TRAINING LEADERS TO LEAD:
AN EXECUTIVE LEARNING APPROACH

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in Education,
Educational Psychology

By

Carmen Ruby Andreasen

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The graduate project of Carmen Ruby Andreasen is approved:

________________________________________  __________________________
Pete Goldschmidt, Ph.D.                  Date

________________________________________  __________________________
Jessica Makin, M.S.W.                  Date

________________________________________  __________________________
Carolyn Jeffries, Ph.D., Chair       Date

California State University, Northridge
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Abstract

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Market changes can have a tremendous impact on how business is conducted in an organization. A clear message and vision is imperative during organizational change in order for the changes to take place and for them to be successful. The leadership team is vital in communicating not only the need for the changes, but also the way in which the changes are implemented. When the leadership team fails to come together to develop and communicate the new vision, it has a lasting and significant impact on an organization’s culture, employees, and clients. The purpose of this project is to shed light on best practices for building trust and improving communication within an executive team during changing and challenging times.

*Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program* is a training workshop that draws from research on effective communication, trust, and executive learning principles. This ten-week executive coaching session provides leadership teams with the tools necessary for becoming agents of change and progress. It is only when we truly look within ourselves that we are capable of seeing all that is possible.
Chapter One

Introduction

Organizational change, however great, is always difficult and can cause many casualties. Organizations see loss of productivity, high turnover and sometimes complete failure, as a result of poorly executed changes. Organizational shifts and cultural changes lead to employee uncertainty, which creates barriers to change (Allen, Jimmieson, Bordia, & Irmer, 2007). These barriers can be responsible for agency failure in implementation of desired strategic planning goals, as well as have an impact on employee morale and turnover. When organizational changes occur, employees are asked to “trust” management and their direction, although that presents a variety of other issues, depending on the leadership. The foundation for all successful change is clear and transparent communication (Johansson & Heide, 2008). Clear communication is important in order to prevent employees from developing their own “theories” of the changes, as well as to avoid rumors (Johansson & Heide, 2008). Such a simple concept is not always easy to execute. Agency executives have a pivotal role in delivering information that the employees need in order to be comfortable with and accepting of the changes. What happens when the executive team of an organization not only fails to provide the necessary information to employees but also has conflicting views of how the changes need to be carried out? Executive teams that lack unity can be the catalyst for organizational catastrophes.

Statement of Need

Over the last eight years I’ve provided training support for a mid-size non-profit agency that provides services to young women and their families who are at risk. We employ social workers, teachers, case managers, and the like. The services we provide are imperative in
moving families towards self-sufficiency. Our organization is one of the leaders in the industry. Over the last year, the organization has seen significant growth. Our workforce increased by a third and our budget by over six million dollars. We went from providing services to over 500 families, to now providing services to over a thousand families per year. Although change is constant and necessary, it disrupts years of deep-seated systems, procedures, and personalities.

Our existing executive team includes two veteran employees and three employees who have worked for the agency for less than a year and a half. When the opportunity to take on additional contracts was presented, two executives opposed it immediately. They believed the change was too much of an undertaking and the expected “roll out” too soon. The other three executives believed that this was not something we could turn down because it would never be offered again. This marked the beginning of the divide amongst the executive team. What began as competing opinions has now become a significant barrier to organizational change. In addition, it has also become a conflict impacting all levels of employees, and potentially our services. The managers beneath the Executives, the Directors, are now experiencing the repercussions of the executives’ lack of unity. Directors are not as productive and effective as they once were. The agency is beginning to see an increase in turnover and outward signs of poor morale. Much of this has to do with how unsatisfied mid-level and executive-level employees are feeling. Many of them are frustrated at the failed attempts they have made to be heard about issues that are important to their departments, as well as the agency. The executive team is lacking the ability to come together and lead by example. The potential consequences for this divide are immeasurable, and can likely lead to a loss of funding. This would be catastrophic to both the families we serve and the highly skilled professionals we employ. Both management teams comprise the leadership and direction of the agency. There is a lack of trust and use of
effective communication in dealing with one another. As a result it is critical that the executive

team begin to utilize effective communication within its team to assist with building trust,

providing much needed feedback as well as supporting and motivating one another. The current

state of the executive team is a critical issue that requires immediate improvement if the agency

is going to continue to see the same success it has seen in years past.

