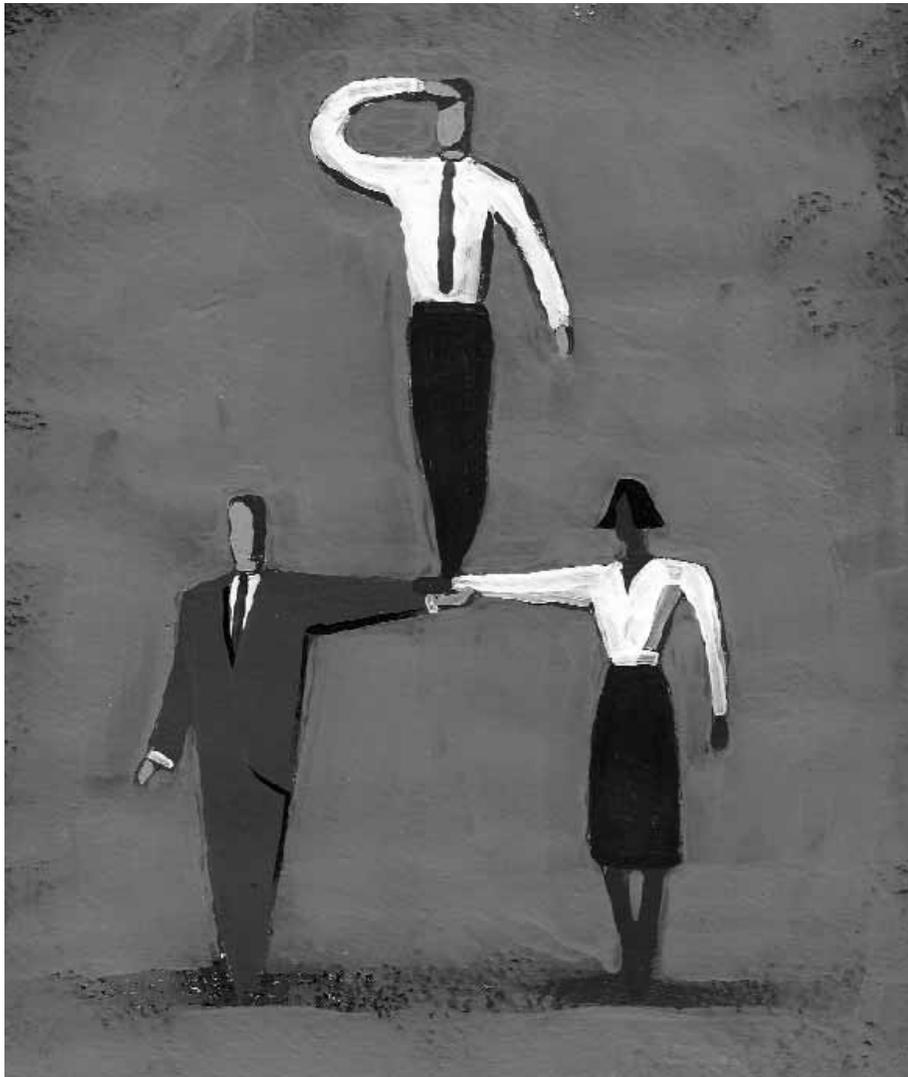


Leadership Development: Past, Present, and Future

Gina Hernez-Broome, Richard L. Hughes, Center for Creative Leadership



This article reviews notable trends in the leadership development field. In the past two decades, such trends included the proliferation of new leadership development methods and a growing recognition of the importance of a leader's emotional resonance with others. A growing recognition that leadership development involves more than just developing individual leaders has now led to a greater focus on the context in which leadership is developed, thoughtful consideration about how to best use leadership competencies, and work/life balance issues. Future trends include exciting potential advances in globalization, technology, return on investment (ROI), and new ways of thinking about the nature of leadership and leadership development.

The Past

Looking back at the state of leadership and leadership development over the past 20 years, we were surprised to discover more than a decade passed before *HRP* first contained an article with the word “leadership” in its title. At the risk of making too much out of mere titles, we note with interest the contrast between that early period and the fact that leadership development is now one of *HRP*’s five key knowledge areas. The last two decades have witnessed something of an explosion of interest in leadership development in organizations. Some of the most noteworthy issues and trends in the field of leadership development in the past 20 years fall under these two general headings:

1. The proliferation of leadership development methods;
2. The importance of a leader’s *emotional* resonance with and impact on others.

