In this follow-up to "The New Core of Leadership" in *T+D*'s annual Leadership Issue in March, Aldrich goes further—how to turn power, ideas, tension, and other core elements into action, into leadership.

Using Leadership to

Most successful leaders agree that leadership is about completing work. More accurately, it's about getting people to complete the right work productively. To do that, leaders need to enhance these enablers:

● Build up their power, both formal and informal, to gain influence.

● Uncover and successfully introduce ideas to explore options.

● Moderate tension to increase people's efficiency.

Then, and only then, leaders need to get the group to commit to and complete action.

Since the first article, many of you have asked me for suggestions on how to get your organization to embrace leadership as an enterprise competency. The answer, of course, is to exercise leadership yourself.

Implement
Leadership

By Clark Aldrich

Power

The first question, do you personally have power within your work group? When you speak, do your colleagues listen? Are your emails circulated? Do you speak at staff meetings, do your comments have impact? Injoy's John C. Maxwell sums it up: "All leadership is influence."

For managers, do your employees follow you? Are they committed or just putting in the hours? Do you share power well?

If you don't have power, you may want to work intensively on your power skills and tactics.

Does your work group have power within the enterprise? Does your budget reflect your priorities? Do you have allies in high places? Is there a CLO? For whom have you done great work before? That is your power base. If you don't have a power base, you need to build it aggressively.

You can build power by documenting your great ideas and seeing them through. Complete simple yet strategic projects to show your competence. Target the rising stars in the company, have lunch with them, and learn and discuss their priorities. If that all seems impossible, develop internally, or bring in someone from the outside, who has formal power skills. Whenever you take on a project, negotiate to earn a bit of profit even if you're a cost center. That's power. In most projects, you aren't a partner but a subcontractor. Leverage that role well.

One of the most effective ways to build power long-term in training groups is to help high-potential people. Right now, there's a group of middle managers that will soon be your organization's senior management. Your most important strategic power questions are how to help them succeed and how to deliver formal development that will help them do better and thus build their confidence in the company. That will require creative thinking, not just marketing the old content more aggressively. Middle-management training programs are terrible in most organizations, which is an absolute guarantee that most training groups won't gain more power.

Ideas

The idea of building leadership as a ubiquitous enterprise competency has to be introduced to a group. If you have enough power, you can do it yourself. Introduce it strongly at various staff meetings of the business units. Publicize it as your group's highest priority. Start little pilots, using the power and budget you have, to make the case. Train 10 to 20 high-potential people. Train 10 to 20 of the worst performers. Track what happens.

You'll win more credibility and respect down the road if the ideas are yours. But if you don't have enough power, or even if you do, spend time listening to your organization. Somewhere, people are talking about leadership. It's probably the CEO or

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Leadership Skill	Gaining Power	Sharing Power
You need to work on *power*…	• if no one in your environment listens to you • if your employees don't follow you • if you are always doing someone else's work	• if no one in your environment cares about an outcome
Every day, as often as you can, make sure you…	• give appropriate praise • complete any work • support popular ideas • partner with authority	• listen • let others take credit for shared ideas
Focus on developing or acquiring some of these *power* skills:	• Negotiation skills • Sales • Business writing • Presentation skills • Public speaking • Serving as an internal consultant	• Empowerment • Teambuilding • Group dynamics
If the focus is right…	cultures that manage power well tend to have satisfied and motivated employees.	
If there is too much focus…	cultures that over-focus on power tend to have employees split between being egotistical and manipulative on one hand and down-trodden and resentful on the other. Overly praised people or cultures can lose their productive edge.	cultures that over-focus on sharing power tend to have no sense of personal responsibility. They have overly matrixed organizations.

Leadership Skill	Generating Ideas
You need to work on *ideas*…	• if your environment is working on the same old issues • if your environment is paralyzed by confusion • if there is little agreement as to what way to move forward • if you are in conflict with your internal or external customers • if you are not learning enough from other people
Every day, as often as you can, make sure you…	• actively listen • bring in the disengaged • bring in the quiet • selectively relax people • selectively increase the tension in other people
Focus on developing or acquiring some of these *idea* skills:	• Creativity/Innovation • Diversity • Listening • Benchmarking • Root cause analysis • Developing a strategic plan • Creating a vision • Empowerment • Marketing • Communication
If the focus is right…	cultures that manage ideas well tend to be innovative and visionary, with strengths in strategic planning and public relations.
If there is too much focus…	cultures that overly focus on ideas tend to work in silos, with high degrees of secrecy and in-fighting; dwell in the theoretical not practical; and accomplish little, with customers loyal to individual employees rather than to the organization.

other members of senior management. Pick up their ideas. Quote their latest speech or annual report. Look at their strategic plan. Talk to them over lunch and capture their words. If they've already done the politically expensive work of introducing an idea, you can discuss how to implement it.

