

**Reflections and insights from a forum on
Crisis Leadership convened at the
Center for Creative Leadership
March 13–15, 2007**

Stepping into the Void

Compiled by
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**Center for
Creative
Leadership**

NORTH AMERICA EUROPE ASIA

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Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

—George Santayana

For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong.

—H. L. Mencken

Leadership exists when people are no longer victims of circumstances but participate in creating new circumstances. Leadership is about creating a domain in which human beings continually deepen their understanding of reality and become more capable of participating in the unfolding of the world. Ultimately, leadership is about creating new realities.

—Peter Senge



Summary

When Hurricane Katrina roared ashore, it left in its wake untold destruction. One of the casualties was any assurance we may have had about the ability of existing leadership systems and strategies to adequately address the broad and unpredictable array of demands in a catastrophic crisis.

To better understand the leadership dimensions of crisis situations, the Center for Creative Leadership convened a forum with formal and emergent leaders who played a role in Katrina. Using an array of facilitation techniques, we overlaid this conversation between crisis leaders with the perspectives of discussants with expertise in disaster, terrorism, public health, and leadership.

What we found is that when crises such as Katrina overwhelm the capacity of formal systems and structures, new leadership systems take shape and emergent leaders step into the void, playing critical and improvised roles in rescue and rebuilding efforts.

The dialogue at the forum also indicates that leadership in mega-crises requires a systemic response that extends beyond the leadership capabilities of any individual or single organization. The leadership response required pulls in different—and sometimes opposing—directions: planning and improvisation . . . top-down and bottom-up leadership . . . individual leadership and collective capabilities . . . critical short-term crisis response and sustained long-term capabilities.

The individuals and organizations that rose to the challenges brought by Katrina, some of whom are profiled in this report, were the ones who worked collectively to improvise a response as physical and human systems

The Crisis Leadership Forum was conducted as part of **The Alfred J. Marrow *New Directions in Leadership Series***, which was established in honor of Dr. Alfred J. Marrow's lifelong commitment to the importance of participative management, through the generous contribution of his family, Paul and Naomi Marrow and Marjorie Marrow Samberg. The Series enables the Center for Creative Leadership to host forums, dialogues, conferences, and other events that continue to inspire the connection between creativity and leadership.

collapsed. A question formed from the discussion is how we can enhance a more inclusive and adaptive leadership capability in more individuals, organizations, and communities so that we may be more effective in the face of future crises.

LEADERSHIP IN MEGA-CRISES REQUIRES A SYSTEMIC RESPONSE THAT EXTENDS BEYOND THE LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES OF ANY INDIVIDUAL OR SINGLE ORGANIZATION.

A few intriguing possibilities emerged from the forum in this regard, including the role of education versus training for crisis preparedness, the importance of shared leadership, and the link between crisis leadership and the field of complexity thinking. The frameworks used in thinking about complex challenges may be quite helpful in thinking about leading in times of crisis. Furthermore, these capabilities needed for complex challenges—such as collective leadership and adaptability—are increasingly integral in helping organizations and communities face ongoing change—from the forces of globalization, competition, and technology—even if this change is not of the intensity and magnitude unleashed by Katrina.

The importance of this work can only be underscored by our connected world today, in which health epidemics, disasters, and terrorist attacks are not abstract ideas but inevitable realities. Our lack of better preparedness and leadership will extract a heavy price, and perhaps one much greater than has been exacted in recent times by 9/11, Katrina, and the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

At the Center, we recognize that much more bridging of knowledge and insight is needed to deepen our collective knowledge of how we can, together, more effectively respond to crises. At the end of this report, we indicate the role we hope to play in continuing this dialogue more broadly.

Introduction

For residents of the Gulf Coast, hurricane season is a normal part of life. For many of the area's leaders, disaster planning is part of the job. But when Hurricane Katrina hit Mississippi and Louisiana on August 29, 2005, it called into question much of the conventional wisdom about disaster relief and recovery. Apart from the need for better planning and logistics, the storm and its aftermath made clear the need for more effective leadership throughout communities and organizations.

The Center for Creative Leadership works to understand leadership and help people and organizations develop enhanced leadership capabilities. When the Katrina crisis unfolded, the people at the Center, like many others around the world, wanted to help. In particular, we wondered if we could help shed light on the leadership issues of what was widely characterized as a crisis of leadership. While few crises may match the scope and scale of the devastation wrought by Katrina, we asked what we could learn from this exceptional occurrence about the nature of crisis and the kind of leadership needed.

This interest took shape as a two-day learning event held at CCL's Greensboro campus March 13–15, 2007, titled *Crisis Leadership: Lessons from*



the Frontlines. The forum participants included ten “frontline” leaders, among them a Coast Guard captain, a bank vice president, an American Red Cross official, a public health nurse from New York, and a community leader in rural Louisiana. These individuals were joined by a dozen discussants from CCL and other organizations who offered their perspectives on crisis and leadership.

Because the Katrina crisis was fraught with blame, we wanted the conversation to be convened in a safe space rather than as a public forum for an audience. We wanted to conduct the dialogue in the spirit of appreciative inquiry and focus on what we could learn from what went right.

WE WONDERED IF WE COULD HELP SHED LIGHT ON THE LEADERSHIP ISSUES OF WHAT WAS WIDELY CHARACTERIZED AS A CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP.

In considering how to enable a frank and highly participatory group conversation of a complex and emotion-laden topic, we decided to layer a series of facilitation techniques developed at the Center and elsewhere in lieu of speakers and panels. An unexpected result was that the experience was deeply valuable for the participants, many of whom were still immersed in relief work and had not yet had the opportunity to reflect, make sense of what had happened, and share their learning with others.

This report reflects some of the stories, themes, and insights that emerged during the forum, as well as some perspectives from the CCL faculty who were involved. It offers lessons that surfaced at the session as well as key questions that emerged. It also folds in (via a series of sidebars) related knowledge developed at the Center.

The report, it should be noted, is not a review of the existing knowledge of crisis leadership (though a brief literature review is offered in the appendices) nor a detailed exploration of the subject. It is offered as a single contribution to what is very much an important and emerging field.

About the Forum

Crisis Leadership: Lessons from the Frontlines was a learning event held at CCL's Greensboro campus to facilitate dialogue about crisis leadership using Hurricane Katrina as the focal point.

The forum brought together a small group of “frontline” leaders—people who were involved in the crisis response during Katrina in either formal or informal roles. We invited the frontline leaders to share their stories with people who have expertise pertaining to public health, terrorism, and disaster-related crises. These “discussants” helped the group to put the Katrina experiences into a broader context of leadership in times of crisis. A small number of CCL faculty members also participated, observing the dialogue and drawing connections to leadership research and knowledge.

The discussants and CCL faculty were not there to impose their ideas, or play the role of “expert,” but rather to observe, learn, and reflect. For their part, the Katrina leaders were able to share their personal and professional stories, connect on a deep level with their peers, and offer and receive insight into crisis leadership.

The goal of the forum was to engage in robust dialogue to

- Explore the role of emerging or informal leadership in crisis
- Examine the relevance of the soft (human) side of crisis leadership
- Distill insights from the sharing of experiences and connection of themes
- Develop and subsequently disseminate a body of knowledge based on learning from the forum to help in future crises

Specific outcomes and expectations were left largely open-ended. Every element of the process was designed to create an environment that would support and encourage reflection, dialogue, and insight.

The CCL facilitators and event designers set out to create an atmosphere and a platform by which the participants could learn from and with each other. The design coupled right-brain activities, including storytelling, mindmapping, graphic recordings, and *Visual Explorer*—a tool that uses images to tap ideas, emotions, and intuitions—with left-brain thinking to log insights and rank key lessons.

The approach helped the participants surface ideas, make connections, and see patterns that may otherwise have been left uncovered.

Crisis Forum Participants

Frontline Leaders

Ms. Angela Cole, MPH
Founder
 Pearlington Project Katrina
 Foundation, Inc.

Mr. Bernard Glavin
Corporate Assistant Director
 Resources for Human Development

Mr. Raymond Jetson
CEO
 Louisiana Family Recovery Corps

Captain Bruce Jones
Commander
 U.S. Coast Guard
 Sector Lake Michigan

Mr. Iray Nabatoff
Executive Director
 Community Center of St. Bernard
 Parish

Mr. Russ Paulsen
Executive Director
 Hurricane Recovery Program
 American Red Cross

Mr. Joe Spraggins
*Director, Emergency Management,
 Emergency Communications, and
 Homeland Security*
 Harrison County, Mississippi

Ms. Jennifer Vidrine
Director
 Ville Platte Shelter

Ms. Linda Watts
Mississippi Coast Division Manager
 Mississippi Power Company

Mr. Kyle Waters
Senior Vice President
 Capital One

Discussants

Mr. John Alexander
Former President and CEO
 Center for Creative Leadership

Dr. Leigh Allen
Chief Assessor
 Center for Creative Leadership

Ms. Donna Dinkin, MPH
Director
 National Public Health Leadership
 Institute

Mr. Bill Drath
Senior Enterprise Associate/Senior Fellow
 Center for Creative Leadership

Dr. Pete Hammett
*Group Director, Client and Assessment
 Services*
 Center for Creative Leadership

Dr. Gene Klann
Manager, Open Enrollment
 Center for Creative Leadership

**Colonel Thomas Kolditz, U.S. Army,
 Ph.D.**
Professor and Department Head
 Behavioral Sciences and Leadership
 United States Military Academy

Discussants (continued)

Dr. S. Parasuraman

Director

Tata Institute of Social Sciences

Dr. William Schulte

Associate Professor

Harry F. Byrd Jr. School of Business
Shenandoah University

Mr. Tom Tucker

Director

The National Center for Biomedical
Research and Training
Louisiana State University

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Group Director/Senior Fellow

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Dr. Ofer Zmori

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University of Massachusetts–Lowell
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Facilitators

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Dr. David Altman

*Senior Vice President, Research and
Innovation*

Center for Creative Leadership

Dr. Karen Dyer

Group Leader, Education Sector Group
Center for Creative Leadership

Bruce Flye, Jr.

Director of Institutional Planning

East Carolina University

David Horth

Senior Enterprise Associate

Center for Creative Leadership

Lyndon Rego

Manager of Innovation

Center for Creative Leadership



"Leadership is not linear—it is circular and interconnected."

—Angela Cole

Through the Crisis Leadership: Lessons from the Frontlines forum, we heard the personal experiences and insights of people who played a role during Hurricane Katrina and the ongoing recovery. These stories painted a vivid picture of how Katrina unraveled existing leadership structures and capabilities and at the same time unleashed exceptional leadership, courage, resiliency, and creativity from many individuals.

The many layers of perspective and insight that emerged at the forum were charted by Bruce Flye, a graphic facilitator who captured the meeting in a series of interlocking vignettes (see graphic).



A distillation of themes reveals a set of attributes that characterized the Katrina crisis:

- *Systems fail.* Crisis leadership is in several respects very different from leadership under “normal” or familiar circumstances. Whether a crisis is natural, man-made, or some combination, people experience systems that fail or are insufficient. Infrastructure, technology, alert mechanisms, information, and communication may be compromised.

Processes fall apart, leaving organizations, communities, and individuals in unfamiliar territory. The failures may be brief or long-lasting, confined or extensive. They may also be ongoing or systemic problems that become apparent in a crisis.

- *Plans are insufficient.* A plan is a starting point, but every situation will involve something unexpected. Plans and preparation are essential; at the same time every crisis is unique. People cannot react in ways they planned when the situation unfolds in unexpected ways or when the crisis is extraordinarily complex.

KATRINA UNRAVELED EXISTING LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES AND CAPABILITIES AND AT THE SAME TIME UNLEASHED EXCEPTIONAL LEADERSHIP, COURAGE, RESILIENCY, AND CREATIVITY FROM MANY INDIVIDUALS.

- *Picture is distorted.* As a crisis explodes, no one has a complete picture of what is happening. All involved have a fragmented understanding of what may be actually going on. People looking on from outside (via the news media, for instance) may have a sense of the big picture but may lack accurate, and critical information from within the crisis zone. In contrast, people on the ground, in the middle of the crisis, see what is in front of them but may be cut off from what's taking place elsewhere.
- *Time is compressed.* In the heat of a crisis, the time in which people have to get information and make decisions is compressed. When each minute counts, extended deliberation can be costly. Moving forward or tackling a part of the problem may be risky in the absence of solid information, but taking action is essential. As the state of crisis evolves beyond the immediate urgency, the time pressure eases, only to be replaced by the complex demands of a protracted crisis or recovery. The recovery period can be an equally demanding phase. Recovery has a different rhythm. It is often protracted and can require different perspectives, capabilities, and assets.