According to Chris Argyris (1991), a highly influential management theorist, improving

employee morale and motivation is not just a matter of improving organizational structures, but

rather creating learning opportunities that change the way professionals learn. What we are

seeing within the executive team is a lack of double loop learning. Double loop learning is the

process by which employees process information in order to initiate action, heavily relying on

critical thinking skills. Argyris (1991) argues that employees in high-level positions have had

expansive experiences in their specific areas of expertise. Over time, these types of specialized

experiences become coded in the executives’ brains with a set of answers to problems. They

don’t often have to step out of this set of answers to approach problems in a different way. This

is due to their seeing similar issues arise every day that do not require them to think outside their

set answers. Alternative solutions to complex problems outside of their expertise can lead to lack

of ownership, defensive reasoning, and other challenging behaviors that become roadblocks to

effective communication and implementation of change (Argyris, 1991).

Purpose of Graduate Project

In response to this problem I am proposing an executive coaching workshop that supports
the executive team in attaining effective communication skills in an effort to build trust. Once the

team learns to trust one another they will be able to have more meaningful dialogue that is
necessary to overcome issues that they have faced in the past. In addition, the effective communication skills will allow them to provide one another with meaningful feedback that is necessary in motivating one another. Ultimately this will lead to executive team unity that will effectively lead the organization through a difficult but exciting time. *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program* is an executive team coaching program that is designed specifically for the busy executive who cannot spend a great deal of time in training. The program is broken down into ten, thirty and forty-five minute sessions geared at building trust within the executive team. The program will not only improve the dialogue within the executive team, but also help bring them together in order to bring an end to the turmoil. Once their team is stabilized, the changes can begin to trickle down to the other levels of personnel.

**Terminology**

**Double loop learning**: learning that requires critical thinking skills and requiring the problem solver to employ additional strategies to come to a viable solution (Argyris, 1991).

**Employee turnover**: the number of employees that leave their employment. The number is usually marked as a percentage at the end of every month and later aggregated at the end of the year (Hom, & Kinicki, 2001).

**Executive Team**: employees who are members of the leadership team; the highest-level positions in said organization (Kets De Vries, 2005).

**Organizational Change**: changes that impact an entire organization, usually beginning in one area and then setting off a rippling effect in other areas (Argyris, 1991).

**Strategic planning**: the process by which strategic plans are developed and implemented.

**Transition to Next Chapter**

In order to design an empowering and meaningful coaching program, I analyzed the research on effective communication strategies, trust building, and executive learning principles. The following chapter provides research into effective communication models, principles of trust-building, and executive training and learning strategies.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review research as it pertains to the development of Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program. Research on effective communication is introduced first, followed by research on trust, and ends with research on executive training principles. This chapter concludes with a synthesis of the discussed research and its implications for the design of this project.

Effective Communication

Effective communication is consistently an element of “effective organizational change” in a variety of web searches. Effective communication provides people with information that they can use to inform their decisions. In the absence of effective leadership communication, middle and lower management create their own stories in an effort to minimize uncertainty. Barry and Shapiro’s (1992) analysis of the effects of influence tactics aims to uncover the type of tactics that are most influential and their impact on communication. They state that influence tactics are actions that people take to change the attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors of target individuals. Research in this area has focused on the predictors and consequences of the use of specific influence tactics; however, Barry and Shapiro argue that the management of tactical combinations remains generally unexplored. As a result, they investigated how using soft versus hard tactics has an impact on compliance. Specifically, they examined how the impact of using soft versus hard tactics might vary depending on whether they are accompanied by a rational offer of an exchange of benefits. Soft tactics are defined as what one says and the characteristics of how one says it in the pursuit of influence outcomes. This includes seeking compliance by
being polite, friendly, or humble or by using flattery and sympathizing with the influence target. Hard tactics are described as tactics that utilize direct assertive communication. In addition, there is an overlap between the soft influence tactics of friendliness and flattery. These are considered *ingratiation behaviors*. Ingratiation behaviors refer to behaviors that individuals employ to elevate their attractiveness to others (Barry & Shapiro, 1992). Although largely recognized empirically, there are persuasive conceptual grounds for the proposition that soft or ingratiating behaviors, successfully used, will foster compliance in social influence situations. In their analysis, Barry and Shapiro (1992) hypothesize that when a request for compliance is stated with, rather than without, soft tactics, targets will be more compliant. They go on to hypothesize that when a request for compliance is stated with, rather than without, a promised exchange, targets will be more compliant. Lastly, they hypothesize that the use of soft tactics will have a greater positive effect on likely compliance with an influence request in the absence of an offered exchange of benefits than they will when accompanied by an exchange offer.

