

Leading to Learn: Learning to Lead

By Michael S. Ashcraft and Chelsea W. Ashcraft



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Organizational Leadership for the Child  
Care and Youth Development Director

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The following is an excerpt from our book  
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## **Scientific Management Theory**

At the turn of the century, the most notable organizations were large and industrialized. Often they included ongoing, routine tasks that manufactured a variety of products. The United States highly prized scientific and technical matters, including careful measurement and specification of activities and results. Management tended to do the same.

Frederick Taylor developed the Scientific Management Theory, popular from 1890–1940. He was an American engineer who became one of the most influential organizational theorists of the twentieth century. Taylor’s Scientific Management Theory emphasized the efficient division of labor into small, specialized, standardized jobs that were carefully matched to the capacities of workers. It espoused careful specification and measurement of all organizational tasks. Tasks were standardized as much as possible. Workers were rewarded and punished (Osland, Kolb, & Rubin, 2001).

He advocated five simple principles:

1. Shift all responsibility and thinking to the managers.
2. Use scientific methods to determine the one best way of doing a job, and designate tasks accordingly.
3. Select the best person to perform each job.
4. Train the worker to perform the job efficiently.
5. Monitor worker performance to ensure that appropriate work procedures are followed and that results are achieved (Morgan, 1997).

This approach appeared to work well for organizations with assembly lines and other mechanistic, routinized activities. Taylor’s ideal manager scientifically determined the organizational goals, divided the work up between employees in a scientifically efficient manner, trained and monitored employees to accomplish specific tasks, and rewarded them with wage incentives.

However, Taylor gained a reputation as a major enemy of the workingman in his view of organizations as machines and the employees as automatons. He emphasized cooperation between the managers who did all of the thinking and organizing (the “brains”) and the workers who implemented their instructions (the “hands”). Taylor was fond of telling his workers, “You are not supposed to think. There are other people paid for thinking around here” (Morgan, 1997).

## **Administrative Theory and Mechanistic Organizations**

Administrative/Bureaucratic Theory and the metaphor of organizations as machines arose out of the Industrial Revolution, when it was shown that many things could be assembled from piles of interchangeable parts. At this point in history (1930–1950), managers were struggling with the increasing troubles and tribulations of larger and larger organizations. This theory is grounded in the metaphor of the organization as a machine. In Mechanistic Organizations, all tasks were rigidly defined and broken down into specialized distinct parts. Authority and control were centralized within a clear, vertical chain of communication and command, and there was a high level of formalization, rigid departmentalization, and a narrow span of control. Mechanistic Organizations were rigid bureaucracies with strict rules, narrowly defined tasks, top-down communication, and centralized decision making (Osland, et al, 2001).

One major contribution to this theory was made by German sociologist Max Weber, who observed many parallels between the mechanization of industry and the increase of bureaucratic forms of organization. He embellished the Scientific Management Theory with his Administrative/Bureaucratic Theory. Weber focused on dividing organizations into hierarchies, establishing strong lines of authority and control. He suggested organizations develop comprehensive and detailed standard operating procedures for all routinized tasks.

He believed in an ideal bureaucracy as a form of organization that emphasized exactness, speed, precision, regularity, reliability, and especially efficiency through the creation of a fixed division of tasks, hierarchical supervision, rules, and regulations (Morgan, 1997). In those days, bureaucracy did not have the negative connotations it does today. Bureaucracy was a good thing. It improved consistency and fairness. It was a solution to the nepotism, favoritism, and unprofessional behavior found in organizations of that time (Osland, et al, 2001).

When an engineer designs a machine, the task is to define a network of parts, each with their own specific function that will function in sequence to accomplish some work. Classical theorists wanted to achieve a similar design function in organizations. Henri Fayol (France), F. W. Mooney (U.S.), and Col. Lyndell Urwick (England) advocated the study of management as a discipline. They believed that ideal managers are planners, organizers, coordinators, organizers, and controllers and commanders (Morgan, 1997; Osland, et al, 2001). Theoretically, if the ideal manager designed the organization correctly and followed established principles of management, the organization would succeed.

This type of organizational structure is most effective for performance based on routine behaviors within stable environments; factories, assembly lines, fast food chains and department stores are good examples. The military is another example of a Mechanistic Organization. Soldiers with the same rank must have the basic skills needed to perform specific tasks required of their method of service. Individual soldiers from different companies, regiments, brigades, or battalions all know how to perform basic tasks and standard operating procedures in exactly the same way. High-ranking officers and non-commissioned officers are expected to do the thinking, while “grunts” are expected to follow orders.

## **Human Relations School**

During the Industrial Revolution, many workers were replaced with machines. This dehumanization of work led to increases in unemployment and poverty. After the stock market crash, the credibility of business was low and feelings of exploitation were high. Eventually, unions and government regulations reacted to the rather dehumanizing effects of Scientific Management Theory and Administrative/Bureaucratic Theory, giving birth to the Human Relations Movement (popular from 1930 through today).