Then you'll have to bring to the surface ideas on how to accomplish the hard work of building the associated skills. Dr. Linus Pauling said it well: "The best way to have a good idea is to have a lot of ideas." **"Is the Number of Ideas Finite?" Concept, page 31** Senior vice president of HR for Electronic Arts Rusty Rueff observes, "Most creativity comes at one of two times: when your back's against the wall or in a time of calm." Listening and bringing in quiet members of your work group is crucial. That won't be business as usual.

Tension

Tension extremes are needed to generate ideas, but moderate tension is needed to get anything done. Deliberately leveraging tension may feel manipulative to unseasoned employees, but it's a constant goal of any successful leader. Once enough good ideas have surfaced, notes Victor Buzzotta, "Resourceful leaders practice techniques that can raise and lower the tension that occurs naturally in the workplace, keeping it in the constructive, energizing range."

A lot of training groups are hoping to wait out the current economic storm. They think that by keeping their heads down, they'll survive the crisis with minimum damage. To those people, I'd say that their tension is, believe it or not, too low. Your job is to raise the tension of that group. Not taking risks is the riskiest behavior of all. Keeping, motivating, and, yes, investing in the highest-impact employees, such as those close to customers, is more important now than ever.
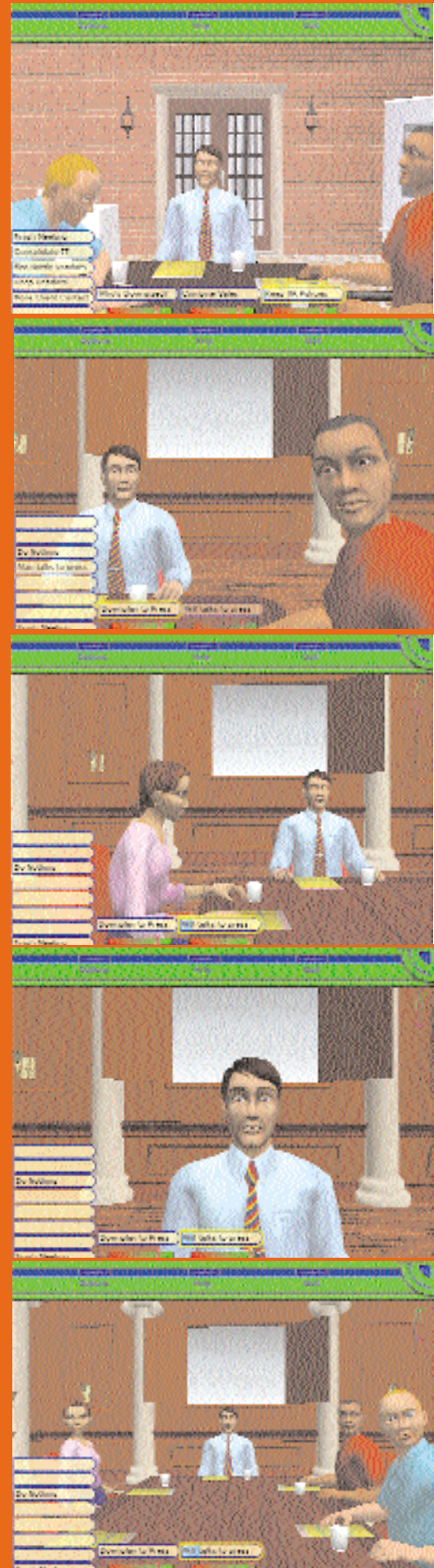
Meanwhile, a lot of organizations are overly focused on the next quarter results. To them, I'd say their tension is too high. They risk pursuing the Enron mentality of letting panic overwhelm judgment. In most cases, the organization will be around next year. Your job with these people is to lower tension, then you can talk about the future.

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Work and commitment

Once you have your power, tension, and ideas set up, then you have to make things happen. *Fortune* columnist Geoffery Colvin has said that "the main reasons CEOs fail aren't mistakes in strategy or finance but simply the inability to execute—to get done what they wanted to get done."

So, don't just follow your self-imposed rules; make leaders. Let nothing stop you. That's as true of an enterprise-wide project as a 20-person pilot.

