



# Leadership Training that Sticks

## 23 Lessons Learned Over 25 Years

### Overview:

Arguably one of the greatest issues with a leadership development program (or any training program) is whether it will STICK — will the skills be applied on the job and will the application of those skills result in the desired business results?

We at Entelechy have been designing leadership development programs for years now and have found a number of elements that significantly increase the chances that the program — any program — will have the intended impact on people and on the organization.



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# Leadership Training that Sticks: 23 Lessons Learned Over 25 Years

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**Abstract:** Despite billions spent on leadership development, the investment doesn't seem to be having the impact one would expect. This may be due to the lack of traction these programs typically have when it comes to lasting behavior change. This updated white paper provides 23 lessons that will help increase the likelihood that the skills learned in a leadership development program will "stick" and be used on the job.

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According to industry watchers Bersin & Associates, U.S. businesses spent \$13.6 billion on leadership development in 2012, a 14% increase from the previous year<sup>1</sup>. That's admittedly a lot of money and one that should show significant return in terms of employee retention, engagement, and performance and achievement of organizational goals. Yet, according to a recent Human Resource Executive Online article<sup>2</sup>, leaders lack the core ability to lead – to engage their employees in accomplishing organizational goals. Specifically, of the 1,279 employees surveyed:

- 49% say their managers sometimes or never ask for their ideas to help solve problems.
- 47% say their managers sometimes or never help them solve problems without simply solving the problems for them.
- 45% of the employees say they sometimes or never get sufficient feedback on their performance.

*U.S. businesses spent \$13.6 billion  
on leadership development in 2012.*

Clearly the billions spent on leadership training don't seem to be having the positive, significant, sustained results they should. And, in our experience, it's typically not the program per se; smart people don't spend billions on lousy programs. It's about making the program stick – ensuring that the skills learned in the leadership development program transfer from the classroom to the floor and become part of the culture, "the way we do things around here."

How do you make your leadership development program stick? Here is a snapshot of the 23 lessons we've learned over 23 years:

- **Executive Support and Organizational Buy-In**
  1. Get a senior-level champion.
  2. Align the program with organizational goals.
  3. Get broad-based buy-in.
  4. Ensure that senior leaders have the capability to model and reinforce the skills.

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<sup>1</sup> Karen O' Leonard and Laci (Barb) Loew, *Leadership Development Factbook 2012: Benchmarks and Trends in U.S. Leadership Development* (July 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Kristen Frasch, "Leaders Behaving Badly," *Human Resource Executive Online*, October 31, 2013, <http://www.hreonline.com/HRE/view/story.jhtml?id=534356316&>.

- **Program Design**

5. Make it simple.
6. Make it relevant – VERY relevant.
7. When in doubt, leave it out.
8. Face-to-face or virtual or self-paced?
9. Embed engaging activities.
10. Use a 360° survey.
11. Use video to illustrate skills in action.
12. Select your trainers carefully.
13. Train your trainers rigorously (and support them vigorously).
14. Ensure a positive experience for participants.

- **Skills Application and Ongoing Support**

15. Develop leaders, don't just train them.
16. Practice the skills in the training.
17. Build in transfer at each module.
18. Provide multiple levels of support.
19. Create regular touchpoints.
20. Support with innovative tools.
21. Leverage the models.
22. Measure – and celebrate – success.

- **Rinse and Repeat**

23. Make leadership development a journey, not a destination.

Each of these strategies increases the likelihood that your leadership development program will STICK and have the results you're looking for and that your investment demands. Address them all and your program is GUARANTEED to stick!

In the pages that follow, we'll expand on each of the 23 strategies, providing specific detail and useful tips to each, tips that we apply to each customized version of Entelechy's award-winning, client-owned leadership development program, *Unleash Your Leadership Potential*.

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**DOES YOUR LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

**STICK?**



## Executive Support and Organizational Buy-In

One of the elements most critical to the “stickiness” of a leadership development program really doesn’t have anything to do with the program. We’ve found that the success of any leadership development initiative is directly related to the enthusiasm and passion the organization has for leadership development. Organizations who view leadership as essential – even critical – to the achievement of organizational goals are more likely to have a leadership development program that sticks – and positively impacts the organization.

### 1. Get a senior-level champion.

Leadership development without visible, vocal, and visceral upper leadership support is a waste of time and organizational resources. Having a senior-level champion is perhaps the most important element in making leadership development stick. The best companies we’ve worked with have an impassioned senior executive whose mission in life is to create powerful leaders. This sponsor is an evangelist for leadership development and is present in initial meetings, communiques, and occasionally even in the classroom.

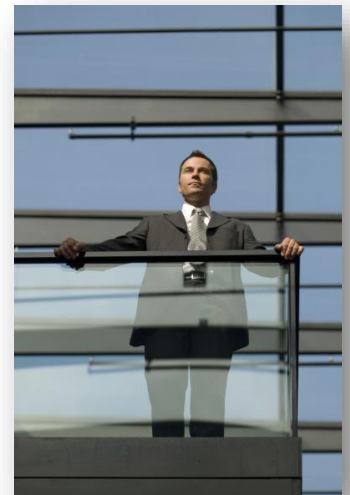
In a white paper by The Learning Executive Think Tank entitled *Top 5 Ways to Communicate the Value of Your Training Programs*<sup>3</sup>, the authors state emphatically and unequivocally, “When senior leaders evangelize key business and learning initiatives throughout the organization, people pay attention.”

A recent article in *Chief Learning Officer* magazine focuses on AT&T University as exemplary explaining, “Leadership commitment is another reason AT&T is the top LearningElite organization. Executives actively support a culture of learning at AT&T. In fact, senior leaders are involved in setting the agenda and shaping courses at AT&T University.”<sup>4</sup> As demonstration of that commitment, the article continues, “Starting with the chairman and CEO on down through the ranks, leaders serve as instructors at the university.”