The Hawthorne studies conducted in the 1920s and 1930s by Elton Mayo, at the Hawthorne Works Plant of the Western Electric Company in Chicago, were first designed to explore relationships between working conditions and fatigue, boredom and productivity. There were many types of experiments conducted, but the purpose of the original experiments was to study the effect of lighting on workers’ productivity. The study surveyed employees about the lighting conditions in

their work space, made lighting changes, and studied productivity. Researchers found that productivity almost always increased after a change in illumination, no matter the type of illumination. They experimented on other changes and again found that no matter the change in conditions, productivity increased. As the research progressed, it began to focus on many other variables such as the attitudes of employees and the social environment outside of work (Morgan, 1997). They ended the experiments when they realized something they couldn't account for—the presence of the researchers—was affecting productivity. This is now known as the Hawthorne Effect.

The studies themselves have been a source of criticism, but they created an evolutionary step, an important milestone in industrial and organizational psychology and in organizational behavior. These studies contributed the idea that workers' productivity was affected by how they were treated and listened to, and how they felt about their work and their coworkers (Osland, et al, 2001). They caused paradigm-shattering breakthroughs in understanding the fact that asking employees about their work environment, paying attention to them, and listening to their feedback could positively affect productivity. This new idea, and the change in understanding it inspired, propelled the development of the Human Relations School.

The Human Relations School was an argument or backlash against viewing workers as automatons, a good example of a self-generating oppositional system where one side of a system produced the existence of the other (Morgan, 1997). Under this theory, more attention was given to individuals and their unique capabilities in the organization. A major belief was that the organization would prosper if its workers prospered as well. Human Resource departments were added to organizations.

The behavioral sciences played a strong role in helping to understand the needs of workers and how the needs of an organization and its workers could be better aligned. Various new theories were spawned, many based on the behavioral sciences.

The Human Relations School stresses the importance of understanding human motivation in the workplace. It assumes that employee motivation is a result of recognition, encouragement, and rewarding of individual contributions. According to Human Relations Theory, ideal managers are those who pay attention to people's social needs and elicit their ideas about work issues.

## **Contingency Approach Theory**

Contingency Approach Theory has established itself as a dominant perspective in modern organizational analysis. It is situational leadership. We call it the "it depends" approach. It holds that organizations, like organisms, must adapt and evolve in response to a changing environment. Individuals, groups, cultures, industries, technologies, personalities, managerial styles, environments, past experiences, and situations can all vary enormously, so choosing the best managerial approach to take in a given situation varies according to the unique situation (Osland, et al, 2001).

Ideal contingency managers can identify and manipulate a mixture of variables, which may be successful for particular situations. Variables that are thought to be related to success include managerial principles, environment, attitudes, human relationships, and job duties. The

Contingency Approach Theory believes that there is no single “best way” of managing. The appropriate strategy depends on the type of task or environment with which one is dealing. The point of Contingency Approach Theory is that different approaches to management may be necessary to perform different tasks within the same organization (Morgan, 1997).

## **Open Systems Theory**

Open Systems Theory became popular due to the rapidly changing environment of the mid-1960s, when effective managers understood the interdependence among the different individuals and subsystems of an organization and recognized that organizations themselves are a part of greater systems in the environment. Open Systems Theory, which takes its main inspiration from the work of Ludwig von Bertalanffy, a theoretical biologist, is grounded in the metaphor of Organic Organizations. Organizations, like organisms, depend on a wider environment for various kinds of sustenance. They are “open” to the environment and must achieve an appropriate relationship with that environment if they are to survive (Morgan, 1997).

Open Systems Theory emphasizes the environment in which organizations exist, the relationships between interrelated subsystems, and the practical use of subsystems to identify and eliminate potential dysfunctions (Morgan, 1997). Ideal managers are the interface between these subsystems. The ideal manager is a systems thinker, having the ability to understand the interdependent relationships between subsystems. The ideal manager can see and predict how a change in one system can cause changes in other systems (Osland, et al, 2001).

## **Total Quality Management**

*Learning is not compulsory...neither is survival.*  
—W. Edwards Deming

Total Quality Management (TQM) is a management strategy aimed at embedding awareness of quality in all organizational processes. It has been widely applied in business, government, and education. It is a people-focused management system centered on continual improvement and customer satisfaction.

W. Edwards Deming based TQM on five principals:

1. Power is shared by all involved.
2. The “hands-on” workers share ideas for improvement with leaders, and leaders share their ideas with workers.
3. Responsibilities are shared among all people in the organization.
4. Attention to customer satisfaction is paramount, and quality is achieved by focusing on doing even the small things right the first time.
5. Finally, improvement is constant, even when the organization is experiencing success.

TQM was and still is very influential. It caused paradigm-shifting breakthroughs, and was very influential on modern leadership philosophy. The progressive ideas of W. Edwards Deming’s TQM Theory created a groundbreaking school of thought that paved the way for Peter Senge’s articulation of the Learning Organization .

## Learning Organizations

The management philosophy of a Learning Organization is based on developing the people—the people who accomplish the mission—in ever-changing organizations. When every individual learns, the organization learns. Organizations that learn benefit from their experience rather than being tossed around in the randomness of a rapidly changing environment (Ollhoff & Walcheski, 2002).

Learning Organizations are grounded by continuous learning and must be led by people who model continuous learning in their own day-to-day behavior. In a Learning Organization, all employees are empowered to learn and to teach. The Learning Organization is created to learn and grow and change, as opposed to traditional bureaucratic models designed to be stable and predictable in their operations. Learning Organizations are places that individuals “would truly like to work within and which can thrive in a world of increasing interdependency and change” (Kofman & Senge, 1993, p. 32).

