

## FEATURE ARTICLES

# Purposeful Engagement: Practical Wisdom for Leadership Development

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## The Problem

Our aim is to provide a fresh, practical perspective for leader development. To hit this target, we offer a framework that should be of shared interest to leaders and to those who have roles and responsibilities to develop leaders. Most readers likely appreciate that an organization's capacity to perform relies in part upon leader development. In nearly every circumstance, however, it is not safe to assume that development occurs naturally. Development requires intentionality across a range of activities. We call this activity purposeful engagement. Our proposal provides a practical developmental philosophy that informs a roadmap to achieve it. Purposeful engagement rests upon two foundational components: leader fundamentals and theories of adult learning. Knowing what leaders do and how leaders learn are prerequisites to planning meaningful leadership opportunities, accomplishing meaningful assessment, and evaluating the effectiveness of developmental interventions.

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To address and overcome rapidly evolving challenges, most organizations need people who are highly engaged and constantly learning. Yet, our observations suggest that few organizations are well-structured to propagate leader talent. In part, this explains why leadership development persists as a multibillion-dollar industry (Kellerman, 2018; Kaiser & Curphy, 2013; Fullmer & Vicere, 1996). The size and expanding scope of the leadership industry suggest that organizations have an appetite for preparing leaders to address a wide range of organizational challenges, including primary, psychological, and achievement-oriented needs. There are many good reasons for individuals and organizations to rely on expert coaches and consultants. Coaches and consultants are critical to guiding and informing developmental work, but the burden of development ultimately belongs to the individual and the organization. Purposeful engagement informs how individuals and organizations can begin to address this burden.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to define three terms central to our purpose— *leadership*,

development, and culture. Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig (2008) define leadership as “a solution to the problem of the collective effort—the problem of bringing people together and combining their efforts to promote success and survival” (Kaiser et al., 2008, p. 96). We adopt this leadership definition because it describes what leaders do without presuming that there is a specific or right way to lead. This definition allows individuals and organizations to integrate ideas and concepts about leadership that best fit their unique culture and values. With this apparent freedom, we recommend selecting and adopting leadership practices that are robust and associated with evidence of success. Instead of asking questions about outcomes like how to increase revenue, improve safety, or enhance resilience, leader developers need to be asking, “How can we best develop  $x$  in our leaders?” where  $x$  represents an essential leadership dimension and is a valid predictor of a desired outcome. Consequently, how a leader leads becomes the primary evidence of developmental efforts. Our definition of leadership also supports a process-oriented leadership perspective that involves the interaction of leader, follower, and situation (Hughes et al., 2012).

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Leadership is not a job or position, but a process. Our definition of leadership allows diverse individuals, teams, and organizations to employ a broad range of leadership theories, models, and concepts that have meaning and relevance to dynamic conditions.

Next, *development* is an individual growth trajectory that depends upon defined and measurable conditions (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Development is inherently longitudinal. Most people are familiar with cross sectional research. Cross sectional research works exceptionally well to take a snapshot at a set time point. For example, cross sectional research might be used to determine if students with higher ACT or SAT scores perform better in higher education. However, cross sectional designs are almost always the wrong tool to assess leader development. Longitudinal research methods are necessary to thoroughly understand and track the effectiveness of developmental interventions at the individual (e.g., how an individual leader has advanced in a specific skill or competency over time) and organizational levels (e.g., average changes in a workforce over time). Measuring development requires assessments that are sensitive to developmental change (Raudenbush, 2001) and do not necessarily assume linear change (Wang et al., 2017). Additionally, longitudinal models account for the initial state of a condition (e.g., the level of proficiency with a specific leadership skill upon starting developmental efforts) to understand what subsequent measures actually represent. Absent objective measurement and the right methodologies, it is impossible to fully appreciate if and how developmental investments are paying off. Studying and modeling development is complicated, but necessary to produce useful evidence of developmental change and efforts.

