

Byrne, J. C. & Rees, R. T. (2006). *The successful leadership development program: How to build it and how to keep it going*. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.

Reviewed by Anna Haller

Introduction

There are many books on the market claiming to have the answers for developing the leadership potential in the reader. Some of these books do a better job than others, but still, reading a book is not all that it takes to develop the particular skills necessary for a specific job or profession. Jo-Ann Byrne and Richard Rees have created a process that will help companies and organizations develop a leadership development program rooted in their mission, vision, and strategic goals. This program will be built upon the individual needs of employees and will be endorsed by senior-level management. This algorithm that Byrne and Rees have developed is the center of their book, *The Successful Leadership Development Program*. The book outlines the steps one should take in implementing a leadership development program in the workplace. This process is lengthy, but if done correctly can help implement a program that will be sustainable. Byrne and Rees have written a book that is easy to read and is well organized, so that the algorithm is easy to follow and steps are clear.

Theoretical Framework

The Successful Leadership Development Program is not based on any one leadership theory. It is however based on adult learning theories that promote the knowledge of leadership through developmental programs. Most leadership theories available today are grounded in the idea that leadership can be taught, and this is the same foundation on which Byrne and Rees have written their book.

This book also uses structural theories, such as hierarchies and power, to develop an understanding of how decisions are made in the workplace and how best to use these structures to gain acceptance from upper-level administration. Much of what Byrne and Rees have written about in their book regarding gaining support from administration relates to Bolman and Deal's (cite) structural frame. The authors demonstrate a need for winning over the administration when developing a new plan and they provide many useful examples of how to do this early on the program development process.

Elements of the Book

Introduction

The introduction lays the framework for The Leadership Development Program Algorithm that will be addressed throughout the book. This algorithm is a roadmap for developing a leadership development program from the initial stages of interest within an organization to how to sustain a program after it has become a part of the daily operations. The way this algorithm is structured allows organizations to start program building or implementation based on the current status of a leadership development program once it has become a part of the organizational culture. The introduction also provides overviews of each chapter within the book as well as the CD-Rom that accompanies the book and provides many resources and documents that are discussed throughout the book.

Chapter 1: Guiding Principles

Byrne and Rees have written this book based on the need to keep a leadership development program sustained over a long period of time. In this first chapter, they address the need to ensure a program is rooted in the mission, vision, values, goals, and strategic vision of an organization. By developing a program that is rooted into the very fabric of the organization and addresses systemic changes, one can ensure a long life of the program. Other guiding principles that are addressed in this chapter include the program is outcome-based and measurable, the program fits the needs of adult learners, the program addresses multiple learning levels to attract members at all levels of the organization, and that the program can be sustained over a period of time. The program should be established with multiple learning levels so that it can be tailored to fit each member fit the organization and will provide learning opportunities based on multiple levels of knowledge. These guiding principles need to be addressed early on in the planning process to ensure that it will be a part of the organization's future and to provide enough information to organization members so that they understand the need to investing their time and energy into the program.

Chapter 2: Building Your Foundation

There are three foundational components that each leadership development program must have and that are addressed in this chapter: (1) a philosophy of leadership development, (2) a conceptual framework for leadership development, and (3) an operational strategy for leadership development. Again, these three components of the program require input early on in the process, but will help the program become an integrated component of training once it has been implemented. At this stage in the process of developing a new leadership development program, it is essential to create buy-in from senior leadership. Including senior executives in decision-making during the early stages of planning will provide approval later in the developmental process. One of the foundations needed to move forward in planning is to develop an assessment of employees' current skill levels. An assessment will provide the organizers information referring to the skill levels of employees, and what levels of training must be offered to improve these competency areas. This chapter addresses three of the areas outlined in the *Successful Leadership Development Program* algorithm.

Chapter 3: Developing Your Leadership Competencies

Leadership competencies are the skills that people possess that are related to the work they do in an organization. There are multiple types of competencies, practical (technical skills), social (interpersonal), and analytical (critical thinking). Competencies should not be decided by one individual lone, but should be selected as a result of discussions and focus groups on the topic. Once leadership competencies have been chosen, it is time develop those areas further and deconstruct what the competency would be like at multiple stages in one's leadership development (ex: beginner, intermediate, and advanced). The authors continue to stress the importance of including representatives from senior management in order to develop a program that will have longevity in the organization.