Learning Organizations are grounded in three foundations:

- First is a values-based culture. The traditions and customs are based on inspirational human values of love, genuine caring, wonder, humility, respect, and compassion.
- Second, Learning Organizations are places where generative conversations take place. Conversations are not dominated by what has been done in the past and what has or has not worked long ago; rather, people talk about what can be done differently and what can be done better in the future to accomplish the mission and realize the vision. People in Learning Organizations discuss their mental models. They challenge their assumptions and strive for personal mastery.
- Third, Learning Organizations are characterized by coordinated action. Everyone works together for continuous improvement. Learning Organizations are characterized by high-involvement philosophies with everyone sharing the power, knowledge, information, and control (Hesselbein, et al, 1996; Kauffman, 1980; Kim, 1994; Kofman & Senge, 1995; Senge, 1990; Vaill, 1996).

A Learning Organization is a non-hierarchical organization where all stakeholders are involved in deciding how the organization will conduct itself. Knowledge, information, power, and control are not held by lone managers; instead leaders develop people. Leaders in a Learning Organization are in charge of establishing the vision and creating the climate and culture. They set the tone. This is the one thing leaders don't give away; the one thing they have complete control over. The entire team learns together and works toward a shared goal. They have the capacity to see and work with the flow of life as a system and work in a coordinated way to improve the big picture.

In his book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Peter Senge defined a Learning Organization as human beings cooperating in dynamical systems that are in a state of continuous adaptation and improvement (1990). He injected into the field of organizational leadership an original and powerful paradigm called “Systems Thinking”—the Fifth Discipline upon which his book is focused.

## **Systems Thinking**

The child care and youth development professions are human-service fields. Humans are complex. Working with humans involves constantly changing dynamics of communication and relationships. While a factory-style, mechanistic view of organizations may be effective for the fast food industry or the front lines in the military because tasks are simple and routine and standardization is important, the theories that emphasize the importance of human relationships seem to be a more appropriate view for human service professions.

The metaphor of organizations as machines was articulated during a period in history when science was developing and understanding new principles by adopting analytical, reductionist methods. Science was looking at smaller and smaller parts of the whole: the cell, the molecule, the atom. Problem solving in this paradigm involved breaking the machine into components, studying each part in isolation, identifying defective cogs in the machine, and drawing conclusions about the whole.

Peter Senge says that this type of linear and mechanistic thinking is ineffective for leading organizations because most issues are complex and interrelated in ways that defy linear causation.

What are systems? Systems are composed of a group of interrelated parts. “Heaps” are also composed of many parts, but they are not interrelated. A pile of hay is a heap, not a system. If you divide the pile in half, you get two smaller and functionally equivalent piles of hay.

The parts of a system affect each other and function as a whole. When the whole is affected, all parts are affected. When one part is affected, all parts are affected because individual parts are in communication and feedback with each other (Ollhoff & Walcheski, 2002). Ecosystems, legal systems, and the nervous system are examples of systems. A cow is a system. It has many parts that function together to create organs, and organ systems that are parts of the entire organism. If you divide a cow in half, what do you get? Not two cows!

The defining characteristic of a system is that it cannot be understood as a function of its isolated parts. The behavior of the system does not depend on what each part is doing individually, but on how each part is interacting with the other parts. Understanding a system requires understanding how it fits into larger systems of which it is a part. How we define the parts is fundamentally a matter of perspective and purpose, not intrinsic in the nature of the larger system—the real thing we are looking at. (Kofman & Senge, 1993). For example, if we look at a single atom or compound in the body of a cow, how we define it is rather limited if we do not perceive that it combines with other atoms and compounds to create a molecule, and that these molecules come together to form cells, which interrelate with other cells to form organs, which join up with other organs to form organ systems, which all work together systemically to form the whole cow.

Systems thinking is a paradigm premised upon the “primacy of the whole.” Seeking to understand the whole dominates over the parts. It “is a way to see the world, looking at wholes and their interactive pieces instead of the individual parts. Systems thinking looks at the dynamics of the entire whole” (Ollhoff & Walcheski, 2002). In order to understand problems and their solutions, linear and mechanistic thinking must give way to non-linear and organic thinking—systems thinking.

Systems thinking views the world we live in as a complicated one and views life's problems as complicated and often chaotic systems in a constant state of change. Systems problem solving looks at the big picture and examines the complexity of the interrelationships of systems involved in the problem and in possible solutions.

At the heart of a Learning Organization is a shift of mind—from seeing ourselves as separate from the world to connected to the world, from seeing problems as caused by someone or something “out there” to seeing how our own actions create the problems we experience. A Learning Organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality, and how they can change it (Senge, 1990).

Communities, workplace settings, and child care and youth development organizations are all very complex. They contain many systems and subsystems. Environmental factors, staff composition, accounting, human resources, socio-economic factors, professional development, and parent involvement are just a few systems that interrelate in complex ways with other elements in the system.

Running a school-age care or child development agency is not something that can be summed up in a policies and procedures manual because it involves many complex sub-systems. Therefore, child care administrators and caregivers must be trained and educated with the goal of increasing creative leadership, decision making, and problem-solving skills.

