

Leadership By Design

The missing element in many programs.



by Michael Venn and B. Keith Simerson

EACH YEAR MANY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS are spent on leadership development programs, and yet little is done to show how they contribute to the development of the leader and the success of the organization.

What is often missing is instructional design (ID)—a systematic process that helps ensure the program: addresses the right issues, capitalizes on existing resources, offers a series of planned and purposeful actions, and serves the needs of participants and the organization.

Five Phases

An ID process consists of five phases:

1. Analysis. Clarify what you are trying to achieve by developing leaders. More than simply selecting topics, clarify how people need to perform and what success will be achieved. Emphasize three areas:

- **Needs of the organization.** Ask, “What must our leaders do to help us achieve our strategy, build a common culture, increase business acumen, or strengthen our pool of management candidates.”
- **Needs of the individuals.** Assess the strengths, weaknesses, and experience of individuals targeted for development. Obtain multi-rater feedback to measure performance against a set of company-specific competencies or model. Identify and address personal development needs and create a personal development plan.
- **Context of the organization.** Decide how to develop your leaders, define factors key to program success, and describe what success looks like. Key factors may include the involvement of top executives, the balance between internal and external presenters, and the

commitment of participants. Must individuals become more effective strategists, better communicators, more efficient problem solvers, or team players?

Never bypass the analysis phase.

2. Design. Plan carefully to ensure the program addresses your needs, reflects the desired quality, and achieves its goals. Communicate the design through a design document that describes what needs to be taught; how it will be taught; who will teach it; how long it will take; how participants will think, feel, or act differently; and how these differences will be measured. Good design weaves various topics together, reinforces those topics throughout the program, and encourages participants to transfer what they learn into action. Whether through action learning, company-based case studies, or development of action plans,

the design document must build in enabling and reinforcing actions to achieve transfer of learning and change of behavior.

3. Development. Create instructional materials according to guidelines set

in the needs analysis and design phases.

Ensure that content is appropriate, exercises and activities can be conducted in the time allotted, and various

instructional strategies are used to meet the learning needs. Have checkpoints to verify progress and to alter materials, exercises, and activities as necessary.

4. Delivery. Effective delivery must address needs, occur according to the parameters set in the design document, and properly utilize instructional learn-

ing aids. Effective delivery also depends on getting the *right participants* in front of *outstanding facilitators* in an environment *conducive to learning* with all instructional materials and support necessary to achieve the objectives. Each participant must explore and attempt new ways of thinking, feeling, and doing.

5. Evaluation. Good evaluation serves not only as feedback (“Did we achieve what we wanted to achieve?”), but also as a description of what needs to be done to improve the program, what next steps must be taken to improve leadership, and what needs to be done to better select, prepare, or support participants. Such information can be obtained from: evaluation forms, interviews, or tracking measures.

Be an Intelligent Consumer

If creating a custom program, make sure the developers:

- Request the right information, talk to the right people, and ask the right questions to reveal the needs. (Analysis)
- Describe what participants will do, how they will achieve goals using instructional strategies, integrate topics, and transfer learning. (Design)
- Review materials for accuracy, applicability, and errors. (Development)
- Meet the standards you desire in delivering this program. (Delivery)
- Capture, summarize, and draw conclusions from the evaluation data including any metrics the program was designed to impact. (Evaluation)

If sending one or more people to a public offering:

- Be clear on what you want to achieve by sending people. (Analysis)
- Determine what people will achieve, decide if goals match the needs, and assess learning methods. (Design)
- Are the materials useful to the learning process? (Development)
- Are the instructors effective? Does the program deliver the results? (Delivery)
- Evaluate every individual who attends. Ask him or her to fill out a program evaluation. Ask if you achieved your goals. (Evaluation)

Good instructional design ensures the time and money are well spent. **EE**

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ACTION: Design your leadership program.