For the study, a sample of 55 graduate business students, who were in the midst of routine job interviews for full-time employment, participated in a class exercise. The participants averaged 27.3 years of age and 4.3 years of full-time work experience. The participants were asked to read a detailed script that was used by a placement representative, which contained an influence attempt. In the influence attempt the subject was asked by a placement representative to move his or her highly desirable interview slot for a less desirable one. The message’s tone was direct and plain and did not utilize any flattery or friendliness for the hard-tactic conditions. For the soft-tactic condition, the placement representative provided a sympathetic apology along with a compliment and was polite. As a measure of the perceived use of soft tactics, the participants responded to three items on 7-point Likert scales assessing the friendliness,
expression of sympathy, and abruptness (reverse-scored) of the influence message ($a= .80$) 
(Barry & Shapiro, 1992). For the hard tactic manipulation, the participants responded to a single 
item assessing their agreement that the message included an offer of something in return for 
compliance. Additionally, two control variables were measured. The first variable was the extent 
to which a participant considered the request to be significant and objectionable. This was 
measured with a salience measure. The second variable was the locus of control for the 
participant. This was measured by a three-item measure taken from Pearlin and Schooler’s 
mastery scale (Barry & Shapiro, 1992).

When testing their hypotheses Barry and Shapiro (1992) found that there was evidence 
supporting their first hypothesis: the use of soft tactics would be associated with higher levels of 
compliance independent of the presence of an offered exchange. The second hypothesis stated 
that when a request for compliance is stated with, rather than without a promised exchange, 
targets would be more compliant. There was no supporting evidence for the second hypothesis. 
There was no supporting evidence for the third hypothesis. There was no supporting evidence for 
the third hypothesis, which predicted a strong positive effect between soft tactics and exchange 
benefits (Barry & Shapiro, 1992). The results indicate that the effectiveness of soft tactics in the 
pursuit of social influence should be analyzed along with any other tactics that are attempted 
during any influence exchange. The use of any influence tactic must be considered under the 
conditions it is occurring in (Barry & Shapiro, 1992). For example, if a supervisor utilizes hard 
tactics, won’t subordinates be influenced just by the mere fact that they don’t want to be 
perceived as non-compliant? Barry and Shapiro (1992) argue that people who are interested in 
increasing ability to influence others, need to consider more than which single tactic will 
 improve it. Also, the impact of the presence or absence of other tactics must also be considered.
In conclusion, Barry and Shapiro (1992) present not only a good fundamental argument for the type of tactics one may use to influence, but also the importance of the context in which the influence behavior is occurring. High-level influencers will recognize the difference between the compliance-seeking strategies they chose to use and the compliance-seeking behaviors an influence target detects and interprets (Barry & Shapiro, 1992). This is an important strategy to keep in mind when designing Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program. Executive level employees are high-level thinkers and strategists. It is imperative that they understand the importance of influence tactics as they continue to build their team. Furthermore, it is equally important that different influence tactics are recognized during the coaching program, and the use of the appropriate ones are integrated throughout.

According to Gill (2011), story telling has always been present in human communication. He believes that it continues to play a vital role in human communication. Gill (2011) argues that utilizing storytelling as a communication strategy within organizations can bridge the barrier between employers and employees, especially during organizational change. He holds that storytelling is an effective communicator because it allows for engagement at a deeper level. Its personal approach allows for a more meaningful understanding for every stakeholder, thus improving communication and trust that is crucial during transitional periods. Gill (2011) states that the storytelling is so applicable to workplace communication because it’s a fundamental skill for nations, societies and cultures.

In his review, Gill (2011) examined literature in order to examine the relationship between corporate storytelling with employee engagement and protecting employee loyalty during organizational change. Gill set out to identify commonalities in research related to corporate storytelling. Specifically, he looked at the benefits to using corporate stories, the
fundamentals to good corporate stories, and the limitations of corporate storytelling. His literature review included a review of journal papers, conference documents and industry publications from recognized academics and industry leaders in the field of corporate communication and employee communication (Gill, 2011). He then utilized his review to evaluate the success of two organizations and their communication plan during a massive organizational change.

The first organization he examined was Ericsson Australia and New Zealand. Ericsson had received their results from a satisfaction survey during the 2008 crisis period, which indicated poor results. As a result, Ericsson executives were asked to attend a two and a half day Storytelling training that would help their executives relate to their employees. The training led to the development of systems that were expected to support organizational change, while building trust and improving communication (Gill, 2011). In 2009 the employees were surveyed again and there was an increase of leadership competency of 18%. Strategy awareness increased by 11%, and senior leaders reported an increase of 22% in their motivation. As a result, Ericsson’s customers rated them higher than their competitors and they finished their year with more profits than the year before. The great changes were credited to a number of initiatives; however, giving the leaders the tools to tell a meaningful story had the biggest impact (Gill, 2009).