Our organization intentionally blurs the lines between the roles of administrators, caregivers, and students. Learning is not something that is only done by students; teaching is not something that is only done by adults. Agency directors, site directors, and caregivers must be role models of not only teaching, but also of learning. The philosophy of our organization as a community of learners is an essential element in a model of a non-hierarchical Learning Organization where all stakeholders are involved in deciding how the organization will conduct itself. Caregivers in many school-age care agencies often complain bitterly about administrative decisions, which interfere with their ability to do their jobs. This is a tragedy.

The current hierarchical system that separates the thinkers (administrators) from the workers (caregivers) is the source of this tragedy. This segregation of power creates a role for caregivers that does not expect them to know a great deal about learning, teaching, organizational management, or child development; which leads to less competent caregivers, which creates a stronger need for administrative control, which leads to even less competent caregivers, and so on.

Our organization, a model of a Learning Organization, is a company in which all employees do whatever needs to be done in order to accomplish our mission, rather than follow narrowly defined job descriptions. An accreditation endorser inspecting our programs once insisted on seeing an organizational chart that described the structure of the organization. After explaining that the organization was non-hierarchical and that knowledge, information, power, and control were dispersed throughout the organization, the endorser still demanded to see an organizational chart. She wanted to see boxes in the shape of a pyramid, but what I eventually produced and showed her was something entirely different.

In most organizations the directors are at the top of the human pyramid and the caregivers are at the bottom, like this.



In our organization the hierarchy of the organization is flipped upside down. This model resembles a house. The line staff, who work directly with the kids and families, are at the top—the roof, viewed as the most influential and most powerful members of the team. The administrative/managerial staff are viewed as the walls—they support the roof. Support staff work for the line staff, supporting them and getting them the resources they need to accomplish the mission. This house is built on a foundation of our mission, and our values. This isn't to say the support staff in this structure now get paid less. They still have more education, experience, and ultimate responsibility, so the pay structure does not change. Similarly to the employees in the Hawthorne Electric story, we have found our staff to be the most dedicated, hard working, and happy staff we have worked with.

**Power Staff =  
Top of the Organization**

**Caregivers, Group Leaders, Assistant  
Directors, & Site Directors:**

Those who facilitate the positive development  
of children, and create the model of quality.

**Director of Finances  
& Customer Service  
Staff:**

Build Capacity,  
Payroll  
Financial Resources,  
Fiscal Management,  
Accounts Receivable  
Information,  
Budget Forecasting

**Youth Programs  
Directors:**

Safety Control,  
Quality Control,  
Curriculum Support  
Field Trip Scheduling  
Mentoring &  
Guidance to Staff,  
Improvement and  
Accreditation  
Assistance

**Director of  
Operations:**

Leadership &  
Management,  
Partnerships,  
Advocacy  
Research,  
Resource  
Development,  
Outreach, &  
Training

**Foundation of Values**

## Promoting the Positive

*There are souls in this world which have the gift of finding joy everywhere and of leaving it behind them when they go.*

—Frederick William Faber

It is important to establish an organizational culture of positive thinking. Everyone in the organization must believe that anyone is capable of anything and that any situation can be improved. The culture must be one that respects people and what they can do, and challenges all members of the organization to be the very best they can be. Respect exists everywhere in the organization, flowing up and down in the power structure. In a Learning Organization, every situation is an opportunity to learn and improve (Kline & Saunders, 1998).

In his landmark book *The Power of Positive Thinking*, Norman Vincent Peale states, “When you expect the best, you release a magnetic force in your mind which by a law of attraction tends to bring the best to you. But if you expect the worst, you release from your mind the power of repulsion which tends to force the best from you. It is amazing how a sustained expectation of the best sets in motion forces which cause the best to materialize” (1952, p. 91).

Effective leaders generate positive energy in others. Leaders create meaning by engaging the emotions of employees. Because learning is an emotional process, the corporate culture is a supportive place to be (Kline & Saunders, 1998). Leaders of Learning Organizations have trust and confidence in their followers. Research shows that followers perform better when their leaders have high expectations of them (Eden, 1990; McNatt, 2000). A team with high expectations, emotional energy, and enthusiasm can provide its members with a positive and rewarding experience that they may never in their lives experience again.

The *Code of Ethics for School-Age Care* states, “We will provide a workplace that is safe, empowering, and emotionally supportive. In a spirit of professional pride and community, we will acknowledge the experience and education of staff as together we respond to the needs of children and youth” (Charron, 2001, p. 10).

## Mistakes

*Failure is the foundation of success, and the means by which it is achieved.*

—Lao Tzu

*Recently, I was asked if I was going to fire an employee who made a mistake that cost the company \$600,000. No, I replied, I just spent \$600,000 training him. Why would I want somebody to hire his experience?*

—Thomas J. Watson

In Learning Organizations mistakes are accepted and expected. Leaders of organizations must continuously learn and constantly reinvent themselves. Learning Organization leaders learn from their mistakes and experiences. Learning Organization leaders take risks, make mistakes, and gain satisfaction from the lessons they learn. They see learning not as a confession of ignorance, but as a

way of being. Lead learners must view mistakes as steppingstones to continuous learning, and essential to further business growth (Kline & Saunders, 1998).

If mistakes are not being made, new possibilities are being ignored. The world's greatest advances and discoveries were the result of mistakes. Members of Learning Organizations learn from their mistakes, learn to take responsibility for them, and learn not to repeat them. Thomas Edison once said, "I have not failed. I've just found ten thousand ways that won't work."

