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Integrative, Psychodynamic Approach
to Evaluating a Leadership
Development Program

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The proof is in the pudding:
An integrative, psychodynamic approach to evaluating a leadership development program

Abstract

In this article, we describe transitional leadership development programs as the beginning of a journey, and we propose that for this type of program, an integrated collaborative approach to evaluation is logical and appropriate. We argue that the leadership development evaluation process for one program described in this article is continuous. On-going evaluation includes base line entry interviews, 360° testing, action planning and experimentation, and most significantly, live case study presentations and feedback loops, which are embedded into the rhythm of the work and lives of the participants who attend our program. Our post-program retest study has validated, albeit on a small scale, that change does occur in a direction that we predicted, as a result of the program.

Key words: transitional leadership development; evaluation of leadership development programs; psychodynamic orientation to leadership development

Introduction

Leadership development programs are in a honeymoon phase, to put it frankly—many have not passed the test of time, not to mention any other empirical outcome measure. And yet, the demand for leadership development in organizations, both internally and through external business school courses, is increasing exponentially (Mintzberg, 2004). No longer the realm of losers, has-beens, or brilliant but eccentric executives, a diploma earned in a leadership development program is something that most young and mid-career executives want to have on their résumé. Even senior executives find that participation in such programs can help them cap their career with a move to a CEO or board position, deal with knotty problems, create a legacy, or simply explore with a group of like-minded peers the difficulties of being "alone at the top." Our experience designing and teaching these kinds of programs shows that participants tend to rate leadership development programs extremely highly—a phenomenon arguably related to the fact that, to a certain extent, the participants who attend our programs are self-, and pre-selected, and given their high degree of motivation and expectations, are predisposed to seeing a positive outcome. They are top performers before the course even begins, and are in a "feel good" phase, having been listened to, and having vicariously experienced and learned from other participants' existential dilemmas at the end of the course when the evaluation forms are filled in.

The honeymoon effect is even more noticeable in leadership development programs that include leadership coaching practices. When evaluation forms are completed

immediately—at the end of the coaching module but before the end of the multi-module leadership development program—we have found that participants are extremely positive about the experience and optimistic about its long-term outcome. In evaluation forms for our programs, they make comments like: "This was a difficult experience, but truly life-changing." "The coaching module helped me understand my own behavior and others' in a new and challenging way." "I have learned skills here that I will use to create a coaching culture in my organization." "I know now what corporate transformation really implies" "I have learned how to build an executive role constellation that really works."[1] From a quantitative point of view, their evaluation of the coaching and the program as a whole is similarly positive. For example, out of a total possible score of 5, our coaching modules received an average score of 4.6 in 2007.

Although affect is undeniably a factor that influences long-term behavioral change (Malan and Osimo, 1992; Vaillant, 1997) anecdotal measurement of outcome satisfaction is no proxy for significant indicators of real change. As Craig and Hannum (2007) have pointed out—even if we momentarily set aside the meta-question "Were the changes caused by the program that is being evaluated?"—two broad and difficult questions face evaluators of leadership development programs. *What* changes have occurred—in terms of dimension, increase or decrease, magnitude of change—and *where* (individual, team or organizational level)? In this article, we look at change at the individual level, focusing not only on *what* changes, but also on *how* can leaders be helped to learn using the acquired insights in a constructive manner; the latter question being the one which addresses the essential dilemma at the center of leadership development programs (Hackman & Wageman, 2007).

Methodological issues are a serious inhibitor for assessing the effectiveness of leadership development programs (Yorks, Beechler & Ciporen, 2007). To accurately measure the effectiveness of a program under ideal conditions, a control group with no leadership development input should be compared to the study group; both should be tested and retested over time, using the same instruments and observers; everyone should answer with complete honesty and full self awareness to avoid desirability bias; and the whole exercise should take place in a quasi-vacuum, with no discernable extenuating circumstances in the organizational environment during the time of the study.

We are aware of the constraints facing such studies and have struggled, like many others, to design an evaluation method that would take these factors into account. In practice, leadership development is often evaluated informally through anecdotal observations; in contrast, quantitative data for this type of "soft" program are hard to obtain through traditional empirical methods. Unfortunately, we have found that busy executives do not want to participate in control groups, since they see no value to themselves in exchange for their time. Furthermore, organizations are constantly

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[1] These comments taken from evaluation forms for our programs and modules in which XXX is involved. The first author is the Director and lead professor for two transformational leadership programs at an international business school with campuses on three continents. One program is for top executives (directors and board members) and the other is for mid-career professionals, including a large number of partners in coaching and consulting firms, HR professionals, and senior line managers. In addition, the first author's centre is responsible for providing coaching modules and feedback in a wide range of company-specific and open-enrollment programs.

evolving; and the executives who have attended a leadership development program and are willing to participate in an evaluation study are, most likely, already highly invested in the leadership process, and therefore can be predicted to report correlated improvement in leadership competencies over time. On the other hand, the participants who feel they gained little or no new skills or knowledge in the program will not be interested in participating in a follow up study.

However, research is beginning to demonstrate that leadership development interventions, and in particular *coaching* can be effective (e.g. Dubouloy, 2004; Boyatzis, Smith, & Blaize, 2006). In one study (as described by Smither, London, Flautt, Vargas & Kucine, 2003) executives who completed a leadership development program followed by coaching were able to increase productivity, with additional evidence showing that the inclusion of a leadership coaching activity resulted in a significantly greater gain compared to the participation in an executive development program without a coaching component. Because many of our leadership development programs include leadership coaching models, we are particularly interested in evaluating leadership development programs which include coaching— this model is very high-touch, and therefore, is provided at a high tuition fee that must be justified.