Next, Gill (2011) compared Ericsson’s communication strategy to Zoosa’s restructure. Zoosa’s communication strategy was to inform all organizational changes down the reporting line, in addition to them being captured in minutes and agendas. A consultant firm investigated the employee morale during the restructure. The investigation involved qualitative interviews with 24 employees working at a middle management or staff level. The interview data collection
for this project utilized in-depth semi-structured interviews. The interview guides identified how much staff knew about their organization’s missions, policies and management processes and to assess the communication strategies and media used to inform, consult and engage staff (Gill, 2011). The data revealed that the prevalent communication adopted by the senior management during the restructure team was a top down approach. Employees reported significant management concerns that included management’s perceived lack of consultation by, failure to communicate changes clearly, a lack of rationale that would support the structural changes, a mistrust of messages due to the inconsistency between the message communicated and actual behavior by management, and ineffectiveness in communicating messages to all employees (Gill, 2011). A prevalent theme amongst employees was their dissatisfaction with management’s exclusion when they were making organizational decisions that would impact them. In conclusion, the study determined that leadership skill levels were less than optimal and were contributing to the poor relationships and lack of trust between managers and employees (Gill, 2011).

Gill’s (2011) review indicates that storytelling is an effective and compelling way to communicate within an organization, especially during organizational change. Storytelling is thought to bring people together on a physical and psychological way. A pool of shared meaning is vital during organizational change as it creates an important point of reference for all. It is a universal language. These symbolic stories convey meaning, as well as stabilizing employee commitment (Gill, 2011). In developing Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program, Gill’s results will be utilized to ensure that executives create storytelling messages that resonate within the team and improve the team’s communication approach. Ultimately, there is an
expectation that the executive team will utilize storytelling as a means to motivate their workforce and empower them in becoming successful agents of change.

Communication is a multi-faceted element that aids in organizational change. The lack of effective communication during high stakes times can be the factor that prevents full implementation of change. Polito (2013) analyzes the current research as it pertains to having difficult conversations in the workplace. She reviews four popular theories of communication during difficult times in order to design a framework that informs the use of effective communication during difficult conversations. Polito (2013) reviews the work of several theorists when looking at different strategies that are utilized when having difficult conversations. In the literature, Stone’s strategy to having effective difficult conversation includes a five step process; gather three stories (the facts, their story and yours), decide whether you should have the conversation, explain your point of view, listen and acknowledge their point of view, and begin problem solving. Polito (2013) review of Leebov’s Caring Feedback Model states that when discussing issues such as unsatisfactory work performance, a supervisor must be clear, empathetic, supportive, but also must stand their ground. Like Stone’s theory, Leebov’s theory is founded in attaining mutual agreement and commitment. Next, Ury’s Breakthrough Strategy proposes that there are barriers to cooperation when having difficult conversations (Polito, 2013). In order to have successful difficult conversations one must address each barrier individually. The barriers include one’s own reactions, other’s position, other’s dissatisfaction, and other’s power (Polito 2013). Lastly, Crawfords’s Workplace Issue Discussions takes the stance that all workplace issues must be addressed in a no-nonsense way. Crawford believes that supervisors must utilize their power to assert themselves during difficult conversations in order to set clear expectations and reject excuses presented by employees (Polito 2013).
Polito’s review of the aforementioned theories serves as a foundation for a framework that is essential to developing the skills that allow people to have effective difficult conversations. The framework is divided into five steps; prepare, purpose, practice, manage emotions, listen and feedback/follow-up (Polito, 2013). Preparation is centered on gathering factual, objective information regarding the issue. Purpose is what the goal for having this conversation is. In terms of practice, she argues that in order for people to neutralize distracting emotions, they must role-play the conversation with a peer who they feel comfortable with. Moreover, role-playing aids one in managing emotions. It minimizes any negative emotions one may have during a difficult conversation. Once the emotions are neutralized, the initiator must listen. A portion of listening is asking clarifying questions and giving the other person an opportunity to provide one with necessary information that may be missing. Lastly, in order to have effective difficult conversations one must provide consistent feedback, as well as follow up. It is not enough to have the conversation only once. Follow up conversations are imperative when setting expectations as well as providing employees with an opportunity to provide additional information and get necessary support (Polito, 2013).