An effective leader must be big enough to admit his mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them. Anyone who refuses to profit by his mistakes is a fool. Every mistake is an opportunity to increase competency.

Chelsea has a story about the value hidden within mistakes. Here is her story. A few years back, a site director of ours made one of the worst mistakes someone can make in our field: she left a five-year-old at a field trip site, violating one of our very few strict procedures.

She called me as the bus was about to arrive at her site to inform me that she had just realized this child was missing. I raced to pick the child up and met my site director and the child's angry parents in the parking lot of our school. By the time the parents left, the site director was in tears. I looked at her and just said, "Meet me at 9:30 in my office tomorrow morning."

I was not sure what I was going to do. The obvious solution was to fire her. Most supervisors would not have questioned this. At 9:30 the next day, she was in my office with a stack of papers. She had stayed up most of the night writing down how she had left the child back. She also had spent most of the night writing down all the ways she would never let that happen again if allowed to keep her job. We talked extensively about what happened and how she planned to prevent this from happening in the future. She had analyzed the situation well. I let her stay and here's why.

Because of that mistake, I could practically guarantee that no child from that site would ever get left behind on a field trip as long as that site director was in charge. Not only could I make that guarantee, but that site director stood up at every new-hire orientation for the next three years and told that story (usually in tears) when we got to the field trip procedures. By accepting that mistake and learning from it, we gained more than we could have by firing her and hiring a brand new site director who could just as easily make the same mistake.

People say, "Success always takes place in private, and failure in the full view of others." I say, "If at first you don't succeed, destroy all evidence that you tried!" My daughter says, "If at first you don't succeed, get new batteries."

## **Try This: Lessons Learned Sessions**

*It's not whether you get knocked down. It's whether you get up again.*

—Vince Lombardi

Conduct "Lessons Learned Sessions." These sessions have become part of the culture of our organization. Earlier we described our philosophy of making mistakes; that they are a valuable part of learning. This is only true if we actually learn by our mistakes. If you create an organizational

culture that punishes mistakes, it in effect rewards people for lying and hiding their mistakes, which inhibits organizational learning. In our organization, we learn as a team. We learn from our mistakes as a team.

When an individual or a team in our organization makes a mistake they are expected to bring it up in generative conversation—to put it “on the table.” We talk about it as a team and discuss possible strategies that would have prevented the mistake. We record our lessons learned and refer to them the next time a similar situation or event occurs.

## **Information Sharing**

*The ultimate leader is one who is willing to develop people to the point that they eventually surpass him or her in knowledge and ability.*

—Fred A. Manske, Jr.

Sharing of information is an essential component of high-performance organizations. Ken Blanchard, world-recognized guru of leadership and customer service says, “The first key of empowerment is to share information with everyone!” It lets people understand the current situation in clear terms. It begins to build trust throughout the organization. It breaks down traditional hierarchical thinking. It helps people be more responsible, and it encourages people to act like owners of the organization.

Sharing information about financial performance, administrative strategies, and long-term planning sends a message that the organization’s people are trusted. Chelsea teaches a college course on child care management. This is her story. When it is time to teach about budget development, I ask my students to bring in a copy of the budget from their own organization. I was at first surprised and continue to be disheartened at how many students are not allowed to see the budget of the organization they work for. They tell me that their directors tell them that the information is confidential and can only be seen by the owner and center director. If you want to create a high-involvement organization, you can’t have secrets.

Employees of empowering organizations know not only what is happening in the organization but why and how it could affect their jobs and careers. If you want staff at all levels to show good fiscal management skills, to conserve supplies, to feel ownership and responsibility for the financial strength of your organization, they NEED to share in the information. “Open-book” management creates ownership and shared responsibility. People without information cannot act responsibly. People with information are compelled to act responsibly. Sharing information motivates employees by providing relevancy. Employees must have all of the knowledge and information they need to effectively exercise the power and control they must have to be self-directed. Give your organization’s budget information or your program budget to your staff. Teach them how to read and analyze it. Spend time discussing it and answering questions.

## **Training and Professional Development**

Training is often seen as a frill in many organizations—something to be cut if profits diminish. This is an example of the short-term thinking that enslaves managers and inhibits the development of a high-involvement organization. Knowledge and skill are crucial to organizations, and too few organizations designate their resources in ways that honor this insight. Training involves

establishing clear boundaries and high expectations that build upon information sharing. Ken Blanchard's second key to empowerment is to "Create autonomy through boundaries." Boundaries establish a purpose; they define the "business of the business." They establish values and operational guidelines. They establish long-term strategic thinking. They help translate the goals for the organization and roles for the stakeholders. The vision of an organization truly becomes alive when everyone sees where his or her contribution can make a difference. Training is a vehicle to these ends.

When typical organizations do spend money and time on training, most training covers policies and procedures. It often includes how to handle situations according to "upper management." Instead of teaching staff members only "how" to do something, teach them "why." Teach staff members how to problem solve. How to identify a problem and how to think about all the options they have available to them. When you spend training time and energy on explaining the standard or the "boundary" and how to solve problems you empower your staff. Let the team decide how to best meet the expectation with their available resources. Every team and every site has different situations. The traditional mold won't work for everyone.

Training leads to empowerment by teaching others things they can do to become less dependent on you. Training is an essential component of high-involvement organizations because this paradigm relies on "frontline" employee skill and initiative to identify, solve problems, initiate solutions, serve the needs of families, and take responsibility for safety and quality.

You will know when you are giving your staff enough information because they will need you less. It may begin to feel like you are no longer a good leader. Before founding our organization, Chelsea was the director of a large corporate child care center in New Mexico. This is her story. The company had over a hundred centers across the nation, and we often got together for retreats and training events. At every break at one of my first retreats all the directors in my division would rush into the hall to return pages or phone messages with their staff back at their centers. I never got one message. I began to feel useless and not needed. I made this comment to my regional manager and she told me something very memorable. She said, "Chelsea, it is a sign of a good leader when your staff do not need you. You have trained them well."

## **Decentralized Power and Control**

*He who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander.*  
—Aristotle

Ken Blanchard's third key to empowerment is "To replace hierarchy with self-directed work teams!" Less bureaucratic, elitist, hierarchical, and authoritarian organizations can create self-managed teams that are more communicative, participatory, and empowered. Self-managed teams permit removal of layers of hierarchy and absorption of administrative tasks. Empowered TEAMS can do more than empowered INDIVIDUALS. Teams with information and training can replace hierarchy. When power and control are decentralized all of the people in the organization feel accountable and responsible for the success of the organization and the accomplishment of the mission. Child care and youth development organizations are a uniquely good fit for self-managed teams because individual sites provide a cellular structure for the identification of these teams.

Each site can become a self-managed team, trained and empowered to facilitate the positive development of children and meet the needs of families.

In a classic experiment, management gave factory employees a lever that controlled how fast they could operate the assembly line. They were at first afraid that employees would take advantage and slow down production. They were later surprised that employees actually worked faster when they felt in control of their work. Employees who participate in decision making, collecting information, generating alternatives, and implementing decisions have an increased sense of control and commitment. In our organization, all staff members participate in developing policy, designing their own evaluation instruments, and making all hiring decisions. Caregivers participate in the hiring decisions of their potential site directors and thereby become more committed to the supervisor who is eventually hired. (See chapter 9 for more information about this group interviewing process.) Self-directed teams lead to increased job satisfaction; an attitude change from “have to” to “want to;” greater employee commitment; better communication between employees and management; a more efficient decision-making process; improved quality of services; reduced operating expenses; and a more profitable and successful organization.

As mentioned before, Chelsea teaches a college course on child care management. This is her story. Every semester I have my students ask a panel of my site directors leadership questions. One of my students asked the panel if any of them had ever thought of owning their own child care program. The unanimous answer from the directors sums up the purpose of sharing as much knowledge, information, power and control perfectly. The answer all my directors gave was they don’t need to own their own program because they already feel that they own this program. That is the benefit of giving power and control to well-trained staff—a sense of ownership!

## **Servant Leadership**

*The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between, the leader is a servant.*

—Max DePree

Robert Greenleaf researched management, leadership, and education for forty years. He felt that the power-centered authoritarian leadership style so prominent in U.S. institutions was not working, and in 1964 he took an early retirement to found the Center for Applied Ethics. He was captivated by the idea of a servant actually being the leader. He wrote, “I came to believe that we in this country were in a leadership crisis and that I should do what I could about it.” In 1970, he published his first essay, entitled *The Servant as Leader*, which introduced the term “servant leadership.” Later, the essay was expanded into a book, which is perhaps one of the most influential management texts ever written.

The Servant Leadership movement was born. Greenleaf believed that service to followers is the primary responsibility of leaders (Yukl, 2002). In traditional top-down hierarchical organizations, the managers at the top of the pyramid seize and hold back knowledge, information, power, and control. In our organization, leaders teach their constituents and give them opportunities to develop their skills. They “serve” their followers, giving them the knowledge, information, and resources they need to do their jobs and to develop. Servant leaders are givers not takers. They give power away in order to develop leadership skills in their followers.

The servant leader must empower followers instead of using power to dominate them. Servant leaders choose to give power away for a purpose larger than themselves. They take the power that flows into them and transfer it to others.

Servant leaders are both learners and teachers. They use power in the service and development of others and are driven by values. In our organization, I often say to colleagues who, according to a formal hierarchical organizational chart, are our subordinates, “You don’t work for me, I work for you.” Servant leaders are learners. They listen to followers about their needs and aspirations. Their door is always open. They are out talking and listening to people at all levels of the organization (Pollard, 1996). Leaders must listen, take advice, lose arguments, and follow (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). They must be willing to walk a mile in the other person’s shoes.

Servant leaders are teachers. They help their followers to become healthier, wiser, and more competent in meeting their responsibilities. A servant leader increases another’s sense of self-confidence, self-determination, and personal effectiveness and makes that person more powerful, greatly enhancing the possibility of success (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). They nurture, protect and empower their followers. Leaders develop their constituents and serve them by providing meaningful and rewarding work.

Servant leaders are values driven. Trust is established by being completely honest and open with their followers, keeping their actions consistent with their values and showing trust in followers (Pollard, 1996). Servant leaders ask their followers what they can do to help them do their jobs better. They ask them what resources they need. Resources may be supplies, more staff, or more knowledge. The job of a servant leader is not to tell followers how to do a better job, but to get the resources they need or have requested to be more successful. The servant leader must look out for the best interests of the followers, standing up for what is right, even if it is not in the best financial interest of the organization (Yukl, 2002). A leader who is willing to serve can provide hope instead of gloom and can be an example for those who want direction and purpose in their lives and who desire to accomplish and contribute.

