

Developing Leaders

Executive Education in Practice

**Entrepreneurship
Risk and
Innovation**
Ali Partovi Interviewed

**Visual Meaning
for Leadership**
Julian Burton

**Leadership
Credo**
William Klepper,
Yoshie Tomozumi
Nakamura

**The Co-creative
Enterprise**
Michigan Ross with
Mahindra & Mahindra



**Bridging the Leadership/
Corporate Governance Gap**
Columbia, Cranfield, Michigan and HEC



Winning People's Hearts

The Way to Successful Leadership

There's an old Sufi story about the wise fool, Mulla Nasrudin. In the story, a man comes upon Nasrudin crawling on his hands and knees beneath the glow of a streetlight. The Mulla explains that he has lost his keys, and the man joins him in his search. After half an hour of fruitless effort, he asks: "Are you sure this is where you lost the keys?" "Oh no," Nasrudin replies, "I lost them up the road. But it's dark up there; the light is much better here."

This is a story about stepping outside familiar circles of light; about venturing beyond the tried and true in search of answers. My hope is that sharing it will help unlock the secret to successfully developing the leaders of our future.

Beating a Dead Horse

A few years back, I had dinner with a colleague, then the head of training and leadership development inside a huge, multinational company. She was in town for the annual company conference—over a hundred professionals from around the globe spending two days together to address ways to improve their craft.

After several glasses of sake, she confessed: "Every year it's the same thing. We bring people together from all over the world to figure out how we can get better results from our training programs. It feels like beating a dead horse."

Having spent two decades as a coach and trainer, I understood. Every training professional knows that even if you offer the best, most compelling content, you can never be sure it will "stick" after the program is over.

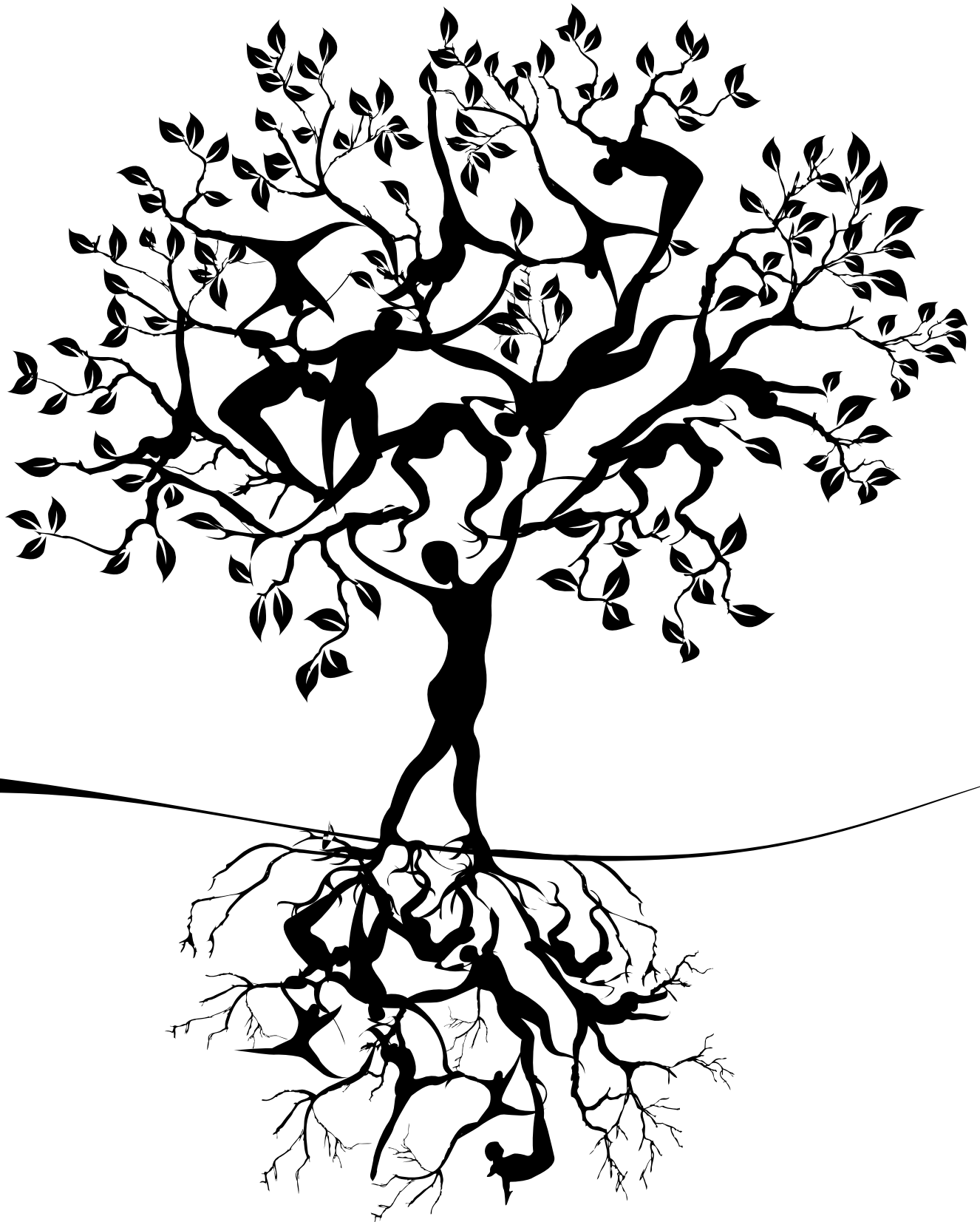
"Well," I mused, "maybe you are asking the wrong questions. Maybe you have to look at something other than training." Her response was abrupt and angry: "I am responsible for a *billion* dollar training budget," she informed me. "Training is my bread and butter. If there is no training, I am out of a job." That was the last time I heard from her.