Given the present state of research in this domain, the rationale of this article is to describe one of our leadership development programs—the Challenge of Leadership (COL), which has been taught and directed by the lead author for the past 16 years— which we believe contains intrinsic evaluation components that cannot and should not be disassociated from the program dynamic itself. Additionally, we have identified ways to continually verify that our teaching and coaching pedagogies are in sync with the participants' needs. To cover these themes, this article is divided in four sections. The first section briefly discusses the framework that is best adapted to the assessment of leadership development programs. Here, we comment on the COL program structure and objectives in the context of this framework. We describe the theoretical foundations of the leadership development intervention: the leadership clinical paradigm, our proprietary 360° feedback instruments, and the live case study approach and group coaching methodologies. The second section exposes the structural components of our evaluation method. Subsequently, we review a pilot study of the long-term effectiveness of our programs. Finally, we will discuss the implications of our findings, and suggest directions for future research.

A framework for the assessment of leadership programs

Evaluating leadership development programs can be complicated by the fact that frequently, the ultimate outcome or objectives are not set out clearly beforehand (Craig and Hannum, 2007; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004). Seeking to measure outcome at, or after, the end of a program becomes a very difficult exercise if the objectives were not built into the original program design. Vague expectations lead to ambiguous results. Furthermore, if evaluation takes place at a fixed point at the end of the program, it is neither very useful as a means to continually improve individual elements of the program design, nor can it precisely indicate what change occurred, and when.

Leadership development programs should be constructed, therefore, on a framework which supports clarity of objectives and in addition, allows integrated assessment. The framework should include:

1. Clarification of the main expected outcome of the intervention.

2. Existence of a theoretical leadership framework that is coherent with the organizational context.

3. Selection of leadership dimension(s) that the program should be targeted to.

4. Identification of the focus that serves to delineate the appropriate pedagogical tools of a leadership program.

Before going on to describe the COL program in detail in the next section, here we will expand on the crucial embedded components of the COL leadership program that match the elements described above. These are: (1) the expected outcomes of the COL program; (2) the clinical orientation to leadership development as a theoretical framework; (3) the 360º feedback questionnaires as the basis for defining the leadership dimensions that the program is targeted to; and, finally (4) the methodological focus on live case studies and group coaching as the most appropriate pedagogical tools to enhance learning in the selected leadership dimensions.

(1) The expected outcomes of the program

What are the organization and/or the participants trying to gain by taking a particular program? Answering this question prior to any intervention facilitates not only the program design, but also its assessment. The *purpose* of the intervention program is a key variable in the selection of practices for a specific program.

The outcome and objectives of the COL program are introduced from the moment future participants first consider it. As they flip through the COL brochure or visit the website, they soon realize that this is not the typical leadership development program. Although they may not be familiar with the concepts, it is apparent that this particular program takes a double-pronged approach, focusing on both cognition and affect to create behavior change. They read:

> "*Act, think, react, rethink*. The COL program aims to improve senior executives' understanding of how human behavior (their own and that of others) affects the functioning of their organization. By focusing on conscious and unconscious behavior, as well as rational and irrational action, it helps executives manage both irrational and dysfunctional processes in their companies. It accompanies them in an exploration of their personal leadership style and addresses ways of dealing with processes that fall outside recommended models."

As they read, they are introduced to the overarching objective of the program: that they will become reflective practitioners, better equipped to moderate their own

actions, behavior, feelings, emotions and drives, and understand these processes in others, as well (Shon, 1983).

The most curious and courageous among them will pursue the matter, and fill out an in-depth application, answering essay questions designed to help them explore their readiness for change. Sample questions include:

- What has been your worst professional failure?
- If Fortune magazine were to write a feature article about you in ten years, what would it say?

Once the future participants have sent their essays in, each candidate has a private interview the faculty members who then compare notes about the candidates interviewed. The purpose of the interview is to assess the psychological-mindedness of the potential participant. The interview becomes a semi-structured exchange between the individual and the faculty member/therapist (both faculty members teaching this program are trained therapists as well as business school professors), during which the candidate discusses their strengths and weaknesses, and their fears, fantasies and desires around the future of their career. They often bring concerns about family members into the conversation as well.

Along with the essays, the entry interviews provide qualitative data in terms of a baseline record of the participant's leadership accomplishments, as well as a record of the areas in which they believe they need to develop their leadership skills. These interviews are triangulated, as the two professors discuss their impression of each candidate before the program begins. A key factor in the discussion is the degree of psychological mindedness, ego strength (the ability to tolerate the anxieties that emerge in such a program), having an observing ego, meaning having the ability to oscillate "going from the dance floor to the balcony," and the capacity to draw connections between past and future events. Moreover, the learning starts before the actual beginning of the course. The admission process becomes an important preparatory stage for further discovery, reflection, and experimentation (Korotov, 2005).

What happens next? We refer to the COL program as a *transformational leadership development intervention*. In this program, we use specific methodologies to create a transitional space in which participants can identify and enable desired behavioral change (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007). The pedagogies used in these programs are designed to match the personal expectations of the participating executives, which are to: increase self-awareness, overcome personal blind spots, acquire better people management skills, acquire a more sophisticated repertoire of leadership behaviors, become more adept at complex problem solving, and, not to forget arrive at a better lifestyle quality. The intervention techniques include socially-guided methods—such as 360° feedback instruments, leadership coaching, role play, story telling, vicarious learning, positive reframing, stressing self-efficacy, and networking—techniques that by definition require active participation to shape not only what executives do, but also who they are and how they interpret what they do (Wenger, 1998). Participants are encouraged to learn something and they are helped to acquire new skills and insights which will positively affect the way they behave at work. and in their private life (Korotov, 2005).

(2) A conceptual framework for facilitating change

As the description of the COL program above indicates, our pedagogical framework draws on several key concepts. Participants are introduced to, and experience during the program, theories of group processes and dynamics. The focus of the program remains very much on the world of work—in this systemic approach, both the micro (the individual) and the macro (the organization) are considered to be equally important. Theories of organizational behavior are integrated and explored. But the essential concept in this program remains the application of a clinical paradigm to the study of human beings in organizations. This lens allows participants to dig deeper—to seek out and understand the ambiguities inherent to change (Miller and Rollnick, 2002)—and to work together to create an action plan for change, in a cognitive behavioral approach. Most critically, it introduces participants to psychodynamic conceptualizations, such as psychoanalytic theory, systems theory, and short-term dynamic psychotherapy.