Proliferation of Leadership Development Methods

One clear trend over the past 20 years has been the increasing use and recognition of the potency of a variety of developmental experiences. Classroom-type leadership training—for long the primary *formal* development mode—is now complemented (or even supplanted) by activities as diverse as high ropes courses or reflective journaling.

Classroom training should not be the only part of a leadership development initiative, and may be the least critical. While training may even be a necessary element of leadership development, developmental experiences are likely to have the greatest impact when they can be linked to or embedded in a person’s ongoing work and when they are an integrated set of experiences. Activities like coaching, mentoring, action learning, and 360-degree feedback are increasingly key elements of leadership development initiatives.

Developmental relationships primarily take two forms: coaching and mentoring. Coaching involves practical, goal-focused forms of one-on-one learning and, ideally, behavioral change (Hall, et al., 1999). It can be a short-term intervention intended to develop specific leadership skills or a more extensive process involving a series of meetings over time. The most effective

coaching allows for collaboration to assess and understand the developmental task to challenge current constraints while exploring new possibilities, and to ensure accountability and support for reaching goals and sustaining development (Ting & Hart, 2004). Mentoring is typically defined as a committed, long-term relationship in which a senior person supports the personal and professional development of a junior person. It may be a formal program or a much more informal process. Recognizing the value of mentoring, organizations are increasingly looking at ways to formalize these types of relationships as part of their leadership development efforts.

Action learning is a set of organization development practices in which important real-time organizational problems are tackled. Three kinds of objectives are sought: delivering measurable organizational results, communicating learnings specific to a particular context, and developing more general leadership skills and capabilities (Palus & Horth, 2003). Effective action learning may range from tacit, unfacilitated learning at work to focused and high-impact learning projects to transformations of people and organizations (Marsick, 2002).

Challenging job assignments are a potent form of leadership development and provide many of the developmental opportunities in organizations today. The level of organizational involvement in making job assignments part of their leadership development process runs the gamut from simply providing people with information about developmental

opportunities in their current job to a systematic program of job rotation. Using job assignments for developmental purposes provides benefits that go beyond getting the job done and may even result in competitive advantages for the organization (Ohlott, 2004).

One developmental method has been so pervasive that it deserves somewhat greater attention here: the use of 360-degree feedback to assess leader competencies. Chappelow (2004) recently noted that perhaps the most remarkable trend in the field of leader development over the past 20 years has been the popularity and growth of 360-degree feedback. Others called it one of the most notable management innovations of the past decade (Atwater & Waldman, 1998; London & Beatty, 1993). To help those organizations disappointed with 360-degree feedback results, here is



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some of what we have learned over the years about how to implement them effectively (Chappelow, 2004):

1. An assessment activity is not necessarily developmental. Three-hundred-sixty-degree feedback should not be a stand-alone event. In addition to assessment there need to be development planning and follow-up activities.
2. Boss support is critical for the process itself, as well as for buy-in for the recipient's specific developmental goals stemming from the feedback.
3. The 360-degree feedback process works best if it starts with executives at the *top* of an organization and cascades downward throughout the organization.
4. Shoddy administration of a 360-degree feedback process can be fatal.
5. The timing of the process accounts for other organizational realities that could dilute or confound its impact.

Another kind of leadership development method gaining popularity during the past 20 years has involved teams (Ginnett, 1990). The prevalence and importance of teams in organizations today, and the unique challenges of leading teams, make it easy to forget that teams were *not* always so pervasive a part of our organizational lives. One way to convey the magnitude of that shift is to share an anecdote involving one of our colleagues. During his doctoral work in organizational behavior at Yale about 20 years ago, our colleague Robert Ginnett would tell others about his special interest in the leadership of teams. Routinely, he says, they would assume he must be an athletic coach; who else, they'd say, would be interested in teams?

Importance of a Leader's Emotional Resonance with and Impact on Others

Twenty years ago, our understanding of leadership in organizations was dominated by the classic two-factor approach focusing on task and relationship behaviors. That general approach can be characterized as *transactional* in nature, as distinguished from a qualitatively different approach often described as *transformational*.

Transactional leadership is characterized by

mutually beneficial exchanges between parties to optimize mutual benefit including the accomplishment of necessary organizational tasks. The exchange-model nature of transactional leadership tends to produce predictable and somewhat short-lived outcomes. Transformational leadership touched followers' deeper values and sense of higher purpose, and led to higher levels of follower commitment and effort and more enduring change. Transformational leaders provide compelling visions of a better future and inspire trust through seemingly unshakeable self-confidence and conviction.