Our most successful implementations of *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* can be traced to the active and visible support of a senior-level champion.

### 2. Align the program with organizational goals.

Organizational goals are the “why” in leadership development: we need improved leadership to achieve specific organizational goals, whether those goals are business-based (i.e., improve productivity, increase innovation, increase market share) or organizational in nature (i.e., increase employee engagement, reduce employee turnover), sticky leadership development programs are grounded by goals. Organizational goals help shape the leadership development program’s content; they clarify the training needs.



*“Coaching must foster a mindset that in this competitive world we must all get better and better every day.”*

- Joseph Bosch, EVP and Chief Human Resources Officer at DIRECTV

<sup>3</sup> The Learning Executive Think Tank, “Top 5 Ways to Communicate the Value of Your Training Programs,” Expertus, <http://www.trainingefficiency.com/explore-resources>, (accessed January, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Deanna Hartley, “AT&T: The Marriage of Business and Learning,” *Chief Learning Officer*, May 20, 2013, <http://clomedia.com/articles/view/at-t-the-marriage-of-business-and-learning>.

Second, any expenditure of the magnitude of a typical leadership development program (see sidebar) needs to be directly aligned with organizational goals. While the goals for many leadership development programs are related to leader capability (i.e., communicate more clearly, provide useful feedback, etc.), the “stickier” programs focus on organizational goals like employee engagement, retention, and productivity. The “stickiest” programs also LINK the skills learned in the program to organizational vision and goals (i.e., “To engage employees, we want to help them develop and thrive in their roles; to do that, we want to act as a coach and here’s how we do that...”).

Additionally, a leadership development program is a PERFECT time to ensure every leader knows what the organizational goals ARE! According to a study published in *Chief Learning Officer* magazine, 95% of employees do not understand their company’s objectives and less than 17% understand how their jobs relate to the overall strategy. We in leadership development have a unique opportunity to ensure that leaders not only KNOW the organization’s goals, but can effectively communicate them to employees.

Dr. Jay Conger, Director of the Center for Effectiveness at the Marshall School of Business (University of Southern California), in his paper on *Why Leadership Development Efforts Fail*<sup>5</sup>, cites what he calls “the productization of leadership development” as a leading cause of leadership development failure. He states that, “companies are frequently in search of quick fixes and silver bullets, and they orient their leadership initiatives around commercial products that have limited relevance to their actual needs. In other words, executives become too focused on the products themselves rather than on the problems that need to be solved.” Conger explains:

*For example, a human resources manager from a Fortune 100 company recently explained enthusiastically during a break in an executive education class how she had just brought a “primal leadership” course into her company. She wanted suggestions on how to convince her company’s line managers of the course’s value...after she had already launched the program! Another company offers a new leadership-training program approximately every two years based on a current best-selling book on leadership. The programs to date include training experiences designed on the basis of well-known books by respected researchers, such as Steven Covey’s Seven Habits of Effective People, Peter Senge’s Fifth Discipline, Collins and Porras’s Built to Last, and Daniel Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence.*

This results in a “flavor-of-the-month” leadership development approach that – at best – is perceived to be a waste of time and – at worst – provides unclear and often conflicting messages.

Third, aligning the leadership development program with organizational goals keeps the program “honest” and subject to ongoing scrutiny and improvement. Organizational goals are the “R” in ROI – they identify what we’re hoping to achieve with improved leadership.

### Cost of the Typical Leadership Development Program

According to the Center for Assessment and Policy Development, the average cost of a leadership development program ranged between \$1000 and \$50,000 with the median landing between \$5000 and \$10,000.<sup>1</sup>

Bersin by Deloitte determined that organizations spent just over \$2000 for each leader participating in the program with significantly higher costs for senior-level programs.<sup>2</sup>

Center for Creative Leadership  
5-day program = \$6200 - \$6800 per person  
3-day program = \$3700 per person<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Investigation of Cost Benefit Analyses for Leadership Programs, Center for Assessment and Policy Development, Dec 2008.

<sup>2</sup>Leadership Development – Is It Really Worth the Money? Bersin by Deloitte. Nov 2, 2009.  
<http://www.bersin.com/blog/post/2009/11/Leadership-Development---Is-It-Really-Worth-the-Money.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> Douglas A. Ready and Jay A. Conger, “Why Leadership Development Efforts Fail,” *MIT Sloan Management Review*, (April 15, 2003).

### 3. Get broad-based buy-in.

While a senior-level champion is the spark, the fuel for a sustained leadership fire comes from throughout the organization. At minimum, each business unit should have a sponsor whose job is two-fold: 1) provide input into the leadership development team, and 2) communicate progress and successes to their unit or department. Carefully select your best and brightest for this work; they need to have credibility within their organization and the ability to communicate with enthusiasm.

Dr. Eduardo Salas, a professor of organizational psychology at the University of Central Florida and a program director at its Institute for Simulation and Training, states:

*You can have the best training in the world. Top-notch. But the organization may not be ready to receive the training and doesn't set the conditions so that when you go back to your job, you have the right supervisory support, the opportunity to practice and the conditions that allow you to apply the skills you just learned and to motivate you to sustain this.*<sup>6</sup>

And that support begins upfront – before any training is conducted or even developed. You'll want supporters from all functions and at all levels of the organization.

One of the best ways to get broad-based buy-in, a tactic we advocate with *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* implementation, is invite leaders from all parts of the organization to – at a minimum – pilot test the program. Genuinely involve them in making program modifications and adjustments. Leverage their expertise – while simultaneously garnering their support – in making the program perfect. Invite as pilot participants those who are most vocal and most visible in their respective organizations; they can become your strongest allies.

### 4. Ensure that senior leaders have the capability to model and reinforce the skills.

One of the most common questions asked in leadership or management training is, “Will OUR leaders go through this? They really need this!” And, when asked in the end-of-course feedback form, “Do you feel confident that your manager will be able to help you implement what you learned?” the common response, sadly, is “No.”

