In the March 2011 issue of *T+D*, Stephen L. Cohen presented a leader development value chain that intentionally made a distinction among leader (person), leading (situation), and leadership (system). He identified leaders as C-suite executives, first-line supervisors, or those in the pipeline. We propose that these leaders, who conduct leadership as a function of their position, are engaged in capital *L* leadership. On the other hand, lowercase *l* leadership includes anyone, regardless of title or position, who interacts with others in the workplace. Leadership, in our view, is a process that involves the interactions and relationships between the leader and others. This view of leadership enables anyone to develop as a leader.

Cohen’s view of leadership focuses on the development of the leader’s characteristics (knowledge, skills, and abilities) and behaviors. In addition to the characteristics and behaviors, our view focuses on the development of the leader’s attitudes and values. Taken together, this ensures alignment between doing and being—which is crucial for individual and organizational performance. Attitudes and values can be formed through reflection and mentoring (as shown in Figure 1).

Reflection and mentoring provide leaders an opportunity to consider the impact and effectiveness of their characteristics and behaviors through a feedback loop. For example, an organization may determine that it is important for leaders to be compassionate in dealing with others. A leader can easily take this message of compassion and employ it in his interactions with others. However, without the reflective feedback loop (for example, consideration of personal observations of own behavior used to update knowledge), the leader may fail.
Leadership development shouldn’t be exclusive to high-level staff. Rather, all employees should possess an understanding about leadership from many perspectives.
Imagine a leader who is successfully compassionate when dealing with others in most situations. But in some contexts or circumstances, or even with certain personality types, that same compassionate stance may not yield appropriate results. Reflection, whether individually or guided by a mentor, serves as a learning process to enable a leader to become more effective. Talent management is a strong vehicle to develop these capabilities.

L.E.A.D. as an enabler of talent management
At the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, we have been in the business of developing leaders of character for some time. We developed the L.E.A.D. framework as a lens by which to view and improve our leader development program. It can be used to create a strategic design for leader development programs within an organization. Specifically, an organization’s talent managers can use this framework as a strategy to develop its leaders, a critical component of talent management.

The elements of L.E.A.D. are
• learn from theory
• experience through practice
• analyze using reflection
• deepen understanding through mentoring.

This framework helps to shape the leader models, theories, experiences, and relationships that guide all leader development.

Learn from theory
Why is learning from theory so important? We find that individuals almost always have preconceptions about leaders and leadership. Sometimes these ideas are right on, and sometimes they are way off.

One preconception about leadership we frequently encounter is that a leader needs to take care of her people. On the surface, we can probably all agree that leaders should be concerned about the interests of their people. However, if leaders are concerned about the needs of followers to the exclusion of everything else, problems can occur.

We all know of a boss or leader who was concerned only about our well-being. And it might have been great to work for this person, but did he ever really get anything done? Did that leader move the organization forward?

To take care of your people without also taking care of the work at hand does not make someone a good leader. Rather, the appropriate balance of taking care of followers and the task makes a person a good leader. So while the preconception that leaders need to take care of their people is not wrong, per se, it also is not completely right. This is where learning from theory can give a more complete, thorough picture of leaders and leadership.

Learning from theory is primarily learning from the work of others—whether through their study or experience. Many people have systematically studied leaders and leadership, and have great insights to impart.

Experience through practice
No matter how much we read about leadership, we cannot possibly become better leaders until we attempt to put that learning into practice. The experience through practice portion of the L.E.A.D. framework gives developing leaders the opportunity to actually practice leadership. Experiences that challenge leaders are critical for development.

These experiences provide developing leaders an opportunity to attempt the theories they have learned and practice the behaviors of leadership. Additionally, challenging experiences give developing leaders the opportunity to test their own preconceptions, and even misperceptions, around leadership.

Certainly these leadership experiences can come in the form of role plays during training sessions. However, such experiences do not need to be manufactured. Luckily, the workplace abounds with leadership opportunities, even for those without any formal leadership authority.

Analyze using reflection
The reflection portion of the L.E.A.D. framework gives leaders the methods, processes, and frameworks to think critically about the capabilities and capacities that have been and are developing. Reflection is essential for true leader development.

Reflection is “sense making” of leadership experiences in terms of the theory learned and preconceptions held.
Without this sense making, theories remain merely abstractions, experiences remain merely events, and preconceptions get no further examination at all. True reflection allows for the evaluation of the experiences, the theories, and the preconceptions about leadership.

