

## Significant Trends in Leader Development

The following is a summary analysis of responses to a survey sent to LDC 2013 participants. As much as possible, the original answers are given word-for-word in bullets.

### 1. A broad recognition of the central importance of leader development:

- Everyone is talking about leader development.
- Increased awareness by major organizations of the critical need for developing leaders to meet the demands of a rapidly growing church
- There seems to be an increased awareness of the need for leader development within the network of my relationships.
- People are awakening to the need.
- There is a hunger for training and good material in the two-thirds world like never before. Quality education has become a high priority among leaders.

### 2. Trends in who is being developed:

- More women in leadership, although there are “fits and starts” when it comes to truly being gender inclusive.
- More organizations are recognizing that having a diversity of people (e.g. ethnically, gender) is important for the entire organization.
- Underserved segments of the community are being highlighted as critical targets for leader development in every sector of the economy (including business, youth development, etc.).
- Empowering oral-preference learners (low education).

### 3. Trends regarding the goal of their development:

- There is an increasing emphasis on the person and personal growth of the leader. In my country, a lot of attention is being paid to a balanced lifestyle as a key component of leader development.
- Greater focus on union with Christ and the internal life of the leader.
- A shift toward the importance of a holistic approach.
- Greater emphasis on long-term relational, holistic, experiential and participative processes with an authentic spiritual focus.
- More focus on Servant Leadership.
- Focus on leaders' character development.

- At the same time, some believe there is still too much tendency to major on competence rather than character.

#### 4. Trends regarding the process of their development:

##### **Spiritually:**

- Increased emphasis on spiritual formation.
- A desire to successfully teach or show emerging leaders how to “Know God.”
- God is bringing a greater balance to the *action* and the *being* in the world of the leader. There is greater focus on how to generate spiritually revitalized leadership that goes beyond the motions of management and becomes more intentional to help others flourish. This includes establishing communities of practice in which leaders can share experiences in a safe place with other leaders, with a purpose of mutual learning in a peer-learning environment; a narrative spirituality frames the interactions as leaders share about their experiences in various dimensions: character, skills and strategic formation.

##### **Relationally:**

- Leadership is more and more a shared process. Instead of a single heroic leader, there is the rise of collective leadership. Leadership is viewed as a social network.
- A healthy focus on mentoring and small group training.
- Increase in organizations wanting a “coaching” people-development culture.
- Greater focus on mentoring, especially of younger leaders.
- Momentum is built as relational networks collaborate to bolster one another.
- Stronger commitment to church-based leader development (driven by the increased adoption of leader-intensive ministry approaches such as small groups).
- Increased attention to the value of community and context in processes of leader development.
- Larger churches are doing more in-house training of leaders.

**Experientially:**

- More process-oriented and relational than simply didactic.
- Shift from training to coaching, from training to networking (experience sharing, learning in a group).
- Interest in skills over character. Need for cross-cultural transferability.
- There has become an awareness that education – without experience and practical application – results in immature leadership.
- Moving from events to processes. Holistic approach.
- Focus on cross-cultural competencies.
- Exposure assignments to other countries.
- Important focus on transfer of learning to life and ministry.
- A significant concern is an overemphasis on fast-tracking younger leaders without enough focus on learning from experience, which takes time.

**Instructionally:**

- I'm seeing and experiencing less dominance of lectures and more use of life experiences and learning experiences.
- More online resources are available than ever before.
- The world is feeling smaller as technology and transportation allows more cross cultural development training.
- Many programs are more holistic and the methodology is more oriented toward adult-learning style.
- Increased interest in sound approaches to adult learning.
- Utilize social media, online services.
- Trends seem to be more on delivery systems or evaluation: web-based, metrics, etc.

**5. Some specific concerns:**

- A decreased familiarity with Scripture.
- Much of the "training" is reiterations of business ideas (and of course, some of them are good and apply).
- Technological and professional advancements deviating focus from relational and spiritual development in leadership.
- Leader development programs excessively focus on "transfer of knowledge" rather than actual practical skills acquisition in the context of the leader being developed.

- Although there is the emergence of potential young leaders in ministry, often there is the structural inability to build them to their best.
- Leaders are considered “qualified” by the study they have done and the degrees they have accumulated.
- People pattern leader development around a curriculum or other turn-key tool.
- Lack of coaching and mentoring.
- General lack of leaders, especially in the next generation (Gen Y2), thereby causing a leadership crisis in the next generation.
- Generally speaking, leaders are not being developed. Period. Yes – in the name of leadership development – transfer of positions and titles, glorified delegations and father-to-son transitions are happening, but I doubt if literally, leaders are being built.
- Most people have no idea how to do leader development.
- Locally, we are seeing that leaders are “busy” so are not as available to give their time within the Church, resulting in the age-old problem of a few doing the majority of the serving. We have had some great input over the years as leaders, but there appears to be lethargy in leaders picking up the baton and running with it. I think some of this comes down to accountability... there hasn’t been much accountability of leaders to follow through on their tasks; more of a trust that they would rise up and move in their role without having to be continually reminded to.
- Often we develop “half-baked” leaders, due either to a lack of resources or a lack of know-how.
- Unfortunately, there are more bad materials and institutions than good ones (especially online).
- Leadership itself is becoming more challenging and difficult.

#### **6. Observations re general leadership trends:**

- Leaders are becoming more humble about ourselves; trusting more in God to work through us.
- Transition from perfection to excellence and risk taking.
- Grace toward leaders as sinners (good). Permissiveness toward leaders in sin (bad).
- Much leadership still remains position-focused.

- Asian leaders need to address thorny pastoral theological issues, such as marrying people previously divorced or sexually active, gender roles, and interest in ecclesiastical models from other non-western cultures.
- The need to deliver leadership training which is more focused on oral or digital learners, rather than print learners.
- The influence of the internet, multimedia, advertising, branding and accessibility to hi-tech even in the two-thirds world have changed the landscape of training forever.

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