Make your leadership development program STICK by ensuring that senior leaders have the capability to model and reinforce the skills. Nothing is as powerful as modeling the expected behavior; conversely, there is nothing more damaging to a leadership program than to see a senior leader who violates the very skills and philosophy touted in the leadership training. Make sure those who supervise attendees of the leadership program are equipped – and committed – to model and reinforce the skills.

In *Unleash Your Leadership Potential*, we created the Executive Reinforcement workshop for upper leaders to learn the models and techniques their staff will learn in the core track. While the content and activities are largely the same, the Executive Reinforcement workshop takeaways are significantly different. For example, instead of “who will I coach,” the senior executive is asked to identify “how can I support my team with their coaching.” Additionally, having a separate track for

*“Coaching is the cornerstone of great leadership. Building a pipeline of leaders that can achieve results through people is the key to sustained growth as an organization, and these coaching conversations are the key to that future success.”*

- Sean Dineen, VP of Global Learning & Quality at Convergys

<sup>6</sup> Rachel Emma Silverman, “So Much Training, So Little to Show for It,” *Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052970204425904578072950518558328>.



senior leaders allows more open discussion in each track. Caution: Do not strip the activities from the Executive Reinforcement track “to save time;” senior leaders need to practice the models in order to confidently model and reinforce them.

## Program Design

A quick Google search on “leadership development program” results in 212 MILLION hits. Clearly, there are many leadership development programs to choose from. Be sure that the program you choose (or build) is designed from the outset to truly make the training “stick.” To ensure the stickiness of your leadership program – a program that changes behavior and changes the organization’s culture – consider the following design tips:

*A quick Google search on “leadership development program” results in 212 MILLION hits.*

### 5. Make it simple.

Difficult or confusing models and content tend not to get used outside of the classroom. The models we use in *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* were honed over 23 years of field application – our clients have helped us refine the models into simple, practical techniques that can be easily used on the job for immediate results.

In her CLO article, *Don’t Overcomplicate Leadership Development*, Tasha Eurich advises, “To boost impact, make leadership development programs high on substance but low on complexity.”<sup>7</sup> Don’t be misled; simple ain’t easy! Achieving simplicity requires work. Look at one of the simplest, most complex devices in existence today: the smartphone, brought to full life with the simple interface that only Apple could achieve. Eurich cites Ken Segall’s biography of Steve Jobs in explaining that Apple’s success “has been to distill its ideas to their essence. When Jobs was not satisfied with the simplicity of ... ideas presented to him, he would hit them with ‘the Simple Stick.’” This, Segall said, was a vital component to the company’s success.

Additionally, simple models are easier for individuals to adopt and make their own. Malcolm Gladwell, in his article *Leadership Development in the Age of the Algorithm*<sup>8</sup>, tells the story of Ralph, a Best Buy store manager who led his store from one of the worst performing to one of the best. Gladwell observed that one technique Ralph employed was the use of whistles; when one employee spotted standout behavior in another, the employee would whistle. This energized the employees and the whole store, even customers. When wind of this leadership practice reached corporate, there was a push to institute whistles companywide. Fortunately, explains Gladwell, some Best Buy executive squashed that idea in its infancy. Gladwell explains:



*The story of Ralph’s whistle reveals a fundamental organizational reality: Leadership excellence doesn’t scale easily. Leadership concepts are scalable, because a concept is easily transferable from person to person. In Ralph’s case, the concept is that the best leaders capture moments of excellence and reflect them back to the team. You can teach this concept to anyone who wants to grow as a leader, and she will benefit—just as you can usefully teach all aspiring leaders the*

<sup>7</sup> Tasha Eurich, “Don’t Overcomplicate Leadership Development,” *CLO Magazine*, June 12, 2013, <http://clomedia.com/articles/view/don-t-overcomplicate-leadership-development>.

<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Gladwell, “Leadership Development in the Age of the Algorithm,” *Harvard Business Review*, (June 2012): 86-94.



*concept that employee engagement drives customer loyalty, or the concept that your existing customers are your best prospects.*

*But in the hands of an individual leader, a concept turns into a practice, a sequence of behaviors, a set of techniques. There is a person involved, someone actually applying the concept—in other words, a Ralph. And a technique that works for Ralph won't work for people who lead differently from him. Again, by "won't work" I mean "won't look authentic." The borrowed technique will appear stilted and uncomfortable; the person trying to adopt it will find that his movements are disjointed and his instincts are off—he's a Franken-leader.*

The models and concepts in *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* are stunningly simple and intuitive. Yet they are also surprisingly effective and adaptable. For example, the questions we embed in our coaching model (based on the concept that asking questions tends to elicit more and better information than telling) are extremely effective questions to do a post-partum on a project or debrief a sales call or discuss how the meeting went. As Gladwell states: "We need a new model—one that is scalable but accommodates the uniqueness of each leader's techniques; one that is stable enough to permit the training of hundreds of leaders at once, but dynamic enough to incorporate and distribute new practices and other innovations in real time."

We designed *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* and all the models in the program to enable scalable leadership. The coaching model, for example, works equally effectively on the factory floor as in the finance department; it works for supervisors and team leads just as effectively as it does for senior directors; it works in the United States as well as in China.

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## 6. Make it relevant – VERY relevant.

An effective leadership/management development program is relevant to participants. Sounds obvious, but most off-the-shelf programs are just that: off the shelf. And off-the-shelf programs (and many home-grown programs) run into the same complaints from participants: "That may work for others, but it'll never work for me!" Make the examples real; create instructional videos illustrating skills being used in real situations.