- *Authority is limited—and limiting.* A crisis of the magnitude of Katrina quickly exceeds any existing structures of authority, despite the desperate need for overarching coordination and control. Who knows what's going on? Who is in charge? What do I do? Who can help me? In fact, the assumption that someone is in charge can exacerbate the crisis. Further, when protocols require adherence to command structure and approvals, they may actually hinder rapid and effective responses.
- *New leadership emerges.* A crisis will generate previously unexpected and unknown leadership capabilities. Individuals will step up and plunge into the fray to assist others. New organizations and networks rise to aid in relief and rebuilding. During Katrina, leadership emerged to address the needs of the moment. “Emergent leadership” surfaced and operated in many quarters non-stop throughout the crisis and continues into recovery. Individuals with and without a direct connection to the disaster felt a call to act. Others took on added responsibility and operated well beyond the bounds of their official title or role. For these individuals, the physical and emotional demands can be intense, extended, and sometimes overwhelming.

The leadership response demanded by a crisis of the scope and scale of Hurricane Katrina clearly transcends the capabilities of any individual person, organization, or pre-identified set of solutions. The complex array of issues, needs, and challenges that participants expressed in the forum highlighted multiple and sometimes opposing demands placed on leadership. These encompassed the essential roles of individual leaders and collective leadership; the need for top-down leadership as well as emergent and grassroots efforts; the importance of planning and preparation and improvisation; and, as the crisis progressed, the inability of short-term response capabilities to accommodate long-term relief and rebuilding needs.

When mapped together, these can be seen as a spectrum of polarities that extend along a series of continuums (see chart). The response to Katrina required leadership on all these fronts, together.



The complex web of leadership elements indicates the need for a response encompassing many elements that span polar ends of continuums:

- *Individual Leaders AND Collective Leadership.* A challenge of crisis leadership is to enhance both individual and collective leadership. In times of crisis, individual leadership is imperative but inadequate. A collective response is essential. How can the power of individual action, authority, and creativity be nurtured while the larger relational intra-organizational and inter-organizational capability is being developed and leveraged?
- *Top-down Roles AND Bottom-up Efforts.* Formal leadership—often provided by emergency management, relief groups, government, and crisis teams within organizations—has much capability but also limitations. When does formal structure and authority offer the most value and where do the informal and unexpected agents come into play? What is the interchange and interdependence between them?

- *Planning AND Improvising.* Planning and preparation helps enable a rapid, coordinated response in a crisis. But it is the nature of crisis that not everything is foreseeable. People need the capacity to read a situation and improvise their approach as reality unfolds. How can these two capabilities be developed together?
- *Short-term Response AND Long-term Recovery.* The urgent need in a crisis drives immediate, short-term response. At the same time, chronic, longer-term needs and challenges emerge that may be well beyond the capability of those who respond to crisis at the outset. How do we manage these twin demands?

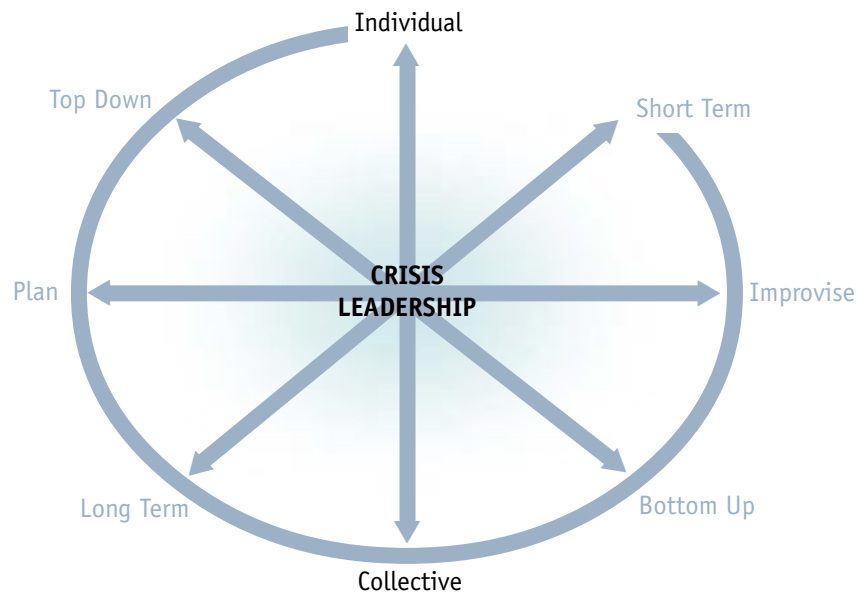
If Hurricane Katrina is a barometer for understanding crisis leadership more generally, it appears that crises outstrip the leadership capacity of any single individual or entity. Crisis, perhaps even more so than other complex challenges, seems to require a range of interconnecting leadership systems and relationships in order to meet the challenges. The leadership role, in effect, may be fulfilled only when various individuals and organizations contribute in diverse, and sometimes paradoxical, ways.



Individual Leaders AND Collective Leadership

“The notion of ‘composing reality’ during a crisis—that is, creating order where there’s chaos—is a powerful idea.”

—John Alexander



During Katrina, thousands of individuals showed courage, took risks, and helped others. At the same time, those individuals did not work or lead in isolation. Collectively, as the situation demanded, they made sense of what was around them, adjusted, and readjusted. In a very real way, it took individual leaders *and* collective leadership to respond to the crisis.

The Katrina participants acknowledged the importance of individual leaders who stepped up to get things done. Playing a leadership role, as so many of the participants at the forum had done, required great individual courage but also an ability to leverage the talents of others. Despite the distinct role that many specific individuals played during Katrina, it was apparent that leadership that is not dependent on hierarchy or authority was very much an operating model.

“Usually people only know that leadership exists when there is a leader or person in charge,” says CCL’s Bill Drath. “But leadership can be happening

in a group of people who are discussing what to do and, although unsure, are figuring it out. It isn't even that the leadership role is being passed around—all are participating equally at any given time."

Drath continues, "I am not sure the idea of leaders/followers is always valid in responses to disaster. The hurricane comes through and it wipes out a lot of the influence structure. It forces people into more of a peer context—responding to things happening in the moment wherever you are on the vertical leadership structure, when the structure itself has gone away."

Jennifer Vidrine's story illustrates how new collective leadership can take shape when formal leadership has lapsed.



A Katrina Story . . .

“Something has to be done.”

Ville Platte, Louisiana

Jennifer Vidrine is the Assistant Executive Director of the Evangeline Parish Community Action Agency. During Hurricane Katrina, Jennifer emerged as an individual leader to pull the community together to care for nearly 10,000 people who landed on the doorstep of Evangeline Parish and the local Civic Center.

Ville Platte, a small town 170 miles northwest of New Orleans and 75 miles west of Baton Rouge, is located in the central part of the hurricane route. “My story is one that just kind of evolved as Katrina did,” says Vidrine. “Monday morning I walked into our Civic Center to see if I could help, to see what was going on. Out front, there were about six thousand people crying, shouting, and hungry. Some had clothes on; some did not.”

Spotting the Civic Center maintenance crew, Jennifer asked, “Where is everybody?” The response? “Jennifer, this is it. You’re the only one that’s here.”

Jennifer “went into emergency mode,” quickly taking in the level of need and grouping the crowd according to need. At the same time she placed a call to the local radio station. “That was the only way I knew that I could get the news out quickly of what I needed and what was going on,” she explains. Over the radio, she made a plea for the community to help. Within an hour, people were rolling into the Civic Center with food, clothes, blankets, medicines, and a willingness to help.

Jennifer’s spontaneous shelter had already begun to take shape when city officials realized the scope of the situation. When questioned about her plans or approach, Jennifer’s reply was clear: “I’m doing whatever I can to help these people. I may make some decisions that you all may not like, but you all are not here; I am. And if I make the wrong decisions, shoot me later, but something has to be done.”

The Civic Center shelter, which emerged out of extreme need and with no planning, remained open for four months. Jennifer and her army of volunteers provided food and shelter, beds, clothes, medical care, haircuts, laundry, and communication. The people of Ville Platte and Evangeline Parish “gave and gave and gave,” according to Jennifer. “We went from chaos and no plan to about 40 services at the end. We became a one-stop shop for people seeking to deal with distress and find some normalcy.” Jennifer summarizes, “The Ville Platte shelter demonstrated public service in the absence of public policy.”

CCL approaches the distinction between individual and collective leadership in a way that shifts the discussion of leadership away from “who” to “what.” We see effective leadership as accomplishing three key tasks:

- **Setting direction** is the articulation of mission, vision, values, and purposes. Key questions are: Where are we going? What are we going to do? Why are we doing it?
- **Creating alignment** is about finding common ground and areas of interrelated responsibility. Ask: How can we develop a shared understanding of our situation? How can our actions be better coordinated?
- **Building commitment** involves the creation of mutual trust and accountability, including addressing questions such as How can we stay together? How can we work better as a group? What can improve cooperation?

From this perspective, the quality of relationships is a core factor to the effectiveness of individual and collective leadership.

- Personal connections and good relationships are literally lifesavers in a crisis. Leigh Allen pointed out that in many Katrina stories what emerged was “the value of previously established relationships to the speed and the comprehensiveness of the leader’s ability to activate resources quickly.”
- Quality of relationship also has an impact on the quality of the crisis response. “The better the relationships the leader develops, the more effective they will be in a crisis,” said Gene Klann. Is the relationship based on trust, credibility, and respect? As Bruce Jones said, “If you can’t communicate with people face-to-face, a better phone won’t make any difference.”
- Building relationships along the way—creating ad hoc teams and connecting with people previously unknown—is important. A crisis encourages people to join hands and do what is needed, but this often requires someone reaching out first to draw others in.

Kyle Waters of Hibernia Bank (Capital One) shared his account of mobilizing a collective effort with competitor banks, government agencies, and industry groups to give people access to their funds when they needed

them desperately. While many people had evacuated New Orleans, there were a lot of people, particularly in Jefferson Parish, who stayed. Waters recognized the need to provide people with banking services as quickly as possible.

“We talk about people not having gasoline, but access to money is a very important thing too. At the bank, we’re certainly not first responders or second responders, but we do feel an obligation to the community to make money available one way or the other.”

Waters said Hibernia partnered with other banks in the area to set up a collaborative where a bank that had a branch open would let other banks share the facilities. The crisis encouraged cooperation. Observed Kyle, “You have to understand, bankers don’t talk and we don’t play well together. So to allow five other banks in your branch was probably a once-in-a-lifetime thing.”

Kyle credited a collective effort. “I’m just so proud of the teams that did all these things. We put the word out that we wanted branches opened up and we had volunteers. People who were out in Houston or Dallas said, ‘I’m coming home. I want to be a part of this.’ And they came. And we had secretaries who didn’t know anything about running branches show up at a branch, saying ‘We’re going to help get this branch opened up.’”

Key Lessons

Leadership takes place when setting direction, building commitment, and creating alignment occur—whether or not “a leader” is present. In a crisis, individual people bring their talent, perspective, vision to the challenge. Acts of courage, risk taking, and bold action shine the spotlight on individual leaders. And though individuals are important during a crisis, survival and success requires many participants, a collective effort. Relationships are essential.

Key Questions

How can participants make the power of individual action, authority, and creativity thrive while also leveraging the larger relational, cultural, and organizational value?

Rethinking Leadership: Crisis Requires Collective Leadership

When faced with complex challenges—complicated and unpredictable situations where established tools and solutions fall short—many of us yearn for better leaders and stronger leadership. We expect that the right individuals will act like leaders and the problem will be solved. But our focus in these instances is often misplaced, according to CCL’s Bill Drath. “No individual alone can provide leadership in the face of a complex challenge,” Drath says. “So how do we get more people involved in leadership and how do we make leadership more inclusive and collective?”

In the midst of the most complex challenges, the leadership tasks become much more difficult to accomplish. Under these conditions, individual leaders encounter distinct limits in their capacity to accomplish the leadership tasks.

Instead of identifying formal leaders as the source of leadership and the followers as receivers of the leadership, according to Drath, the emphasis should be on the tasks of leadership. “Forget about who has the ‘job’ of leader,” he says.

Think of leadership as a process that is used to accomplish a set of leadership tasks. Begin by asking *What work is leadership expected to get done?* At CCL, we say that the work of leadership is to set direction, create alignment, and generate commitment. The process by which these leadership tasks get accomplished may take many forms, ranging from individual action to collective or peer leadership.