Every year companies spend billions of dollars on programs trying to cultivate great leaders. But it's an open secret that many of those traditional efforts fall short. In 2011, Development Dimensions International (DDI) found that among 1,400 leaders within 2,600 organizations across the world:

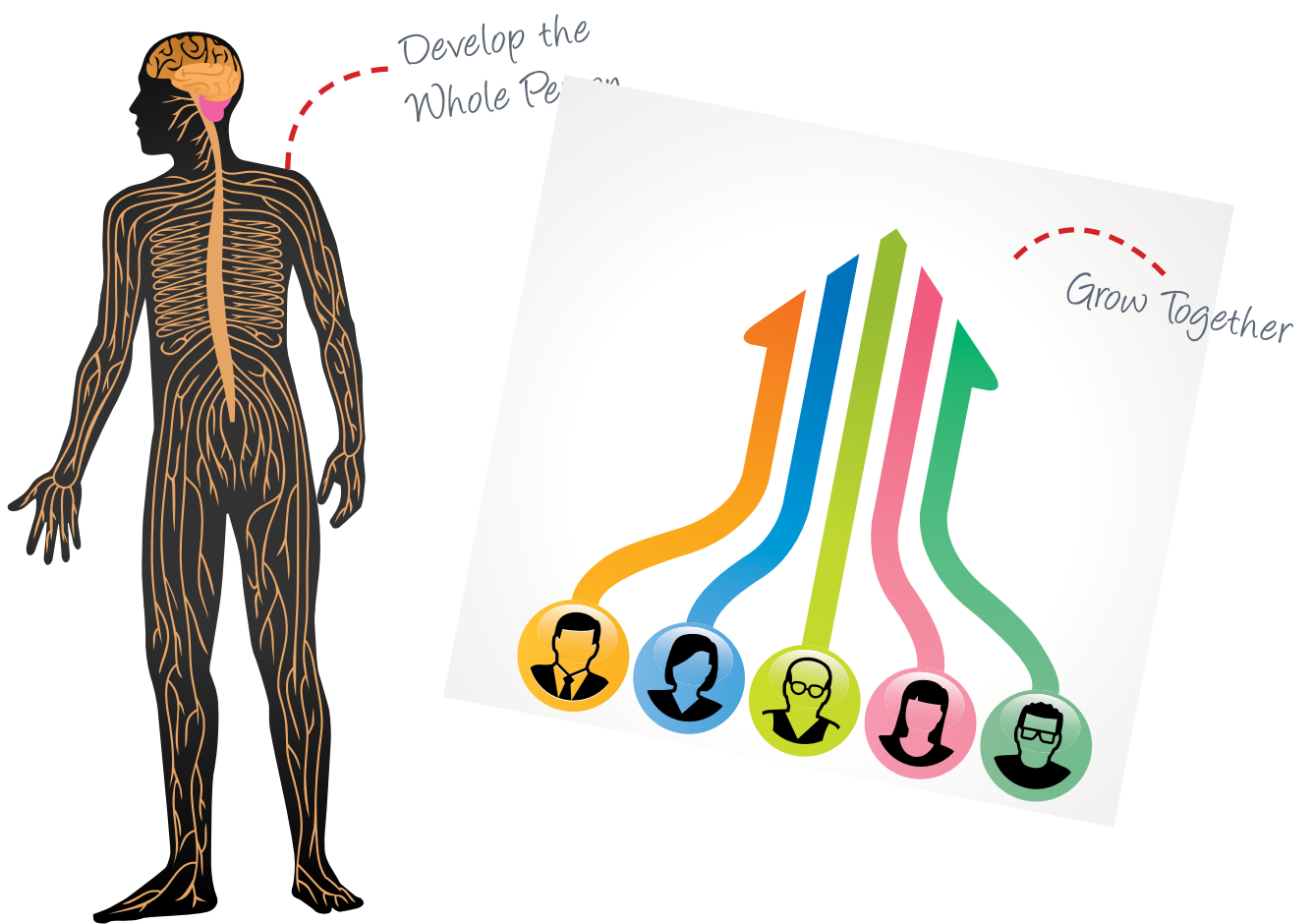
- 75% said they feel leadership development is important, but only 34% said current leadership development efforts are successful;
- and only 18% feel they have a strong pipeline of prospective leaders.