Jay Conger (introduced in Lesson #2), explains the severe consequences of leadership development programs that are perceived as irrelevant:

*As one executive in the company explained, "We build a program and then toss it over the wall to the operating units. Then we go back and build another one without linking the ideas to the context of our business. There is no consistency in our message." A division president at a Fortune 50 company made a similar comment a few years ago during a leadership-development audit: "We spend \$120 million a year on this stuff, and if it all went away tomorrow, it wouldn't matter one bit. Leadership development in this company is nothing more than a series of disconnected programs sold by consultants to training managers who don't understand our business."<sup>9</sup>*

There's a double-whammy here. Leadership development programs that are seen as less than relevant tend to create negative perceptions about training in general, which creates a death spiral for training and a learning culture within the organization. Conversely, a highly-relevant and

<sup>9</sup> Douglas A. Ready and Jay A. Conger, "Why Leadership Development Efforts Fail," *MIT Sloan Management Review*, (April 15, 2003).

practical leadership development program creates a buzz and is its own best marketing, which increases the overall credibility of training.

Many clients who have instituted *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* have indicated that the demand for the training usually exceeds the organization's ability to schedule and conduct classes. That demand is driven by relevance. And relevance is created through customization. *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* was created with customization in mind. We identify specific places for customization including, company (or even business-unit) specific examples, role-play scenarios, leadership competencies, language/terminology, and instructional videos. We even changed the terminology in our Performance Checklist mobile app at a client's request to match the language they used within their organization. That's relevance!

## 7. When in doubt, leave it out.

Especially with leadership training, there's a tendency to include anything and everything that deals with communication, performance, building relationships, listening, time management, delegation, handling conflict, and so on. And if this is new leader training, let's throw in policies and procedures, with some diversity training and some legal compliance training "since we have them here already...." It's too much. If there's anything we've learned in our 23 years, it's what to leave out. Effective leadership programs focus on key skills and consciously leave out other skills that, while important, are perhaps less critical or can be acquired through other training.

Others agree. In their article, '*Less Is More*' Leadership Development, Karen Voloshin and Julie Winkle Giulioni state, "Let's walk away from over-engineered experiences, and instead opt for elegant yet simple, functional, and highly practical development alternatives."<sup>10</sup> They suggest in the design of a leadership development program:

*You need to be ruthless at identifying the few mission-critical skills, and work at expanding skills through context and complexity rather than through more content. You also must be able to describe, in measurable terms, what success looks like at each leadership level, and then reconcile models, courses, and approaches with those parameters. Finally, as with all learning efforts, you need to challenge leaders with relevant activities and assignments that they can use back on the job.*

Tasha Eurich, in her *Chief Learning Officer* article agrees:

*Give leaders only what they need. Most car owners don't care how their engine works; they just want to drive. The same goes for leadership development. Learning leaders must adopt a simplicity mindset to assess and grow the capabilities of leaders in their organization.*<sup>11</sup>

The thing is, we tend to muddy the waters with our training design. We designers feel compelled to explain the theory on which a model is based, or to provide a historical treatise on the field of leadership study. Recently, when asked by a consultant "which leadership theory or theories is *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* based on?" I was caught off guard. Slowly (and somewhat painfully) I recalled programs we created 20 years ago that could have answered the question –

*Give leaders only what they need. Most car owners don't care how their engine works; they just want to drive. The same goes for leadership development.*

<sup>10</sup> Karen Voloshin and Julie Winkle Giulioni, "'Less Is More' Leadership Development," ASTD, (September, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Tasha Eurich, "Don't Overcomplicate Leadership Development," *CLO Magazine*, June 12, 2013, <http://clomedia.com/articles/view/don-t-overcomplicate-leadership-development>.

McGregor, Bennis, Drucker, McClelland – but those theoretical discussions have been squeezed out of the program in favor of more relevant discussions and application activities.

## 8. Face-to-face or virtual or self-paced?

For many clients, the single highest cost of leadership training is travel expenses. While virtual training via the Internet can eliminate travel expenses, many clients realize that there are tremendous benefits to getting leaders together for face-to-face training.

In the article *Technology's Role in Leadership Development*<sup>12</sup>, Bryan Austin, CEO of Game On Learning, states:

*Leadership skills, or any type of business skill, are really difficult to teach because of its complexity. The way a lot of training attempts to teach those skills, they don't allocate enough time for applying and mastering the skills. Learning and development professionals in the business world, both corporate and government, get tons of pressure from their internal clients to reduce formal training time. Managers want two-day classes shortened to one day, and one-day classes shortened to a half-day. Let's be realistic — the acquisition, mastery and internalization of complex skills requires hours of practice in a safe environment, not minutes.*



In the same article, Ronald Riggio, Professor of Leadership and Organizational Psychology and Director of Kravis Leadership Institute at Claremont McKenna College, states, “Technology is limited in terms of how much we can develop, and it’s hard to give the kind of personal feedback and personal instruction that is often needed ... there’s nothing like face-to-face interaction, practice and feedback.”

Our suggestion is to use a blended approach, using face-to-face for initial skills training and forming cohorts, and using virtual training as part of the ongoing development program. Self-paced learning works well as precourse and for supplemental learning. However, we’ve found that the BEST (read “stickiest”) implementations of *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* leverage – not bemoan – the face-to-face time. One client, for example, invites a senior leader to speak during an evening dinner about “what makes for an effective leader here at XYZ Corp.” Another client takes the class on a short field trip to tour the corporate facility. Still another invites the CEO to explain over dinner “lessons I learned as a leader.”

*Let's be realistic — the acquisition, mastery and internalization of complex skills requires hours of practice in a safe environment, not minutes.*

## 9. Embed engaging activities.

Engaged participants learn most and retain that learning longer. Engagement happens in different ways: skill building activities (see Lesson #16); attention activities (like videos, table discussions, and action planning); and identity-creating activities where participants learn more about themselves as leaders. While all are important, many leadership development programs aren’t as successful as they could be because they don’t help participants change their identity of who they are as leaders. STICKY leadership development programs help participants imagine a new possibility – a new

<sup>12</sup> Jessica Dubois-Maahs, “Technology’s Role in Leadership Development,” *CLO Magazine*, (October, 2013): 18-21.

identity of who they can be as a leader. And this shift typically requires an activity that jolts the participant.