Usually in the heat of a challenging leadership experience, we just act—often that is all we have time for. Reflecting on leadership experiences allows developing leaders to take a step back from the action, and to think about the leadership successes and failures that occurred during an experience. For example:

- What things went well?
- What could the developing leader have done differently?
- What theories were useful in the experience?
- Did leadership preconceptions enhance or harm successful leadership?
- If I were in a situation like that, how would I act?

While it often is helpful to conduct written reflection, it is important to note that reflection often occurs during the process of mentoring.

Deepen understanding through mentoring

Mentoring—especially in terms of psychosocial support—attempts to guide protégés to deeper understanding of their leadership experiences, how those experiences fit with the theory that they learned, and to assess strengths and areas for improvement.

We have found a strong relationship between the relative cost of a program and its benefit in developing leadership.

Using L.E.A.D. for leader development

Figure 2 on page 52 provides a high-level overview of some of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy’s leader development programs and assessment points. It indicates many of the leadership development assessment methods. In general, it should be noted that we have found a strong relationship between the relative cost of a program and its benefit in developing leadership.

With this as a consideration, below are two examples of leader development opportunities that can be implemented using the L.E.A.D. framework. The first is a leadership book club and would be on the low cost, low benefit end of the spectrum. The second is a year-long fellowship program that would be on the high cost, high benefit end of the spectrum.

A book club is a concept that easily could be implemented and focused on leader development using the L.E.A.D. framework. We have had such a learning community at our institution for many years.

Learn from theory. By selecting appropriate books on leadership, you can determine which aspects you’d like to emphasize. Our Leadership Development Center selects and purchases books that are shared with participants in the weeks leading up to a discussion meeting or brown bag event. Typical books have included *Drive*, *Leadership for the Future*, and *Good to Great*. You also could choose to select articles or even videos as well.

Experience through practice. During the course of our discussion event, we often have participants pair up with a colleague to make commitments on how each will adopt and implement some of the ideas learned from the reading. These partner pairs form the basis for later reflection and mentoring.

Analyze using reflection. After a few weeks, the pairs will come together at a mutually convenient time and discuss how their actions faired and what adjustments they intend to make regarding their leadership.

Deepen understanding through mentoring. These reflections are shared through peer mentoring (although it could be through any form of mentoring). It provides the essential feedback and learning necessary to become better leaders.

A longer-term more formal fellowship program might intentionally include all aspects of L.E.A.D. One example of such a program is the Excellence in Government fellows program that is targeted to senior civil servants who are considered high potential for senior executive positions within the government. Although this program was not specifically created with the L.E.A.D. framework in mind, it does contain all of the elements.

Learn from theory. Typically, there is a reading list of articles and books on leadership. Additionally, during the in-residence sessions, there is classroom instruction and discussion about leadership topics. Learning occurs by benchmarking leaders and other organizations.

Experience through practice. Practice is performed primarily in three ways: the fellowship requires a team results project, each participant has the opportunity to practice the just-learned ideas in the natural work setting when they return.
Figure 2 | Cost Versus Benefits of Various Leadership Assessments

SUMMARY OF IMPACT AND INVESTMENT

COST

LOW

HIGH

BENEFIT

LOW

HIGH

Fellowship program

Philosophy and defense

Mentoring

Capstone course

Faculty review boards

360° feedback

Identity paper

"This I Believe" paper

Book club

Mental models

Internships

Grad performance

Concept inventory

GOLD individual development plans

Cadet regimental positions

Copyright American Society for Training & Development, 2012. No unauthorized use, distribution, or reproduction is permitted.

Permissions authorized through Copyright Clearing Center (www.astd.org/licensing). Order Number: 9003580276 Order Date: 08/02/2012
from an in-residence session, and each participant is detailed to a special assignment (typically two to three months) in another organization or agency. **Analyse using reflection.** Each participant receives 360-degree feedback at the beginning of the program and uses it to create a learning action plan. Also, participants are encouraged to develop a personal leadership philosophy and maintain leadership journals.

**The workplace abounds with leadership opportunities, even for those without any formal leadership authority.**

**Deepen understanding with mentoring.** Finally, each participant is assigned an executive coach, and they meet at least three times during the fellowship to discuss the 360-degree feedback, the learning action plan, emergent challenges, and so on. Additionally, the cohort of participants provides a rich pool of peer mentors from other agencies to discuss leadership, learn, and improve.

**Putting L.E.A.D. into action**

Now that we’ve described the L.E.A.D. framework and have presented a pair of examples, we encourage you to consider ways in which you can implement aspects of this approach. There is an unlimited number of ways to put this into action. To get you started, we’ve provided a list of methods for each element of the L.E.A.D. framework (see sidebar).