This theory review and framework provides an effective model that can be utilized when designing a project to support a team that needs additional tools and skills for handling difficult conversations. The use of this research will guide the development of activities that will demonstrate the ability of having difficult conversations. Having effective, difficult conversation is the cornerstone by which all change relies upon and will be essential for developing the trust the executive team is lacking.
Trust-building

Trust is an important ingredient in any relationship. When high trust is established people feel more vulnerable and connected. Being trustworthy is one of the most important skills a leader can display. It is vital in leadership teams. A study conducted by Wells and Kipnis (2001) examined the relationship between a worker’s dependency on others and their trust of one another. They defined trust as “an individual’s reliance on another person” and dependence as “that one’s outcomes are contingent on the trustworthy or untrustworthy behavior of another” (Wells & Kipnis, 2001). The study examined whether trust between managers and employees is associated with the use of controlling influence tactics, specifically the types of tactics utilized: hard, soft or rational. Moreover, the study attempted to find a pattern for the types of influence tactics used by both managers and employees when trust is low. Lastly, the study examined the reasons people give for trusting others. More specifically, are the reasons based on trustee’s job performance or upon his or her personal qualities?

The study looked at 275 managers and 267 employees who had over two years working in their current workplace, in states across the country, and in a variety of industries. The mean age of the managers was 41. The participants had been in their present positions for an average of eight years and had known the employee they were describing an average of six years. The mean age of the participants in the employee sample was 36. They had been working in their present jobs for over five years and had known their managers for the same amount of time. The participants completed a survey on trust. The survey included two forms per participant. The manager completed a survey on an employee they trusted, and then completed the same survey for an employee they did not trust. The employee was asked to take a survey where they were asked to rate the extent to which they trusted their manager by using a seven-point scale.
The data concluded that managers’ trust was positively correlated with the measure of their dependency on employees, $r = .35, p < .01$. Moreover, it was also assumed that employees’ trust of their managers would be related to the extent to which they were dependent on their managers for promotions and other benefits. However, the data did not support this ($r = .09$). Placing only a single measure of dependency was insufficient for getting a more representative sample according to Wells & Kipnis (2001). It was also predicted that the more the manager distrusted his/her employee, the more the manager would attempt to control them. The data proved that trust and control were negatively related in the manager’s sample. The correlation between managers’ trust of their employees and managers use of strong influence tactics was $−.42, p < .01$. It was also found, that employees who did not trust their managers reported the use of strong tactics to influence them. When asked about why a manager and an employee trust one another, the data revealed that managers look at job related reasons, (such as how well they do their jobs or how motivated they are) for trusting than did employees. Employees offered significantly more personal reasons for trusting their managers (Wells & Kipnis, 2011). Both employee and manager participants justified their distrust of a trustee by pointing out personality or character flaws. However, in describing why they trusted their managers, only employees used mostly personal reasons (85%) while managers’ trust of employees was based on both job-related issues (57%) and personal reasons (57%). Next, the data proved that here was a strong correlate between a manager’s dependency on their employees and their trust. This correlation explains that when there is low trust in a working relationship, there is less dependency. This explains why employers terminate employees who they do not trust, regardless of skill set.

This study demonstrates the reasons why it is important to foster trust in working relationships, namely manager and employee ones. The researchers found that there are high
correlations within dependency and trust as moderated by influence tactics, job skills, and personal qualities. Managers and employees alike thrive in environments that are challenging and maintain trust. When a manager feels his or her employee cannot be trusted, due to low work performance, or an employee feels the managers cannot be trusted due to them being unethical, it has a lasting impact on the relationship, the team, and ultimately the organization. The data supports the importance of establishing trust in working relationships and is vital in informing the design of Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program. Further, the vignettes utilized in the program will capture trust issues between managers and employees. The team will be expected to analyze the vignette and address the trust issues that are presented. They will also be expected to reflect on their trust of one another, and ways in which they can improve upon it.

Willemyns, Gallois and Callan (2003) conducted a study based on the content analysis of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) and Social Theory. Referencing the CAT theory, Willemyns et al. (2003) state that in positive conversations, managers' communication can be assessed in terms of a mentoring, caring, in-group and trusting relationships. They defined the term “in-groupness” as minimal power distance, which included a manager’s personal similarities, self-disclosure, active listening, support, empathy, inclusive communication and positive face. On the other hand, it was expected that significant themes in negatively perceived interactions included managers' communication of dominance, distancing, lack of willingness to listen, lack of support or empathy and face threat (out-groupness). They hypothesized that there were specific, pronounced patterns of communications within the in-group, as well as the out-group, which have an impact on trust between employees and managers.