Finally, *culture* is a pattern of shared basic assumptions that organizational members learn, validate, and teach other organizational members about the correct way to think, feel, and act in response

to organizational events (Schein & Schein, 2017). Culture is not just a hypothetical organizational characteristic or a given condition that has to be accepted. Culture is established, maintained, and adjusted by organizational leaders and members alike.

Organizations need leaders who are adept at a wide range of skills and high levels of proficiency. Routine work experiences, where leaders can experience development in the context of doing real work, are a potential gold mine for growth to occur. Unfortunately, gold nuggets rarely sit on the surface waiting to be picked up. Gold mining involves careful prospecting, the right resources, and hard work. In the same manner, leadership development requires intentionality, design, resources, execution, and assessment. In the following two sections, we offer a perspective on leader fundamentals and adult learning that provides a basis for continuous, life-long leadership development to meet this need. Purposeful engagement involves interdependence between what leaders know and how they apply it to bring people together and achieve collective outcomes.

### Leader Fundamentals: The “What” of Purposeful Engagement

Leader fundamentals are “what” an effective leader embodies—these qualities are the learning objectives. For the sake of focus, we introduce three primary objectives for leader development: knowledge, skills, and character. There are certainly other consequential fundamentals (e.g., abilities and personality) that are germane to development and are worthy of further exploration. However, these are beyond the scope of this paper. Our intent is to draw attention to what leaders can learn by providing a bottom-up perspective on what leaders need to do (i.e., knowledge), how to do it (i.e., skills), and consistently acting upon values despite inducements to act otherwise (i.e., character). Knowledge, skills, and character are the on-ramp for engaging leaders in development.

*Knowledge*

Models of performance (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1993) routinely specify knowledge as a determinant of performance. Building upon this perspective, leadership knowledge (e.g., the facts and ideas a person holds about theories and models of leadership) serves to address naively held conceptions of leadership (Offerman et al., 1995) that might otherwise impede development. In simple language, knowledge of effective leadership practices is a precondition for developing leadership capacity.

More than one student of leadership has declared, “You can’t learn leadership in a classroom.” We agree. There is a lot more to leadership than what you know. Yet, learners who assert that leadership cannot be learned in a classroom reveal an implicit bias that stands in the way of development. Student pilots complete academic training on aeronautics and the rules of aviation before sitting at aircraft controls. Surgeons study human anatomy and disease processes before taking a scalpel in hand. Likewise, leaders must

phenomenon. Completing tasks and attending to relational activities are fundamental to what leaders do (Bales, 1950; Fleishman, 1957; Halpin & Winer, 1957; Hackman, 2002; Judge et al., 2004; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008). Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig’s definition of leadership reflects these fundamental qualities where leadership involves achieving results (e.g., success and survival) and interpersonal processes (e.g., bringing people together and combining their efforts). Consequently, leader performance is also bipartite. To understand leader effectiveness requires assessment of what leaders accomplish (e.g., tasks and objective achievement) as well as relational elements (e.g., interpersonal processes) to fully appreciate a leader’s developmental potential.

*Skills*

In addition to knowledge, models of performance also specify procedural knowledge and skills (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1993) as predictive of performance. Procedural knowledge and skills are acquired proficiencies that involve implementing knowledge or “know how.” An example of procedural knowledge that can be held by a leader are the steps involved in recognizing and rewarding the contributions others make. An example of specific leadership skill is listening. Comparable procedural knowledge and skills work in combination to form competency dimensions like working with people (Bartram, 2005). Including working with people, Bartram’s research identifies a total of twenty competency dimensions that further combine to produce eight broad competencies. Bartram’s “Great Eight” includes leading and deciding, supporting and cooperating, interacting and presenting, analyzing and interpreting, creating and conceptualizing, organizing and executing, adapting and coping, and enterprising and performing. Bartram’s broad competency factors provide a universal framework for leaders and organizations to explore leadership performance.