## **Learning is Motivation**

People have an intrinsic desire to learn. Praise and manipulation can only serve to stifle that natural motivation and replace it with blind conformity, a mechanical work style, or open defiance toward authority (Hitz & Driscoll, 1988). In a study of about a hundred mothers in California, researchers studied the mothers and children from the time the children were one year old until they were eight years old. They looked into those who pushed their kids to do well in school, especially those who rewarded good grades or removed privileges for bad grades. The children of these mothers became less interested in learning and were less likely to succeed in school. The more that school achievement was the main concern of the parent, the lower was the commitment of the children (Kohn, 1999). These observations about basic principles of human motivation apply to adults as well as children, both of whom are driven by intrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation must be present if people are to do their best. “If work comes to be seen solely as a source of money and never as a source of fulfillment, organizations will totally ignore other human needs at work—needs involving such intangibles as learning, self-worth, pride, competence,

and serving others” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 41). Motivation must be internalized; internal rewards maximize intrinsic motivation.

## **Pleasure is Motivation**

What makes something intrinsically motivating; a reward in itself? People find things intrinsically motivating if they derive pleasure from the experience and pleasure from using their skills, and if they feel that their work is challenging and adventurous (Csikszentmihaly, 1975; Kouzes & Posner, 1995). “Being invited to do better than we’ve ever done before compels us to reach deep down inside and bring forth the adventurer within” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 42). Intrinsic rewards include a sense of accomplishment, born in the thrill of creation; rewards that are the outcome of individual effort. Giving the director of a child care and youth development program the opportunities to create new programs and develop new strategies for helping people is a reward linked to performance. Although intrinsic motivation comes from inside the individual, it is not something outside of the influence and control of organizational leaders. For leaders to get the best from others, they must “Find opportunities for people to solve problems, make discoveries, explore new ground, reach difficult goals, or...make work responsibilities fun” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 42).

## **Acknowledgement is Motivation**

When leaders lend a hand with the work being done, when they actively listen to employees without interrupting, and when they give sincere verbal recognition in public, they take an active role in increasing the intrinsic rewards of good performance. Motivating leaders can provide feedback and coaching at the time of employee performance to enhance intrinsic motivation. Showing genuine concern and respect for those doing the work boosts intrinsic motivation.

Imagine you are in your work setting and your supervisor approaches you and says, “Excuse me, do you have a moment? I’d like to talk to you.” What would be your first thoughts? Yep, what did I do now, what am in trouble for? When supervisors only provide positive feedback and acknowledgement during a staff meeting or at an annual evaluation, when it is “planned” acknowledgement, it seems fake. Good leaders carefully observe their followers and seek out opportunities to provide on-the-spot feedback. Spontaneous and unexpected acknowledgement and appreciation for good work and for effort in and of itself is effective for developing intrinsic motivation. In fact, personal congratulations rank at the top of the most powerful non-financial motivators identified by employees (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

Congratulations and social recognition from other team members are often the most valued rewards for teambuilding behaviors. Recognition from team members is particularly likely to occur when the team is held accountable for team performance and any recognition from management goes to the team and not to individual team members. When management recognizes individual team members, other members are not as motivated to provide recognition themselves because they grow to see this as the responsibility of management. Team members tend to want recognition from their peers more than they want it from management. Teamwork rightly places individual achievement within the context of organizational and team goals.

## Meaning is Motivation

One reason internalization is so important is that it links prior and new learning together, which creates meaning and the intrinsic motivation for good performance and continued learning. “There are sweeping sociocultural changes as employees are seeking a deeper sense of meaning from their worklives” (Rolls, 1995, p. 102). People are intrinsically motivated to be involved in work that is aligned with their own values and interests, with work that is worthwhile and has relevancy or meaning for them as individuals. As people seek heightened authenticity, compassion, wholeness, and meaning outside of work, their newfound growth and expectations will come to work with them. Articulating the inherent goodness of the work being done by the director of the school-age care program and the benefit it has to society is an important factor.

Leaders create meaning by helping employees to see and foresee cause and effect by pointing out the connections between their actions and consequences. Leaders create meaning by engaging the emotions of employees. Leaders create meaning through a caring environment, by eliminating stress and threat, meeting basic physical needs, ensuring safety, and establishing boundaries and expectations. Leaders create meaning through positive relationships by providing adult role models, caring authoritative relationships, positive peer relationships, and positive interactive feedback. Leaders create meaning through positive experiences which are purposefully planned to provide novelty, playfulness, challenge, enrichment, community building, and problem solving.

The easiest way to accomplish this is through building relationships with your followers. I’m not saying you have to be friends with everyone, or for that matter even LIKE them. However, understanding systems thinking helps us realize that the more you truly care about your staff, the more they will care about their job and their work will improve. So, if you do not like someone, work hard at finding some things you do like about that person (find the pony). Find ways to let go of work responsibilities and learn to care deeply for all your team members.