The participants included 157 working psychology students ranging in age from 17 to 58; with a mean age of 22 years, and who had been employed full-time employment for at least six
months, or part-time for at least twelve months. Participants completed a questionnaire where they were asked to describe a satisfactory and an unsatisfactory interaction with a supervisor or manager. The results were coded and placed into thirty-five lower-order categories, six second-order categories, and two higher-order categories. The data revealed that there was a clear pattern of communication behaviors and characteristics for employees in terms of in-group and out-group relations with their managers. The largest out-group category was dominance, followed by coercive power. Evidently, a manager's use of a domineering or coercive communication negates employee trust (Willemyns et al, 2003). When looking at discourse management, the study found that out-group categories indicated a manager’s lack of willingness to listen or communicate, and they used directives, which had a negative impact on employees' trust in their managers. In comparison, “in-group” categories indicated two-way communication between the manager and employees. They also found that active listening and self-disclosure broke down power barriers that brought managers into “in-groupness”. Maintaining these types of discourse behaviors would lead to an increase in perceptions of in-group membership and trust, argued Willemyns et al. (2003). Additionally, they indicate that relational communication behaviors also have a salient impact on trust between employees and managers. These behaviors include positive face (a manager not being critical when the employee made a mistake), being supportive, empathetic, perceived as trustworthy, giving praise, and being inclusive. They hold that these behaviors are vital in developing and maintaining positive and trusting relationships between managers and employees. Lastly, face threat (issues of criticism, blame and embarrassment), if handled inappropriately, can also be a major source of distrust (Willemyns et. al, 2003).

In conclusion, it is evident that this study has shown that there are consistent communication behaviors, utilized by managers that have a great effect on their employee’s
ability to trust them. By adjusting communication in order to reach a larger audience, or by using language that is inclusive of all employees, a manager holds the key to fostering trusting and productive teams. A manager’s role is not solely to develop and implement systems, but to also utilize strategies help attain “in-group-ness”. Similarly, managers who are using communication strategies that are confining them to the “out-group” must begin to make swift decisions and improvements in their communication patterns. The information presented in this study further iterates the importance of utilizing trust-building strategies when developing Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program. Attaining “in-groupness” is not mythical occurrence but rather necessary achievement for managing high-level teams and organizations.

In Burke, Sims, Lazzara and Salas’ (2007) review of empirical research pertaining to trust in leadership antecedents of trust are analyzed, with a focus on trust in leadership from the perspective of the individual and team levels. Burke et al. (2007) arrive to an integrative model of trust in leadership utilizing broad research that has been conducted in the areas of trust, leadership, and trust in leadership. They state that trust has been shown to have influences on processes such as communication, cooperation, and information sharing, as well as satisfaction with and perceived effectiveness of the leader. In addition, trust has a positive effect on upward communication, decreased turnover and improved team and organizational performance (Burke et al., 2007).

Burke et al. (2007) define trust as a psychological state comprising of the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviors of another. Further, they state that the key components of trust are: a willingness to be vulnerable; positive expectations that interests will be protected and promoted when monitoring is not possible; and the assessment of others intentions, sincerity, motivations, character, reliability, and integrity.
(Burke et al., 2007). In their literature review they analyze antecedents, moderators and outcomes when discussing trust and its development.

Burke et al. (2007) argue that ability, benevolence, and integrity are precursors to trust. Ability is defined as that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain (Burke et al. 2007). In other words, the setting of clear, compelling direction will influence trust in leadership, as employees will see it as an indicator of leader ability. Further, they view benevolence as the leaders’ ability to be perceived as genuinely caring about their employees and conveying authentic concern in relationships. They propose that leaders who are viewed as having concern for the welfare of their employees will contribute to greater trust in leadership (Burke et al. 2007). Lastly, Burke et al. (2007) evaluate integrity. They state that in relation to trust, integrity has been defined as, “the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable” (Burke et al. 2007).