Conger (1999) reviewed 15 years' research in the related fields of charismatic and transformational leadership, and observed that scholarly interest in these areas may be traceable to changes in the global competitive business environment at that time such as competitive pressures to reinvent themselves and challenges to employee commitment. Prior to that time, leadership researchers generally had not distinguished between the roles of leading and managing: A

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person in any position of authority was largely assumed to hold a leadership role. It was a novel idea that leadership and management might represent different kinds of roles and behaviors. Hunt (1999) was even more blunt about the state of scholarly research in the field of leadership in the 1980s. He described it as a gloom-and-doom period characterized by boring work, inconsequential questions, and static answers. Research in the areas of transformational and charismatic leadership both energized scholars and interested

organizational practitioners.

One factor presumably underlying the interest in charismatic and transformational leaders is the nature and strength of their emotional impact on others. The nature of the leader's emotional connectedness to others is also apparent in the growing interest over the past decade in topics like the leader's genuineness, authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness (Goleman, et al., 2002; Collins, 2001). These seem related more to the *affective* quality of a leader's relationships with others than to specific leader behaviors and competencies. Attention given during the last decade to the concept of emotional intelligence also attests to that shifting interest. For example, Goleman, et al. (2002) present data that a leader's ability to

resonate emotionally with others is a better predictor of effective executive leadership than is general intelligence. Recent research at the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) has uncovered links between specific elements of emotional intelligence and specific behaviors associated with leadership effectiveness (Ruderman, et al., 2001). Effective leadership is clearly about more than just enacting the “right” behaviors, or merely translating feedback (e.g., from 360-degree feedback) into changed behavior. One way 360-degree feedback can positively impact an individual’s effectiveness as a leader is by deepening that person’s self-awareness about the impact of his/her behavior on others.

Much leadership development feedback naturally affects how people think about *themselves*, not just their interactions with others. Similarly, it can lead to re-evaluations of many aspects of one’s life, not just one’s role as a leader. It can affect the whole person. It follows, then, that in some ways leadership development itself involves the development of the whole person. The Center for Creative Leadership began during the heyday of the human potential movement, and its ideals and educational philosophy still reflect a commitment to the value of *self-directed change and growth* (albeit informed by knowledge about the needs of the organization). Virtually all CCL leadership development programs include numerous activities to increase managerial self-awareness, and most address balance in life, including the relationship between health, fitness, and leadership. From our own participants, representing diverse companies across virtually all industries, the feedback is that balance in life has so far been more of an aspiration for them than a reality.

The Present

Today, effective leadership is commonly viewed as central to organizational success, and more importance is placed on leadership development than ever before. Developing “more and better” individual leaders is no longer the sole focus of leadership development, although it remains a critical aspect. Increasingly, leadership is defined not as what the leader does but rather as a process that engenders and is the result of relationships—relationships that focus on the interactions of both leaders and collaborators instead of focusing on only the competencies of the leaders. Leadership development practices

based on this paradigm are more difficult to design and implement than those that have been popular for the last several decades in which the objective was to train leaders to be good managers. In light of this, several themes describe the state of leadership development today:

1. Leadership development increasingly occurring within the context of work;
2. Critical reflection about the role of competencies in leadership development;
3. Revisiting the issue of work/life balance.

Leadership Development Within the Context of Work

Leadership development initiatives today typically offer performance support and real world application of skills through such methods as training programs, coaching and mentoring, action learning, and developmental assignments. Combining instruction with a real business setting helps people gain crucial skills and allows the organizations to attack relevant, crucial, real-time issues. The goal of leadership development ultimately involves action not knowledge. Therefore, development today means providing people opportunities to learn from their work rather than taking them away from their work to learn. It is critical to integrate those experiences with each other and with other developmental methods. State of the art leadership development now occurs in the context of ongoing work initiatives that are tied to strategic business imperatives (Dotlich & Noel, 1998; Moxley & O’Connor Wilson, 1998).

Furthermore, best practice organizations recognize leadership as a key component of jobs at all levels and are committed to creating leaders throughout their organizations. Increasingly, organizations have CEOs who model leadership development through a strong commitment to teach leaders internally. For example, Carly Fiorina at HP is annually teaching at 12 leading business results classes. The targets of leadership training programs are no longer relatively isolated individuals who were “anointed” by senior management. Instead of the thin horizontal slices, the program design is likely to involve work groups or several vertical slices of the organization (Fulmer, 1997).