Clearly, something is not working.

By Pamela Wiess



Keys to Success



Stepping Into the Dark

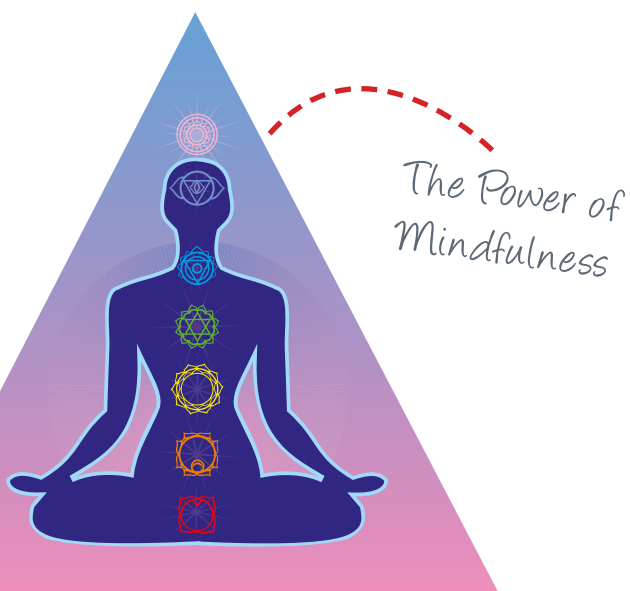
In 2006, I was introduced to Todd Pierce, then the VP of Information Technology at the Biotech giant, Genentech, in South San Francisco. At the time, I was working as an executive coach and mindfulness meditation teacher. Todd invited me to offer mindfulness classes to the employees in his 700-person organization. He understood from his own experience that mindfulness is one of the all-time great technologies for human development. As he put it: "Mindfulness is a super-skill that brings out the best in people."

After six-months, the mindfulness classes were consistently full and were creating a buzz within the department. "The classes are good," Todd told me, "but I want more impact. I want to create a *culture* of mindfulness and development in my organization." He asked me to come up with a set of principles that became the underpinning for a human development program we launched later that year, called "Personal Excellence" (PEP)

Our aim was not simply to create a new program. We wanted to transform how people development is done in organizations. As a leader, Todd had experimented for years with the usual array of trainings, speakers, and other events. Frustrated by the limits of established methods, he wanted to challenge the traditional thinking.



*Mastery
Takes Time*



Instead of addressing tactical questions about program content, structure, cost and scalability, we stepped back and considered: What are the keys to lasting human growth and development?

Prior to this, I had witnessed a repeated pattern in my work. At my first meeting with new coaching clients, they would consistently hand me a thick binder filled with data from personality tests and profiles. In leadership development programs I participated in, I saw a similar theme: curriculum was consistently content-heavy and process light. In both cases, the underlying assumption is that information equals transformation. But I knew—as we all know if we look closely at our own experience—that just wasn't true.

Growing a person is not the same as launching a new product or delivering a project on time. While data and information may be a good place to start, the process of real human development is less linear, messier, and more mysterious. Human beings grow in organic, dynamic ways. Like other organic matter, we are alive. What is needed for us to learn and grow is less about force-feeding ideas, and more about offering a rich, nurturing environment—with just enough sunlight and water—so the life inside can bloom.

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Keys to Success

Here are five keys we discovered to growing successful leaders:

1. Develop the Whole Person: Most training and development focuses on the person from the neck up. But lasting growth and change requires tapping into cognitive, emotional and somatic intelligence—head, heart and body.

2. Grow Together: Whole people grow best in community. There's an exponential impact when people have the opportunity to share and learn from one another in a safe environment where they can be open and authentic. One of the comments we receive most often from participants is how much they appreciate the opportunity to discover "I'm not the only one."