All four components of the framework are important. When you next design or improve a leader development activity, remember to include all four aspects, or as many as you can. Also, remember that:
- the leader is the object of leader development
- L.E.A.D. and leader development enable talent management
- all people can benefit from leader development.

**A good strategy**

Talent management is about getting the right people in the right jobs doing the right things with the right people at the right time for the right company goals and objectives. L.E.A.D. is a good strategy for how talent managers achieve that goal.

Leader development helps organizations to understand how employees possess an understanding about leadership from many perspectives. These perspectives should include the theoretical, practical, and reflective. Talent management and leader development enable shifts in leader and employee behaviors that are necessary to adapt to the needs of the ever-changing workplace.

Now that you’ve been introduced to another theoretical framework for leader development, we’d encourage you to apply it in your own context and reflect on its impact to your organization, talent management, and leader development.

**Laurel Goulet** teaches human resource management and diversity at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. She specializes in mentoring and developed a center that oversees a mentoring program focused on leader development; [Laurel.R.Goulet@uscga.edu](mailto:Laurel.R.Goulet@uscga.edu). **Jonathan Jefferson** is director of the Institute for Leadership, the leader in residence, and a professor of management at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy; [Jonathan.K.Jefferson@uscga.edu](mailto:Jonathan.K.Jefferson@uscga.edu). **Paul Szwed** teaches management courses and performs research about leader development and leadership assessment for the AACSB-accredited undergraduate management degree program at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy; [Paul.S.Szwed@uscga.edu](mailto:Paul.S.Szwed@uscga.edu).

---

**Methods to Use Elements of the L.E.A.D. Framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learn from theory</th>
<th>Experience through practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Assigned reading</td>
<td>- Special or “stretch” assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reading lists</td>
<td>- Natural work environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Book clubs</td>
<td>- Rotational assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Study of the month</td>
<td>- Simulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Short training</td>
<td>- Role play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Course modules</td>
<td>- Project team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Expert speakers</td>
<td>- Service learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Podcasts</td>
<td>- Volunteering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Video</td>
<td>- Community service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analyse using reflection</th>
<th>Deepen understanding with mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Guided discussion</td>
<td>- Informal programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Journaling</td>
<td>- Intact or created relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Blogging</td>
<td>- Individual or group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Written responses to prompts</td>
<td>- In person or at distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Public presentation or panel</td>
<td>- Goal-oriented or open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Group discussion</td>
<td>- Directed inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fictional or real interviews</td>
<td>- Question focused</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

INTERESTED IN ORDERING E-PRINTS? Would a digital version of this article be a great fit for your next course, presentation, or event? Are you interested in e-prints of several T+D articles on a specific topic? Visit [www.astd.org/TD](http://www.astd.org/TD), and click on “About T+D,” for more information.
I would like to subscribe to T+D magazine—12 monthly issues that keep me at the forefront of workplace learning and performance.

☐ Individual rate $150 ($216 outside the U.S.)
☐ Institutional rate $300 ($366 outside the U.S.)

YES!

Order Information

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Title: ____________________________________________________________
Company: ________________________________________________________
Address: _________________________________________________________
City: _____________________________________________________________
State/Province: ___________________________________________________
Zip/Postal Code: __________________________________________________
Country: _________________________________________________________
Email: ___________________________________________________________
Phone: __________________________________________________________
Fax: _____________________________________________________________

Check One:
☐ $150 (Individual USA)  ☐ $216 (Individual Outside the US)
☐ $300 (Institutional USA)  ☐ $366 (Institutional Outside the US)
☐ VISA  ☐ MasterCard  ☐ Amex  ☐ Discover  ☐ Check (USD)
(Payable to T+D)

Card Number: ___________________________ Expiration Date: ___________________________

Signature: ________________________________

Fax this form to 1.205.995.1588 OR Mail to:
American Society for Training & Development
Subscription Office, P.O. Box 11806
Birmingham, Alabama 35202-1806, USA

Order online at store.astd.org
Phone: 1.866.802.7059

Orders processed within three business days.

If you have questions, please contact td@subscriptionoffice.com

Prices valid through 12/31/2013. If you should wish to cancel your subscription for any reason, you will receive a refund on all unmailed issues. Your subscription to T+D may be a tax deductible business expense. Please allow 6 to 8 weeks to receive your first issue.

T+D is published by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD)