

# Learning to Lead

Reviewed by Deanne Bryce

WHEN MANAGERS ARE ASKED to “act” like a leader, they are often puzzled about the difference between managing and leading. *The Leadership Pickles*, an 18-minute video and DVD, offers a fun, yet substantive introduction to learning to lead as a manager.

You might be wondering why this program refers to leadership “pickles.” Bob Farrell, the video narrator, excelled for more than 30 years in the restaurant industry. He and his business partners opened more than 150 restaurants without a single failure. Farrell has maintained a customer service mantra, “Give em’ a pickle,” ever since a loyal customer said he would not come back after a waitress wouldn’t give him an extra pickle free of charge. He is the narrator of a previous Media Partners video, *Give ‘em the Pickle*, on customer service.

In this video, Farrell combines his passion for serving others with leadership stories to create a motivating leadership message. Farrell defines a leader as: “Those who serve the people who serve the customer.” Just as customers need pickles—those special things you do for them to keep them coming back—your employees need their pickles too. They need and want certain things from

their leaders, and those things are discussed in this video.

While Farrell doesn’t say it explicitly, the pickle has come to represent something extra. In leadership that means:

- spread enthusiasm
- inspire confidence
- demonstrate integrity.

One of these concepts is a real story from Farrell’s restaurant experiences. Inspiring confidence is illustrated by a story about a dishwasher in one of Farrell’s ice cream restaurants, whose face was disfigured in a childhood accident. Naturally, the dishwasher was hesitant to work in front of people, but Farrell helped him grow beyond his fear. This story implicitly addresses diversity and could be used as a discussion point, even though it is not listed in the workshop notes as a point to explore in more detail.

## Product description

The video comes with a trainer’s guide, a 12-slide PowerPoint presentation, a self-study guide, pocket cards, a gold pickle lapel pin, green pickle lapel pins, and a pickle sticky pad. The trainer’s guide is a key source of information on how to use the materials in this training package.

When managers have successfully completed this program, they will be able to:

- identify the three Leadership Pickles
- explain why spreading enthusiasm, inspiring confidence, and demonstrating integrity are important leadership skills
- self-assess their proficiency in each of the three key Leadership Pickle skills
- determine how to increase their effectiveness in each of the three key Leadership Pickle skills
- track their progress over 30 to 60 days to increase their Leadership Pickle proficiency.

## Evaluation

Because of its simplicity and light touch, this program appeals to an audience less sophisticated than senior leaders. However, there were many executives who didn’t mind learning about change using the cute concept of mice and cheese in the bestselling book and video, *Who Moved My Cheese?* And the story of the dishwasher

takes the concepts presented to a depth that belies cute. So it is critical that the person who selects the program knows the audience well and can deal with the package this message comes in.

The program sticks to three basic skill areas. The fact that there is an assessment and follow-up steps is a strong plus because the program designers know that changing leadership behaviors is a process and watching a video alone will not have much of an impact.

### We liked...

- the entertaining look at leadership concepts
- the abundance of training materials.

### Could be better...

- The video lacks sophistication.
- The web and CD-ROM feature tours are delivered with obtrusive background noise.

### Pickles product rating

<b>Holds viewer interest</b>	<b>****.5</b>
<b>Acting/presenting</b>	<b>**5</b>
<b>Diversity</b>	<b>***.5</b>
<b>Production quality</b>	<b>***</b>
<b>Value of content</b>	<b>***.5</b>
<b>Instructional value</b>	<b>***.5</b>
<b>Value for the money</b>	<b>***</b>
<b>Overall rating</b>	<b>***</b>

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# Individual Self-worth

Reviewed by Bill Ellet

I DON’T ENVY TRAINERS who have to capture and keep students’ attention every day. I do regular presentations in front of business school students and am forever experimenting with ways to keep the number of sleepy heads to a minimum without pandering or making a complete fool of myself. That’s something you don’t have to worry about with the video *People*.

**The Leadership Pickles**  
 Video, 2005  
 Media Partners  
[www.media-partners.com](http://www.media-partners.com)  
 800.408.5657  
 \$795 VHS, \$895 DVD  
 Included: leader guide, various classroom aids

**Recommendation**  
*The Leadership Pickles provides an entertaining look at legitimate leadership concepts. I recommend it if you think your audience can appreciate an approach that may appear to lack sophistication but actually has real depth.*

### We liked...

- It's visually arresting and easy to watch.
- It fosters discussion about respect and individual worth.

### Could be better...

- It doesn't fit neatly into a single training topic.
- There is no support material.

*People* has the visual surface and soundtrack of a network television commercial. A mere four minutes long, it holds a viewer's attention without requiring much of the brain. But this commercial-on-steroids has a bit of a soul, too.

*People* doesn't fit neatly into a single training topic. Diversity is probably closest, but most diversity training explains why diversity is important and how people can cope with it. *People* has more to do with the core values and conditions of an organization.

It makes a simple "argument" that people are different, but everyone has a need to be valued and respected. It clothes this argument in a montage of people and quotes from individuals who differ in gender, age, race, and nationality. The video also manages to work in pretty pictures from Venice, Italy, and the Namib Desert in southern Africa.

Soul is expressed in quotes from Bob Hope and Marcel Proust. How often have you seen those two names in the same sentence? The writing of Maya Angelou makes several appearances, and she is given the honor of delivering the punch line: "...people will never forget how you made them feel." The video asserts that everyone wants to feel that they are valued and respected, but it leaves to inference any conclusions about how people can be made to feel in an organization. Maybe that's where the conversation should begin after viewing?

Although the production company's website categorizes *People* as a meeting opener, I don't agree. Meeting openers tend to be programs with a self-contained message that you show and don't necessarily discuss. *People* belongs in the category of discussion opener. You wouldn't dare just show it and then start in on the monthly sales figures or a project progress report.

And that's where things can get sticky. Being valued and respected is

far from assured in many organizations. Every smart organization should have a conversation about respect and the worth of each individual on a regular basis, but it had better be a real one. Otherwise, you'll just encourage cynicism.

*People* was originally inspired seven years ago by a mere three lines from a poem, and more recently impassioned by observing the outpouring of global humanity after the unfortunate tragedies of our new century.

*People* beautifully illustrates the potential of the universal human traits of kindness, generosity, and respect in our workplaces. This powerful video gets to the heart of the one thing that unites all people on earth. This one thing is the key to success in all our relationships.

Meeting openers typically don't come with support materials, and to our knowledge, there are none for *People*. That means what you do with the video is entirely up to you.

### People product rating

Holds viewer interest	****
Diversity	****.5
Production quality	****
Value of content	****
Value for the money	****
Overall rating	***

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**People**  
Video, 2005  
Learncom  
www.learncom.com  
800.622.3610  
\$375

### Recommendation

**People is visually arresting and easy to watch. You could try to pass it off simply as an affirmation that your organization places a high value on respect and individual self-worth. I don't recommend that you try that, however, because this pretty package invites the viewer to set the ideal against the reality. Whatever the result, the conversation is worth having, but you need to be prepared to have it.**

# Interpersonal Communication

Reviewed by Bill Ellet

THE PROJECT Howard is in charge of isn't going to be completed on time. What's worse, problems associated with the project have reduced production, and in Howard's company, that is a big no-no. In the old Soviet Union, you could just say you met your quota, and the bosses wouldn't check. In Howard's company, they check.

Howard looks pretty funny standing on the factory floor with his beard wrapped in a hair net while wondering what to do. But his predicament isn't funny—so thank goodness he's got Eva, his friend and fellow supervisor. Howard's bad interpersonal communication skills set the fire, and in all the ways he's bad at them, Eva isn't just good—she's great! You want a good meeting? Go to one of Eva's. You want someone to speak with diamond-edged clarity? Listen to Eva speaking with one of her reports. She is the perfect communicator.

While Howard is a believable character with a sense of humor, Eva often speaks like a textbook. Her stilted lines blow the dramatic illusion of people trying to solve real problems. After this happens a few times, the viewer's attention drifts. What's compelling about the *Master the Message* video is the illusion of real life. When the viewer senses an actor reading from a script, the illusion vanishes.

Edge Training Systems is one of the best video producers left in the training field, and a lot of things are right with this program, starting with the content. Every day bad interpersonal communication skills contribute to huge inefficiencies in companies and other types of organizations. The skills taught in the video are bound to help supervisors and managers, which are the primary audience. The prime production values (camera work, sound, and editing) are excellent; that's a hallmark of Edge productions.

The support materials are invaluable. The leader guide and participant course

## We liked...

- strong content
- great camera work, sound, and editing.

## Could be better...

- a hard-to-believe character
- awkward support materials.

book provide ample material for both reinforcement and skills practice. What I don't like about them is that the participant material isn't included in the leader guide. An instructor has to flip back and forth between the two books, and that is a major pain. The program also lacks ready-made PowerPoint slides, a major time saver for instructors.

### **Master the Message** product rating

Holds user's interest	***.5
Acting/presenting	***.5
Diversity	***
Production quality	***.5
Value of content	***
Instructional value	***.5
Value for the money	***.5
Documentation	***.5
Overall rating	***.5

### **Master the Message: Communicating for Success**

Video, 2005

Edge Training Systems

[www.edgetraining.com](http://www.edgetraining.com)

800.476.1405

\$695

Included: leader guide, student course book

### **Recommendation**

In *Master the Message*, good content is let down a bit by a hard-to-believe character. She's so perfect, it's comical. Also, the support materials are awkward for instructors.

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