In *Unleash Your Leadership Potential*, for example, we introduce our coaching model following fairly traditional instructional methods: explanation and discussion followed by a video demonstration. Typically, we see lots of head nodding (this is pretty simple stuff after all) even though we repeatedly point out the importance of asking the questions from the model. Then we do an activity called Coach the Expert; the instructor “coaches” a volunteer and does a rather poor job of it, not following the coaching model at all. After the volunteer sits, the instructor/coach turns to the class and asks them collectively for coaching. Invariably, the class starts by telling the instructor/coach what was done wrong; the class almost NEVER follows the coaching model – despite having just learned the model, having just seen the model in action in the video demonstration, and having the actual model in front of them in their workbooks! It’s this “whack” that evokes a very emotional response from participants, making them pause and reflect, “maybe there is a better way.”

According to Heather Hilliard in her article, *Why Training & Development Programs Fail: Mastering the Real Drivers of Behavioural Change*<sup>13</sup>, learners need to engage their brains AND their emotions:

*Our brains are designed for experiential learning over time, so the only way to change behaviour is by creating new neural pathways in the brain through repeated and frequent experiences that lead to mastery. It also requires changing emotionally-driven patterns and unconscious habits of mind that get in the way of development.*

We have been careful to include a specific blend of engaging activities in the design of *Unleash Your Leadership Potential*. Some activities are designed to apply skills. Other activities are to provide “a whack upside the head” (sudden realization) and help participants to see a new perspective, one that will open up a whole new way of leading. Still other activities encourage participants to share and seek insight from their peers. And still other activities help participants apply their skills on the job and collaborate with THEIR leader in a true performance partnership.

## 10. Use a 360° survey.

An online 360° survey provides attendees with insights they normally don’t receive. For some, it’s affirmation of their self-assessment of strengths and areas for development; for others it’s a much needed dose of reality.

In a recent article on *The Challenges of Leadership Development*, the authors conclude that, “...becoming a successful leader requires a true transformation. Central to the process of becoming a leader is achieving both greater self insight and self knowledge.”<sup>14</sup>

Likewise, Stedman Graham, in his article *Identity Leadership: Developing Self-Awareness in the Corporate World*, states:

*STICKY leadership development programs help participants imagine a new possibility – a new identity of who they can be as a leader.*

*Effective leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must operate with a strong sense of their own identity, because along with it comes purpose and integrity, willingness to take risks, the ability to understand the importance of change and to be ready for it.*

<sup>13</sup> Heather Hilliard, “Why Training & Development Programs Fail: Mastering the Real Drivers of Behavioural Change,” *HRVoice.org*, April 17, 2013, <http://www.hrvoice.org/why-training-development-programs-fail-mastering-the-real-drivers-of-behavioural-change>.

<sup>14</sup> Benjamin J. Amos and Michelle Amy Marks, “The Challenges of Leadership Development: Are Business Schools Exhibiting Evidence Based Practice?” *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*, (2013).

*Effective leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century must operate with a strong sense of their own identity, because along with it comes purpose and integrity, willingness to take risks, the ability to understand the importance of change and to be ready for it. People who have the self-awareness of an intentional, strong identity can lead themselves to overcome obstacles in their own lives so that they can lead others in their organization toward success.*<sup>15</sup>

A 360° survey can provide not only perspective that is often hidden from a leader, it can also provide a benchmark that would be useful for ongoing development. In *Unleash Your Leadership Potential*, we customize our online 360° survey to the organization's leadership competencies; the results of the survey then provide a snapshot of the current perceptions of the leader's employees, boss, and peers regarding those competencies. This insight can be invaluable for the leader and for the leader's ongoing development.



Some organizations aren't ready for a true 360° survey. If the organization hasn't established expectations or competencies for leaders, a 360° survey may backfire – alienating leaders and employees alike (and making future implementation of a 360° much more challenging). However, even if you can't do a true 360° survey, provide participants with the opportunity to self-assess using the organization's leadership competencies as the framework. It's not ideal, but it does enable a discussion of leadership competencies.

Note that there are many useful techniques for crafting effective 360° surveys. One interesting perspective is provided by Marcus Buckingham in his article on *The Fatal Flaw with the 360 Survey*.<sup>16</sup> Be sure to read the responses in the comment section to fire your brain!

## 11. Use video to illustrate skills in action.

There's nothing like seeing a skill in action. Even the earliest of instructional design theories point to the superiority of demonstration over explanation – seeing over reading or hearing. And recent research<sup>17</sup> supports the power of video over print/lecture in the acquisition of skills.

When we first started creating instructional videos back in the early 1990s, it was a huge production – literally! Scripting, hiring and training talent, shooting and producing, and editing all were huge efforts – with the accompanying huge expenses. With today's technology, it's easy to shoot and edit your own instructional videos using your own people as “talent.” While the video examples need to accurately illustrate the models, they don't have to be perfect since less-than-perfect illustrations invite discussion.

As a bonus, videos depicting your organization's people in action add yet another level of relevance to the models, which tends to add credibility and applicability to the models and the program.

<sup>15</sup> Stedman Graham, “Identity Leadership: Developing Self-Awareness in the Corporate World,” *Training Industry.com*, April 3, 2013, <http://www.trainingindustry.com/leadership/articles/identity-leadership-developing-self-awareness-in-the-corporate-world.aspx>.

<sup>16</sup> Marcus Buckingham, “The Fatal Flaw with 360 Surveys,” *HBR Blog Network*, October 17, 2011, <http://blogs.hbr.org/2011/10/the-fatal-flaw-with-360-survey/>.