*Cultivating basic leadership knowledge is essential to preparing leaders to practice relevant skills and proficiencies associated with leading effectively.*

possess a sound understanding of what is involved in leading others to achieve successful outcomes. Knowledge is indispensable to development; without it many leaders have lost their way. Cultivating basic leadership knowledge is essential to preparing leaders to practice relevant skills and proficiencies associated with leading effectively.

Foundational considerations for leader knowledge include precise definitions of leadership and performance. Leadership is fundamentally a bipartite

While the Great Eight (Bartram, 2005) represents a universal framework to explore leadership performance and development in all manners of organizations and settings, caution is urged. Selecting and designing developmental efforts requires an appreciation for the top-down influences on the importance and relevance of leader skills. Bartram's work provides a comprehensive framework for understanding leader behavior, but it does not prescribe how important individual behaviors are or how frequently they are needed. Between organizations, elements like structure, culture, and strategy affect the significance and relevance of skills and competencies (Pearlman & Sanchez, 2010; Williams & Dobson, 1997; Snow & Snell, 1993). Within organizations, consideration of a leader's current and projected assignments introduces the need for additional tailoring of developmental approaches.

As leaders develop and encounter increasingly complex challenges, leaders must demonstrate progressive mastery and integration of leadership skills. Like a CrossFit exercise program, leadership development involves practicing various leadership activities repetitively and across diverse contexts. Mastering a specific exercise is a worthy accomplishment but is an inaccurate representation of overall physical fitness. In the same manner, leader development involves informed and intentional experimentation to develop a comprehensive suite of leadership skills that complement the maturation of developing leaders.

### *Character*

Performance also requires effort (Campbell, 1990; Campbell et al., 1993). Given the consequential nature of leadership, however, we favor the quality of the effort as the third fundamental predictor of leader performance. As a central quality of a leader's effort, character is essential to understanding the effects leaders have upon others in pursuit of objective results (Pless et al., 2012). Collapses in leader character are of profound consequence and have spurred a growing

body of literature (Kellerman, 2004; Kellerman, 2020). Researchers have investigated the effects of character through a range of perspectives including authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), social learning (Brown et al., 2005), and transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985). Taken together, the research indicates that leaders must behave ethically because they are responsible for guiding others while serving as an essential source of ethical information for organizational members.

Foundational considerations for character development include the leader's inclination to act upon moral and ethical judgments. Key areas include leaders who pursue personal development, seek the development of others, and undertake such efforts to realize collective and noble benefits for the organizations and broader society in which they live and serve (Basik et al., 2011; Silveria, 2018). Additional research provides important insights on how the capacity for character can be expanded (Hannah & Avolio, 2010; Hannah et al., 2011; Schaubroeck et al., 2012; Crossan et al., 2013; Sturm, Vera, & Crossan, 2017; Ogunfowora et al., 2021).

A final note on character involves acting in ways that are aligned with foundational values and are appropriate given the needs of others and the situation. Leading ethically implicitly involves respecting diverse beliefs and dignity while upholding integrity for organizationally espoused values—conditions that can lead to conflict. Leadership character requires an appropriate subduing of personal interest when that interest comes at the expense of others' needs. A leader may be inclined to act in ways that are not inherently wrong, but such inclinations might be opposed to what a situation requires. Character strength represents a final dimension of capacity for leaders to act on moral and ethical judgments (Hannah & Avolio, 2010). Character represents the discipline of natural tendencies.

## Learning Modes: The “How” of Purposeful Engagement

In addition to understanding *what* is involved in holistic and well-rounded development, it is necessary to understand *how* adults learn. Adult learning scholars observe five basic orientations of adult learning—cognitivist, behaviorist, humanist, social cognitive, and constructivist (Merriam et al., 2007). Each learning orientation has a rich history of theorists, specific views of the learning process, the purpose of the learning, instructional strategies, and evaluation methodologies. Likewise, each orientation has strengths and limitations depending on developmental objectives. The five orientations (i.e., modes) provide critical insights into the design and implementation of personal as well as programmatic efforts. Learning experiences that explore each domain serve to prepare individuals to comprehensively navigate the inherent challenges of leading others across complex contexts.

### *Mode 1: Cognitivist Perspective*

The cognitivist orientation (e.g., Bruner, 1965; Gagne et al., 1992; Lewin, 1951) focuses mainly on the learner's mind—what they know and how they think. For example, pilots have to know the functions of various controls, switches, and indicators and why they are critical to flight. Similarly, a surgeon has expert knowledge of the human body's systems and functions, expert knowledge of surgical techniques, and knows how to use operating room tools and equipment. In leader development, the individual must have a solid understanding of leadership theory (e.g., Bass, 1985), research (e.g., Bass & Bass, 2009), and the mental processes (e.g., Lord & Hall, 2005) necessary to think through a given situation based on their knowledge of the literature. Instructional strategies often include interventions such as lecture, reading, audio books, or self-paced learning. Topics may consist of general leadership theory or specific frameworks like negotiation, problem-solving, and building effective teams. Learning is often evaluated via formal exam or case analysis. The cognitivist orientation is critical

because it provides learners with domain specific declarative knowledge required to function effectively.

### *Mode 2: Behaviorist Learning*

The behaviorist orientation (e.g., Hull, 1952; Skinner, 1974; Thorndike, 1931) is concerned with behavioral change and skill development. The learner meets behavioral objectives that demonstrate proficiency in the specific domain of learning. For instance, pilots routinely practice touch-and-go landings to efficiently build habits concerning checklist use, aircraft configuration, and aircraft operation (e.g., instrumentation, pitch, and power settings). Repetition of these skills serves to develop and demonstrate mastery of landing an aircraft in a range of flying conditions. Similarly, the surgeon can remove an appendix with observable skill. In the domain of leader development, the learner displays proficiency in activities associated with effective leadership. They not only understand the topic cognitively but also perform skills to objective standards. Because of the broad nature of leadership, the leader is required to display mastery in many areas (e.g., supervision, project management, ethical decision-making, navigating difficult conversations, public speaking, negotiation, teaming, and visioning/setting strategy). Instructional methods used to facilitate learning from the behaviorist orientation include assessment centers (Arthur et al., 2003), individual coaching (Killburg, 2000), observation/feedback (Conger, 1992), deliberate practice (Ericsson & Pool, 2016) and simulators (Brousard, 2008). Evaluation of the behaviorist orientation occurs via specific benchmarking, skill sheets, checklists, rubrics like behaviorally anchored rating scales, and expert evaluation. The behaviorist orientation is critical because it provides learners with domain specific procedural knowledge required to perform certain tasks associated with leadership.

### *Mode 3: Humanistic Learning*

The humanistic orientation (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1969) focuses on psychological growth and

development. In essence, the humanistic approach is concerned with ensuring that the individual is self-aware and a person of character. As leadership scholar Bernard Bass might say, the leader has their “shop” in order (1985). Similar to a leader, an individual serving as a pilot or surgeon will be better positioned for success when they have a strong sense of self, are open to feedback, and understand the value that others contribute. Because of the chronic stress and demanding nature of being a leader, a developmentally mature individual who has a strong sense of their values and is committed to continual self-exploration and growth is theoretically better prepared to serve others (Eigel & Kuhnert, 2016). Instructional strategies appropriate for the humanistic domain include individual/group reflection (Avolio, 2005), one-on-one coaching (Theeboom et al., 2014), personal development plans (Taylor & Edge, 1997), and multi-rater feedback (Brett & Atwater, 2001). Curricular topics may consist of personal goals/motivations, personal values, personal reactions to stress, mindset, identity development, and perceptions of others. Evaluation of this domain relies heavily on qualitative approaches, and expert assessment is the primary approach. The humanistic orientation is critical because it grounds a leader in the personal work they will need to weather the many challenges inherent in leading others (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002).

#### *Mode 4: Social Cognitive Learning*

The social cognitive orientation (Bandura, 1971) suggests that interaction with others is a source of learning. Interactions with mentors and others who model competence, organizational norms, and values set standards for the leader to emulate. In essence, leaders have role models in context who exemplify and guide their growth. In medical education, more experienced surgeons train and guide the learning of less experienced individuals. Pilots benefit from a similar model whereby pilots with advanced qualifications and experience pass along lessons and stories to less-experienced pilots. In this mode, less experienced

individuals have an opportunity to evaluate themselves as they observe and learn from others with more seniority. In the context of leadership, role models provide learners with mental representations of what “ideal” looks like in practice. This domain is perhaps the most elusive as well. Many learners in the leadership domain do not have ideal role models or have skewed perceptions of “good” leadership that depend on unchallenged implicit beliefs or organizational culture that might contrast with espoused corporate values. Instructional strategies for the social-cognitive domain include mentoring programs (Higgins & Kram, 2001), networking with senior leaders (Giber, Carter, & Goldsmith, 2000), shadowing (Lalleman et al., 2017) and apprenticeship-type experiences (Talbert et al., 2009). Of course, these types of learning experiences are challenging to measure/evaluate. They may rely heavily on a learner’s ability to “connect the dots,” make sense of experiences, and organize their learning. However, one cannot under-estimate the importance of role models and mentors in a learner’s environment. The social cognitive orientation arms learners with critical cultural knowledge required to succeed in the context.

#### *Mode 5: Constructivist Learning*

The constructivist orientation (Dewey, 1933) holds that learners are active creators of knowledge. With roots in the Socratic Method, the idea is that learners actively construct and make meaning through dynamic learning processes in exchange with others. The constructivist orientation relies on the presentation of questions that stimulate cooperative dialogue and critical thought. In military pilot training, student pilots navigate hypothetical aircraft emergencies by actively engaging the instructor with their questions to thoroughly analyze the situation and take appropriate actions that safeguard the aircraft and its occupants. When student pilots make mistakes in these scenarios, there are limited but real consequences that might include removal from a scheduled flight to make room for remedial, individualized training. In healthcare,

resident physicians make daily rounds with senior physicians where each case is discussed at the bedside. The resident's understanding of the working diagnosis and plan of care are critiqued, and senior physicians

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share insight from past experiences. In the context of leadership, these are the lessons from experience where learners engage with the work and take the time to capture the learning through activities such as “after-action reviews” or other individual/group sensemaking activities designed to inform future practice (Ellis & Davidi, 2005; DeRue et al., 2012). Instructional strategies may include experiential learning activities (Kolb, 1984), action learning (Zuber-Skeritt, 2002) stretch/developmental assignments (McCauley et al., 2014), or communities of practice (Smith Kempster, & Wenger-Trayner, 2019). Evaluating the constructivist orientation can be a challenging endeavor. In some instances, it could be a record of failures and successes (e.g., objective results from the previous pilot training example) or improved quality scores in the context of healthcare. The constructivist orientation provides learners with the experience and upon critical reflection, the practical wisdom necessary to understand the “art” of leading others.

#### *Integrating all Five Modes*

In the essay, “Advancing Leadership Education and

Development: Integrating Adult Learning Theory” (Allen et al., in press) the authors assert that leader development programming that addresses all five modes of development will yield a more well-rounded and prepared leader. The complementary modes facilitate development of leaders who have the essential knowledge, skills, self-awareness, mentors, and experiences. In purposeful engagement, learning is appropriately scaffolded, occurs over time, and incorporates learning strategies from each of the five modes. As Allen, Rosch, and Riggio (in press) suggest, many program architects and learners believe they are developing leaders but unknowingly default to only developing one or two modes. For instance, colleges of business heavily rely on cognitivism which is important, but not holistic. With careful consideration and thoughtful

alignment we have an opportunity to experience and provide leadership learning opportunities that more holistically meet the needs of learners and set them up for developmental success.

