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Outcomes: Essential Leadership Skills for Training and Development Professionals

December 5, 2008 NEO ASTD Workshop

Overview

On December 5, 28 NEO ASTD members and guests met at the Fairlawn Panera to dialogue and reach consensus on essential leadership competencies for training and development professionals.

Identifying Competencies

Participants were asked to share the first word or concept they think of when considering leadership. These included:

Direction	Good example	A lion (roar)	Vision
Skill	Guidance	Influence	Servant leadership
Motivation	“Lack of”	Inspiring	Developer of others
Honesty	Risk taker	Energy level	Authenticity
Integrity	Compassion	Timing	2 kinds: mentors tormentors

We next considered 67 researched leadership competencies (Lombardo and Eichinger, *FYI: For Your Improvement*), first individually and then in small groups. The members of each small group were asked to discuss their individual priorities for their current roles and then to reach consensus on the three to five most important competencies for a successful training and development professional.

Of the 67 competencies, 24 were selected. However, to focus on a reasonable number for potential future work in the group, only those 11 mentioned more than once are listed below (in no particular order).

- Dealing with paradox (also discussed as facilitating or managing change)
- Drive for results (also discussed as results based processes)
- Listening
- Customer focus
- Presentation skills
- Integrity and trust
- Organizational agility (also discussed as “learning on the fly”)
- Motivating others
- Creativity
- Negotiating
- Developing others

Most Common Competencies

The two competencies mentioned most often were **Integrity and Trust** and **Creativity**.

Lombardo and Eichinger state that **Integrity and Trust** appears on most success profiles (p. 176). These are basic to being part of a team, and without them, little else matters. Why are skills and abilities surrounding integrity and trust sometimes perceived as lacking in someone? Common causes are personal disorganization, inconsistencies, and habits that get you into trouble. You sometimes don't think through the impact of your actions and don't realize how you come across to others. Or, it can be a lack of integrity in that people just don't buy what you say.

Creativity is a valued skill because most organizations need innovation in their products and services to succeed (p. 82). Behaviors attributed to being creative involve things such as immersing yourself in a problem; looking for connections- in the past, what other organizations do; brainstorming; noticing breakthroughs when you are distracted or in a relaxed state; and, picking one or more of those ideas to champion. This competency can be improved by letting go of constraints (many of which were learned from childhood) such as risk-taking and incorporating research-based and experience-tested creativity skills to your tool kit.

Self awareness is a key to leadership, and it is enhanced by networking and learning best practices in giving feedback to and receiving feedback from others. Feedback – positive or negative – is a gift. If we don't get it, we can't grow. I encourage you to make a personal and professional development plan for the next one, five, or even ten years. A simple **planning document** is attached.

What one or two competencies did you choose to work on as a New Year's resolution?

What future programming do the selected competencies suggest for our ASTD chapter?

If you have recommendations for future program topics, contact the program chair listed on the NEO ASTD website, because it's probable that others would be interested.