<sup>17</sup> Francis Donkor, “The Comparative Instructional Effectiveness of Print-Based and Video-Based Instructional Materials for Teaching Practical Skills at a Distance,” *The International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, March, 2010, <http://www.irrodl.org/index.php/irrodl/article/view/792/1486>.



## 12. Select your trainers carefully.

The best-designed leadership development program with the most effective models and activities can fail if not effectively facilitated. In the hands of the right facilitators, however, a good program becomes great; participants learn and leave confident of their ability to apply new skills.

Leadership trainers need a unique blend of skills and experience. They need, of course, outstanding presentation and facilitation skills in order to convey new material and facilitate the discussions and activities that bring that material to life. Additionally, they need leadership experience; they have led and managed people and can speak with authority and credibility while also facilitating lively discussions.

Many organizations are challenged to find facilitators who meet all of the criteria and will choose to have two people – a senior trainer and a senior leader – facilitate the leadership training. While this increases the effectiveness of the delivery, other organizations tap into outside resources to add yet another level of credibility to the training. A recent article in *Chief Learning Officer* (mentioned in Lesson #1) highlights AT&T as a LearningElite organization, an achievement due in large part – according to Ken Fenoglio, VP AT&T University – to the active involvement of leaders in the delivery of training:

*We believe totally in leaders as teachers. You don't know your subject matter, you don't know your business until you actually teach something. We have a nice blend of external and internal [instructors] that we have teaching [and] we really feel like that has gotten us a long way.<sup>18</sup>*

As with AT&T, most of our clients prefer to use two instructors to facilitate leadership training; in fact, an ideal combination is to use a professional facilitator with an internal leader.

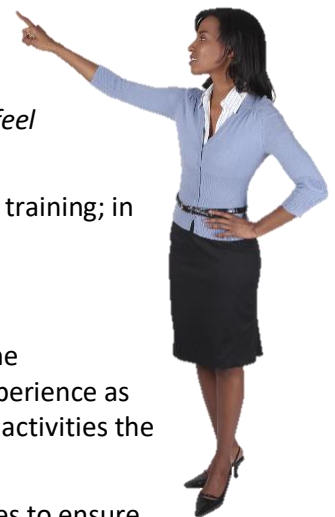
## 13. Train your trainers rigorously (and support them vigorously).

A well-designed leadership development program – one that is scalable throughout the organization – is well documented. You want each class to have the same valuable experience as all other classes; you want each instructor to convey the same messages and conduct activities the same way to ensure a consistently powerful result.

Ensure that every trainer is delivering training as it was designed. Provide robust guides to ensure that the nuance of the instruction is clear and repeatable. Robust guides also ensure that the first delivery is as powerful as the 30<sup>th</sup> delivery. While each instructor should be encouraged to share his or her own experiences, it is critical that each instructor adhere to the explanations and activities as designed.

Train trainers rigorously and have them deliver portions of the training, ensuring that they have a grasp of the content AND display the presentation capabilities required for such an important program. We always use as a benchmark the question: “If the CEO (or senior-level sponsor) walked in on this delivery, would he or she be pleased?” If the answer is “no,” we coach the instructor or find a replacement. It is THAT important!

*In the hands of the right facilitator, a good program becomes great!*



*We always use as a benchmark the question: “If the CEO (or senior-level sponsor) walked in on this delivery, would he or she be pleased?”*

<sup>18</sup> Deanna Hartley, “AT&T: The Marriage of Business and Learning,” *Chief Learning Officer*, May 20, 2013, <http://clomedia.com/articles/view/at-t-the-marriage-of-business-and-learning>.

Additionally, encourage instructors to share tips and techniques. Sit in and monitor instructors; provide coaching to ensure a consistently powerful end result!

#### 14. Ensure a positive experience for participants.

Provide resources to ensure that attendees are notified, classes are scheduled, rooms are set up properly, and professionally-produced materials are on hand. While much care and thought has gone into the design and development of your leadership program, its reputation is built at the point attendees first encounter the program. Make it a profoundly positive first experience.

With *Unleash Your Leadership Potential*, the more successful clients take great care to customize the precourse letter/invitation as well as the precourse web-based training (WBT). The WBT not only provides an overview of the program and some of the content, but also contains a video of a senior executive welcoming participants and explaining the importance of this leadership program to the organization's success.

This attention to a positive experience extends to the classroom as well; ensuring that the program is a positive experience has instructional merit. Simply put, paying attention to the learners' emotions in the design of a program is important. As Heather Hilliard<sup>19</sup> (introduced in Lesson #9) states:

*As much as we would like to believe that development is solely a cognitive activity that on its own can produce changes in behaviour, the reality is that we are emotional, social beings. Emotions are critical to successful learning and neural patterning that leads to behavioural change. Positive emotions enhance the learning experience, fostering curiosity and increased retention. Negative emotions shut down the learning process, triggering a flight or fight response—which often occurs without the awareness of either the participant or the facilitator.*

*Training approaches need to provide for the emotional security of participants if they are to be effective. This includes creating safe learning environments, talking about negative emotions and their impact on learning, as well as attending to the fears and emotional barriers participants are experiencing. However, if you do not understand the psychological needs and innate fears of participants, the self-protective system in their brain gets activated and shifts their focus to surviving the experience—rather than engaging in the learning.*

*Unleash Your Leadership Potential* is designed to push participants out of their comfort zone, but to do so in a safe environment. Most modules end with the opportunity for participants to write down how they will apply that particular skill on the job. They then share with the person next to them or with the others in their “table team” what they wrote and why. Peers offer insight and support. It's this type of positive environment that enables *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* graduates to confidently apply what they learned; the skills STICK!



<sup>19</sup> Heather Hilliard, “Why Training & Development Programs Fail: Mastering the Real Drivers of Behavioural Change,” *HRVoice.org*, April 17, 2013, <http://www.hrvoice.org/why-training-development-programs-fail-mastering-the-real-drivers-of-behavioural-change>.