Chapter 4: Designing a Diagnostic Inventory for Leadership Competencies

This quick chapter builds on the competencies that were developed during chapter four. Byrne and Rees discuss the steps for developing a diagnostic inventory that will determine employees' skill levels in the different competency areas that were deemed important to the function of the organization. It is most common to use a Likert scale for the diagnostic inventory because the use of this scale makes an assessment easy to score.

Chapter 5: Developing and Using Your Return on Investment Model

A return on investment (ROI) model is vital to the success of a leadership development program because it proves to the leadership of an organization that the program is worth funding. It is necessary to develop an ROI model before there is a need to justify saving your program. If the leadership development program is truly linked to the core mission, values, and strategic initiatives of an organization, then developing the ROI will not be too much extra work. The return on investment is made up of calculations, such as: number of participants, how much money has gone into the training program, and projected developmental gains from the program. Determining the program's ROI will prove to members of the organization that the program saves money in the long run – by providing beneficial services to employees.

Chapter 6: Obtaining Administrative and Financial Support

Every program within an organization competes for monetary funds in order to have a place within the fabric of the company. The competition over these resources can prove to be a difficult challenge, unless you have done your homework ahead of time. Byrne and Rees have strategically placed this chapter after others that will help to earn support early on that will help in securing financial support for the program. When asking for resources to fund a program it is imperative to have done preparation and come to the first meeting with the mission, goals, ROI data, and assessment information from any previous focus groups. The authors provide many great tips to keep in mind when asking for funds within an organization and provide sample program proposals on the accompanying CD-Rom.

Chapter 7: Developing Individual Learning Plans

This chapter is composed of two main actions: developing learning levels and creating learning plans. First, learning levels are the multiple levels that one can be at in their development of each competency area (ex: beginner, competent, expert). These learning levels will help administrators place individuals in the training level that will provide the most growth. Learning levels are determined based on one's assessments of themselves on the leadership inventory discussed in chapter four. The authors found that the learning levels could also be used for assessment purposes in later stages of the program. The second area discussed in the chapter is individual learning plans. Participants design their own learning plan based on their answers to the inventory, as well as the skills they are most interested in developing. The authors also suggest that participants keep a journal to note their own progress throughout the leadership development journey.

Chapter 8: Defining the Roles of the Senior Leadership Team and the Participants

The authors suggest building a place for senior leadership into the foundation of the leadership development program, because if they have a place in the program they will likely become advocates for the mission and values the group is working to promote. In this chapter, Byrne and Rees suggest asking members of the senior management to become mentors in the program. This role could include helping to score participant diagnostic inventories, monitoring progress towards learning plans, and continually assessing the program to cater to participant needs.

Chapter 9: Getting Clearance to Move Forward

Again, building upon the knowledge shared throughout the book, the authors discuss the importance of generating buy-in from the senior managers in an organization. If information has been shared with organizational leaders, asking for final approval should not be difficult. It is for this reason that the authors have been encouraging communication between the creators and company leadership throughout the previous eight chapters. In this specific chapter, Byrne and Rees suggest that buy-in be received from both formal and informal leaders in the organization, including senior level management and the governing board. The authors give recommendations for how to have these important conversations with organizational leaders, communication strategies for continued updates on the program, and the need for receiving a formal commitment to move forward to the implementation process.

Chapter 10: Developing Learning Modules

This chapter outlines how to develop the meat of the program based on the learning levels and individual plans that have already been created. For this step of the process, Byrne and Rees suggest focusing on the learning objectives for each module; objectives must be determined for each of the competency levels that were decided upon earlier in the process. When developing the modules, the authors also suggest thinking about the professionals who will present the sessions and striking a balance between drawing facilitators from within the organization as well as from outside it. The authors also warn program developers of the need to create variety among the activities and not make all sessions lecture-based. Program participants will be giving up a portion of their time to participate in the leadership development, and as a program designer, you want to provide a great experience. Again, the authors note the importance of keeping senior administrators in the know on progress made, as well as working on assessments to ensure progress is being made towards participants' development. The authors provide resources and ideas for developing learner's guides and evaluation forms to accompany each of the learning modules.