In the COL program executives explore not only manifest issues but also explore what lies beneath the surface, and use what they discover there to become more effective leaders. Our integrative, clinical perspective helps the leader understand the hidden dynamics associated with individual perception, motivation, leadership styles, interpersonal relationships, team behavior, collusive situations, social defenses, corporate culture, and the extent to which individuals, groups and teams, organizations, and even societies can be prisoners of their past. We want our participants to be open to the idea that they can be organizational detectives, deciphering their organizations' internal and social dynamics, and becoming aware of the various unconscious and invisible psychodynamic processes and structures that influence the behavior of individuals, dyads, and groups in organizations. And most importantly, we want them to understand that organizational life is like a mirror, and what they see reflected in the organization, they must examine inside themselves.

Although they do not leave our programs believing themselves to be trained psychotherapists, our participants are better equipped to bring a greater dose of realism to organizational interventions. It makes sense to them that in-depth approaches to organizational interventions have a greater chance of addressing the deeply entrenched causes of individual and organizational problems. Leadership programs have been noticed to have a therapeutic quality, although they are not therapy (Kets de Vries, Korotov, and Florent-Treacy, 2007). The aim of our programs is not a temporary high, but rather, lasting change. To make this happen, we teach participants self-analytic activities so they can eventually engage in organizational interventions on their own, creating a coaching culture that includes people at every level of the organization.

The leitmotiv of our work is to help people rethink their answers to the following questions: "Is the typical executive really a stable, logically minded human being? Is management really just a series of predictable tasks performed by rational executives and stakeholders? And the most difficult questions of all (as written above the temple of Apollo in ancient Delphi): "How aware am I of the reasons behind my *own* behavior?" "How does *my* behavior affect those around me?" "How can I *change* my behavior?" The faculty makes it very clear in the intake interview that if the participants are looking for a quick-fix to become a transformational leader in one

easy lesson, they are at the wrong address—and should look elsewhere. It they, however, want to learn more about their own behavior and how this behavior affects others, help can be provided. And paradoxically, by working at themselves, they can have a major affect on others, making transformational activities a reality.

In our work with top executives, we use the clinical paradigm as a lens to look at the world (Kets de Vries 2006a, 2006b). The clinical paradigm is based on several premises. The first premise is that *all human behavior, even in its most odd or deviant forms, has a rational explanation*. To get a grasp on these irrational processes, another lens is needed to decipher the dynamics. The second premise tells us that *our declarative and procedural unconscious plays a tremendous role in determining our actions, thoughts, fantasies, hopes and fears*. The third premise states that our emotions have an important impact on our behavior. The fourth premise is: *human development is an interpersonal process. Major behavior patterns are the outcome of complicated learning activities with the major caretakers* (Kets de Vries and Korotov, 2007).

The clinical paradigm can be described metaphorically as a way to explore a person's inner theater—the scripts that determine a person's behavior and actions (McDougal, 1985). Behind the curtain, we all have a rich tragic-comedy playing out on an inner stage, with key actors representing the people we have loved, hated, feared or admired. Some of them are associated with painful experiences, others with great joy. These unconscious associations are more than just a private screening of secret events, however, because they affect not only a person's "real life" loves, friendships, and artistic expressions (in other words, how the individual reconciles the needs for affiliation and exploration), but also can be uncovered as the source of patterns of behavior that affect a person's leadership style. And these behavioral patterns are not only played out in relationships with a person's boss, colleagues, or subordinates, but they may indeed affect the organizational culture as a whole, becoming a subtle force that influences the way insiders and outsiders act in relation to the organization (Kets de Vries and Miller, 1984).

By exploring these themes in a leadership development program, we can tease out important keys to understanding a person's behavior and relationship patterns. We can draw parallels between past relationships and current behavior, and explore how a person might be using behavioral responses learned in the past—in interactions with those key, inner actors—to deal with situations in the present. The clinical perspective enables individuals to better evaluate their own behavior, and helps them decide what is no longer working for them. Armed with this greater self insight, they are more likely to embark on a journey of personal change.

(3) What dimensions of leadership is the program targeted to?

The executives who attend our programs can be thought of as global leaders; almost without exception, they are either working for a global or transnational organization with at least one subsidiary outside of the home country, or they are in organizations that focus on domestic markets, but are very attuned to the global context in which their competitors operate. In addition, the participants are top organizational executives—typically group CEOs, CEOs of divisions, board directors, and the like.

In designing programs and teaching tools that would be appropriate for this level of executive, our fundamental research questions were: *What do such leaders have to do to be effective? What roles do they play? What—if anything—distinguishes an effective leader from an effective global leader? By what criteria should excellence be judged?* Our process of exploration—as always, informed by the clinical paradigm—was both heuristic and hermeneutic. We conducted a large number of consultations and research projects in global organizations. Data was collected and themes were interpreted in an iterative way on a foundation of grounded theory, which we used to arrive at a set of working hypotheses about global leadership practices. In other words, while engaged in the process of hypothesis formulation, we delineated connections, patterns, and themes—at the individual and organizational level—continuously modifying our hypotheses. Through this ethnographic and clinical orientation, ideas were developed and thick descriptions emerged (Glaser, 1993; Strauss, 1987; Charmaz, 2006)

Through an analysis of this research, the lead author identified what he believed to be the underlying drivers of the most successful organization leaders. He concluded that they establish a state of complementarity with universal motivational need systems (their own and their followers), whatever the national culture might be (Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy, 2002). We focused on that state of complementarity, arguing that vision, mission, and cultural and strategic factors in organizations have to be aligned with universal (but often out-of-awareness) motivational need systems of its executives.

The constructs that emerged from this research were content-analyzed by five faculty members working independently of one another, and then grouped in terms of themes relevant to leadership. Inspection of groups formed by the researchers revealed a very high level of agreement among faculty members. The constructs of the inventory were derived through triangulation of the data in the group discussion.

