



Leader-Led Leadership

by Eric Herzog, PH.D. President, Quest Consulting and Training Corporation

Introduction:

Founded in the business climate of 1978, Quest Consulting & Training Corporation has always looked to the future. So it's not surprising this innovative organization has developed a unique vision of how to help each client perpetuate success. Quest's founder, Dr. Eric Herzog, Ph.D., discovered an over-riding truth about his most successful clients. Those organizations which retained the legacy and vision of the founders and/or leaders of the company had the best results. Now, after 22+ years of listening to their clients and working with corporate leaders, and developing and refining the philosophy of top-down leadership development, Quest's professionals have a program you need to seriously consider.

A. The Challenge:

How can a successful organization best perpetuate success?

Your organization may hire the best and the brightest as you grow over the years. But unless these newcomers access the definitive corporate culture, the drive, the vision, the know-how, the energy that built the company, they may be doomed to perpetuate mediocrity. Through no fault of their own.

Over the years, many core concepts are lost to future generations of leaders and employees simply because the key leaders and initiators have moved out or retired. Yet the absence of these keys to success can affect the entire corporate culture. And can lead to a decline in performance and profitability. Knowledge transfer or knowledge management is today's greatest HR challenge.

B. The Answer:

Getting your leaders to develop the leaders of tomorrow.

Imagine how much more powerful the corporate mission statement will be when your key leaders deliver it personally. Who better to teach the "best practices" and successful strategies and tactics than the individuals who developed them?

Yet, it's not easy for company leaders to find time to pass along their experience and vision to new employees. Many senior executives are historically unapproachable on the subject of teaching. However, it's been proven – on a rather large scale – that leader-led development is one of the most profitable investments of time and money a successful corporate leader can make.

C. The New Paradigm:

HR Professionals and Senior Leaders Working Together.

As each successful Leader-Led Development program is scrutinized, it becomes apparent the primary key – from day one – is for HR and senior leadership to work together to develop the best program possible. Neither can do it without the other.

Your senior leader/HR partnership has many rewards . . . some of them quite surprising. As senior leaders accept responsibility for developing new leaders, it becomes a higher priority. Past habits of simply supporting and reinforcing HR efforts change rapidly to a role of promoting and setting an example. Leaders find it is very satisfying to make the time to be the coach. The facilitator. And to do it right.

Once the program is in place, it becomes self-perpetuating. New situations handled in the workplace are easily incorporated into the program, so it is always up to date. Credibility of the training goes up with active involvement of senior leaders. Succession becomes nearly seamless, as the outgoing and incoming leaders are already in sync . . . working together from start to finish. The company captures the expertise of its senior leaders and has it documented for future reference. Especially important now that up to 50% of the workforce is approaching retirement.

D. The Process:

Putting in Motion the Leader-Led Leadership Development Process.

You begin by formulating new learning models.

You will no longer think the best way to train is to import an “expert” to teach a subject with how to’s, workbooks, Q & A and practice sessions. You will no longer fill an employee’s mind with examples and theories. Then send him or her back to work to figure out how to apply them.

Your new learning model will bring together the company’s most experienced leaders with the trainees who must learn how to perform as leaders, too. They will work on real cases, issues and examples and discuss “best practices.” These are the things they will be able to apply the very next day. Your program is designed to tap the strengths of the leadership team and enable them to impart their experience . . . in a way with which they are very comfortable . . . to the trainees. These same leaders are then present in the workplace to reinforce the learning. All the leaders are “on the same” page with leading, working towards improved performance.

E. The Return on Investment:

Real Benefits You Can See, Measure and Replicate.

Aside from the obvious financial benefits of using internal “experts” rather than hiring them, this program pays off with new efficiencies that cut training costs in several ways.

- Training can be decentralized, avoiding costly travel by using local leaders throughout the company at home and abroad.
- Impact is discernible from day one. Employees find the challenges they face have already been explained specifically. And they have been provided real solutions, not just theory.
- Corporate objectives are part of the training objectives, imparting ownership to both leaders and trainees for meeting major challenges.
- The program is easily maintained and repeatable over and over with real time updates from the leaders themselves.

F. The Results:

Winners Developing Winners.

Soon you will be turning out a new breed of leader. Winners who don’t have to guess what practices and procedures work best. Confident performers who know how to overcome problems and lead in the way you want to manage the business. They have gained critical thinking skills, through case examples and challenging discussions. Everyone has participated in the process. And with their help, each new generation of leader will perpetuate and contribute to the corporate vision and operational excellence.

“This represents a new paradigm in training. Leader-Led Leadership Development not only allows for a rapid development, but also has the added benefit of addressing issues like retention and aging managerial staffs,” says Eric Herzog, Ph.D., President of Quest. “As today’s senior managers approach retirement, every business is faced with the problem of capturing their knowledge, while at the same time developing new leaders for the future.”

G. Examples/Case Studies

COSTCO Wholesale

COSTCO, a 350+ store membership retail chain, faced a major challenge. Corporate objectives called for opening 35 new warehouses per year. To meet that goal they needed 5,000 new managers over a five-year period of time. And they needed to grow them from within, for hiring outsiders did not seem to work.

Realizing their previous management training programs were not equal to the task, they contacted Eric Herzog at Quest Consulting to help create innovative ways to develop the new leaders and staff. The program, Leader-Led Leadership Development, designed with Herzog and his colleagues, employs some unique strategies.

First, they challenged their senior management team to get involved with the program. The premise here is that it is management's responsibility to develop tomorrow's leaders. It does not rely on traditional methods. The programs allow COSTCO to capture the knowledge and best practices of their senior leadership, and then use the same senior leaders as training facilitators.

With the help of exceptional company leaders and the HR department, Quest developed customized case studies that are specific to COSTCO's business. These cases address vital issues of operating and managing the company. The case study approach creates the comfort zone for COSTCO's senior leaders and warehouse managers leaders to facilitate in-depth discussions of difficult business issues and to define "best practices."

Leader-Led Leadership Development assures each new facility will be opened and managed just like the most successful of the chain's existing stores. Therefore, the success of this program directly impacts COSTCO's financial bottom line. And the senior leaders are creating a learning organization by seeking to extend the learning to all areas of the business.

Milgard Manufacturing

The largest window manufacture in the Western United States, Milgard, was facing similar growth issues. The strategic plan called for long-term expansion. But the chief obstacle to growth was having leaders who know how to lead “the Milgard Way.”

Milgard University was developed to capture the knowledge and experience of the senior leaders, those responsible for the success of the company. Milgard’s Leader-Led Leadership program was implemented in phases, one program of 24-32 hours per year.

Now, senior leaders don’t just “send” their staff to take a course. They help design and actually facilitate the program. They make a commitment to develop their people and support them on the job. They identify specific – real – issues and teach tomorrow’s leaders how to apply the company’s preferred methods to deal with them. Best of all, Milgard’s senior leaders are there on the job reinforcing the training as their newer managers make decisions in complex situations. And Gary Milgard is confident his leaders of the future are well versed in running the company “the Milgard Way.”