

# developing your colors and textures

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Linda W. Helgerson  
Michael M. Lombardo

*The full measure of a man is not to be found in the man himself, but in the colors and textures that come alive in others because of him.*

Albert Schweitzer

Personal improvement is very “in” these days. Yet personal improvement doesn’t in most cases allow a person to develop his/her own feelings and leadership behaviors. The seven-day leadership development course at the Center for Creative Leadership<sup>1</sup> is designed to motivate individuals toward personal understanding of themselves and their leadership styles.

The Center for Creative Leadership, a nonprofit, educational institution, is dedicated to identifying and developing innovative leaders. Lectures, readings, and multimedia presentations by themselves aren’t usually enough to produce personal growth. This requires a combination of experiences, climate, feedback, and the opportunities to test and practice new methods and behaviors of leadership.

The seven-day leadership course uses three basic methods:

1. Learning by doing.
2. Learning from feedback.
3. Learning to change.

## **Learning by Doing**

Being involved in a training situation is radically different from observing or discussing it. Participants in our center workshops spend considerable time in simulated conditions making decisions, learning from their mistakes, trying out new leadership behaviors and skills, and practicing those seen as the more effective ones.

The most sophisticated part of the seven-day program is the decision-making module. The basic instrument used

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*Linda W. Helgerson:* Program Coordinator, Leadership Development, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, North Carolina.

*Michael M. Lombardo:* Director, Publications, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, North Carolina.

in the module is the *Leader Decisions Styles Survey*—25 vignettes that require participants, role playing as managers, to make decisions. The choices range from making the decision alone, involving others for information purposes only, or allowing the whole group to make the decision.

This is useful because it allows the participants to see if they have a definite leadership style or if they're able to use different leadership styles from decisions based only on the facts of the situation. These decision situations are then used in role-playing situations in the training program. The model outlines seven variables to be considered by leaders in varying situations to ensure both the quality and acceptance of the decision. Participants are involved in the discussions that focus on applying the decision-making model to everyday decision-making situations.

### **Learning from Feedback**

Participants are provided with a constant flow of information about themselves through formal behavioral assessment, ratings of exercises, psychological test results, and staff and peer observations. Participants are given the information in a descriptive, nonevaluative manner by the center staff to help individuals plan for personal development.

Participants are trained in the techniques of giving and receiving feedback, and after practice, provide one another with constructive feedback. After practicing the feedback process in small groups, participants are asked to pair-off—*in front of the fireplace, near the lake, or wherever they can find a private place*—to give and receive feedback.

### **Learning to Change**

Using information and experiences accumulated throughout the seven-day training period, the participants identify an area they'd like to change. Then, with the help of staff and peers, they design a self-development project. The intent is for the trainee to develop realistic, measurable goals that can be carried out back home. Too often you hear, "I want to be a better leader," which is too vague to guide future personal development.

The final module of the program includes discussing the importance of choosing directions in life. The possible directions that one can take depend almost entirely on the number of personal assets accumulated.

These assets are diverse:

- Can you write well?
- Are you keeping your brain active?
- Do you have enough friends for emotional support?

- Do you exercise daily?
- Do you associate with people who are motivated?

This final analysis helps participants examine their personal assets and liabilities, and leads into activities concerning what they value in life. The center staff brings this personal development process into sharp focus by helping participants select one realistic goal to begin work on immediately.

The leadership training program at the center enhances one's own colors and textures.

**Footnote**

1. Center for Creative Leadership, 5000 Laurinda Drive, P.O. Box P-1, Greensboro, N.C. 27402.