#### **A Note on Organizations: The “Context” of Purposeful Engagement**

To have leaders who are fully capable of meeting organizational needs, an organization must have a structure and culture that nurtures, encourages, and rewards leadership development. Learning needs to align with organizational processes (Allen, 2008). Leader fundamentals inform what organizations might assess to understand leader development and performance but offer an incomplete picture of the developmental context. Developmental culture must emanate from the very top of the organization, making clear how leaders should lead and what support is available to develop. Critical features of developmental culture include support that continues throughout an individual's career, embracing a variety of leadership styles, and developmental resources that are available to all organizational members. A key benefit of

establishing development as a part of corporate culture is the materialization of individual and mutual accountability where organizational members reinforce development independently. By leveraging day-to-day experiences, the desired developmental outcomes can be achieved.

In contrast, stand-alone interventions (e.g., workshops and training) in response to emerging challenges take people away from real work, regularly fail to produce lasting change, and are often only made available to select organizational members. In the authors' experience, standalone interventions are prone to overstated outcomes, fail to adequately consider alternative interventions, and often ignore how the content of a proposed solution relates to the organizational context. These are just a few conditions that undermine the return on investment where standalone solutions fail to consider adverse, unwanted, and unintended consequences (Kerr, 1995).

Culture starts with intentional decisions by senior leaders (Schein & Schein, 2017). Much like significant capital investment, initiating a developmental culture requires more than intent or expectations—it also directs support in the forms of money, time, and resources. As such, top leaders must be willing to make long-term investments that may take years to yield dividends. While somewhat difficult to quantify, an actual leadership return-on-investment contributes to organizational health and results in significant competitive advantages. Unless senior leaders invest, development will be delayed, restricted, or completely inhibited. In addition, individuals throughout the organization watch senior leadership behavior to determine which behaviors facilitate advancement. When senior leaders provide lip service to leadership development, it will quickly fall to the wayside.

Leadership development must be omnipresent. Leaders at all levels, including the most senior executives, need regular, formalized, and tailored

development. As leaders mature, their developmental needs change concerning situational and didactic qualities (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Coaching can be a valuable tool to increase self-awareness and overcome blind spots because no leader is good at every task (Lamb, 2018). Coaching, feedback, and continuous training help leaders reinforce positive qualities while improving and addressing limitations and blind spots. This approach parallels professional athlete development. The most accomplished athletes have multiple coaches who watch their every move and constantly give feedback on areas and ways to improve, and performance is increasingly recognized as involving athletes' psychological skills, motivational factors, and support structures outside of the sport (Reed et al., 2016).

A common tendency among senior leaders is to develop and embrace leadership styles and tendencies that reflect their strengths and styles. While natural and sometimes valuable, leadership is a highly individualized skill set. One size does not fit all, and organizations must have a "leadership bench" of leaders with diverse leadership styles. Consider a young field-grade officer in the military tasked to develop a battalion of young soldiers into an effective fighting unit. The styles and techniques required differ substantially from a field-grade officer assigned to a unit responsible for developing cybersecurity programs. If organizations miscalculate what their leaders need to do, opportunities will be lost, and organizational performance suffers. Historically, General George Marshall and General George Patton were both pivotal to the success of World War II. Each leader had a markedly different approach to leadership. General Marshall's diplomacy, administration, and organization skills were indispensable in leading the Allied war effort and ultimately, the invasion of Europe. By contrast, General Patton's decidedly authoritarian, confrontational, and task-oriented approach worked mightily against the Axis in Africa and Europe. Diverse

leadership styles are essential within an organization to meet various leadership challenges.