“Employees want to enjoy work, to feel they can make a contribution, to feel respected as people and to learn and grow” (Rolls, 1995, p. 102). Psychologist David E. Berlew believes that what really excites people and generates enthusiasm are these value-related opportunities—a chance to be tested, to make it on one’s own, to take part in a social experiment, to do something well, to do something good, and to change the way things are (Kouzes & Posner, 1995). Followers want to be a part of something significant, and for their work to have real meaning and relevancy. Effective leaders understand the desires of followers and work to make their work relevant. “Without employing people’s hearts, organizations lose precious return on their investment in people” (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 41).

People need the opportunity to do something deeply moral, meaningful and transforming in their work life. Leaders can create meaning for work and learning by helping employees to see and foresee cause and effect, by pointing out the connections between their actions and consequences, and by showing the logical reasons for their tasks. It is important for organizational leaders to recognize that in order for people to learn something so that it is easy for them to use it, it must be logical, moral, and fun (Kline & Saunders, 1998).

## Relevancy is Motivation

Imagine that we put up a painting, and around it is an old beat-up scratched frame. Does the frame influence your perception of the picture? We suspect so. Now imagine, instead of that old frame we put up a brand new, beautiful frame lighted just right. Does that influence your perception? Again, we suspect so, although the painting never changed. Frames are how we choose to look at something. We learn from our experiences, yes, but what we learn depends upon the frame we put around it. Frames establish relevancy. They answer the question of “what’s in it for me?” WIIFM?

Framing is a great tool for motivating people. If I command someone to do something, I might get obedience, but not motivation because there is no relevancy. If we want our staff to attend a training event, we might say, “I know that your weekends are precious to you, but licensing requires that you all get twenty-four clock hours of training per year. This Saturday there is a training event and it is mandatory, so don’t be late, and don’t forget to get a signature on your certificate to prove that you were there.” Wow, wouldn’t you be excited to be at that training? No? What if we framed it like this? “I have noticed that the children in your program sometimes misbehave and this stresses you out. I’ve got good news for you. We’ve found someone who conducts a great training on guidance. In just one day you can learn some skills that will reduce your stress, make your job easier, and get the kinds of behavior that makes you truly LOVE working with these kids!” Better right? It is still the same training event, but with a different frame.

Framing can work with employees, bosses, even spouses. If you can’t positively frame something you want your staff to do or learn, reconsider whether you need them to do it. If it is important to do, then find a frame that fits! Think about the person and what is relevant to them, not how it is relevant to YOU.

Our older daughter was a little afraid of the water. We planned to take a vacation one summer to spend some time with friends who happen to have a lake house: jet skis, motorboat, a dock to jump off of into the lake. We thought it was important for her to learn how to swim. When she’d try to put her head under water, typically only part of her face would get wet. We enrolled her in swimming lessons. She was in the pool with a group of six-year olds. Her swimming teacher was a young man.

He began the class by saying, “Okay kids, it is really important for you to learn what I’m going to teach you in this class.” I grinned really big and looked at Chelsea and said, “Cool—he’s about to FRAME it!” Chelsea said, “You are such a dork!”

The swimming teacher continued, “The reason it is so important for you to learn what I’m going to teach you is that at the end of this class there will be a test. If you don’t learn this then you can’t pass into the more advanced class next summer.”

I shook my head in disgust. He missed a great opportunity to establish relevancy.

When we got home, Chelsea and I put a new frame around the lessons. “Madison, we’re going to the lake house this summer. Last summer when we went there you had to wear the life jacket all the time. It was big and bulky. You couldn’t go on the boat or the jet skis or do a lot of the things you wanted to do because you couldn’t swim. You were afraid of the water. We were thinking that if

you learned to swim really well, you wouldn't be afraid, you wouldn't have to wear the life jacket all the time, and you'd have more fun in the water! How does that sound to you?" That summer the little girl who would only dunk part of her face under water was jumping off the dock, laughing and squealing and having fun with the other kids.

## **Team Spirit is Motivation**

*The secret is to work less as individuals and more as a team. As a coach, I play not my eleven best, but my best eleven.*

—Knut Rockne

*The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime.*

—Babe Ruth

Learning the content of teamwork and followership in a practical, real-world context is important for relevancy and motivation. In order for work teams to be successful and stay together, there must be a clear and interesting goal. This goal must be exciting, chosen by the team, and agreed upon by all members.

The team must possess the social capital to be successful: cooperation, collaboration, and mutual assistance. The most important element in building this social capital is trust; all else flows from it. Informal, seeming irrelevant, day-to-day conversations among employees build trust that will make their working relationships more effective in the future (Lipnack & Stamps, 2001).

Chelsea is the financial manager of our organization, and found this extremely hard to accept. She often finds herself in her office working at the computer while other members of the organization are in the other room. She can hear them chatting and if she just keeps her financial manager hat on all she can see are the payroll dollar signs adding up with little productivity. However, she has also seen the benefit first hand of this chatting among employees. Our team members know and care deeply for each other. They trust each other and are willing to help each other out when needed. It is hard to put a price on this.

Another element is reciprocity—give and take. People need to trust that giving will eventually result in receiving. That making a sacrifice to benefit others is an investment that will yield returns in the future. Over the last few years, we have worked hard on sharing staff among sites. We have had many conversations with directors about giving up good staff for a while, even if it makes it more stressful at their site, to help other sites that are extremely short staffed. It was difficult at first as directors were not completely trusting that they would receive the same help if they needed it. After many exchanges, they learned to trust that reciprocity would happen, and our team is now closer and the organization has an easier time sharing.