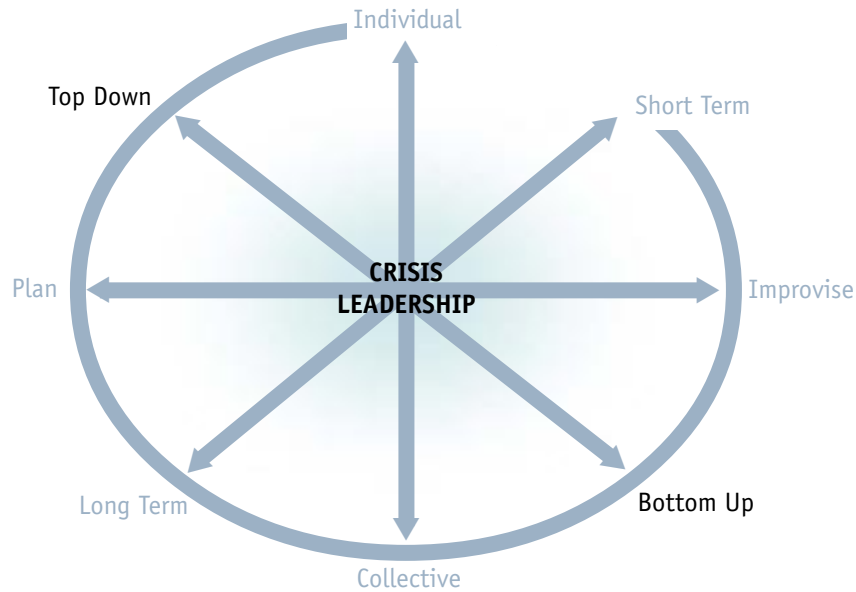
We believe that when a community or organization confronts a complex adaptive challenge—the kind of challenge that requires moving into the unknown—the process of leadership must develop toward the more collective forms.

This article is adapted from “Leading Together: Complex Challenges Require a New Approach,” by Bill Drath, in the March/April 2003 issue of *Leadership in Action*, and from “The Connected Leadership Project: Creating new organizational ideas and tools for facing complex challenges.”

Top Down AND Bottom Up

*“Disasters push the operational focus [down to the grassroots level].
It is the same in military operations—the faster the tempo and the
higher the danger, the more decentralization is necessary.”*

—Colonel Tom Kolditz



In addition to individual and collective roles, much of the discussion during the forum revolved around the distinct capabilities and limitations of top-down or formal versus decentralized or emergent leadership. Formal leadership—enacted by emergency management, relief groups, government, and crisis teams within organizations—plays an essential role during crisis, but volunteers, community members, bystanders, and the victims themselves are also a source of leadership.

S. Parasuraman suggested that the magnitude of the disaster drives the decentralized/centralized debate: “To what extent are the groups within the area able to deal with the situation? I think serious disasters cripple the local capacities to a greater extent, and that’s where the input and mobilization from outside become very important.”

One paradox in a crisis is that we look for someone to take charge and coordinate the overall effort, yet people on the ground are able to see what is needed and react more quickly.

“You hear a lot in formal organizations that everybody has to be a leader or they want everyone to be a leader. The fact that we do have formal leaders gets in the way of that happening. In a crisis, that is destroyed and everyone has to be a leader,” says CCL’s Ellen Van Velsor.

General Russell Honoré, a CCL alumnus who played a critical formal leadership role during Katrina, spoke of enabling others to lead. In a successful organization, he said, everyone is a leader, and part of the top leader’s job is helping others understand the significance of their contributions. The real art of leadership is getting people to willingly follow you—and they’re more likely to do so if you listen to them. “You have two ears and one mouth for a purpose.”



Leading in Crisis

“In a crisis, one person can’t do it all, but one person can make a difference,” says CCL’s Gene Klann.

Leaders can take steps to prepare themselves to lead during a crisis, just as they can do things to manage the logistics or operational aspects of a crisis. Klann suggests that individuals develop their crisis leadership reserves by:

- **Understanding personal strengths and limitations.** In any organizational role, people benefit from clear self-awareness: their skills and strengths; weak points and development needs. With a foundation of self-awareness, leaders have the ability to work more effectively in everyday situations as well as in times of crisis.
- **Honing key skills.** Leadership, including crisis leadership, improves with individual and organizational flexibility, strong relationships, and resiliency.
- **Building a network of solid relationships.** Invest in the people skills and relationship-building that create a reliable personal and professional network.
- **Creating a culture of empowerment.** Develop an organization or community culture of empowerment and initiatives.

During a crisis, leaders who have built a personal, relational, and cultural foundation can then focus on the immediacy of the moment. According to Klann, effective crisis leaders often do the following:

- **Face emotions.** Recognizing and managing the emotions of the situation (others’ as well as your own) can help with individual and group resiliency, getting people to safety and then back to normal (or a new normal). People with an imbalanced emotional state don’t process well. It is important to do anything you can to reduce the emotional stress on people while “doing the job.”
- **Show respect.** Treat people with sincere consideration and genuine concern. Show it by paying attention, listening, and responding to what people are telling you (and considering what is not being said).
- **Make connections.** Draw on a sense of loyalty, courage, morality, or other principles that tie your crisis response to what is important to people.
- **Be sincere.** Communicate truthfully and honestly. Follow through with what you say and avoid deception.

- **Take action.** Be proactive; take initiative. If you are in charge, take charge. Do something even if it might be wrong; paralysis or over-analysis is more risky.
- **Be positive.** A leader's attitude is contagious. Leaders are dealers in hope. Even in extreme crisis, an upbeat, can-do attitude keeps people going.
- **Communicate.** People need information in a crisis; it provides emotional stability for them as well as tactical guidance. The leader's job is to get information and share it. However, loss of communication is a very real possibility in crisis, as it was during the early days and weeks after Katrina. People need to be able to function independently in the absence of communication or authorization.

Adapted from *Crisis Leadership: Using Military Lessons, Organizational Experiences, and the Power of Influence to Lessen the Impact of Chaos on the People You Lead*, by Gene Klann (CCL Press, 2003).



To a great degree, formal leaders may be constrained by accountability and repercussions. “Is it okay to make a bad decision? If not, no decision is made,” Pete Hammett observed. Emergent leaders, however, are unencumbered by a chain of command and the limitations of authority. Angela Cole, a nurse based in New York State, watched the crisis unfold on television. Sensing the need, she packed her bags, uninvited, and headed to Mississippi to mobilize relief to a community in dire need.

A Katrina Story . . .

“Go on your own.”

Pearlington, Mississippi

Angela Cole is a nurse with a master’s degree in public health. Originally from rural South Georgia, she currently lives in New York State. Watching the news of Katrina unfold on TV, she felt a weight on her chest. She says, “After a few days of not breathing, I thought, ‘Well, clearly you’ve got to get your hands in the game at this point. You’re organized, and you speak Southern, so you’ve got to go.’”

Angela shut down her business—planning to return in a week—and flew to Atlanta. With a map and a rented SUV outfitted with food, water, and medical supplies, she headed to the Mississippi coast.

When she reached a staging center for a major relief agency, ready to volunteer, a medical official pulled her aside and said, “You can be so much more effective if you go on your own.” The agency’s dispatcher circled Hancock County on her map—the area that was hardest hit—and said, “That’s where you should go.” Angela did.

On her own, she drove to Pearlington, a small, rural, unincorporated community in the southwest corner of the state. The eye of the storm went over Hancock County and the situation was dire. “These people had nothing and nobody was there,” says Angela.

Angela gave medical care, distributed supplies, and recruited nurses from a healthcare provider operating a free clinic in Bay St. Louis. One week turned into three weeks. After a brief trip home, Angela returned to Pearlington. Frustrated by the limited response when the need was so great, Angela contacted the *New York Times* and CNN, both of which subsequently reported on the devastation of Pearlington. She reached out to clients, friends, and family. Her hometown in Georgia sent truckloads of supplies. In August 2006, Angela founded the Pearlington Project Katrina Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to rebuild homes in Pearlington.

But for all Angela’s passion and effort, “It hasn’t been about one person,” she emphasizes. “Over the past year and a half, a grassroots network has developed. Churches and individuals from all over this country have sponsored families and worked with this community. When people know, they come. But it hasn’t happened because of any systems that were in place to take care of them. And the systems are still not there.”

The Coast Guard, which performed heroically in rescuing thousands of people, was empowered by a culture that enabled individuals in its ranks to do what needed to be done (see pages 32–33). Culture played a key role in RHD’s effectiveness during Katrina as well.

Resources for Human Development (RHD) is a large nonprofit social services provider that is headquartered in Philadelphia and has programs in New Orleans. While many other social agencies—even those with crisis protocols—shut down during the storm, RHD was able to evacuate their clients and continue to take care of them through the crisis. Casting aside the prejudice that top administrators can make better decisions, RHD let their people in New Orleans lead rather than drive action from Philadelphia. Centralized protocols, notes an RHD staffer in a retrospective report on the organization’s performance during the hurricane, produces “black and white thinking. You’re either on or off.” The fact that the organization already had a culture in place to support a decentralized way of working made all the difference. Bernie Glavin explained, “Part of our philosophy is decentralization and having folks at the local level make as many decisions as possible. It worked out well that we had been trying to push that management philosophy for years. When Katrina visited, our folks on the ground in New Orleans were the ones making the day-to-day decisions.”

Key Lessons

Structure, including communication, can be an enabler but may impede action in a crisis. Formal leadership often falls short, while individual volunteers rise unexpectedly to meet the challenge. We must consider how we can better leverage and nurture the abilities of everyday people as well as formal crisis leadership capabilities.

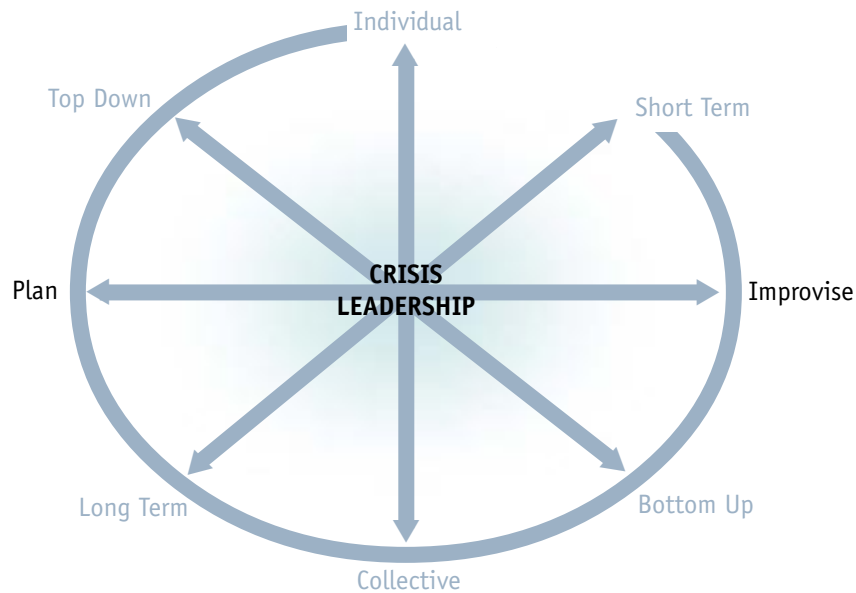
Key Questions

How can we increase centralized coordination but also enable and empower people on the ground to act independently as needed? How can numerous disconnected entities—such as nonprofits, government entities, and independent volunteers—work more effectively together?

Planning AND Improvising

“Planning is ALWAYS inadequate. Plan on it.”

—Gene Klann



The stories that emerged from Katrina make it clear that crisis preparation and planning was largely insufficient and inadequate. Media reports indicated that many organizations did not plan or prepare for crisis even in the most basic ways. Even organizations that had in-depth plans and practices for when “the big one” hit the Gulf Coast were overwhelmed by the scope, scale, and complexity of Katrina.

It is the very nature of crisis that reality does not match up with plans and expectations. Crisis forces action and reaction in ways that are not anticipated. What’s essential is the capacity to read and understand a situation and improvise the approach as the reality unfolds.

Raymond Jetson served as executive secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals when Katrina hit. He related how Katrina hollowed out the state’s medical capacity, rendering their preplanning efforts irrelevant: “Fifty percent of the state’s healthcare resources are within a mile

of downtown New Orleans. Fifty percent or probably 75 percent of your medical education is within a mile of downtown New Orleans. And so we had all of these pieces moving prior to the storm. We worked our way through that, having regular conference calls. Then the storm comes through.”

IT IS THE VERY NATURE OF CRISIS THAT REALITY DOES NOT MATCH UP WITH PLANS AND EXPECTATIONS.

Jetson continued: “We come to the emergency operations center, and for all of the exercises that folks had gone through, for all of the planning that had gone in place, it quickly dawned on folks that there weren’t any plans that were for this. There weren’t any. There weren’t any processes in place for what we were looking at. And so it became apparent, at least to me, very quickly that if you did not have people who were capable of operating beyond the plans, if you did not have people who understood what needed to happen intuitively, you were in deep trouble.”

Leigh Allen stated, “The magnitude of natural disasters is much, much larger than any of us can imagine, so planning needs to go much farther in our thinking about potential scenarios. That time we spend in considering possible scenarios won’t be perfectly accurate, but the process of expanding the planning will be useful in educating future leaders.”

This focus on thinking about the worst was echoed by Linda Watts. In looking back at what could be done to better prepare, she offered: “I would ensure plans were truly ‘worst case’—such as planning for zero communications capability. I would help our community think through ‘who all needs to be at the table’ as we’re planning for and dealing with a crisis. This planning effort will include identifying the unique strengths and capabilities each stakeholder brings to the situation, then considering how others can also utilize those strengths/capabilities—without compromising the efforts of that original stakeholder.”

Said Tom Tucker, “Everyone wants to do something of value to assist in a crisis, to do their very best to make a situation better. The common

frustration is trying to determine how to fit your talents into a system which has dissolved.”