Global Executive Leadership Inventory (GELI)[2]

Analysis of leadership practices in various types of organizations and countries confirmed our belief that the most effective leaders simultaneously fulfill two roles: the first is a charismatic role, the second is what we call "architectural" (Kets de Vries, 2006a; Heifetz & Laurie, 1997, Kotter, 1990). The first involves *envisioning, empowering* and *energizing*—behaviors that direct, inspire, and motivate followers. The second involves *designing and aligning* organizational structures and processes. The most successful leaders appeared to be extremely talented at fulfilling the charismatic and architectural roles, or at creating top executive teams that complemented their own shortcomings in either of these areas (Kets de Vries, 2006a).

These two roles consist of a number of sub-roles. In fact, we determined, that the world-class executives in our study focus on twelve main tasks, which we conceptualized as dimensions:

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[2] For a full report of the psychometric design and testing of the GELI, see XXX, M.F.R., Vrignaud, P. and Florent-Treacy, E. (2004) "The Global Leadership Life Inventory: development and psychometric properties of a 360° instrument." *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 15:3, May 475-492.

Visioning, Empowering, Energizing, Designing and aligning, Rewarding and giving feedback, Team-building, Outside stakeholder orientation, Global mindset, Tenacity, Emotional intelligence, Life balance, and *Resilience to stress.*

Building on our research studies on the dimensions of excellent leadership, we designed a proprietary 360° survey instrument, the Global Executive Life Inventory (GELI), with a clinical perspective, specifically for use in our leadership development programs. Although many 360° leadership behavior survey instruments exist, there are no others, to our knowledge, that have a global *and* clinical orientation. In addition, in our exploratory interviews described above, we discovered that emotional intelligence, resilience to stress and life balance are little-explored, yet critical themes in discussions with executives about their concerns. An important objective of the development of the GELI therefore, was to combine an exploration of these essential dimensions in one 360° questionnaire.

The Personality Audit (PA)[3]

To be effective leaders, executives must have an understanding of the reasons for doing what they do (Daudelin, 1996; Schön, 1983). They need to study their motivation from the inside to truly understand what is happening on the outside. This requires taking into consideration their relational world, paying attention to the forces of human development and considering their emotional management. This approach creates a more three-dimensional appreciation of human behavior and helps executives obtain greater access to, and understanding of, their emotional lives.

To help participants in the COL and other leadership development programs gain insights about facets of their personality that may come into play in the workplace, we developed a 360° instrument called the *Personality Audit* (PA). By providing insight about the ways in which conscious/observable and unconscious/invisible processes influence behavior, the PA supports a better understanding of interpersonal relationships, recurring conflict patterns, and the meaning of one's actions and experiences. What distinguishes the PA in particular is that it gives a comparison of the executive's behavior in the world of work, and in his or her private life.

The PA is designed to provide an assessment of seven of the major personality dimensions important in human functioning, and clarify the various motivational needs of executives. The seven dimensions of the instrument—derived from basic aspects of personality—can help people understand the complexities of personality functioning. These dimensions, when assessed by the test-taker and others, provide a glimpse of the executive's inner world. Each of the seven dimensions of personality assessed in the PA has two anchor points, for example, high self-esteem and low self-esteem. The dimensions are:

High – Low Self-Esteem, Trustful – Vigilant, Conscientious – Laissez-Faire, Assertive – Self-Effacing, Extroverted – Introverted, High-Spirited – Low-Spirited, and *Adventurous – Prudent*

The Leadership Archetypes Questionnaire (LAQ)[4]

We also use a third survey instrument, the *Leadership Archetype Questionnaire* (LAQ), designed to facilitate discussion about the concept and creation of effective teams. Used in conjunction with the PA and the GELI, here we focus on the idea that no single leader can be perfect in all dimensions. It is equally important to recognize individual strengths and weaknesses to be able to form well-balanced executive role constellations. It is also important to keep in mind that different phases in the

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[3] For a complete discussion of the Personality Audit see XXX, M. F. R. (2005). *Personality Audit: Participant Guide,* Fontainebleau, INSEAD Global Leadership Centre and XXX, M. F. R. (2005). *Personality Audit: Facilitator Guide,* Fontainebleau, INSEAD Global Leadership Centre.; XXX, M. F. R, Vrignaud, P., Korotov, K., and Florent-Treacy, E. (2006). 'The Development of The Personality Audit: A Psychodynamic Multiple Feedback Assessment Instrument,' *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17 (5): 898-917

[4] For a complete discussion of the Leadership Archetype Questionnaire see XXX, M. F. R. (2006). *Leadership Archetype Questionnaire: Participant Guide,* Fontainebleau, INSEAD Global Leadership Centre and XXX, M. F. R. (2006). *Leadership Archetype Questionnaire: Facilitator Guide,* Fontainebleau, INSEAD Global Leadership Centre.

organizational lifecycle will often require emphasis on different kinds of leadership skills (Lord & Hall, 2005; Mumford Marks, Shane Conelly, Zaccaro & Reiter-Palmon, 2000; Charan & Drotter, 2001). To help participants grasp these concepts, we introduce them to the idea of leadership archetypes.

Personality theorists recognize that certain constellations of character traits – archetypes – recur on a regular basis. A leadership archetype characterizes the way in which leaders deal with people and situations in an organizational context. These archetypes represent prototypes for ideas, a template for interpreting observed phenomena and understanding behavior. The eight leadership archetypes included in the LAQ are: *strategist*, *change-catalyst*, *transactor*, *builder*, *innovator*, *processor*, *coach* and *communicator*.

The LAQ helps leaders understand the way they deal with people and situations in an organizational context, identify situations in which a particular leadership style could be most effective, and think about what it is like to work with people who demonstrate certain dominant behaviors. It also helps them determine the best roles for each team member, the best way to manage and work for people with certain dominant characteristics, and which combination of styles works well and which to avoid. Finally, it can help leaders create teams of executives best suited to particular challenges, for example, merger integration, new product development, or transition periods.

In designing the GELI, PA and LAQ, we paid particular attention to the fact that our participants have very diverse world views and cultural values. We had a specific set of criteria—setting parameters both for the instruments and for the feedback process that they would be used for. They were designed by a multicultural team, with items written specifically for clarity for a non-native English speaking participants, tested and validated on a mixed culture group, and used by over 50,000 people from around the world (to date). They have culture face validity and to be culturally relevant. From the time each one was psychometrically validated, we have used these instruments in all our programs, therefore accruing experience, predictability, and stability over time.

Decades of research on effects of psychotherapy (Hubble, Duncan & Miller. 1999), self-help programs (Kanfer and Goldstein, 1991), training programs (Morrow, Jarrett, and Rupinski, 1997) and education (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991; Winter, McClelland and Stewart, 1981) have shown that people can change their behaviours, motivations and self-perception. But most of the studies focus on a single characteristic. To address this gap, the GELI and the PA were designed to complement each other to provide insights not only about behaviors and character attributes, but also about a person's inner theater. In our experience, a side-by-side comparison of the 360° results on these instruments often helps the test taker to understand how personality traits affect leadership styles, which in turn helps them to initiate change in manifest actions and behaviors.

Personality traits as measured by the PA as individual constitutional factors can be understood as a set of potentials that the individual may or may not activate in daily situations. But personality may not be sufficient to understand why individuals differ in performance or in choosing activities within organizational contexts. The next step is to grasp the constellations of character traits that help to interpret observational

phenomena and understanding individual behavior. These constellations of behaviors are called archetypes, as measured by the LAQ. These archetypes are closely linked to specific organizational context in which the individuals are operating and which specific behavior is produced. The outcome supports the other, basic questionnaire that deals with the identification of effective behaviors that may have a strong explanatory power over performance. These behaviors are measured by the GELI.

Use of 360° instruments per se brings with it an element of ongoing evaluation of the leadership development programs. First, participants judge the face validity of the instruments' dimensions and their applicability to their specific leadership situations. Second, when instruments are used in coaching interventions, they make part of the joint sense-making process, involving the participant and his or her peers, faculty, and coaches. Discussion of the 360° results in the context of a program immediately provides signals about the applicability of the concepts to daily life of executives. Moreover, when executives from different organizations and countries converge in their opinion about importance of a particular dimension for leadership success, some kind of a spontaneous triangulation occurs, involving the program learning community at large (participants, faculty, and coaches).

Over time, we have created an archival database to collect and aggregate the data generated by the people who have completed the GELI, the PA, and the LAQ. (Identifying information is stripped from the data immediately after a program ends, with one exception: if participants agree in writing to a follow up study, then their name remains linked with their responses until the end of the study.) This database is accessible through a website, allowing researchers to analyze the data in different ways, for example, by age, gender, nationality, or position. Participants' scores are converted into percentile rankings derived from this data, as well, allowing them to compare their own leadership behaviors to all the other top executives in our database. With this data, we can recalculate norms and standard deviations for specific geographical regions, translate and test new target language versions, and with participants' permission, we use the data for test-retest longitudinal studies.

(4) The appropriate pedagogical focus: live case study approach, and group coaching

We concur that the dimensions of leadership to be taught determine the appropriate pedagogy (Doh, 2003). For example, case studies and action learning may be most useful for developing strategic thinking; experiential learning for teaching behavioral skills; and feedback questionnaires and coaching for benchmarking one's current leadership capacities (Doh, 2003.)

In particular, transformational programs work well in a modular format. A modular structure (as suggested by Mintzberg, 2004), gives the learner a chance to tie the educational environment to the working experience. Over time, in this kind of program, it is possible to create a safe environment for "pausing" and allowing individual change and development to ferment and emerge. This encourages individuals to experiment with new ways of behaving in their daily life (private and personal), then to come back in subsequent modules and report to the group on their experiences in a context of mutual reflection. In a factious way, the faculty calls this

the "shame, guilt, and hope" approach. Many people have "dreams"—good intentions to lead life differently—but with no action, nothing happens. Now in the class setting, they have made public declarations of intent what they want to change (the creation of "hope"), and feel obliged, given the public nature of their declarations, to deliver.

The COL program consists of four one-week intensive modules. The first three modules are spread over six months; the final one follows half a year later to assess if the good intentions have been internalized. In the first module, participants are introduced to the clinical paradigm through lecture / discussion sessions that show links between the inner theatre of the individual, and the culture and strategy of the organization. References are made to life cycle and developmental issues. Simultaneously, participants are invited to plunge into the difficult work of exploring themselves and dealing with unfinished business.

Given the psychoanalytic background of the two faculty members, by its very nature COL establishes participatory processes, and sets building trust as a key primary goal. The two faculty members model multilateral self awareness, empathy, and the use of the self as a responsive instrument (Kets de Vries et al, 2007; Kets de Vries, 2007). To create a pause—the capacity for reflection and experimentation outside the pressures of daily life—there is an emphasis on learning and practicing executive leadership coaching. Through a virtuous cycle of reflection (supported by a live case study approach and group coaching) action (testing new behaviors in the workplace) is created, implemented, evaluated and accepted, and if all goes well, internalized (Korotov, 2005).

The clinical paradigm, described above, offers a tremendous opportunity for the faculty members to use the leader's own behavior as a real-life case study, with the added advantage that this particular case study is sure to be of interest to the executive concerned. In each module, participants take the "hot seat": each one telling his or her "live case study" to the group. In this context of safe, transitional space (Schrage, 1999; Dubouloy, 2004; Korotov, 2005; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007) the participant bares his or her soul to a certain extent, describing fears, doubts, and hopes around salient issues in both personal and professional life. They are also welcome (though never really obliged) to share their GELI, PA and LAQ 360° feedback results with the members of their small study group. When that happens, the other members of the group respond, challenging the individual to explore possible options and possible outcomes. The individual listens, and then with the help of the group and the faculty members, identifies an action plan, with several key points to be tested in "real life" between modules. The individual reports back in the next module whether or not he or she feels satisfied with progress made, and the feedback loop begins again. In an appreciative inquiry approach, their world is reframed not as a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be explored (Cooperrider & Avital, 2004).