## Skills Application and Ongoing Support

Don't just trust your leaders to figure out how this stuff works "in the real world." Or assume they don't need to practice in a classroom. Life gets busy. Build in the right practice and support to help your leaders be a success back on the job!

### 15. Develop leaders, don't just train them.

Training is important to impart and practice skills, but leadership is a developmental process and should be treated as such. Provide initial skills training, but ensure that participants have the opportunity to apply, practice, and get feedback over time.

In his Forbes article, *The #1 Reason Leadership Development Fails*<sup>20</sup>, Mike Myatt states that "You don't train leaders you develop them – a subtle yet important distinction lost on many." He continues by claiming, "Training focuses on best practices, while development focuses on next practices. ... Perhaps worst of all, training usually occurs within a vacuum driven by past experience, not by future needs."

*"You don't train leaders you develop them – a subtle yet important distinction lost on many."*

Myatt suggests scrapping training in favor of development because, as he puts it, "training attempts to standardize by blending to a norm" while development "strives to call out the unique and differentiate by shattering the status quo." We won't go as far as suggesting we scrap training since we believe – and our clients would agree – that sometimes you WANT to train, to standardize on best practices and to establish a norm in how we do things, especially in how we lead and manage our teams.

However, we completely agree that training is not enough; ongoing development through coaching, reflection, self-assessment, ongoing feedback, and developmental activities and opportunities are critical to help managers realize their full leadership potential.

### 16. Practice the skills in the training.

Love them or hate them, role-plays work. Role-plays turn knowledge into action. Sure, they're uncomfortable. Sure they're not exactly like the real world. That's why they're called "practice!" We ask participants to focus less on the scenario and more on the skill or model.

In his Harvard Business Review article, *Why So Many Leadership Programs Ultimately Fail*<sup>21</sup>, executive coach and writer Peter Bregman states:

*I have never seen a leader fail because he or she didn't know enough about leadership. In fact, I can't remember ever meeting a leader who didn't know enough about leadership.*

*What makes leadership hard isn't the theoretical, it's the practical. It's not about knowing what to say or do. It's about whether you're*

*"We feel we are setting ourselves up for success for the workplace of the future. The next generation entering the workforce demands this kind of leadership and we want to continue to be an employer of choice."*

**Maureen Williams, Senior  
Director of Leadership &  
Organizational Development at  
DIRECTV**

<sup>20</sup> Mike Myatt, "The #1 Reason Leadership Development Fails," *Forbes*, December 19, 2012, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikemyatt/2012/12/19/the-1-reason-leadership-development-fails>.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Bregman, "Why So Many Leadership Programs Ultimately Fail," *Harvard Business Review/HBR Blog Network*, July 10, 2013, <http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/07/why-so-many-leadership-program>.

*willing to experience the discomfort, risk, and uncertainty of saying or doing it.*

*In other words, the critical challenge of leadership is, mostly, the challenge of emotional courage.*

*Emotional courage means standing apart from others without separating yourself from them. It means ... remaining steadfast, grounded, and measured in the face of uncertainty. And staying in the discomfort of a colleague's anger without shutting off or becoming defensive.*

*These are the things that distinguish powerful leaders from weak ones. And you can't learn them from reading a book, taking a personality test, or sitting safely in a classroom.*

Effective training approximates the real – and often challenging – situations that leaders find themselves in, where emotional courage is required. And well-designed role-plays can be extremely effective in building that emotional courage and confidence in participants.

Furthermore, when participants use the skills in class, they acquire the confidence to use them on the job. According to the article, *The Challenges of Leadership Development*, developing leaders “must also feel that they possess (or can develop) the competencies required” to be an effective leader. Additionally, developing leaders:

*...must feel confident or self-efficacious about becoming a leader. In this regard, there is evidence that the feelings of efficacy being created in the curriculum will produce greater professional success. Moreover, the route to transformation is thought to involve critical tasks such as ... developing skills for managing interpersonal relations...*<sup>22</sup>



Entelechy's *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* program uses triads in its role-plays, with one person acting as observer-coach. Because *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* introduces coaching early in the program, participants are able to use the coaching model over and over again throughout the training to provide useful guidance to their colleagues. In addition to customized scenarios we create for each client (ensuring that the practice situations are realistic and relevant), *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* also requires participants to use their own situations – we call them real plays – in practicing the skills. That way, participants gain confidence – emotional courage – to ensure that the skills – and the willingness to use them – stick.

## 17. Build in transfer at each module.

Executive coach and writer Peter Bregman (introduced in Lesson #16) states, “The goal of any leadership development program is to change behavior. After a successful program, participants should show up differently, saying and doing things in new ways that produce better results.”<sup>23</sup>

*How participants show up –  
what they say, what they do –  
must be built into the training.*

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin J. Amos and Michelle Amy Marks, “The Challenges of Leadership Development: Are Business Schools Exhibiting Evidence Based Practice?” *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings*, (2013).

<sup>23</sup> Peter Bregman, “Why So Many Leadership Programs Ultimately Fail,” *Harvard Business Review/HBR Blog Network*, July 10, 2013, <http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/07/why-so-many-leadership-program>.

Some leadership development experts take it a step further, however, stating that leadership development must also include “facilitating an identity transition”<sup>24</sup> so they can feel comfortable in showing up differently with their teams.

How participants show up – what they say, what they do – must be built into the training. Many programs leave action planning for the end of the day or program; that’s a huge mistake since participants 1) are usually out of time and energy and want simply to leave, and 2) often forgot what they learned earlier.

At the end of each module in the *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* program, we pause for five to ten minutes to ask participants to record in their Management Action Plan (MAP) how they will apply what they learned; we then ask them to share what they wrote with their neighbors/peers; we call on a few to declare what they will be doing. Each of these activities cements how each individual leader will apply what they learned. While each participant will record something unique based on their team, situation, timing, etc., they all share one commonality: each participant knows HOW they’ll show up differently.

## 18. Provide multiple levels of support.

Key to the success of any training program is building in the support participants will need when they return to their job. An Executive Reinforcement track ensures that the participants’ managers will be able to provide the support needed for success. In fact, “sticky” programs force the communication between attendee and his/her executive before and after the initial training AND establish the executive as the primary support after the initial training.

The *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* program’s Executive Reinforcement track not only enables executives to model the behaviors their managers and supervisors learn in *Unleash Your Leadership Potential*, but after each module we pause (as in Lesson #17) for 10 minutes and ask executives to identify specifically how they will reinforce and support this skill or behavior with their team.

Additionally, we tell executives what their *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* participants will be writing in their Management Action Plans (MAPs) and to – at the very least – ask about it.

We also provide activities executives can use to reinforce specific skills. One reinforcement activity built into the Executive Reinforcement track of *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* is “21 Days of Coaching,” a series of 21 pre-written emails that the executive would send to their managers each day to reinforce a specific skill from the *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* program. The executive is encouraged to customize the email, but can

*“Establishing a common language and procedures for coaching and continuous improvement creates an open, transparent culture that gives employees self-confidence and valuable reasons to stay and grow with our company.”*

*- Jeff Muoio, VP and General Manager of Field Operations at MasTec Advanced Technologies*



<sup>24</sup> Helen Nickolson and Brigid Jan Carroll, “Identity Undoing and Power Relations in Leadership Development,” *Sage Journals*, (February 14, 2013).

send it out as is – easy, effective, and infinitely doable! In addition to positioning the executive as leader/supporter, the whole team knows that their executive is committed to the skills and models.

## 19. Create regular touchpoints.

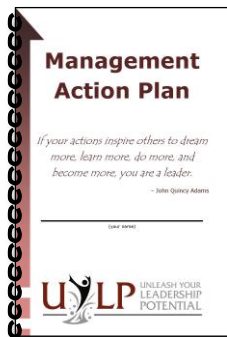
Use monthly conference calls to maintain focus on key leadership skills. The best meetings provide an opportunity to learn more as well as to share successes. In these meetings, you can:

- Provide Skill Spotlights, structured mini skill building activities to be used on the job in support of the leadership skills learned.
- Select a challenge from one of the attendees and discuss options for addressing the challenge; link the options back to the models learned in your leadership development program.

Another way to keep the skills alive is through Action Learning, where graduates tackle real issues and reflect on what they did. Have a team tackle “the turnover problem” or create an effective onboarding process or recruiting strategy.

## 20. Support with innovative tools.

Sometimes “cool” adds to the appeal – which increases the likelihood that the model will be used. Certainly, leveraging technology is both cool and effective.



We created an innovative mobile app called PerfChecklist (Entelechy’s Performance Checklist). The app – available for Apple and Android devices – is mirrored off of the less high-tech Performance Checklist featured in *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* and is designed to help managers identify and improve the performance of their employees.

And innovative doesn’t have to be high-tech; the Management Application Plan (MAP) in *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* is a handy 5” x 7” wire-bound guide in which participants keep track of their learnings and their plans for applying the skill on the job.



## 21. Leverage the models.

The more widespread the models are used, the more entrenched they become in the organization. This creates efficiencies when discussing performance and when sharing ideas and solutions.

We’ve had clients embed the coaching questions into their customer service quality control process. Other clients have used the Performance Checklist questions as the de facto standard for HR consultants when working with corrective action cases.

Note: Many leadership development training providers prevent organizations from using their proprietary models and content as described above. Check with your provider. Or just contact Entelechy, because we want your training – our models and content – to STICK!

*Many leadership development training providers prevent organizations from using their proprietary models and content as described above. Check with your provider. Or just contact Entelechy, because we want your training – our models and content – to STICK!*

## 22. Measure – and celebrate – success.

Nothing breeds success like success. Create a buzz using the success stories from program graduates (and there WILL be stories). In addition to highlighting the utility of the skills and models, anecdotal stories also inform others on how the skills and models could be used – in other words, the learning continues!

Use the organizational metrics identified up front to show progress and to identify areas for development. Use the 360° survey to help individual leaders measure personal growth.

And recognize the team – including yourself – for the tremendous work you accomplished in making your leadership development program STICK!

## Rinse and Repeat

### 23. Make leadership development a journey, not a destination.

Lastly, leadership development must be viewed as an ongoing endeavor, not simply an event that distracts us from real work. One doesn't work out once or eat healthy once and expect miracles. (Okay, we may hope for miracles, but they won't come with such a "one and done" attitude.)

The most effective leadership development programs are those that are regularly updated to include not only fresh content, but also to realign foundational content with new organizational direction and strategy. The most effective leadership development programs are embraced by senior executives as the means to achieve the end. They're the **how** to the organization's **what**. To reach new goals, leaders need new and realigned tools, tools presented in a refreshed leadership development program.

A final strategy is to select a training partner who has the experience and expertise to help you create and implement your organization's leadership and management development program. It's too important to leave to chance. Entelechy would like to be that partner! Listen to a recent client:

*We engaged Entelechy about a year ago to review the Coaching and Leadership Essentials program [a variant of Unleash Your Leadership Potential] as they were highly recommended by one of our largest clients. I cannot express enough how supportive and collaborative Entelechy has been. It was important to me that we partnered with a company that has the performance, values and culture that demonstrates the desired results of this type of program and initiative. That's who Entelechy is – that company.*

*From a performance standpoint – the attention to detail and the deliberate approach to meet our needs has been incredible. You couldn't ask for a better partner to guide you through design, customization, training and implementation.*

- Jeff Price, V.P. Leadership & Culture, MasTec Advanced Technologies

If you're looking for a leadership or management development program that is GUARANTEED to stick, make *Unleash Your Leadership Potential* YOUR program.

Contact us today.

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