Russ Paulsen of the Red Cross observed the paradox between planning and improvising. “Your plan can’t be that you will always have extraordinary people who do extraordinary things in every situation—so you try to come up with processes and procedures and rules and regulations on how to do these things. But, at the end of the day, if people just slavishly follow processes and procedures, they don’t make the right decisions.”

As Watts noted, planning is as much about creating relationships and identifying capacity as laying down protocols. This was echoed by David Horth, who stated that plans should address developing leadership capabilities related to resilience, presence, effective relationships, networking, systems thinking, action learning, and creative problem solving.

The idea is that when a crisis hits, plans may go out the window, but the capabilities and relationships that are nurtured through planning are valuable. So, too, training is useful because it provides common language and game plans that enable alignment.

Alan McCurry of the American Red Cross indicated that his experiences as a commander on a Navy submarine helped him understand the interplay between established plans and revising in the face of reality. “We trained a lot, and we trained primarily so that we could ensure that the routine became automatic. What did that do for me? I knew every time the general alarm went off, the ventilation was shut down, that the watertight doors were shut, that the automatic breathing systems were broken out so that I, as the captain or the leader of the disaster, now could focus on what’s different in the event.”

Continued McCurry, “In a crisis, you’re always going to need food, you need ice, you need water, you need clothes, and you need a distribution system. I want to be confident that those things can be handled and that I have leaders who know how to deal with the uncertainty of a situation. If we can get to the point that people really do think ahead about what is going to happen—the planning—then the leaders can focus on what’s unusual or different.”

At the forum, participants teased apart the distinction between training and education. Education prepares people to think and act, whereas training

prepares people to follow a prescribed set of instructions or procedures. Said Kolditz, "You train for certainty and you educate for uncertainty."

Steve Kroll-Smith expanded on this point, "Training to me is teaching somebody protocol. I think education is an attempt to create a mental and emotional space for someone in which they feel confident enough to act on the world in a creative and perhaps intuitive fashion. How to teach intuition in these crisis moments, I think, is a significant tabletop issue that deserves a good deal of discussion. And one of the things that I think we'll find is that the plan is full of training tips and training protocols, and the intelligence—not the wisdom."



Graphic Recording by Bruce Flye, thecenterforchangeleadership.com, March 14, 2007

"In crisis situations, you have to reorganize the priorities based on the needs produced by the critical incident and not based on the needs defined by the emergency plan," said Leigh Allen.

The Coast Guard (see sidebar on next page) did just that. When the levees broke and the waters rose, the Coast Guard was pressed into service, flying countless sorties to pluck people marooned on roofs and trapped in attics. The improvisation required was immense, not only in the sheer scale of rescue operations, but also in adapting training practices geared to maritime rescue to an urban landscape of houses, trees, and power lines.

As rescue operations mounted, improvising around standard operating procedures was essential for the Coast Guard, recalled Captain Bruce Jones: “By the fifth day there were about 125 choppers from all the military services over the city and surrounding areas. It was unique. That much traffic required striking a balance between complete air traffic control and chaos. The problem with complete air traffic control is that there would be far fewer aircraft allowed in the airspace. Helicopters would not have been able to do a quarter of the rescues. Instead we let people, professionals, exercise measured judgment about risk. That allowed us to get more done. Was it total control? No. Was it total chaos? No. It was the balance; the judgment of professionals about what constituted acceptable risk in that situation that allowed us to get the most done safely . . . or at least with an expectation that it could be done safely. But once we were out there—there was no single controlling authority.”

Jones credited the organization’s leadership culture as enabling empowerment and improvisation. His colleague, Captain Dave Callahan, whom CCL interviewed prior to the forum, contrasted how planning and improvisation can mesh at the Coast Guard: “Everything we do is based on four principles: adaptability, flexibility, clear objectives, and on-scene initiative. Training reinforces these; all four principles are woven into all of our syllabi. Empowerment is my big thing. In crisis, people have to be able to act. Sometimes what they are doing may seem to go against objectives and plans, but it will nearly always be meeting the overriding principles and objectives, which are what the plan was intended to accomplish.”

A Katrina Story . . .

“It’s not about the plan.”

New Orleans, Louisiana

A Coast Guard helicopter pilot for 23 years, Captain Bruce Jones was assigned to New Orleans when Katrina hit. Immediately after the storm came ashore his helicopter unit headed into the devastated city. From the sky, the levee breeches and flooding in the streets indicated the scope of the mission that was before them.

Even so, Bruce would not have predicted that seven thousand people would be rescued by Coast Guard helicopters during the nine days after the hurricane. “Our air crews just did extraordinary numbers of rescues. One rescue service rescued 150 people in four or five days—usually you might rescue 20 people in an entire career.”

The Coast Guard crews are well trained for maritime search and rescue and had to adapt for urban search and rescue. They would lower rescue swimmers between power lines and trees, onto the edges of buildings, and into hazardous flood waters.

“Our pilots were flying all night long, all day long, and when they weren’t flying, they were offloading aircraft, refueling them, and maintaining them. They were giving the crews food and water, doing mission tasking, and helping rebuild the facility. And none of it is in the plan,” Bruce says.

The Coast Guard instills a culture of empowerment, “which is by necessity,” Bruce explains. “When you send a crew out in the middle of the night to do something, the boss isn’t with them. When you have two hours’ worth of gas in your fuel tank, you don’t have time to call and wait for an answer. So our crews are used to making decisions literally on the fly.

“As commanding officer my job wasn’t to tell them what to do or to give them tactical guidance, because they already knew what to do and how to do it,” Bruce continues. “My job was, every time a crew landed, to put my arm around them, ask how they’re doing, and keep them going, keep them motivated, and ensure they still knew they were empowered.

“It’s not about the plan. It’s not about organizational charts. It’s not about your processes. It’s about your people and your leadership. It’s about organizational culture. That’s what’s important.”

Key Lessons

Crisis planning, training, and preparation work best if we consider that things will not go as expected. Training can build skills and common capabilities that enable rapid crisis response. At the same time, what people will need to do in a crisis may not be what they've been trained to do. Developing a culture that empowers people to improvise is important. Developing an individual's capacity to adapt and improvise is essential. Developing broader relationships and networks is key.

Key Questions

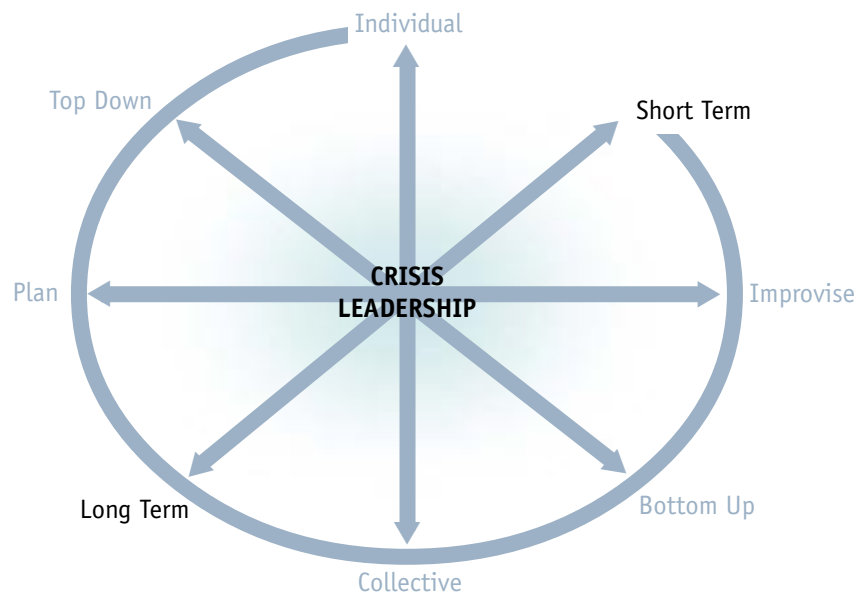
Does crisis preparation focus too much on planning for what is envisioned versus developing adaptability for what is not expected? How can people develop creative and critical-thinking skills as part of crisis training or education? How can organizations and communities embed empowerment into their culture and values? How can cross-institutional relationships be enhanced?



Short-Term Response AND Long-Term Recovery

“In a crisis, the goal or vision is mostly easily identified. But in recovery, the goals and interest get blurred.”

—Kyle Waters



Crisis leadership needs often extend long beyond the event itself. Urgent short-term needs drive the immediate response, while many complex challenges resulting from the crisis become manifest only in time.

“Various styles of leadership are needed at different times during the preparation/rescue/recovery phases. A team approach with a keen eye focused on the end goal is critical,” noted Linda Watts.

When crisis hits, the first response is one of taking action. Enacting rescue and ensuring safety drive the leadership response. At this time, decision making and taking action are rarely two distinct processes. Simultaneously people must take in the information and respond. Making sense of what is going on happens much quicker than in routine situations.

Ofer Zmiri noted that “there is a major difference between the long- and short-term processes. The longer term is more emotional and harder to agree upon and build consensus around.”

Bill Drath stated that “if we think of leadership as the process of producing direction, alignment, and commitment, the rescue phase of disaster response may actually make leadership easier—there is a clear direction for people to align around and commit to. Individuals can effectively take charge and make things happen through mutual adjustment. Once the recovery phase begins, direction is much harder to find or create and get people to agree on; practices for creating new realities are required.”

CRISIS LEADERSHIP NEEDS OFTEN EXTEND LONG BEYOND THE EVENT ITSELF. URGENT SHORT-TERM NEEDS DRIVE THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE, WHILE MANY COMPLEX CHALLENGES RESULTING FROM THE CRISIS BECOME MANIFEST ONLY IN TIME.

In the aftermath, or early stages of recovery, the leadership role expands and includes sense making, prioritizing, setting vision, crafting next steps. Blaming, second-guessing, and the complexity of meeting competing needs often become part of the leadership environment. “People are very forgiving at first,” said Donna Dinkins. “So if someone takes a leadership role, is making decisions without authority, people are okay with that in the short term. But eventually, people are not so forgiving, and they’re pointing fingers.”

Tom Tucker reflected on this point. “You know, we’ve heard all kinds of success stories here, and it’s individual initiative and breaking rules. I sincerely hope we have a forgiveness authority. . . . It’s going to be very interesting if the right people that did the right things are forgiven. And if they’re not, you’re going to lose a layer of leadership.”

The pressure on formal leaders to deal with blame was articulated by Joe Spraggins, who spent his first day on the job the day Hurricane Katrina arrived (see sidebar on next page). Spraggins noted that when tensions were hot, the inclination to place blame was great, yet this act of “throwing the hatchet” could damage the relationships needed to sustain a long-term effort.

A Katrina Story . . .

“Don’t throw the hatchet.”

Harrison County, Mississippi

Katrina was as if “an atomic bomb hit the Gulf of Mexico,” says Joe Spraggins, director of emergency management for Harrison County, Mississippi, whose first official day on the job was the day Katrina hit. “The day after the storm, we realized that 98 percent of our plans weren’t any good,” says Joe. “This was something that had to be dealt with in a different manner.”

Harrison County “turned into a military organization in a matter of 24 hours,” says Joe. “The first priority was rescuing our people, and then we had to go from there.

“Rescue motivated us, to know that we have a chance to save a life. And we did; we found people who were trapped on the roof of their house or trapped in the water, or up under rubble, who were still alive.

“But after the 14th day, the hardest thing in the world for us to do was to take that part of rescue away and go into some form of recovery. We had to, in our minds, say, ‘We can’t find anybody that’s alive today, after 14 days in the heat of the summer, without water and food, that’s going to stay alive. We can’t find them anywhere.’ So that was a tough thing for us to go through.”

Of course, tensions were extremely high all around. “Somebody always had something bad to say about somebody else, somebody to blame. I called this ‘throwing the hatchet.’ The message was that if I sling a hatchet, wherever it goes, it makes a very deep wound. Most of the time, it takes an extremely long time, if ever, to heal it.”

In Joe’s view, “We were at war against nature, and we had just got our butts kicked. Hatchet-throwing didn’t help. We had to figure out which way we could go to take this to a different level and move forward. So, we decided that the hatchet-throwing was not going to happen in our meetings in Harrison County, Mississippi.” When a FEMA representative delivered a toy tomahawk to Joe, he knew the point had hit home.

“I think that philosophy did us a lot more good than anything else,” he says. “If you started to throw a hatchet, one person would pick up the hatchet in the room, look at you, and say, ‘Sure you want to do that?’ or ‘Don’t throw it. Whatever you do, don’t throw that hatchet.’”

The need to maintain a positive outlook despite the crisis was echoed at the meeting. “Leaders are dealers in hope,” emphasized Gene Klann. “Convincing people that the sun will come up tomorrow is half the battle,” reflected Tom Kolditz.

Kyle Waters related how Hibernia Bank had made a special effort to relight its symbol, a cupola atop a tall office tower that is historically the highest point in New Orleans. That gesture, Waters stated, “said that Hibernia is open and that New Orleans has a spirit and that, you know, we’re back.”



It is also the optimism of leaders that shines. A case in point was Jennifer Vidrine, who picked up the phone and called hospitals around the country—Duke, Mount Sinai, Johns Hopkins, the Mayo Clinic—resulting in a van from the Mayo Clinic pulling up in Ville Platte, Louisiana, a week later with ten doctors in it, much to Vidrine’s amazement. “I almost fell down and just about died,” said Vidrine. “They came and said, ‘We’re here to help you.’”

Linda Watts commented on this: “I did not understand the depth of the ingenuity applied by some of those informal leaders who acted on their values and came to help us. Jennifer’s example of calling the Mayo Clinic among others and having them show up in her Ville Platte parking lot with

ten doctors was inspiring and would surely serve as a great example to others of what initiative can do!”

As recovery, or the new normal, sets in, longer term and chronic issues must be addressed. What toll does leadership take on first responders and sustained crisis leaders? What are the mental health, professional, and personal costs? What are ways to support leaders as they support others?

“There’s a cost to being a leader, and I think one of the costs is your own mental health, your own stress,” Donna Dinkin added.

AS RECOVERY, OR THE NEW NORMAL, SETS IN, LONGER TERM AND CHRONIC ISSUES MUST BE ADDRESSED. WHAT TOLL DOES LEADERSHIP TAKE ON FIRST RESPONDERS AND SUSTAINED CRISIS LEADERS?

As the urgency dissipates, so too can the outpouring of public attention and assistance, as well as some of those involved in immediate rescue and relief. Russ Paulsen noted, “I’ve been thinking about the difference between initial response and long-term recovery, the skills required, the environment in which they take place. I was surprised how many other folks had been doing the same.”

Leigh Allen likened the rush to the crisis by well-intended people to “all the folks who show up at a funeral. Then you don’t see them for a year. The need to account for a sustained long-term response is an important one.

“The thing about reacting to a crisis situation is that it lasts a lot longer than outside people think it does. For instance, Hurricane Katrina was over one-and-a-half years ago, but to those involved, affected, the timeline is much different,” Allen pointed out. “Many are still experiencing it, literally and psychologically still in the middle of the event itself. They are still in an emotional place, anger, PTSD, because for them, one-and-a-half years is nothing.”

This was echoed by Bill Schulte, who noted, “We need to look at the current thinking on grief therapy and posttraumatic behaviors. My sister who teaches at an elementary school on the West Bank of Jefferson Parish tells me

that every time it rains her little kindergarten children are frightened that another Katrina is coming. We are going to be helping people manage stressors over this traumatic event for decades. We need an army of social workers in the region now.”

A key long-term issue for those involved in chronic crisis situations is fatigue. For all involved in the relief operations, the demands of the work take a toll. It can be hard to disconnect and recharge in the face of pressing needs, yet this is essential.

“*Crisis* may not be the best word or label, because many crises today are chronic—they do not end when the hurricane passes, or even eighteen months later. It is becoming a way of life,” reflected John Alexander.

Iray Nabatoff was a volunteer who had been part of a community center and kitchen in New Hampshire. A few friends of his with a faith-based group in Texas had set up a kitchen and asked him to come down to New Orleans *for a week* to help in the kitchen. Iray started out as a cook, but once he realized they had plenty of volunteers in the kitchen, he looked around to see how else he could help. Drawing on his knack for networking, he began to connect people in need with people who had the resources. His efforts blossomed into the creation of a new community center in St. Bernard Parish. Nabatoff’s planned week of helping out in New Orleans had stretched into a multi-year commitment. The decision entailed personal difficulty, said Nabatoff, but was a choice he knew he had to make. “I just knew in my heart that it was the right thing to do; there was nothing in my life more important than trying to help there.”

Spraggins credited his military background with his ability to hang in there. “The situation has settled down a lot here, but it will take five years to build back the infrastructure; it will take ten years to get the communities back. Many people want it now, now, now. But in the military they teach you that every day is a move forward. The military is all about that, moving forward, a day at a time. I did not realize how much I have drawn on that mentality to keep me going.”

The Emotional Impact

During a crisis, leaders are often focused on the emotional turmoil of their direct reports and others in the organization, but it's equally important for leaders to take care of themselves during a crisis. "A crisis can exert a high impact on human needs, emotions and behaviors. We may not be conscious of this, but our behaviors send messages to others about our own underlying needs and emotions," Gene Klann explains.

Whatever leadership role you play, you need to be aware of your own emotional turmoil, its effect on your behavior, and its influence on your leadership abilities. Here are some ways to help you keep the perspective you need to bring your people and your organization through a crisis:

- **Think "today."** Take the crisis one day at a time.
- **Focus on the positive.** Avoid negative people, negative thoughts, and negative talk. Constantly think positive thoughts and tell yourself that you can do it.
- **Get grounded.** Take five-minute private breaks. Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation and deep breathing. Don't neglect spiritual exercises and activities as they fit your individual beliefs.
- **Prioritize and focus.** Keep meetings short or "on the hoof," where everyone stands. Be more assertive. Say "no" more often. Be more conscious about managing your time and priorities. Concentrate on only major issues. Skip secondary tasks.
- **Remember the big picture.** Concentrate on the greater vision you have of yourself, both personally and professionally. Think about where you will be and what you will be doing a year from now. Stop and realize that you are alive and that much good will come out of the crisis.

By paying attention to your own emotions, needs, and behaviors, you will be better prepared to handle the human dimensions of the crisis. As a result, you will be more capable of containing the crisis, regaining control, minimizing damage, and effectively preventing, defusing, and reducing the duration of an extremely difficult leadership situation.

Adapted from *Crisis Leadership: Using Military Lessons, Organizational Experiences, and the Power of Influence to Lessen the Impact of Chaos on the People You Lead*, by Gene Klann (CCL Press, 2003).

It is almost a given that a crisis such as Katrina will find us lacking. Yet it addresses a need to learn and share learning. Donna Dinkin noted that the word *crisis* in Chinese is actually composed of two separate symbols: one that symbolizes danger, and the other, opportunity.

A crisis offers an opportunity to learn for the next time, but Dinkin observed, “Learning from a crisis is very limited. Organizational debriefing sessions are typically very focused on the failures of logistics or tactics. ‘Cause’ is sometimes discussed and people are fired.”

Dinkin stressed that learning must also transcend the diagnostics of a particular crisis. “How do we help organizations learn from one type of crisis event to make them more prepared? Not more prepared for the ‘same’ type of crisis—but a totally different kind of crisis?”

Key Lessons

Crisis has multiple phases; the leadership response needed will vary accordingly. In the short term, emphasis is on taking action, quick response. Risk taking is essential; you might make mistakes, but standing still is not an option. A key challenge is sustaining the effort through fatigue, blame, and lack of attention and resources. In the long term, priorities are less clear-cut and require people to connect through differences, wade through complexity, and find common ground to continue the work that must be done together.

Key Questions

How and when do people and institutions transition from short term to long term? How can crisis management efforts consider not only the immediate crisis but the difficult challenges of recovery?

Lessons Learned: Building Crisis Leadership Capacity

What can be done to prepare people to enact leadership during a crisis?



Toward the conclusion of the forum, participants attempted to distill the cascade of conversations into a series of key insights about crisis leadership. The following five lessons topped the list:

- *Forge relationships:* Build relationships with a broad base of stakeholders before the crisis.
- *Develop flexibility:* Develop a culture of flexibility, adaptation, and discretion while staying action-oriented.
- *Encourage courage:* Lead your organization in such a way that people aren't afraid to "bet their bars" and take personal risks. Help people have the confidence that if mistakes are made, when acting in good faith, they will not be penalized or made scapegoats.
- *Empower people at the grassroots:* Organizations should empower local leaders to make decisions based on the situations they face and then support those decisions.

- *Engender inclusive leadership*: Develop the capacity in individuals, groups, and communities to participate as peers in creating leadership.

These themes emphasize that enhancing crisis leadership preparedness requires a focus on building collective capacity as well as individual adaptability and empowerment, both in the context of organizations and communities:

Raymond Jetson offered, “Creating the appropriate culture within an organization prior to the onset of a crisis will ultimately determine the response of the organization during the crisis.”

“Without faith-based organizations and nonprofits (not the government), the community wouldn’t come back,” observed Donna Dinkin. “These organizations are very important components of crisis response, yet they have very little training, resources, etc. The preparedness community needs to assure that nonprofits are at the table.”

Bruce Jones of the Coast Guard, in turn, saw the need to consider the role of everyday people: “The contributions of private citizens and small community organizers and groups are significant, and should be accounted for in planning for response to catastrophes.”

There is much resonance (see sidebar on pages 45–46) between these lessons of crisis leadership and the thinking about complex challenges—challenges for which no pre-existing solutions or expertise exists. Looking through the lens of complex challenges may add depth to the conversation and provide an approach for organizations seeking to build their crisis leadership capacity.

Crisis Leadership and Complex Challenges

One key area of leadership study at the Center for Creative Leadership is related to complex challenges and their implications for leadership. While this work is not specifically based on crises or disasters, the qualities needed to address these challenges mirrors the capabilities surfaced at the forum.

What is a complex challenge?

CCL talks about complex challenges in terms of five criteria or characteristics:

1. Complex challenges go beyond an individual's leadership capability. They require the involvement and interaction of others.
2. Complex challenges potentially have significant strategic impact if they are not properly navigated.
3. Complex challenges require novel solutions. When standard solutions are not working, they signal that something different is necessary.
4. Complex challenges demand flexibility and agility on the part of the leader and the organization.
5. Complex challenges create a paradox between the need for reflection and the pressure to act.

Navigating Complex Challenges

If the challenges facing leaders are complicated, interconnected, and ever-changing, then it stands to reason that any new model of leadership should address that current reality. To get a handle on how leaders and organizations can face complexity effectively, CCL's Brenda McManigle suggests thinking of a kaleidoscope.

The Kaleidoscope Framework, developed as part of CCL's new Navigating Complex Challenges open-enrollment program, is a way of looking at the skills needed to understand and lead in complex and unpredictable situations. "Just as images of a kaleidoscope change by the constant reshuffling of its component parts, so must leaders be able to shift and merge their skill sets to meet constantly changing and increasingly intricate problems," says McManigle.

The Kaleidoscope Framework addresses four "foundational skills" for leaders managing complex challenges. To be effective, leaders must:

- **Promote Collaborative Leadership.** *Determine which boundaries leaders need to span in order to collaboratively make sense of and develop a robust response to the complex challenge.*

- **Foster Innovation and Creativity.** Have the ability to find new ways to develop and apply innovative techniques and strategies to complex business challenges.
- **Adapt to Emergent Strategies.** Hone the capability to act and react appropriately to an unplanned situation or condition.
- **Scan for Changes in the Environment.** Pay attention to changes in the business environment and recognize which changes are relevant.

The individual competencies, however, do not stand alone. As they are merged or linked with each other, they help leaders to expand on their abilities to navigate through challenges. As they combine and recombine through individual and collective experience, they become organizational capabilities for leading through complexity. These capabilities include:

- **Insightfulness** (Combining Collaborative Leadership with Innovation and Creativity). The perspectives and new information gained by collaborating with others, combined with the new perspectives and approaches learned from innovation and creativity, can help a leader achieve greater insights into the problem being solved.
- **Risk Taking** (Combining Innovation and Creativity with Changing Environment). Leaders who can skillfully combine innovation and creativity with an understanding of the changing business environment will increase their aptitude for risk taking. Intelligent risk taking presumes leaders will be at the forefront of their organizations with new and different ideas on how to confront knotty issues.
- **Adaptability** (Combining Changing Environment with Emergent Strategies). Leaders with a strong sense of the changing business environment and a keen ability to react to an emerging situation will display the characteristics of adaptability. These characteristics are critical if leaders are going to survive in the dynamic circumstances swirling around complex challenges.
- **Co-Inquiry** (Combining Emergent Strategies with Collaborative Leadership). Asking questions, discussing, and learning from others while developing emergent strategies can help leaders manage the shifting nature of the challenge. This approach creates conditions in which leaders can gain a flexible understanding of the problem and its broad implications for the organization.

Source: CCL's *Leading Effectively* e-newsletter: "[Complex Challenges and the New Leadership—Navigating Complex Challenges: Think 'Kaleidoscope'](#)" (January 2006).

It is possible to see that creating “crisis leadership capacities” is at the heart of leadership development itself and essential beyond times of crisis.

Ellen Van Velsor observes that crisis leadership is still very much about leadership, and the principles and competencies that apply: “The reason we assume there might be different capabilities is because the context is different, but the set of competencies are the same. I heard this in all the stories. The principles and issues were common developmental aspects and principles within differing contexts. Maybe in a crisis, some aspects of leadership take on more importance, or are more salient. Yet leadership is leadership no matter where it happens.

“At the forum, we heard a lot of stories about people taking initiative and enacting leadership without authority. Formal constructs had been dismantled. Authority structures, infrastructure had gone away. Regular people who depended on those things found themselves without access to that, but leadership still had to happen.

“The stories told underscored the notion that leadership does not have to come from people of authority. The people who stepped up in crises may or may not have realized it, but they were making decisions and taking initiative, stepping into the void. This, in essence, is leadership.”



Afterword

David Altman and Lyndon Rego

We created the Crisis Leadership Forum as a learning experiment. We had hoped that a facilitated “meaning-making” conversation with an accomplished group of practitioners and scholars would generate valuable insights about crisis leadership. We found that the conversations were honest, stimulating, and insightful, and in some cases, unexpectedly therapeutic and healing.

The forum was conducted in the spirit of co-inquiry and dialogue. Our hope is that this report serves to stimulate further conversations about crisis and the role of leadership. Clearly, much more development, bridging, and disseminating of knowledge is needed to enhance our collective ability to respond more effectively to crisis situations.

From our own perspective, there were a few key takeaways:

The forum suggests that organizations with adaptable and empowered cultures are likely to adapt well to the challenges inherent in a crisis. When standard operating procedures and protocols no longer make sense and the chain of command is broken, or formal leadership is unable to absorb and make sense of a rapidly evolving situation, the leadership capability embedded in the organizational DNA is the reserve that is left to count on. The good news is that some organizations are evolving capabilities around adaptability and empowerment that will serve them well in the face of rapid change and competition.

The strong relevance of the field of complexity to crisis leadership is perhaps not surprising but worth calling out. Bringing knowledge from the more actively studied realm of complex challenges and wicked problems into the crisis conversation can infuse the field with useful models and practices. This would be a useful and divergent complement to the more conventional management/planning or heroic leader frames so often used to examine crises.

At the Center for Creative Leadership, we think about leadership development in the context of enhanced relationships across multiple levels of analysis. The forum underscored this point. We have much to learn, however, about how we can more successfully forge societal relationships in

communities and across organizations. There may be much we can draw on from endeavors related to social capital, especially the bridging (versus bonding) kind of social capital. It is clear that in times of crisis, people want to help. The challenge is to enable the connectivity that makes assistance more possible and more effective.

The importance of “creative leaders” implementing creative leadership solutions in times of crisis is an important thread in the report. It calls out the importance of development (versus training) in enhancing individual capacity, so that more of us act in the mode of creative and empowered individuals like Angela Cole, Jennifer Vidrine, and Iray Nabatoff, as well as those at the Coast Guard and RHD.

IT IS CLEAR THAT IN TIMES OF CRISIS, PEOPLE WANT TO HELP. THE CHALLENGE IS TO ENABLE THE CONNECTIVITY THAT MAKES ASSISTANCE MORE POSSIBLE AND MORE EFFECTIVE.

A part of the power that fuels these individuals flows from focusing on what they can do, rather than what they can't do. So, what can the Center do? We think the Center can play a role in contributing to the understanding of the leadership dimensions of crisis. We also see that we can work to facilitate dialogue and create a platform for boundary-spanning conversations.

Included in the appendices to this report is an initial response to this report from Donna Dinkin, a discussant at the forum. We invite you to weigh in, too, and share your thoughts and observations on the issues raised in this report. We have created an online space to host this conversation at <http://crisisleadership.blogspot.com>.

It is through broader, deeper, and divergent thinking and more active engagement that we may be able to converge on the practices that will help us better lead through crises such as Katrina.

Appendices

Literature Review

Donna R. Dinkin, MPH

Recent natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and human conflicts around the world have highlighted the devastation that crises can cause. Loss of life, destruction of the environment, and organizational collapse are all potential tragic outcomes of such events. Given the harm that a crisis can cause, one might be surprised by the lack of empirical research to help explain the nature and practice of leadership in extreme or crisis situations. Much of our understanding of crisis leadership is based on case studies of past tragedies such as the Exxon *Valdez* oil spill, the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the Gulf Coast hurricanes. These studies have led to the development of speculative lists of individual characteristics of effective crisis leaders and an overabundance of prescriptions for responding to crisis situations. Individuals have suggested that crisis leaders be excellent communicators, system thinkers, physically resilient, and emotionally intelligent. Lessons learned about responding to crises include thinking out worst-case scenarios ahead of time, forming a crisis team, creating a chain of command, calling emergency services, setting up back-up generators and communications equipment, and securing the premises.

The nature of crisis makes it difficult to study this phenomenon in a comprehensive and systematic manner. By definition, crises are rare and complex events. Situations such as a widespread infectious disease, a terrorist attack, or the complete devastation of a city do not occur every day and are difficult to predict. Research cannot possibly predict when and where a crisis will occur and which people will become leaders. Crises are also complex in their cause and impact. They are caused by and can impact multiple dimensions of the complex systems in which they occur. A thorough case study of the Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, India, illustrates the complexity of this crisis. Researchers have suggested that this crisis was caused by a failure of human, cultural, financial, technological, political, and environmental factors (Shrivastava, 1987). The same failures have been cited as causes of the death and destruction after Katrina hit the southern coast of the United States. This level of complexity makes crises difficult to study in a systematic manner.

While there are a plethora of publications that present long lists of things a leader should do after a crisis hits, I believe the study of crisis leadership is still in its early stages of development. A review of the current literature on crisis leadership reveals that in addition to the focus on only one method of study—the case review—the research suffers from at least three other major deficiencies. First, the literature is limited by inconsistent terminology and incomplete theoretical models. Second, most publications addressing crisis leadership focus on the skills or actions needed for effective response after an event and do not contribute to our understanding of the role of a leader in crisis recovery and learning. Finally, much of the dialogue around leadership in times of chaos has focused on individuals in formal, authoritative leadership roles and has not encompassed a broader view of leadership. These gaps are described in more detail below.

One of the more apparent weaknesses of the literature on crisis leadership is the lack of a generally agreed-upon common language for this field of study. The multidisciplinary nature of crises has contributed to the confusion as separate disciplines have conducted their own research and created their own language around the same topic. Commentary and research on aspects of crisis leadership can be found in periodicals for academics and practitioners from the fields of military studies, political science, psychology, education, medicine, business, environmental sciences, and public health. This has resulted in no generally accepted definitions for the term *crisis* and no consistent paradigm for crisis preparedness. Many terms have been used as synonyms for *crisis*. For example, the words *disaster*, *threat*, *hazard*, *problem*, *emergency*, *issue*, and *catastrophe* have all been used to describe crises. Similarly, *crisis preparedness* has been used synonymously with terms such as *procedural preparedness* (Noonan-Hadley, Pittinsky, & Zhu, 2007), *mitigation*, *crisis readiness*, *incident command*, *crisis management*, and *business continuity*. The wide variety of terminology is a barrier to integrating what is known by the different fields of practice about crisis, crisis leadership, and crisis preparedness (Pearson & Clair, 1998).

Much of the crisis literature has focused on what actions should be taken immediately after an event has been recognized as a crisis. Undoubtedly the response during the first minutes and hours after a crisis will determine how many lives are saved and how long the crisis will last. Guides on how to develop crisis plans and how to prepare and deliver effective crisis

communication messages are now widely available to educators, public health professionals, and business executives. Studies are now also emerging on critical skills leaders must have to effectively react to crisis events, such as communication, information assessment, and ethical decision making. But it has become clear, particularly after some of the more recent tragic events, that there is a need for more information on how to improve leadership during other phases of a crisis beyond the crisis response phase. In particular, there are very few studies which add to our knowledge of crisis leadership for long-term system recovery and for maximizing learning during and after an event. Working against us is the crisis mentality of Americans and their desire for quick fixes. These cultural factors lead us to a focus on dealing with emergencies when they occur versus preventing them and finding someone to blame for the failures of the system instead of dealing with the complex root problems that caused the crisis in the first place.

As a final point, it is important to note that the current literature of crisis leadership is limited in its paradigm of leadership; that is, most writings focus on the individual as the leader and not on a collective of people or institutions. In the literature, crisis leaders have been defined based on who they are versus what they know. They are individuals with high moral values, character, and integrity. They make quick decisions when they are faced with ambiguity, stress, and complexity. They demonstrate caring, vision, and control. Over history we have labeled those who have led us in great times of difficulty as heroes. Rudolph Giuliani, Abraham Lincoln, and Winston Churchill are three people who have been described as great crisis leaders. Some feel that people are looking for this one engaged leader to pull them through (Braden, Cooper, Klingele, Powell, & Robbins, 2005). While this may be true, it has also become clear that preventing and responding to complex and chaotic crises requires more than one heroic leader.

Community-wide crises need multiple leaders who not only function at various system levels but do so in an integrated and coordinated manner (Marcus, Dorn, & Henderson, 2005; Rowitz, 2006; Drabek & McEntire, 2002). Leonard Marcus and colleagues describe leaders with skills at integrating and leveraging the efforts of many organizations as “meta-leaders.” These individuals are thought to have a high level of self-awareness, self-regulation, and emotional intelligence. They not only are able to lead their own sphere of control but are also skilled at connecting with other parts of the larger system.

But the Meta-Leadership model still falls short of what truly happens in a community-wide disaster. This model still assumes that the only leadership that occurs or is needed during a crisis is from individuals working in formal organizational structures such as FEMA, the Red Cross, the Department of Public Health, or other governmental emergency service agencies. Boin, 't Hart, Stern, and Sundelius (2007) write that crisis leadership involves five strategic tasks that are not associated with any one leader. These include sense making (understanding what is occurring), decision making (making crucial decisions), meaning making (interpreting the event and actions to others), crisis termination (demonstrating control), and learning. These activities can come from both formal and informal sources. New, expanded models of crisis leadership are needed.

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Selected Tools and Resources

The following (pages 56–64) are practitioner resources, excerpted from a number of CCL publications, which may be useful in helping individuals and organizations prepare for crises.



Crisis Action Plan Checklist

- ☐ Define what constitutes a crisis for your organization and what does not.
- ☐ Develop and implement risk identification and assessment procedures.
- ☐ Define events and indicators that show a crisis is imminent.
- ☐ Define the immediate actions to be taken when a crisis occurs.
- ☐ Select who activates the CAP and how it occurs (that is, what is the first step?).
- ☐ Develop a detailed internal and external communication plan with specific reporting and notification responsibilities.
- ☐ Discuss the organization's general policy regarding the media.
- ☐ Define responsibilities for leaders and key employees during the crisis (for example, who staffs the command center, and who leads the crisis response teams).
- ☐ Specify locations and equipment for the command center, the crisis response teams, the media briefing area (if needed), and other operations.
- ☐ Specify locations for any special equipment and resources to be used during the crisis and specify the people who have access to them.
- ☐ Develop detailed evacuation procedures with safety as a prime consideration.
- ☐ Create a precrisis checklist for all departments or units to measure compliance, levels of commitment to the process, and overall preparation.

From *Crisis Leadership: Using Military Lessons, Organizational Experiences, and the Power of Influence to Lessen the Impact of Chaos on the People You Lead*, by Gene Klann (CCL Press, 2003, p. 80).

Table 2
Forceful Leadership and Enabling Leadership: Virtues and Vices

<i>Too Forceful</i>	<i>FORCEFUL</i>	<i>ENABLING</i>	<i>Too Enabling</i>
Takes over, doesn't give people enough rope.	Leads personally. Is personally involved in solving his or her unit's problems.	Enables subordinates to lead. Is able to let go and give individuals the latitude to do their jobs.	Empowers to a fault. Gives people too much rope.
Other people don't speak out, aren't heard.	Lets people know clearly and with feeling where he or she stands on issues. Declares himself or herself.	Is interested in where other people stand on issues. Is receptive to their ideas.	People don't know where he or she stands.
Is insensitive, callous.	Makes tough calls—including those that have an adverse effect on people.	Is compassionate. Is responsive to people's needs and feelings.	Is overly accommodating. Is nice to people at the expense of the work.
Is harshly judgmental. Dismisses the contributions of others. Is an "unloving critic."	Makes judgments. Zeros in on what is substandard or is not working—in an individual's or unit's performance.	Shows appreciation. Makes other people feel good about their contributions. Helps people feel valued.	Gives false praise or praises indiscriminately. Is an "uncritical lover."

(continued)

From *Forceful Leadership and Enabling Leadership: You Can Do Both*, by Robert E. Kaplan (CCL Press, 1996, pp. 14–15).

Is parochial, a partisan, rivalrous.	Is competitive. Is highly motivated to excel and have his or her unit excel.	Is a team player. Helps other units or the larger organization perform well.	Sacrifices sharp focus on own unit.
Pushes too hard. Demands the impossible. Risks burnout.	Has an intense can-do attitude. Expects everyone to do whatever it takes to get the job done.	Is realistic about limits on people's capacity to perform or produce.	Is too understanding. Doesn't expect enough.
Is arrogant. Fills his or her space and some of yours, too.	Is confident. Gives people the feeling that he or she believes in self and his or her abilities.	Is modest. Is aware that he or she does not know everything, can be wrong.	Is self-effacing or down on self. Doesn't fill own space.
Sticks rigidly to a course of action, despite strong evidence it's not working.	Is persistent. Stays the course—even in the face of adversity.	Is flexible. Is willing to change course if the plan doesn't seem to be working.	Is inconstant, changeable. Is too quick to change course.
Forces issues when finesse would work better.	Raises tough issues. Acts as a "forcing function."	Fosters harmony, contains conflict, defuses tension.	Avoids or smooths over tense issues that need attention.

From *Forceful Leadership and Enabling Leadership: You Can Do Both*, by Robert E. Kaplan (CCL Press, 1996, pp. 14–15).

Exhibit 3.4. Measuring Capacity for Risk.

Here are some questions you can use to explore the broader climate and context of risk-taking within your group or team.

- Are we encouraging an appropriate level of risk-taking for us to be successful?
- What are some examples of appropriate risks that we've taken in the past?
- What are some examples of seemingly appropriate risks that we didn't take?
- Are there any patterns in those two sets of examples?
- Are there certain kinds of risk that we need to be more prepared to take?
- Are the criteria clear about when taking a particular kind of risk is appropriate?
- How do we handle mistakes? Does the response to failure stifle even moderate levels of risk-taking?
- How much risk-taking takes place "under the radar"? Would it be better if we had a better handle on the actual level? What would that take?
- When we know an action was successful, do we also know the degree of risk taken to achieve that success?
- How well do we use examples of risk-taking with both positive and negative outcomes as teaching opportunities for shared learning and development?
- How safe do people feel that they won't be punished for taking what appeared to be a reasonable risk, if it eventually goes south?
- What barriers have we imposed on ourselves that constitute obstacles to appropriate risk-taking?
- What can the leader do more of (or less of) to encourage appropriate risk-taking?

From *Becoming a Strategic Leader: Your Role in Your Organization's Enduring Success*, by Richard L. Hughes and Katherine Colarelli Beatty (Jossey-Bass, 2005, p. 100).

Exhibit 4.5. Suggestion for Development: Politics and Credibility.

Here are some ideas to keep in mind about maintaining credibility as you find your way through the political landscape.

- Because political behavior is often viewed negatively—or at best, suspiciously—examine your own motivations with care and honesty. Knowing who you are, why you do what you do, and how your behavior impacts others is critical to ensuring that you are operating with the organization’s best interests in mind.
- In communicating to others, speak about long-term issues that are fundamental to the organization and how your ideas help achieve these. Letting people know you are striving for the same outcome as they are will help them to connect to your proposals.
- Recognize that you might not achieve optimal results when the political landscape is difficult, but achieving satisfactory results is better than achieving nothing at all. It also shows that you are willing to give as well as take.
- Keep your endpoint in mind, and be open to other ways to get there. You might have to try several different ways, or only one way that is very different from what you imagined. But usually, that endpoint can be achieved in many ways, so do not get frustrated if your method of achieving it does not survive.
- Over time, show through your results that you are furthering the goals of the organization.
- Be careful about labeling others as political when you perceive them to be acting in self-serving ways. You might not have all the information, so strive to understand how they view their ideas as furthering the organization—not just themselves. In short, model the behavior you would like others to show toward you when they don’t fully understand your intentions.

From *Becoming a Strategic Leader: Your Role in Your Organization’s Enduring Success*, by Richard L. Hughes and Katherine Colarelli Beatty (Jossey-Bass, 2005, p. 144).

Asking Powerful Questions

Powerful questions are aimed at the root of issues facing leaders and their organizations—the values, assumptions, perceptions, and emotions that can form a wedge between a challenge and a solution. By asking powerful questions, leaders are able to uncover aspects of a challenge that might have been ignored or overlooked in the past, called negative space. There are three characteristics that typically distinguish powerful questions: they invite exploration, resist easy answers, and invoke strong passions. In essence, powerful questions affect the way we gather information by helping us move beyond simple intellectual analysis to create a more holistic view of the challenge. What follows is a description of several types of powerful questions, along with examples of each type.

R-mode questions (so named because they are associated with the right hemisphere of the brain) promote patterns, synthesis, visual metaphors, emotions, or intuitions:

- What are the patterns?
- What is interesting or unique about this challenge?
- What is one hope you have regarding this challenge?
What is one fear?
- How do you feel about this challenge? What is your intuition saying?

Imagination questions pose surprising scenarios and encourage imaginative thinking:

- What if we deliberately tried to make this challenge worse?

(continued)

- What would happen if we threw everything away and started over?
- What would our “blue sky” solution look like?

Wild-card questions focus on scenarios that are highly unlikely or stretch our sense of reality:

- What are the most important wild cards for my organization, my customers, and me?
- What would wipe our organization out or make us obsolete?
- What are three future trends that could totally change the way we do business?

So-what questions get at the underlying values of an individual or group:

- What is the value we are unwilling to give up?
- What are we trying to achieve? What purpose does our mission serve?
- What’s so important about this challenge?
- What’s so great about our solution?

Positive-frame questions focus on what is going right through appreciative inquiry:

- What are we doing right?
- What are our strengths?
- To what do we aspire?

From *Critical Reflections: How Groups Can Learn from Success and Failure*, by Chris Ernst and André Martin (CCL Press, 2006, pp. 14–15).

Resiliency Worksheet

Look over the items in this checklist and darken the circle that most closely matches your assessment of yourself in each of the nine resiliency areas. What does your list tell you about your degree of resiliency? What resiliency strengths can you rely on during times of change? What areas should you develop to become more resilient?

Resiliency Strength <i>(indicates a skill you can rely on in times of change)</i>	Resiliency Development Need <i>(indicates a skill you should develop to increase your resiliency)</i>
Acceptance of Change	
I am comfortable with change. I see it as an opportunity to grow as a leader.	Change makes me uneasy. I don't like facing new challenges without having some kind of control over the situation.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Continuous Learning	
Change provides a chance for me to learn new skills and test new ideas. I like to build on the lessons of the past – my successes and my disappointments.	I want to stick with what I know best and with the skills that got me to this point in my career. Other people expect that – it's part of who I am.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Self Empowerment	
I regularly assess my strengths. I keep my eye out for work assignments that will let me build new managerial skills and develop as a leader.	I have enough on my hands guiding the work of my direct reports. If this organization wants me to develop, it has to give me some kind of plan.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
Sense of Purpose	
I like to think that my work reflects my personal values. I try to make decisions based on what's important to me and balance that with the organization's mission.	If the organization demands a certain way of working, who am I to say if it's right? My work isn't designed to follow a value system. It's my life the way it is – I can't just change it around to make it into something else.
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

(continued)

Personal Identity

I really like my job, but it doesn't define who I am. I have other pursuits outside of work that are just as important to me as my job.

☐
☐
☐

I live for my work. Why not? What's the first question a person usually asks you? It's "What do you do?" not "How would you describe yourself?"

☐
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☐
☐

Personal and Professional Networks

I really appreciate my family, my friends, and my colleagues. There have been many times that those relationships have helped me out of a jam. I like to stay connected to those people who are close to me and take a personal interest in their lives.

☐
☐
☐

Networking is really helpful in case there's a downturn and my company downsizes me. I wish I could stay more current with what my friends and colleagues are doing outside of work, but there never seems to be enough time.

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☐

Reflection

I make some room in each day to reflect on my decisions and actions. I like to look back to see if there was another choice I could have made.

☐
☐
☐

There are always so many things to do. It's like running ahead of an avalanche. I don't have time to sit back and daydream about where I am going and how I am getting there.

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☐

Skill Shifting

My skills could prove useful to this organization in another role. I can translate my experiences outside of work into developmental opportunities.

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☐

Every position calls for a distinct set of skills. It takes a long time to develop those skills. It's inefficient to take somebody out of a familiar role and ask them to perform some other function.

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☐

Relationship to Money

I like things. Doesn't everybody? But I don't want to get caught in the trap of working long hours and taking on extra assignments in order to pay for things that don't really reflect my interests and values. I make my money work for me. I think about my purchases before I make them.

☐
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☐

I have responsibilities. They cost money. There's no way around that. Besides, there's a certain expectation that when you reach my position you can afford a certain kind of lifestyle. You just have to work hard if you want the good things in life.

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From *Building Resiliency: How to Thrive in Times of Change*, by Mary Lynn Pulley and Michael Wakefield (CCL Press, 2001, pp. 22–23).

Participant Biographies



Hurricane Katrina Participants

Angela Cole has an accomplished 19-year healthcare career in public and private sectors encompassing disaster relief, clinical nursing practice, management, strategic business planning, and consulting. She is the founder of Pearlington Project Katrina Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit foundation whose mission is to rebuild homes in Pearlington after Hurricane Katrina. She received her B.S. in nursing and her master's in public health from Emory University.

Bernie Glavin is an experienced professional with a unique combination of expertise in quality assurance, staff development, residential services, operational, human resources, and fiscal functions. He brings more than 15 years of experience in residential services to his current position as Corporate Assistant Director for Resources for Human Development in Philadelphia.

Raymond Jetson is currently CEO of the Louisiana Family Recovery Corps, a nonprofit organization created to oversee the human side of the hurricane recovery effort and to help people rebuild their lives. Prior to serving as Deputy

Secretary for the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, he served as the State Representative for District 61 in the Louisiana House of Representatives from 1984 to 1999. Mr. Jetson received his B.A. and M.A. from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Captain Bruce Jones is the Commander of the Coast Guard Sector Lake Michigan and Captain of the Port for Lake Michigan and adjoining ports and waterways. He took command of the New Orleans Air Station 14 months before Katrina. Captain Jones graduated from Washington and Lee University in 1982, Coast Guard OCS in 1984, and Naval Flight Training in 1985. He received a master's degree in public administration at Syracuse University in 1997. Captain Jones served at Coast Guard Headquarters from 1997 to 2001, where he led the development and publication of the Coast Guard's first-ever Strategic Plan in 1999. His military awards include the Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal (3), Air Medal (3), and the Navy Commendation Medal.

Raphael "Iray" Nabatoff, a native New Englander, is the Executive Director of the newly formed Community Center of St. Bernard Parish in Louisiana. He has committed five years to the community center, but knows it will be hard to choose between "homes." Before coming to Louisiana he had worked at a community kitchen in Keene, New Hampshire, serving as many as 130 people a night.

Russ Paulsen, as Executive Director of the Hurricane Recovery Program for the American Red Cross, provides management oversight in the long-term efforts of the Red Cross in aiding hurricane victims and assisting in the recovery of the hurricane-damaged communities along the Gulf Coast. Prior to joining the national headquarters team, Paulsen worked as both an employee and volunteer at the American Red Cross Bay Area Chapter in San Francisco for almost 14 years. He received a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Riverside, and a master's degree in political science from the University of California, Berkeley.

Joe Spraggins is Director, Emergency Management, Emergency Communications and Homeland Security for Harrison County, Mississippi. He was recently selected as a Top Ten Community Leader for the Gulf Coast (2005), Goodwill

Ambassador of the Year (2005), and Public Servant of the Year South Mississippi Humane Society (2006). Brigadier General (Retired) Benjamin J. Spraggins had a distinguished military career prior to being appointed to his current position. General Spraggins was the Chief of Staff and Tennessee Air National Guard and Battle Commander for Air Force North. He retired on June 30, 2006, with over 27 years of active duty and over 34 years of total service.

Jennifer Vidrine is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Nelson Mandela School of Public Policy & Urban Affairs in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She attended the Executive Program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the International Government Studies Summer Program at Oxford University, Oxford, England. With a B.A. from Louisiana State University and an MPA from Southern University, she has been the Assistant Executive Director of the Evangeline Community Action Agency since 1984. She is an affiliate of numerous associations, civic organizations, and the United Way—St. Landry /Evangeline—Volunteer of the Year for 2005.

Kyle Waters is Senior Vice President, Branch Banking, at Capital One. A native of New Orleans, he earned a bachelor's degree in business management from the University of Southwestern Louisiana. He also graduated from the School of Banking of the South at Louisiana State University and the National Commercial Lending School at the University of Oklahoma. Waters brings more than 34 years of banking experience to the field, including leadership roles managing the largest markets of Hibernia Bank, which became Capital One's banking segment following a merger in November 2005.

Linda Watts is currently the Mississippi Coast Division Manager for Mississippi Power Company. She serves on the executive board of the Mississippi Coast Chamber. She is also a board member of the United Way of South Mississippi. In 2006 Linda was named the Outstanding Business Woman of the Year for the State of Mississippi by the *Mississippi Business Journal*. She was also selected as one of South Mississippi's Outstanding Community Leaders by the *Sun Herald* and *South Mississippi Business Journal*.

Crisis Leadership Discussants

Donna Dinkin is currently the Director of the National Public Health Leadership Institute (PHLI), a leadership development program offered nationally to 55 senior public health officials each year. She has worked in the field of public health for over 20 years, during which time she has worked as both a practitioner and an educational consultant at both the state and local levels, training health and human service practitioners in media relations, health advocacy, and crisis management. From 1996 to 2004, Donna served as the Program Director for the Southeast Public Health Leadership Institute. Over the last ten years, she has worked for the School of Public Health at the University of North Carolina (UNC) in Chapel Hill. In addition to teaching courses in Human Resource Management and Crisis Communication, Donna has represented the university as a technical advisor and project leader for several community health improvement projects across the state.