Chapter 11: Developing and Implementing Strategy

Byrne and Rees offer advice when determining who will present each of the sessions, where learning sessions will be held, and when these trainings will take place. They stress the importance of the program developer having a central role throughout the implementation process, since they are most familiar with the strategic initiatives of the program. Next, the authors give suggestions on how to select first-year participants. They suggest that senior management refer these individuals. It is important to have an effective group of individuals during the first year to provide adequate feedback for future years.

Lastly, this chapter explores program assessment the need for strong assessment tools, strategies for measuring success of the program, and how to develop the program to create organizational change.

Chapter 12: What's Next?

In the final chapter, the authors discuss about sustaining the program, and some of the areas that need special attention when planning for the longevity of a leadership development program: time, budget, materials, human resources, facilities, organizational support, and sustainability. The final resource that Byrne and Rees leave the reader with is a progress check template that can be used throughout the design and implementation to ensure all aspects of the program are being considered.

CD-Rom

The authors have compiled a CD-Rom with helpful resources for professionals developing their own leadership development program. Many of the resources listed in the book are available in a Word document format so that they can be adjusted to fit the needs of particular organization. There are 25 documents available on the disc as well as a list of links to websites of other resources. This CD-Rom provides resources that aid in the development of leadership development programs and provide documents that will save time for the professionals creating new leadership development programs for their organizations.

Best Target Audience

Professionals who work in areas of employee training, leadership, and professional development are going to gain the most from reading *The Successful Leadership Development Program*. The book offers them a step-by-step guide to creating a new program that will be intertwined into the fabric of the organization. Because of their own personal experience developing a corporate leadership development program, Byrne and Rees are able to share ideas for developing a program that is based on the mission and vision of the organization and will create real change in the institutional fabric. The authors are able to provide great insight into the process for professionals just starting their work in the field. This is a must-read for anyone thinking about implementing a new leadership development program into company culture.

Use of Book in Practice

The Successful Leadership Development Program can be best utilized when an organization is thinking about, or has decided to, implement a new employee-focused leadership development program. This book clearly articulates the steps that should be taken in order for a program to have a lasting place in the framework of a company or organization. Based on personal experience, the authors are able to provide strong insight for professionals in the role of developing a new program. It does not matter if an organization has a current leadership development program or if they are starting from scratch. The algorithm Byrne and Rees have developed, as well as the organization of the book, allows the reader to move throughout the pages depending on current level of organization surrounding a leadership development program. Student leadership

educators will find several of the chapters helpful in implementing adult learning experiences for leadership outcomes.

Critique

Weaknesses

Byrne and Rees are able to offer a great deal of insight that they gained through their personal experience developing a leadership development program. However, they do not ground their findings in literature. While the authors have not written this book as a strong piece of literature that offers support to theory, it would have made the book stronger if they would have provided some of the links between theory and practice in the text. Along the same lines, there are less than two pages of the book dedicated to a bibliography. As a reader, I would appreciate a longer list of resources to consult in order to gain further knowledge on the subject. There is a lot of information available on research and theory related to leadership development that could have been included to make the findings in *The Successful Leadership Development Program* stronger.

Another weakness of this book is that the authors interpret leadership development as being professional development. The book should be publicized as offering insight into developing leadership development (or professional development) programs in a work environment. The *Successful Leadership Development Program* was not written to identify particular needs of other groups, such as student organizations, sports teams, volunteer groups, or professional organizations. The frame used to look at the issues in this book is from a very hierarchical structure and may not translate to organizations that have a different structure.

Strengths

The authors are able to offer real world examples from their personal experience developing a leadership development program. Byrne and Rees are able to foresee issues in the process that they know can be detrimental to the creation of a new leadership development program, and have created an algorithm that will hopefully solve some of these major issues before they become problems. For example, they make a strong point of generating buy-in from senior level administrators early on in the process so that issues do not arise when it comes time for the program to be pitched to these administrators for approval of the program.

The algorithm that has been developed allows for entry into the process at any of the different stages. Therefore, it is able to serve the needs of many different campuses that all approach the creation of a new leadership development program with different levels of buy-in and with different commitments to leadership development in the organization culture.

Lastly, the CR-Rom that accompanies *The Successful Leadership Development Program* provides numerous resources that are helpful to the process of creating a new organizational program. The resources available on this disc provide professionals with a great resource and save time when professionals do not have to re-create materials discussed in the text.

Reviewer

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