### Considerations for Practice

Up to this point we have explored the importance of clear definitions, the importance of knowledge, skills, and character (what), and the need to design comprehensive leadership learning experiences (how). We also underscored the importance of an organizational context that facilitates development by setting expectations, aligning values and practice, and focusing on results of importance to the organization.

In this section we offer statements and exploratory questions for readers to consider as they commence and revise developmental efforts. For some readers, this content will reinforce and validate ongoing efforts. For others, these questions may provide new insights to help you as you start or seek to strengthen your efforts. Every reader is encouraged to first evaluate themselves. Once explored, consider how these statements might also apply to a specific person that you are helping to develop or a program you are designing or implementing. Regardless of the perspective taken, the intent of the exercise is to help readers discover richness in developmental experiences that might otherwise be overlooked.

1. I have a solid understanding of leadership theory, research, and the mental processes necessary to think through a given leadership challenge.
  - What do I know about leadership?
  - What questions arise when I interact with others across diverse situations that suggest areas for further exploration?
2. I have led people and have practiced skills required for leadership such as listening, giving feedback, setting reasonable goals and objectives and hiring/firing employees.
  - What leadership skills and competencies do you currently have?

- How do they relate to performance in day-to-day work and fit with anticipated future challenges?
3. I have a strong sense of my strengths and weaknesses, I am open to feedback, and I value what others contribute.
    - What efforts are needed to enhance your sense of self and the value that others contribute?
    - How do you balance attending to objective performance and interpersonal processes?
    - How could you incorporate the perspectives of others to validate or challenge your perspective?
  4. I have role models and mentors who demonstrate leadership talent and help me grow.
    - Who or what do you look to as the epitome of leadership and why?
    - How are you serving as an exemplar to others?
    - In what areas could continued growth help you reach your ideals?
  5. I frequently take time to discuss leadership experiences with my supervisors and other colleagues and look for ways to capture wisdom for the future.
    - What habits are you actively practicing to make meaning of leadership experiences?
    - Who else can you employ in your efforts to make meaning of these experiences?
  6. Consider your answers to the preceding questions.
    - How do you need to change the way you are practicing development for yourself, for others, and for your organization?

### Conclusion

Leadership development is essential for organizations to be competitive and successful. To develop leaders, individuals at all levels need to intentionally engage in activities that provide the knowledge, skills, and

character needed to lead. These qualities need to be brought to leaders in ways that respect the theories of adult learning and the needs of the learner. Our hope is that this paper will serve as a blueprint for leaders young and old, and for the organizations with the opportunity to enable others to pursue life-long leadership development.

The daily demands in modern organizations set the stage for leadership development to be pushed to the side and neglected. Any leadership development program can quickly devolve into casual efforts with no formalized structure, objectives, plan, or accountability. Imagine a young football player trying to develop athletic skills without a formalized practice schedule, coaching, and a record of progress. Leadership is no different. To this end, purposeful engagement represents basic requirements where leaders and the organization pursue leader fundamentals by practicing diverse learning modes.

As a note of caution, organizations invested in developing highly qualified workers often focus on technical competency. Technical competency is not a replacement for developing leaders and leadership capacity. More than twenty years ago, Senge (2000) critiqued the academic community for pursuing individualistic aims that missed opportunities to produce a highly qualified workforce. The persistent problem is that many organizations remain motivated to respond to technological advances and dynamic contexts (e.g., the knowledge and skills associated with a particular field or emerging challenge) and miss opportunities to develop leaders in ways essential to enhancing organizational performance.

We offer purposeful engagement as a practical and scalable framework so that any organization can undertake informed, evidence-based efforts to develop leadership talent in the context of day-to-day work settings. Advancing the recommendations

of Reimer, Bremer, and Larsen (2021), we proposed purposeful engagement as a process to create and sustain conditions through efforts involving leading people, connecting learning to the organization's purpose, and leading with culture to create favorable conditions for development. In doing so, people at every organizational level are empowered to share efforts to develop themselves and others as leaders.

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