

LEADERSHIP Excellence

OCTOBER 2006

THE MAGAZINE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

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—WARREN BENNIS, AUTHOR *MANAGING PEOPLE IS LIKE HERDING CATS*

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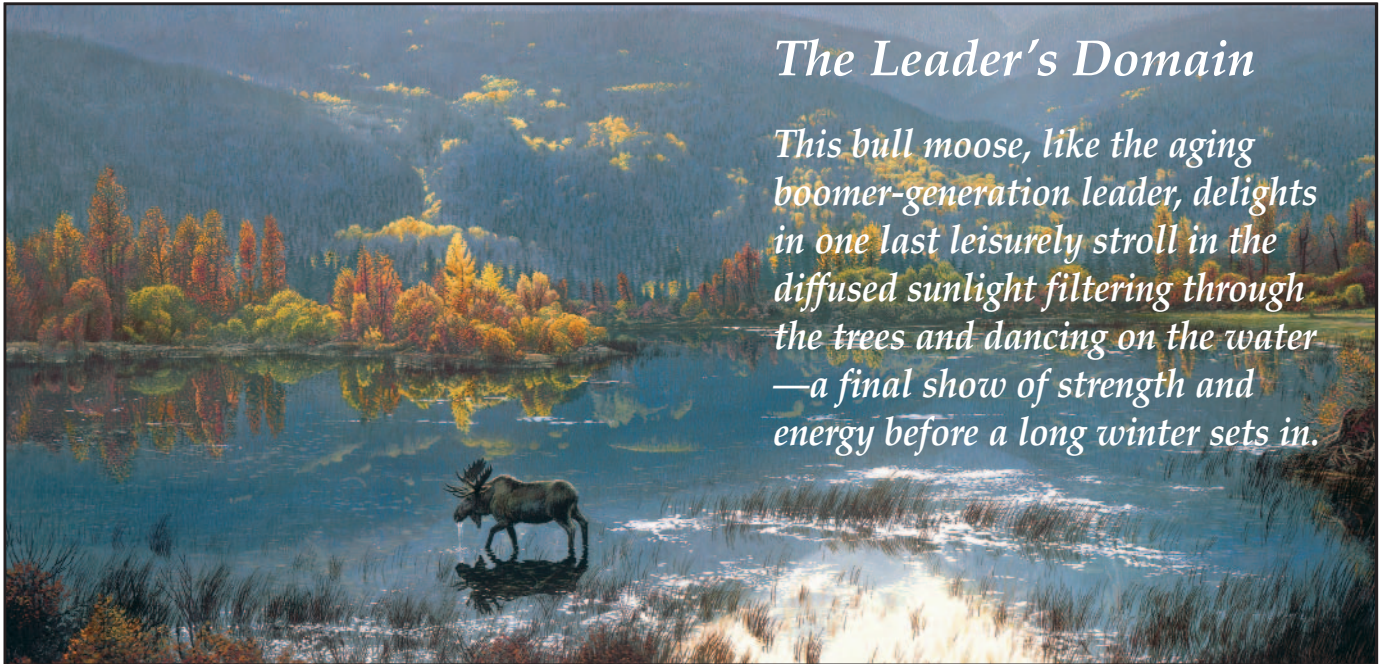
LEADERSHIP Excellence™



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The Leader's Domain

This bull moose, like the aging boomer-generation leader, delights in one last leisurely stroll in the diffused sunlight filtering through the trees and dancing on the water—a final show of strength and energy before a long winter sets in.

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and organize family gatherings. Why do we need a lot of formal leadership?"

In a disaster, where quick response is demanded, formal organizations are incapacitated by the means they use to get things done—chains of command, designated leaders, policies, procedures, plans, regulations, and laws. We can rely on human compassion, but we need to develop the means for official agencies to support and work with rather than resist the self-organizing capacity of people. Leaders need to have the freedom to make intelligent decisions based on their comprehension of the situation, not their understanding of policies and procedures. The formal leader's job is to ensure that the resources they control get to local groups as fast as possible. Leaders need to trust that people will invent their own solutions, that they'll make good use of the resources they provide. And leaders need to expect and value the unique and inventive responses created in each community.

These radically different behaviors require that we free official leaders to act wisely and that they trust people to self-organize effective responses. The only way to restore order out of chaos is to rely on people's intelligence, love, and capacity to self-organize to accomplish what they care about.

We also need to entrust local people with the official resources of money and materials for the rebuilding. When rebuilding is left to governments, outside contractors, and large non-profit organizations, progress gets mired down in regulations, time drags on, people's needs aren't served, and no one from the local community is satisfied with the results. Supporting initiatives where local people do the work sustains local cultures, recreates community cohesion, and is accomplished at amazing speed.

This capacity to create solutions without hierarchies or formal leadership is found in all communities.

As leaders, we can rely on human caring, creativity, and compassion. We can rely on bundles of potential figuring out solutions, learning quickly, and surprising ourselves with new capacities. We can rely on people to self-organize quickly to achieve results important to them. Together, people act creatively, take risks, invent, console, inspire, and produce. LE

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ACTION: Enable people to achieve results.

Developing Action Leaders

Tie rewards to outcomes.



by Bruce LaRue

MOST LEADERSHIP development programs are passive and disconnected from business realities; hence, most developed leaders are not ready to step up and actually lead out. They are blown away by the harsh, tough, competitive realities of business. In fact, when they get close to the field of action, many opt out.

We need to find new ways to develop leaders who are prepared to take the helm and hit the ground running. The weekend seminar or leadership conference alone is not enough. Leaders need just-in-time learning that they can apply, test, and refine in practice. Action-learning teams (ALTs) among leaders in development are the best way to develop real leaders in real time for the realities that face your company.

Action-learning teams are charged with developing specialized capabilities to close process gaps or generate new capacity. Action-learning teams tend to be cross-functional and cross-organizational, drawing together individuals with specialized knowledge to collaborate on the development and application of new forms of knowledge.

The ALT process is designed to enhance current leadership development initiatives. The knowledge workers and executives who remain in the core of today's firms require significant development to keep up with the increasing pace of change, heightened competition from emerging economies, technological complexity, succession planning, and shifting demographics.

Five Principles of Integrating ALTs

ALTs can be integrated with any existing leadership development program using five principles:

1. Connect the dots. If learning is to make a difference, it has to be put into practice. Have participants work in groups to identify specific high-leverage challenges they face at work,

and to create an action plan that outlines how they will apply what they learn.

2. Create the ALT. Action plans are not implemented in a vacuum. Participants should identify any individual or group whose input would be necessary to succeed in their initiatives, or who would be significantly affected by the proposed changes. These stakeholders should be contacted early in the process in order to gain their input. Key members of this stakeholder group should compose the ALT. Key customers, members of other functional groups, vendors, suppliers, and one's boss should all be members of the ALT. Some stakeholders will become active members of the ALT, while others will engage the process at critical touch-points. Including these stakeholders will ensure that you receive valuable input while addressing the concerns of those who could otherwise resist the change.

3. Follow-up action-coaching. Participants should be paired with a coach or mentor whose job it is to systematically follow up with them to help them overcome any challenges that

arise. The coach should have data from recent leadership assessments, address behaviors most relevant to the success of the initiative, and focus on the context in which inappropriate behaviors may arise. Using specific initiatives as pilots for testing new approaches to leadership makes development

more relevant.

4. Tie rewards to outcomes. Let participants know up-front that their work in the ALT process is important, and compensate them accordingly. If they think they are just checking a box, they will trivialize the ALT process. Use performance reviews and bonuses to reinforce appropriate behaviors and successful implementation of action-learning initiatives. Tie rewards to the successful outcome of the initiative, and not for just doing one's job!

5. Integrate lessons learned. Too often, what is learned from these initiatives is not disseminated. This leaves future ALTs vulnerable to reinventing the wheel. Honestly evaluate what went well and what could be improved, and integrate this into core processes and future initiatives in your company. LE

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ACTION: Integrate ALTs into your leadership.