For example, one man began by telling the group that he was wondering if he should be in the running for the CEO position in his organization. Currently a senior executive in the organization, he was very effective, but to take the number one position seemed very frightening to him. The subsequent discussion with his peers in COL was enlightening. He told them that as son of the headmaster of the school he attended as a teenager, he had learned to always operate under the radar. Despite being an extremely talented student, he was often singled out by his father. While

growing up as the focus of what he felt was negative attention, the son (the COL participant) had always felt that it was less risky to stay at the level of second best. This behavior pattern (associated with many confusing emotions) had continued into adult life, although he was quite successful in his professional career. Listening to the comments from the group after his "live case" presentation, he became more aware of the relationship between his past and present behavior, and of the anxiety associated with standing out. It gave him the motivation to no longer hold himself back and put his head in the ring for the race for the CEO position. He continued to report back to the group over the next few modules, as he tested his new impressions and action plan in his work setting.

As this example illustrates, involving the group in a participant's leadership development is an important social process that supports introspection and change. It helps to create safe environments for "pausing" and experimentation. Because of group pressure, it takes a tipping point for participants to take action steps. Beyond live cases, another significant opportunity for group involvement is group coaching. As we have already mentioned, we claim that to create this experiment-enticing pause, leadership development programs should contain at least some form of executive leadership coaching. Typically, leadership coaching is a one-on-one experience, rather than a group process. However, some professionals familiar with both kinds of intervention argue that executive coaching and leadership development programs carried out in a group setting have a more dramatic impact than one-on-one sessions. Coaching in a group setting offers access to the collective minds, hearts, and experiences of several individuals. There are further advantages of the group setting in which trust has been well established: a supportive, collective approach facilitates constructive conflict resolution, stronger commitment to personal and professional development, and greater accountability. Such a group coaching process makes it more likely that a tipping point is created, whereby the person finds the courage to embark on a process of transformation. Besides, getting involved in group coaching, allows participants to practice their own coaching and peer coaching skills and continue helping one another to learn through peer coaching (Korotov, 2008). Coaching sessions also serve as opportunities to provide immediate feedback from participants to the faculty in terms of the important issues that exist in participants' lives or careers but that are not explicitly raised through the program.

In sum, the pedagogical focus described above becomes what Symonette describes as a responsive evaluation in which "all stakeholder groups … provide on-going feedback through periodic surveys and emergent oral check-ins to help modify intervention activities, increase alignment, and foster desired outcomes." (Symonette, 2007, p. 121). Even more importantly, the *process* becomes *practice*, as over time the participants begin to consciously integrate a more reflective behavior into their "real lives." This newly-learned behavior has proven over time to be stable for many of the participants, as evidenced by the fact that most of the cohorts continue to meet as a group regularly, years after their program has ended.

The schematic outline of the program, shown below in Figure One, illustrates the key elements of the program: first, participants embark on what they expect to be a journey of self discovery (an awareness that begins prior to the program during the baseline interviews); next, a transitional space is created in this early stage; then, as participants become familiar with the transitional space, a feedback loop of narrative,

experimentation, and peer coaching is established; and finally, new skills are consolidated and internalized through the interplay of action in the "real world" and reflection during the module.

Figure One: a schematic outline of the COL program
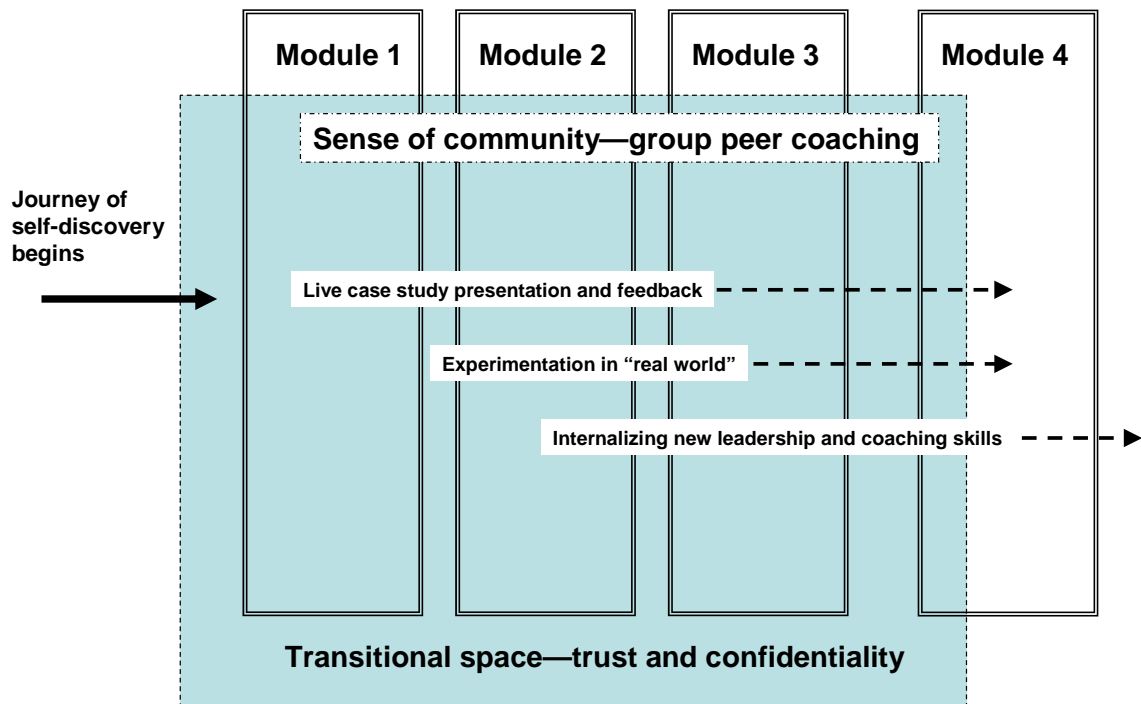
Outcome research: a pilot study

As the final step in this evaluation method, we conducted a small exploratory study of the 2005 COL program (Kets de Vries, Hellwig, Guillen Ramo, Florent-Treacy & Korotov, 2008), one year post-program. Our goal, as we defined it in that pilot study, was both summative and formative. That is, we sought to answer the questions: "What changes have occurred?" and, "Were the changes caused by the program?" Our approach was also formative in that the data we gathered (in the form of quantitative test scores and qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews one-year post-program) provided us with direct feedback that will be applied in an on-going process of improving our clinically-oriented leadership development programs in general.