My biggest concern about any corpo-

Leadership Skill	Lowering Tension	Moderating Tension	Raising Tension
You need to work on *tension*…	● if your environment is too tense to get any work done		● if your environment is too relaxed to try any risky work
Every day, as often as you can, make sure you…	● give appropriate praise ● bring up relaxing ideas		● challenge people ● bring up controversial ideas
Focus on developing or acquiring some of these *tension* skills:	● Dealing with tough customers ● Stress management ● Reducing workplace violence ● Creating a positive workplace ● Conflict management ● Resolving team conflict	● Facilitation ● Change management ● Improving personal productivity ● Reducing sexual harassment ● Safety ● Ethics	● Competitive analysis ● Budget preparation
If the focus is right…	cultures that manage tension well tend to be productive and creative.		
If there is too much focus…	cultures with very low tension tend to be low-risk, with no tolerance for failure, and no employee turnover except for retirement.	cultures that overly focus on moderating tension appear manipulative.	cultures with very high tension tend to be erratic, switching strategies often, with high employee turnover.

Leadership Skill	Completing the Work	Preventing the Wrong Work
You need to work on *work*…	● if not enough in your environment gets done ● if people around you are frustrating your work	● if there are large amounts of waste and pork projects ● if completing insignificant projects are creating a false sense of accomplishment
Every day, as often as you can, make sure you…	● focus on completing the right work ● reiterate the goals of the organization	● argue against the wrong work ● introduce alternatives to the wrong work ● reiterate the goals of the organization
Focus on developing or acquiring some of these *work* skills:	● Time management ● Project management ● Execution ● Management principles ● Streamlining business processes	● Constructive conflict ● Disagreeing well ● Confrontational skills
If the focus is right…	cultures that manage work well tend to have a results-oriented culture with strong metrics and accountability.	
If there is too much focus…	cultures that overly focus on work stifle any new ideas, focus on short-term results, and have low customer satisfaction.	cultures that overly criticize disempower the members and prevent people from learning.

rate function is that, as with new math, it tends to think it's more important to do it right than to get the right answer. The desire for staffers to endlessly research, prove, defend, create the case for, and later explain why the project should have worked cannot replace the absolute burning desire to make something happen.

Whenever I hear the phrase "sound instructional design," for example, the context often sounds like a defense of failure rather than an enabler of success.

Building an enterprise-wide leadership competency is different from rolling out classes and labs for everyone. It will take the constant work and support of your partners, as well as that of your work group.

It can't, shouldn't, be done alone.

Dynamic systems skills

Finally, leadership is a dynamic systems skill rather than a linear process skill. That's why it can't be taught in traditional classrooms or via e-learning. Balancing power, tension, ideas, and work requires hours of practice, preferably in a safe environment. It's a skill around juggling, making instant trade-offs, and dealing with unintended consequences—constantly.

For example, in some cases if you have a surplus of one of the core leadership elements, you can leverage it to gain more of another—similar to spending currency (see the box).

Most training groups tend to be imperfect practitioners of leadership. They traditionally (I apologize for over-generalizing because I can already think of dozens of exceptions) don't do a great job of building power, they try to lower tension overly, and they rarely bring bold new ideas to the surface. But they are exceptionally good at getting work done and are trusted throughout the organization as an infrastructure.

Balancing and compensating unproductive tendencies will ultimately elevate a CLO to his or her rightful position as a true peer of the COO, CIO, and CFO in controlling an organization's destiny. All it takes is leadership. **TD**

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From	Gain Power	Gain Ideas	Moderate Tension	Complete Work
Sacrificing Power to…	● -	● Listen. ● Introduce a controversial idea.	● Introduce or reintroduce a charged or relaxing idea. ● Oppose popular work.	● Focus the group on the right work. ● Redirect their attention if need be. ● Keep the group focused on unpopular work.
Sacrificing Future Ideas to…	● Do all of the work yourself; take all of the credit yourself.	● -	● Constantly moderate tension.	● Commit to an idea before alternatives are explored.
Sacrificing a Productive Tension to…	● Compliment people.	● Move tension to an extreme.	● -	● Focus on a critical idea that raises or lowers tension beyond the productive levels.
Sacrificing Work to…	● Complete an idea that you supported, but with which you may not agree. ● Discuss an idea that you introduced ("your idea").	● Complete distracting work. ● Share in the completing of an idea to give everybody personal influence.	● Finish an idea to lower tension.	● -