The proliferation of leadership development methods was previously noted. Not just the *variety* of development methods matters; greater variety is not necessarily better. It is also critical



to *integrate* various developmental experiences to each other as well as to both developmental and business objectives. That way they can have a greater collective impact than they otherwise could have. But such efforts at integration are far from universal.

In reviewing the entire field of leadership development, McCauley and VanVelsor (2003) noted that the approach of many organizations is events-based rather than systemic. One method of making leadership development more systemic is to make sure it involves more than training. An array of developmental experiences must be designed and implemented that are meaningfully integrated with one another.

Leadership development efforts and initiatives must be ongoing, not a single program or event. The idea of leadership development strategies that link a variety of developmental practices including work itself (e.g., action learning projects) with other HR systems and business strategy is an emerging and probably necessary evolution of our state-of-practice (Allredge, et al., 2003).

Critical Reflection about the Role of Competencies in Leadership Development

Although the field is moving away from viewing leadership and leadership development solely in terms of leader attributes, skills, and traits, leadership competencies remain a core dimension of leadership development activities in most organizations. A recent benchmarking study found that leading-edge companies define leadership by a set of competencies that guide leadership development at all levels (Barrett & Beeson, 2002). A majority of organizations have identified leadership competencies, or at least tried to define the characteristics and qualities of successful leaders. How then are leadership competencies most effectively used in leadership development?

Leadership competencies need to correspond to the organization's particular strategy and business model (Intagliata, et al., 2000). Leadership development programs implemented in isolation of the business environment rarely bring about profound or long-lasting changes; therefore, organizations must develop leaders and leadership competencies that correspond with and are

specific to their distinct business challenges and goals. While common leadership qualities or competencies characterize effective leaders, developing such core leader qualities may not be enough. The leadership competencies of a best-practice organization uniquely fit the organization, its particular strategy, and its business model (APQC, 2000).

This perspective has also been applied to the individual level. Not only may organizations differ in their identification of critical leadership competencies, some would argue it is unlikely all leaders *within* an organization must all possess the same set of competencies to be successful—

or make the organization successful. According to this perspective, leaders should not be accountable for demonstrating a particular set of behaviors but rather should be held accountable for desired outcomes. This perspective looks beyond competencies, which have a tendency to focus on “what needs fixing,” and instead focuses attention on the *whole person* and on peoples' strengths and natural talents, not on a reductionist list of idiosyncratic competencies (Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2003). Development is

increasingly seen as a process of developing and leveraging strengths and of understanding and minimizing the impact of weaknesses.

Work/Life Balance Revisited

Health and well-being at work are issues of increasing interest and attention, including their relevance to leadership. In an environment of constant change and unrelenting competition, managing stress and personal renewal to avoid burn-out are becoming a central focus for leadership development. Dealing with multiple and competing demands of a fast-paced career and personal/family relationships and responsibilities is a common challenge, and there is increasing recognition that a person's work and personal life have reciprocal effects on each other. We know that individual leader effectiveness is enhanced when people manage multiple roles at home and at work but we continue to learn more about the organizational benefits and maybe even the benefits to family and community as well. We also know leadership effectiveness is correlated with better health and exercising

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(McDowell-Larsen, et al., 2002). We need to better understand which assumptions about organizational life are challenged by the idea of work/life integration as well as which changes organizations need to make to facilitate greater work/life integration.

Challenging work/life situations are integrally related to the need for, and development of, resilience. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity or hardship, a characteristic that can be developed at any time during a person's life. It is an active process of self-righting and growth that helps people deal with hardships in a manner that is conducive to development (Moxley & Pulley, 2004). One of the fundamental characteristics of resilience is that it allows individuals to take difficult experiences in their lives and use them as opportunities to learn. This, in turn, develops their ability to face hardships successfully in the future.

The Future

Several trends will have a major role in our future understanding and practice of leadership and leadership development. They represent, in different ways, the critical role changing contexts will play in leadership development.

1. Leadership competencies will still matter;
2. Globalization/internationalization of leadership concepts, constructs, and development methods;
3. The role of technology;
4. Increasing interest in the integrity and character of leaders;
5. Pressure to demonstrate return on investment;
6. New ways of thinking about the nature of leadership and leadership development.