3. Cultivate Intrinsic Motivation: In the book, *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, author Daniel Pink describes the unexpected results from studies on motivation. It turns out that for complex tasks (and I think we would all agree that human development is a complex task!), the presence of external rewards or punishment consistently *lowers* performance. As Pink puts it: "There is a mismatch between what science knows and what business does."

This is especially true for leadership development, where tapping into intrinsic motivation requires allowing people to choose meaningful development topics, rather than following what someone else tells them to do.

4. Mastery Takes Time: Information transfer only needs to happen once to be successful. But development is a process, not an event.

As Malcolm Gladwell reported in his book, *Outliers*, the key to mastery in any domain is not inherent genius, but repetitive practice. The distinguishing feature of virtuosos in all fields—from music to sports to leadership—is that they dedicate significantly more hours of practice to developing their skills than their less accomplished peers.

5. The Power of Mindfulness: Mindfulness is about paying attention, about learning to observe ourselves in real time. As we pay attention, we begin to see ourselves (and others) more clearly. And, based on our clear-seeing, we are able to make wise choices—so we can act rather than react. Based on the 2,600 year-old tradition of Buddhist meditation, mindfulness is not new or New Age. What is new is bringing its potential to the offices and conference rooms of businesses and corporations.

When we first launched our program, I was a little skeptical: would it really work to bridge two worlds that tend to look askance at one another? In the world of meditation and mindfulness, the busyness of business is considered problematic at best; while in the fast-paced world of business, meditation and mindfulness tend to be received with eye rolls and nervous jokes about navel-gazing and getting touchy-feely.

But I am fundamentally a pragmatist: I'm interested in what works. And to my surprise and delight, the results I've seen have been nothing less than astonishing.

Because we were going out on a limb with our experiment, we were rigorous in collecting data. In addition to soliciting consistent participant feedback, in the third year of our program, we hired outside experts who conducted an impact study to measure bottom line results. They reported that our program brought about 50% improvement in employee communication, collaboration, conflict management and coaching skills; and a significant return on investment, estimating that the program produced between one and a half to two dollars of benefit for every dollar invested to deliver it.

When I spoke with the consultants on the phone, they told me: "We've measured hundreds of leadership programs, and you are definitely doing something right. The business impact of your program is nearly three times the norm." Then they offered suggestions for how we could do even better: tie participants' development goals to clear business goals and metrics; make sure managers get more involved; and reduce the time spent on reflection so participants move into action more quickly—all proposals that would align us with traditional leadership training protocols.

When I pushed back, explaining that the design choices we made were intentional, they too got angry. "But you *have* to do it this way!" they insisted. "Why?" I asked. "Because that is how it's always done!"

I was nervous when I delivered the findings to Todd. "They say that we need to tie our process to clear business goals and metrics," I explained, handing him a copy of their glossy report, "but I disagree." I waited. Todd thumbed through the report and placed it on the table between us. Then he leaned back in his chair, lacing his hands behind his head, and laughed. "They just don't get it, do they?" he said, with his Texas twang, tapping his chest with his fingers, "this is not about business goals and metrics. It's about winning people's hearts."

I hope that sharing this story this will provide inspiration for seeing and doing things differently. I know it isn't easy. The power of inertia and institutional habit are formidable. Many times over the past years, I have felt like Sisyphus, rolling large boulders uphill.

But all around us, institutions are falling apart—financially, ethically, and with stunning displays of failed leadership. Maybe it's time to stop norming and conforming; to find the courage and conviction to step away from known forms; to be willing to venture into the dark. It may just be that the future of successful leadership development depends on it.



Pamela Weiss is the founder of Appropriate Response. She is a coach, meditation teacher and recognized pioneer in integrating the principles and practices of Buddhist teaching into leadership development and organizational transformation. She has worked with executives, managers and teams within a wide variety of organizations, including:

Genentech, Roche, Salesforce.com, Oracle, Intel, Banana Republic, Statoil (Norway), Clouds in Water Zen Center, Spirit Rock Meditation Center, the Metta Institute and the Center for Executive Development at UC Berkeley.

Despite much discussion about the need for leadership development in corporate and public organizations, and the considerable industry that surrounds it, this is the first authoritative periodical focused entirely on this area.

Developing Leaders looks at the critical confluence between the provision of executive education and the real everyday needs of organizations to strengthen their management teams, their corporate performance, and their leadership.

The publication presents the latest thinking and most recent developments in both academic and commercial executive education provision worldwide, what it is achieving and which are the best models for success, sharing the experience and expertise of top leaders and world class educators.

Developing Leaders is published in both hardcopy and online “page turning” format. The quarterly magazine complements the IEDP website - the definitive resource for executive developers worldwide.

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