Colonel Thomas Kolditz, Ph.D., is Professor and Head of the Behavioral Sciences and Leadership Department at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York. Previously he served as Commander of the 2nd Battalion, 17th Field Artillery, at Camp Hovey in Korea and as a leadership and human resources policy analyst in his roles as Special Assistant to the Personnel Chief and Leadership Policy Analyst in the Pentagon. His military and civilian honors include Fellow of the American Psychological Association, Meritorious Service and Army Commendation Medals, two National Service Defense Medals, and two Overseas Service Ribbons. Colonel Kolditz's education began at Vanderbilt University in Nashville with a degree in psychology and sociology. He went on to receive an M.A. degree from the University of Missouri, a Master of Military Arts and Sciences from the Command and General Staff College, a Master of Strategic Studies from the U.S. Army War College, and a Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Missouri. He recently authored a book on leading through crisis titled *In Extremis Leadership: Leading As If Your Life Depended On It*. Colonel Kolditz is currently serving as a visiting professor in the Yale School of Management.

Steve Kroll-Smith, Ph.D., is Professor of Sociology at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro (UNCG) and editor of *Sociological Inquiry*. He joined the Department of Sociology at UNCG in 2001 and served as Chair of the Depart-

ment from 2001 to 2007. Previously he was Research Professor of Sociology at the University of New Orleans and a Co-Director of the Environmental Social Science Research Institute at the University of New Orleans. He has co-authored and co-edited several books, including *The Real Disaster Is Above Ground* (University Press of Kentucky), *Communities at Risk*, and *Witnessing for Sociology* (Praeger Press). Currently, Kroll-Smith is on sabbatical researching the 2005 flooding of New Orleans and the problems of personal and collective recovery. He received his bachelor's degree in sociology from Ball State, a master's in sociology and a master's in folklore and folklife studies from the University of Pennsylvania, and his Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania.

Alan McCurry is Executive Vice President, Chapter and International Operations for the American Red Cross. As one of two Executive Vice Presidents, he is responsible for enhancing the organization's ability to provide the delivery of Red Cross services—especially disaster preparedness and response. He is responsible for integrating resources and support functions to build disaster preparation and response programs to meet the requirements of the future while continuing to respond to the crises of today. Previously McCurry was on the staff of Senator Pat Roberts of Kansas as the principal advisor on issues ranging from homeland security to foreign affairs. He had a distinguished career in the U.S. Navy as Acting Commander of the Navy Recruiting Command. McCurry also served as the liaison officer for the U.S. Representative to the Military Committee at NATO. A graduate of the University of Kansas and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, McCurry completed graduate-level studies in the areas of National Mobilization, Industrial Preparedness, Joint and Combined Operations Planning, and the Management of Resources for National Security.

S. Parasuraman, Ph.D., is the Director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Mumbai, Deonar, India. Formerly, Parasuraman was the Asia Regional Policy Coordinator for Action Aid International and a Senior Advisor to the Commission, and Tam Leader of the Secretariat at the World Commission on Dams (IUCN—World Bank). He has written over 50 articles for publication and co-authored several books including: *Listening to People Living in Poverty* (Books for Change) and *India Disasters Report* (Oxford University Press). He is the author of *The Development Dilemma: Displacement in India* (Macmillan Press Ltd). Parasuraman's research has included topics on water and energy resources, options assessment and decision-making processes, involuntary resettlement of

people, globalization, governance, social exclusion, and disaster management. He holds a master's of science in social anthropology from the University of Pune and a Ph.D. in demography from the University of Mumbai. He has been a United National Fellow and a Senior Fellow at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.

William Schulte, Ph.D., is an associate professor and Sam Walter Free Enterprise Fellow on the faculty of the Harry F. Byrd Jr. School of Business at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia. He has a master's of science at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. He received his doctorate at George Washington University in strategic management and public policy with supporting fields in entrepreneurship and international management. Dr. Schulte continues to advise Doctor of Science students in innovation and knowledge management in the Innovation and Knowledge Institute (which he helped create) in the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences at the George Washington University. He is active in USASBE, ICSB, and the Academy of Management. Schulte's areas of expertise include cross-cultural aspects of knowledge management, moral leadership, and social entrepreneurship. He has won two national awards for entrepreneurship education. Prior to joining the academic world, Dr. Schulte was a media entrepreneur in print, motion pictures, and broadcast enterprises that he founded. He also has years of experience in residential real estate development. His family suffered loss of life and property from Katrina; his family has been in New Orleans' ninth ward since 1810.

Tom Tucker is Director of the National Center for Biomedical Research and Training (NCBRT) at Louisiana State University. He assumed leadership of NCBRT in October of 2002 after nine years as program director for the U.S. Department of State, Antiterrorism Assistance Program (ATAP). Under Tucker's leadership, the NCBRT has grown from 12 to nearly 60 employees. Currently, over 200 instructors are qualified to teach NCBRT courses, which made it possible for 46,410 participants to be trained in 2005. Tucker came to LSU following a distinguished 26-year career in the U.S. Army Military Police Corps, retiring as a colonel. His career encompassed numerous senior leadership positions in the police, security, and corrections field stateside as well as overseas. He was Garrison Commander at Fort Polk in Louisiana and is a Vietnam veteran. Mr. Tucker holds a master of science degree in criminal justice from the University of Baltimore and a B.A. from the University of Southern Mississippi.

Ofer Zmiri, Ph.D., is Professor of Security and Counter-Terrorism at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, and President and CEO of OZ-S.I.S. Inc., an international security consulting firm. Since 2005, Zmiri has been a Research Fellow in Emergency Management at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. He is also an Adjunct Professor of Public Policy and International Terrorism at Elon University in North Carolina. He has been a Consultant on Foreign Affairs for the General Consulate of Israel, a Division Executive Director and Executive Delegate for the Israel Defense Establishment, and the Security Director for the Ben-Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv, Israel. Zmiri earned his bachelor's degree in international relations and organizations at Bar-Ilan University in Tel-Aviv. He later received his master's in strategic management from McGill University in Montreal, and a doctorate in management from Harvard.

CCL Participants

John Alexander served as President and CEO of the Center for Creative Leadership from 1999 to 2007. He continues to serve the Center as Senior Advisor and has been named the Isabella Cannon Distinguished Visiting Professor of Leadership at the Elon University School of Law in Greensboro, North Carolina, for the 2007-08 academic year. Prior to joining the Center's staff in 1990, John enjoyed an 18-year awarding-winning career as a newspaper writer and editor, and is the author of numerous publications on topics ranging from leadership and globalization to the environment. A Rhodes Scholar, he has a B.A. in English from Princeton University and an M.A. in politics, philosophy, and economics from Magdalen College, Oxford University.

Leigh Allen, Psy.D., is CCL's Chief Assessor. She is responsible for the selection, training, and supervision of the executive feedback coaches in Colorado Springs, who provide interpretations of management and psychological data to participants attending various CCL training programs. Leigh maintained a private practice between 1988 and 2003. She was the Executive Director of several crisis centers in Colorado and has consulted with profit-making and nonprofit executives and boards of directors. Leigh was an on-site psychologist who assisted the leadership and school community at Columbine High School from 1999 to 2002.

Bill Drath is a Senior Enterprise Associate and Senior Fellow. He has worked with people in organizations on their development and has participated in leadership development design over the last 19 years. His current research and educational work focuses on the evolution of leadership and leadership development toward more inclusive and collective forms. He has authored or co-authored publications that include *Making Common Sense: Leadership as Meaning-Making in a Community of Practice* and *Putting Something in the Middle: An Approach to Dialogue*; and *A Lifelong Developmental Perspective on Leader Development*. A recent book, *The Deep Blue Sea: Rethinking the Source of Leadership*, explores a relational-developmental framework for understanding leadership.

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Gene Klann, Ph.D., is Manager of Open Enrollment. As a senior member of the Center's training faculty, he trains the Center's flagship offering, the Leadership Development Program, as well as The Looking Glass Experience, Coaching for Development, and Foundations of Leadership. His distinguished military career included service in Vietnam, Germany, Panama, Italy, and the first Gulf War. It culminated with service at the U.S. Military Delegation to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) headquarters in Brussels. He successfully completed five command tours and was awarded 17 personal military decorations during his 25-year career. Gene earned his Ph.D. from the Free University of Brussels. He earned an M.A. in international relations from the University of Arkansas, European Campus, and a B.A. in European history from Ripon College.

Ellen Van Velsor, Ph.D., is Senior Fellow at CCL and also serves as Research and Innovation Group Director of Individual Leader Development. She has expertise in the use and impact of feedback intensive programs and 360-degree feedback,

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Facilitators

Jerry Abrams joined the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina, as Senior Enterprise Associate. He manages the Center's Applied Collaborative Technologies initiative. He provides systems analysis and business and process improvement services at the Center. He is a senior decision analyst and group process facilitator. He also dedicates part of his time to the Center's Strategic Frontiers project and contributes to research efforts on leadership and group decision processes. Jerry holds a B.A. in liberal arts with majors in mathematics and philosophy and minors in language and physics from St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. He also holds a master's in international management with foci in international finance risk management and international political economics from Thunderbird, The Garvin School of International Management in Glendale, Arizona.

David Altman, Ph.D., is Senior Vice President, Research and Innovation at the Center for Creative Leadership. He is also an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Public Health Education at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, and Adjunct Professor in the Department of Social Sciences and Health Policy (SSHP) at the Wake Forest University School of Medicine. Before coming to CCL, David was a tenured Professor at Wake Forest in the Department of Public Health Sciences with a joint appointment in the Department of Pediatrics. Prior to joining the Wake Forest faculty, he was a Senior Research Scientist at Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention at Stanford University School of Medicine. David also trains in CCL's Leadership at the Peak program. In

addition, he serves as director of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Substance Abuse Policy Research Program, a national initiative to stimulate research on issues related to drug, alcohol, and tobacco policy, and is director of The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Ladders for Leadership Program, a \$4 million initiative to develop emerging leaders in health and healthcare. David is active in a number of professional associations and serves on a variety of community task forces and boards. He earned his Ph.D. in social ecology at the University of California, Irvine, where he was selected as Alumni of the Year in 2007, and was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Stanford Center for Research in Disease Prevention.

Karen Dyer, Ph.D., is the Group Leader of the Education Sector Group for the Center for Creative Leadership. In this role, she works primarily with superintendents, principals, and others occupying leadership positions in educational settings in accessing CCL's portfolio of programs, products, and services. Karen also is a facilitator for The African-American Leadership Program and The Women's Leadership Program. Karen is the co-author of the book *The Intuitive Principal: A Guide to Leadership* (Corwin Press) and ASCD's *A Guide for Instructional Leaders*, along with several articles and numerous instructional leadership modules. She is also a featured expert on ASCD's video series, *The Principal*. Karen holds a bachelor's degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and a master of education degree from Holy Names College in Oakland, California. She earned her doctorate in education administration from the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California.

Bruce L. Flye, Jr., is Director of Institutional Planning at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. In addition, he assists groups outside the institution through his own venture, The Center for Change Leadership. As a registered architect and a trained graphic facilitator, he works with groups in strategic planning and other change-oriented collaborative initiatives. Since assuming a planning-oriented position five years ago, Mr. Flye has led collaborative efforts that included school and departmental strategic plans, a feasibility study for campus day care, the conceptualization of a city/university intergenerational center, and a data-driven process for allocating research space. His external clients have included the Center for Creative Leadership, the Creative Education Foundation, and Eva Klein & Associates.

David Horth, Senior Enterprise Associate, is an accomplished trainer in a range of custom and open-enrollment programs. His fluency with both the technical and administrative aspects of business is a major asset in his work as a designer, facilitator, and executive coach for senior managers in client organizations. He is co-author of *The Leader's Edge: Six Creative Competencies for Navigating Complex Challenges* (Jossey-Bass, 2002) and co-author of a chapter in *The Change Handbook* (Berrett-Koehler, 2006). He led the development of Leading Creatively, a five-day experiential program for developing creative leadership. David is also co-author of a CCL product used to support group sense-making called *Visual Explorer: Picturing Approaches to Complex Challenges*. He holds a B.Sc. (Honors) from the University of Surrey in England.

Lyndon Rego, MBA, is Manager of Innovation at the Center for Creative Leadership. Lyndon's work focuses on innovation, particularly the development of new institutional initiatives, capabilities, and relationships. He also co-manages the Association for Managers of Innovation (AMI), an international network, and writes and presents on innovation. Lyndon earned an MBA, with an emphasis in strategy and marketing, from Kenan-Flagler School of Business at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; an M.A. in communication from the University of North Dakota; and a certificate in strategic planning for nonprofit institutions from the University of Illinois at Chicago. His areas of expertise and interest include nonprofit management, integrated marketing, branding, services marketing, and international development.



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