Moreover, Burke et al. (2007) state that in addition to there being antecedents to trust, there are also moderators. They view a leader’s accountability as a moderator to trust. They propose that when leaders are accountable by being responsible for their actions, they are seen as more trustworthy. Further, Burke et al. (2007) argue that individual propensity to trust will also moderate the relationship between the antecedents to trust and trust in leadership. The reason for this is because trust is based on the interpersonal relationships that exist between two or more individuals and so they make the decision to trust one another, even when they are different. Every definition of trust that is presented by Burke et al. (2007) includes the term vulnerability. They state that vulnerability and perceived risks are an often ignored, but are critical components of trust in the workplace. In the workplace this vulnerability may come in the form of risk to
ones' reputation, opportunity for promotion or compensation, and continued employment. When a leader has access to resources necessary for employee success, Burke et al. (2007) argue that employees become more vulnerable and have higher risk of loss. For this reason, Burke et al. (2007) dispute that as the frequency and intensity of risks increase within a team, trust in the team leader will become increasingly important in reaching the desired outcomes. In addition, the mental models that employees employ when measuring the level of efficacy of a leader also play a part in moderating trust (Burke et al., 2007). If an employee had a previous supervisor who managed the team differently, the employee will use this as a barometer for measuring leadership success. Lastly, they state that an employee’s previous history with a supervisor (positive and negative) can become an aid or barrier for trust. These histories are difficult to erase and become a canon for future behavior.

Finally, Burke et al. (2007) explore the possible outcomes for the effective development of trust between a leader and their employee. Although in the beginning of their article Burke et al. (2007) propose that communication is an antecedent to trust, it is also an outcome. According to them trust develops when leaders are open and transparent with their employees. Similarly, when leaders exhibit the behaviors necessary to develop trust, employees are more likely to perform additional tasks at higher levels. This has a direct impact on workplace learning which is attained through the testing of assumptions, as well as discussing changes in an open and responsive way (Burke et al., 2007). Burke et al. (2007) hold that this type of learning activities place employees (leaders as well) at interpersonal risk. As stated before, when employees feel the risks are worth the behavior, they will be more effective and the overall organizational performance will be improved. Employees who are challenged and have good working relationships do not leave their jobs, and talent is retained. This is crucial during a time when job
surfing is a common occurrence.

The information presented by Burke et al. (2007) further advises the strategies utilized for the development of *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program*. When planning activities for the Executive team, there will need to be special consideration of the teams’ ability, benevolence, and integrity as it pertains to trust. Further, moderators such as vulnerability and perceived risk when asking the participants to engage in the process must also need to be explored.

**Executive Learning**

Executive learning follows many adult-learning principles, with the addition of complexities that are specific to leadership. Executive learning is tied to their titles. In other words, an organization’s President tends to only learn things that are specific to his or her scope of work. In order for them to learn things outside their expertise, it has to be presented in a dynamic way. They have to be invested in fixing the problem, which means they have to see the implications of not addressing issues. In Kets de Vries’ (2005) case study, the intricacy of executive learning is captured and analyzed in order to determine factors that are imperative in executive group coaching. Kets de Vries (2005) suggest that during an ever-changing global market, executives are finding it necessary to employ leadership coaches that will help them fine tune their skills and work on some perhaps outdated approaches. The pressures felt by todays’ leaders are unlike the pressures of the past. They have to accommodate a diverse (culturally, ethnically, age, gender, etc.) workforce while still having to produce high-level results. Historically executives have focused on implementing ironclad systems that would support their employees in being successful, thus increasing profits. However, retaining high quality
employees is what makes the difference between a high performing organization and a mediocre one (Kets de Vries, 2005), and the systems, however sophisticated, are secondary.

Kets de Vries’ (2005) case study follows eight executive employees who attended a high performance team-building workshop. The participants were asked to take The Global Executive Leadership Inventory, an instrument that measures leadership in twelve dimensions: envisioning, empowering, energizing, designing and aligning, rewarding feedback, teambuilding, outside orientation, tenacity, global mind-set, and emotional intelligence. The training participants were also asked to identify seven to ten work colleagues to be his or her personal "observers." The observers were asked to answer the same questions about the participant, and in addition, they were asked to write answers to three questions: What behavior should the executive continue doing? What behavior should he or she develop further? What behavior should he or she eliminate? The information that they received from the observers would provide specific recommendations for how the participant could be more effective. In addition, the participants (the executive team) were asked to take the Personality Audit. This instrument measures personality dimensions (presented in the form of polarities) such as sense of self-esteem, conscientiousness, trust, assertiveness, extroversion, mood state, and adventurousness (Kets de Vries, 2005). The participants were asked to have different observers (one a spouse or significant other, and two peers in the office). At the end of the first day all members of the executive team were given an envelope with their results and were asked to review them at home, in preparation for them being discussed first thing the following morning. All members of the team were asked to have an open dialogue with the other executives about their results the following day (Kets de Vries, 2005).