During this study, volunteers from the 2005 COL program completed a retest of the GELI 360° survey, and participated in qualitative, semi-structured interviews around

their self-perception of progress in the key areas targeted by the program (Self N=11, Observer N=70).

To further inform our exploration, before the retest the two faculty members were interviewed about their predictions of which participants would show the most improvement in targeted areas one year later. These predictions were based on the two professors' notes from two different points in the program. The first set of notes was from the entrance interviews, and the second set came from the individuals' presentations of their live case studies.

Summary of the exploratory study: quantitative results

When we compared the 2005 and 2006 GELI percentile scores of the 11 participants, our preliminary findings suggested there was: (1) an increase in the level of life satisfaction; (2) a probable increase in participants' self-awareness, as shown by comparing the 2005 and 2006 differences between self-assessments and observers' assessments in all leadership dimensions; and, (3) that some dimensions had higher percentile scores one year after the program. In particular, *emotional intelligence* and *rewarding and feedback* ranked higher in both the self-assessments and the observers' assessments. We hypothesized that it is precisely in these *coaching* competencies that transformational programs have higher and more consistent impact.

Summary of the exploratory study: qualitative results

The quantitative preliminary findings were enriched by the data from the semi-structured interviews, conducted *before* participants saw the second set of GELI scores. According to the interview transcripts, executives perceived the transformational leadership program as refreshingly different from other forms of learning in executive education programs. As we analyzed the transcripts, we looked for the changes through the journey of self-discovery that participants said were enhanced by the transformational program. Second, we looked for clues about *how* the change process occurred, and what elements fostered long-term outcomes.

Concerning the question *what* changed, we looked at repeated regularities in the participants' accounts of the effects of the leadership development program and found two main effects of note:

- In the first place, there seemed to be an increase in *self-awareness* that helped to identify blocks that inhibited personal development. At the same time, the interviewees felt they had gained a better understanding of their own driving values, and a clearer idea of their goals and desires.
- Secondly, concerning improvements in specific *leadership behaviors*, executives reported to have become more people-oriented after the COL program (perceived improvement in the dimensions of listening, emotional intelligence, rewarding and feedback, and team building). In particular, they became more aware of the complexity of human beings ("everybody is normal until you know them better). It their future dealings with their executives, they took these complexities into consideration.

These results were in line with the quantitative findings which can be treated as a sign of convergent validity.

Regarding *how* change is facilitated through transformational leadership programs, four themes appeared in the interviews:

1. The *group coaching* sessions facilitated growing self-awareness and a sense of commitment to the group in terms of meeting self development goals.
2. The *action plans* were crucial in setting individual developmental objectives and committing to working towards achieving them.
3. *Acting and experimentation of new behaviors* in the professional context were needed to crystallize changes and enrich an effective repertoire of behaviors.
4. Staying in contact with *a learning community* serves to maintain changes in the long-term.

Although the sample size in this final phase of our exploratory study was quite small, the good news is that the data validated that some change had occurred, as reported by participants and observers themselves, during and after the COL program. Furthermore, the predictions of success, in terms of amount and type of change in behavior, from the two professors about each participant did not always correlate with individuals' progress as measured in the 360° post-program retest, potentially showing that the program itself had had some influence.

Discussion: Structural components of an integrated evaluation method

When considering ways to evaluate the COL program, we speculated that the dimensions of leadership distilled from our grounded theory research provided a domain of outcomes to be considered. We believed we could make use of existing measurements to evaluate progress and outcome, including: pre-program interviews and essays; a mid-program feedback process using 360° instruments specifically designed for the program being measured; an on-going process of testing of new behaviors, further moderated by feedback through presentation of live case studies by each participant; and post-program 360° retesting and qualitative interviews with the professors and participants.

In the end, we argue that we have described a program in which evaluation is embedded in the teaching methodologies and tools used throughout. Here we summarize the discussion points raised in the sections above:

Program framework

- Clear objectives: The objectives of this leadership development program are directly derived from the lead author's 30 years of experience teaching, researching, and interviewing successful very senior global business leaders. The program proposes a precise, empirically-based definition of leadership excellence, uses a framework of leadership dimensions derived from this

foundation, and includes teaching and coaching tools and methodologies specifically designed to enable participants to improve performance in these dimensions.

- Faculty: The faculty members involved are fully integrated (they select, teach, coach and evaluate participants) and have taught the program together for 16 years, inferring an unusual depth of experience in, and broad historical knowledge of, the pedagogical methodology of the program.
- Pre-program base line measurements: The faculty members who teach the program conduct intensive pre-program interviews with every candidate, and require completion of in-depth essay questions. These indicate the participants' pre-program level of self awareness, willingness to experiment, and level of achievement.
- Program evaluation forms: In the early years, the program design was experimental. Over a roughly five year period, participants' written and oral evaluations about the program were explicitly sought and directly applied to the evolution of the curriculum. Now, in its 16th year, the design of the program has stabilized; although participants' evaluations are still gathered after each program, it appears that the program meets their expectations and needs. In fact, the program is completely filled each year through word of mouth.
- Database: We have gathered an enormous amount of data (age, gender, nationality, industry, job position) in a database from our three proprietary 360° instruments. We continually use this data to fine tune our coaching and teaching methodologies. We can easily store and retrieve identifiable data (with participants' permission) from this database for conducting longitudinal studies.

