaviours on the job) and not just to "learning".

At CLP we do this through a variety of methods such as post-programme coaching, action learning work (projects etc.), involvement of the C-suite as role-models and as supporters of the changed leadership behaviours of their direct reports.

3. Incorporate a strong feedback component.

We do this through a variety of methods, which include 360 surveys, psychometric, peer and trainer feedback during programmes, and ongoing feedback from direct reports and others on an ongoing basis.

4. Longer programmes in multiple sessions are more effective.

This matches our experience that 1 or 2 days "quick dips" don't allow leaders to fully immerse themselves in the learning experience, nor do single-module "big-bang" events which are not followed up.

5. Blended F2F pedagogical approaches are more effective than single methods.

These include short exposure information inputs, practical demonstrations, and practice for active experimentation. We at CLP working closely with our clients extend the range and combination of such approaches, to include curated expert content, external speakers, experiential activities, gamification and action learning.

In summary, when well-designed and implemented, leadership development for senior managers is effective at delivering both individual and organizational results. This, however, only happens when programmes and other interventions are carefully crafted with both a sound structure and with enough space for senior leaders to explore and transfer on the job the practical applications of their learnings. In this way, leadership development for senior leaders does deliver improved individual and organizational performance.

One key approach to ensure this individual and organizational performance is to carefully design the leadership development landscape around the organisation's strategic goals – something that CLP has been supporting clients in doing for many years, either through co-creation and/or through our "Design Master Class" for HR teams.

Yours, **Paul Galante**
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CLP is constantly evolving Leadership Development and publishes 500 words periodically that reflect CLP's experiences, research and thought leadership. 500words@clp.world