Leadership Competencies Will Still Matter

Leadership competencies will still matter, but they will change as the competitive environment changes. According to a Conference Board study (Barrett & Beeson, 2002), five critical forces will shape leadership competencies (requirements) in the future: 1) global competition, 2) information technology, 3) the need for rapid and flexible organizations, 4) teams, and 5) differing employee needs. Given these, most organizations will not need the "Lone Ranger" type of leader as much as a leader who can motivate and coordinate a team-based approach. This new environment will have greater ambiguity and uncertainty, and many

if not all aspects of leadership (e.g., strategy development) will require a more collaborative approach to leadership. The model of effective leadership in the future will be one of encouraging environments that unlock the entire organization's human asset potential.

The Conference Board report "Developing Business Leaders for 2010" (Barrett & Beeson, 2002) identified four essential roles for meeting the business challenges of the future, and the career derailers that will matter most in the future. The four essential roles for meeting future business challenges include master strategist, change manager, relationship/network builder, and talent developer. The most important derailers in the future include hesitancy to take necessary business risks; personal arrogance and insensitivity; controlling leadership style; and reluctance to tackle difficult people issues.

Changes in the context in which leadership is practiced will bring certain competencies even more to the forefront, including globalization, the increasing use of technology, and public scrutiny of the character and integrity of leaders.

Globalization/Internationalization of Leadership Concepts, Constructs, and Development Methods

Future leaders will need to be conversant in doing business internationally and conceiving strategies on a global basis. Globalization will intensify the requirement that senior leaders deal effectively with a complex set of constituencies external to the organization. (e.g., responsibility for managing the company's interface with trade, regulatory, political, and media groups on a wide range of issues).

Leadership development is rapidly moving to include substantial components involving international markets, world economic trends, and focus on particular regions such as the Asia Pacific rim (Cacioppe, 1998). Leaders are being exposed to how the world is becoming interdependent and the need to be up to date with international trends that are vital to the success of the business. Use of the internet to obtain information and to market products and services worldwide is a topic in many current leadership development programs.

The Role of Technology

The technology revolution has changed organizational life. It has changed the ways information and knowledge are accessed and disseminated, and the ways in which people can communicate and



share with one another. This has profound implications for what effective leadership will look like as well as how to use technology most effectively in leadership development.

Leaders will clearly have to be much more savvy with regard to technology in general. Facility and comfort with communication technology and the internet will be a necessity. Given the pace of change and the speed of response time that leaders are now required to demonstrate, technological savvy has rapidly become an integral aspect of leadership effectiveness. It has even been noted that the effective use of technology is proving to be a “hierarchy buster.” It can be an avenue for people to communicate with leaders at all levels and whenever they need to at any time. Leading virtually is already a reality, and requirements to lead geographically dispersed units and teams will only increase. Technology will not be a solution for this challenge, but it will surely be a tool.

The pressure on costs, increased reality of virtual teams, and availability of technology in leadership development has reduced the need for people to travel to training programs, will make learning opportunities available to geographically dispersed leaders, and will allow individuals access to learning opportunities when it best suits their schedule. Technology can extend learning over time rather than limiting it to time spent in the classroom. Technology will also enhance the emergence and sharing of knowledge among participants via such venues as chat-rooms, thought leader access, e-learning advances, e-mentoring/ shadowing, and business simulations.

While technology is useful for some aspects of leadership development, it cannot replace the importance of bringing leaders together to deepen their relationships and their learning experience. Maximizing the effectiveness of leadership development offers the best of both worlds: integrating face-to-face classroom and coaching experiences with technology-based tools and processes, i.e., blended learning solutions (e.g., Alexander & Ciaschi, 2002).

Increasing Interest in the Integrity and Character of Leaders

The 1990s witnessed ethical lapses and arrogance among senior executives of certain companies of disturbing-if-not-unprecedented

magnitude. Enron and WorldCom were two notable examples. Such events probably accelerated and deepened growing sentiment among many—including members of organizational governance boards—that interrelationships among leadership, character, and values ought to be made more salient.

It is probably not a coincidence that a recent article in *CEO Magazine* (Martin, 2003) observed that “the age of the imperial CEO is waning. In its place, a crop of new CEOs – humble, team building, highly communicative – are rising” (p.25). Similarly, one of the intriguing and unexpected findings in the book *Good to Great* (Collins, 2001) was of the universally modest and self-effacing nature of CEOs in the good-to-great companies. This contrasts considerably with the often flamboyant and self-promoting style of many popular business leaders in recent years who, despite celebrity status, typically did not have an enduring positive impact on their companies.

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) noted that transformational leadership is only authentic when it is grounded on the leader’s moral character, concern for others, and congruence of ethical values with action. A leader’s credibility and trustworthiness are critical, and increasing numbers make the case that character—as defined by qualities like one’s striving for fairness, respecting others, humility, and concern for the greater good—represents the most critical quality of leadership (e.g., Sankar, 2003). Assuming there is continuing if not increasing interest in the character of leaders, much work is needed in the years ahead to assure greater clarity of concept about these vital-yet-elusive concepts if they are to play a prominent role in leadership development practices in organizations.

Pressure to Demonstrate Return on Investment

The future trends noted reflect in part a response to the changing context of leadership. Perhaps the strongest pressure facing leadership practitioners in the future may be to demonstrate ROI (Kincaid & Gordick, 2003). While leadership development is strategically important, it is usually expensive. Yet while leading-edge companies today such as PepsiCo, IBM, and Johnson and Johnson spend significant time and resources on leadership development, attempts to quantify its

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benefits precisely have remained elusive and have led some to speculate that investment in developing better leaders may be falling short of the desired impact. In today's economy, leadership development expenses will likely have to meet certain standards of proof of impact or return on investment. Demonstrating and quantifying the impact of leadership development investments is likely to emerge as a priority for organizations committed to building leadership strength.

To maximize ROI for leadership development efforts, its payoffs organizations must effectively plan, implement, and evaluate their initiatives. They must create a "chain of impact" that connects leadership development to relevant organizational outcomes (Martineau & Hannum, 2003). Historically, most organizations have not closed the loop through systematic evaluation and thus make assumptions about its efficacy based on anecdotes, reactions, or hunches.

New Ways of Thinking about the Nature of Leadership and Leadership Development

Emerging new perspectives on the nature of leadership may profoundly affect our thinking about leadership development. Increasingly, leadership and leadership development are seen as inherently collaborative, social, and relational processes (Day, 2001). Similarly, Vicere (2002) has noted the advent of the "networked economy" where "partnerships, strategic and tactical, customer and supplier, personal and organizational, are essential to competitive effectiveness."

As a result, leadership will be understood as the collective capacity of *all* members of an organization to accomplish such critical tasks as setting direction, creating alignment, and gaining commitment. Leadership development based on this paradigm is more difficult to design and implement than those that have been popular for the last several decades in which the focus was to train individual leaders. Taking this next step will require a deeper understanding of the role of organizational systems and culture in leadership development (VanVelsor & McCauley, 2004).

Conclusion

The dual challenges of *understanding* the nature of leadership development and *implementing* effective leadership development practices will likely be greater than ever before. At the same time, we find ourselves guardedly opti-

mistic about the field's future. Our optimism is directly tied to some of the trends that make the future both challenging and interesting. For example, leadership development practices will need to become better integrated in the broader context of organizational business challenges and systems. Thus, not only will organizations need to *hire and develop* leaders, they will also need to be the kind of organizations that nurture and reinforce *enactment* of the kinds of behaviors desired in those leaders. Similarly, demands to demonstrate ROI can encourage greater rigor and clarity in our understanding of the nature of leadership development and in how we assess its impact. Meeting such challenges will be one important thrust of more comprehensive efforts in the years ahead to demonstrate convincingly the strategic role of people in organizations.

Biographical Sketches

Gina Hernandez-Broome is a senior program and research associate at the Center for Creative Leadership's Colorado Springs campus, and manages its Leadership Development for Human Resource Professionals (LDHRP). At CCL she also researches how systemic factors affect an organization's leadership capacity. Prior to joining the Center, Gina worked in a Denver-based consulting firm with a diverse mix of client organizations, designing and facilitating customized training. She gained extensive experience designing and implementing various assessment processes including certification processes, assessment center technology, and 360-degree feedback processes. Gina has also held adjunct professor positions at the University of Colorado. She holds an MS and a PhD in industrial/organizational psychology from Colorado State University and a BS in psychology from the University of Colorado.

Richard L. Hughes is a senior enterprise associate with the Center for Creative Leadership at its campus in Colorado Springs, CO. Rich trains in many of the Center's leadership development programs for senior executives including Developing the Strategic Leader and Leadership at the Peak, and his research focuses on strategic leadership. He is on HRPS's Publications Committee, and is an associate articles editor for HRP in the key knowledge area of leadership development. Rich is senior author of an undergraduate textbook surveying the field of leadership, now in its fourth edition. Before joining CCL, Rich headed the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the U.S. Air



Force Academy. He received his BS from the U.S. Air Force Academy, his MA from the University of Texas, and his PhD from the University of Wyoming.

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