Program components

- 360° feedback instruments: During the program, the twelve dimensions of leadership are introduced, personality characteristics are discussed, and the concept of leadership archetypes is introduced, seen in the context of the environment the organization is operating, using 360° instruments specifically designed to support the leadership development objectives for this program.
- The COL program includes the requirement to create an action plan with two or three specific development goals or behavioral changes (identified by the participant him- or herself) to be addressed within a set amount of time, and followed-up with other members of the small coaching group.
- The program devotes a great deal of time to the appreciative inquiry, "live case study" approach, where each participant takes several turns in the hot seat, talking about their own life, their hopes, and their fears. Fellow participants and faculty members provide immediate and on-going feedback about personal progress over the subsequent modules. Feedback is discussed only with faculty and peers on a voluntary basis.
- An evaluative feedback loop is created through group coaching, peer coaching, and the "live case study" method.
- Participants are taught and coached during the program and later followed up by the same two faculty members. At no point in the process are feedback results or action plans provided or discussed with anyone from the individual's

organization, and the results are never used as a basis for performance review. Confidentiality is essential for perceived psychological safety of the learning space. Therefore, evaluation results are less likely to be biased or influenced by the views or requirements of other organizational stakeholders.

- The context of the program—a transitional space treated with empathy and confidentiality—allows the two faculty members to create trusting relationships with former participants that facilitate continued interaction and a willingness to participate in follow-up studies.

Post-program component

- An experimental post-program retest pilot study showed change in some dimensions. These preliminary results also provided evaluative feedback indicating that the pedagogical focus of this program met the expectations of the participants, and was effective in helping the study subjects attain pre-program personal objectives.

Given the well-tested, stable, and smooth functioning of these program components, we theorized that the underlying teaching philosophy, feedback instrument design and use, and coaching practices unique to the COL program could be reframed as an internally-integrated, collaborative method for evaluating longitudinally the programs' outcomes. Our assessment practices are indeed embedded and integrated into the rhythm of the work and lives of the participants who attend our programs, at multiple levels, and with multiple participant perspectives (Symonette, 2007). Our program design matches beautifully Symonette's description of mainstreaming evaluation, whereby "the process spotlights and clarifies the intimate interconnections among program visioning, development, implementation, and ongoing improvement." (Symonette, 2007, p. 117).

Directions for future research

Leadership has been traditionally conceptualized at the individual level, focusing more on the leader than on the social dimension (Day, 2001; Avolio, Sosik, Jung & Berson, 2003). There is an increasing awareness of the relevance of leadership development in many areas, including: facilitating organizational change and developing new business; increasing competition; increasing the collaboration across the organization; and facing the challenges posed by globalization (Bolt, 2005). Leadership development at group and organizational levels is encouraged.

Leadership development programs constitute the trigger of the developmental process if they are well designed. But how change is maintained in the long-term needs to be further explored in the literature.

Management and leadership theories and development practices come out and make sense in a specific time and place, linked to personal issues concerning identity (Pittaway, Rivera & Murphy, 2005). Thus, to truly understand management development, programs should be constructed within the boundaries of personal experience and identity. More research of leadership development programs that

consider the evolution of individual and social identity are needed to understand how training accompanies and reinforces the natural adult development process.

The pedagogies used in leadership interventions cannot be simply cut-and-pasted from one collective to another. They must be in sync with the particular needs of the participants. Thus, how the objectives, methods and the learning impacts may differ for novice, intermediate and senior managers need to be clearly conceptualized. In addition, the evaluation components outlined above should be tested in other leadership development programs—not by applying our methodology whole-cloth, but through a careful and creative program design that is relevant to the specific pedagogical objectives of those programs.

Another relatively unexplored area that would benefit from further research would encompass the parallels we have remarked on among some dimensions of our 360° feedback instruments. Psychometrically-validated 360° feedback questionnaires (GELI, PA and LAQ) developed by the INSEAD Global Leadership Center, when used together, often create the tipping point that sends the participant on a truly introspective journey, and set into motion changes in behavior (Kets de Vries, Vrignaud, Florent-Treacy & Korotov, 2007). Studying the relationships—which could prove to be reciprocally influential—among them may help to understand how personality traits affect leadership styles, and how they in turn became manifest actions and behaviors. In a similar vein, it would be interesting to study the effect of specific personality traits and leadership behaviors on the formation of effective teams, by comparing participants' scores on the GELI and PA to their scores on the LAQ. These analyses will provide a comprehensive structure of the instruments while helping to improve the design of development plans that are coherent with the individuals' current self-awareness and their desired change process. This stream of research will have profound implications because it will give further information about the individual reflection process that is required for change.

Final thoughts

We described our leadership development program as the beginning of a journey, and we propose that for this type of program, an integrated collaborative approach to evaluation is logical and appropriate. We have argued that our assessment practices—including base line entry interviews, 360° testing, action planning and experimentation, and most significantly, live case study presentations and feedback loops—are indeed embedded and integrated into the rhythm of the work and lives of the participants who attend our programs. Our post-program retest study has validated, albeit on a small scale, that change does occur in a direction that we predicted, as a result of the program.

To use another kind of metaphor, we can think of the participants in our leadership development program as captains of sailing vessels. Their destination, a far off, unexplored land, is set. But they know—or at least, they quickly learn—that one cannot sail in a straight, predetermined line. The unpredictable whims of winds and currents require a constant re-evaluation of actions and directions. Compasses are read, depth soundings are taken, the weather report is consulted, and the day's route is adjusted accordingly. At times the ship may be forced to tack in a direction that

appears to set it far off course, or allow itself to be propelled by trade winds that add thousands of miles to the journey. If the ship finally arrives safely at port, it is a result of these small and constant evaluations of direction and speed, as much or more so than the choice of the final destination.

We believe that the integrative method of evaluation that we have outlined in this paper provides this kind of constant measuring and adjusting of actions and learning—on the part of the professors as well as the participants—that allows individuals to progress in the direction that they wish to take when they enter the program. The fact that the COL participants are in the program together for one year, and often remain in contact with each other for years after their program ends, is another factor that strengthens the validity of the internally integrated evaluation approach. The exploratory study has given us a preliminary indication that, for the individuals in this particular study, the final destination has been reached, or at least, is in sight.

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