As a result, executive teams began having open, trusting conversations that were not
possible in the recent past. Kets de Vries (2005) suggests that this is due to having an expert leadership coach who integrated vital elements into the training that were the catalyst for improved team dynamics. Through the course of the training, the leadership coach provided a "transitional space", an environment geared at understanding and resolution, where executive teams were able to speak their minds safely and freely (Kets de Vries, 2005). By placing the executive team in a safe place, the leadership coach was able to get them to understand the maladaptive behaviors that impacted the team negatively, and how this contributed to the team’s lack of effective communication (especially during difficult times), lack of focus and reduced productivity (Kets de Vries, 2005).

Kets de Vries (2005) suggests that the leadership coach bares the responsibility of making the executives feel relaxed and comfortable because only when participants are relaxed are they able to be open to hearing what others have to say in a non-defensive way. According to him commitment, storytelling, and trust are vital elements in executive training that is aimed at implementing change and encouraging collaboration. Further, he contends that group training environments for executives foster higher commitment amongst the participants because they support one another to sustain the changes that need to happen. Everyone carries around with them a sense of accountability for one another. Storytelling is also thought to be another important element that must be integrated into executive training. Kets de Vries (2005) claims that when people reveal personal things about themselves (be it about work or professional life) they arrive at self-understanding. In telling these stories, he proposes that people rediscover themselves and their life. An integral element and outcome in executive training must be the development of trust (Kets de Vries, 2005). All relationships begin with trust. Executive teams must get to a place where they can be open, honest, communicate effectively, listen carefully,
and show mutual respect (Kets de Vries, 2005). Without trust, executive teams constantly question the intentions of others, which often times leads to unresolved conflict.

In conclusion, in order for this transformative work to take place, Kets de Vries (2005) recommends that executive teams be heard and supported. Leadership group coaching is an effective tool for leaders because it helps foster better relationships, which means better business (Kets de Vries, 2005). The findings indicate that the manner in which information, especially sensitive information, is presented can make the difference between a motivated and unmotivated employee. Kets de Vries (2005) suggests that the facilitator (in this case the leadership coach) bares the responsibility of creating a safe and welcoming space where participants can commit, tell their story, and trust one another. Ultimately, when people feel heard and understood they are easier to motivate and influence (Kets de Vries, 2005). The goal of an effective leader is to motivate and empower their employees and so the integration of these principles into Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program workshop is pivotal in providing the executive team additional tools for motivating them into creating effective and necessary change.

Lysø, Mjøen and Levin (2011) discuss necessary conditions that unlock the full potential of Action Learning Programs. Action Learning Projects (ALP) are defined as an approach utilized in organizations to solve business challenges (Lysø et al., 2011). The model includes a set of “real world problems that a team has to resolve, an action learning group (or team) that examine the problem, a process of insightful questioning, an action that is taken (as agreed upon by the team), and a commitment to ongoing learning. Lysø et al. (2011) argue that if the action and learning is balanced, ALPs can have a positive impact upon the organization and its systems. The challenges of ALPs begin when there is an imbalance of learning and action. Action without
learning will not lead to beneficial long-term results and learning without action does not facilitate change in an organization (Lysø et al., 2011).

Lysø et al. (2011) address the need of an additional perspective from employees who participate in management development training. For their study, Lysø et al. (2011) collected qualitative empirical material through a case study of one management development program in Norway. Participants included twenty-two managers from different companies. Regular interactions by researchers were recorded for a period of 2.5 years. During the course of the 2.5 years, the researchers had lengthy exposure with the program activities, which provided the opportunity to gather rich qualitative material from the perspective of the participants through interviews (Lysø et al., 2011). The majority of the material used for their study was based on interviews that were conducted a year after the managers completed the program. Lysø et al. (2011) created a descriptive analysis of the progress of the ALPs based on the managers’ presentations at the final session and the post-program interviews. They used this analysis to explore the managers’ reflections of reasons for organizational changes based on the ALP. In addition, they identified three organizational conditions that seemed to characterize those ALPs that created an impact beyond individual learning (Lysø et al., 2011).

The findings indicate that learning happened for all who attended the program, however, not all felt it fueled organizational change (Lysø et al., 2011). Many managers learned but were unable to translate the learning into organizational changes due to a lack of support and engagement from a local supervisor. Some managers did have the support from a supervisor, but the supervisors’ participation in coaching sessions were limited, if at all. Some statements were made about the ALP being more for individual development, and not really important for the organization. In contrast, participants who reported organizational changes following the ALP
disclosed that they had involved others in the accomplishment of their project (Lysø et al., 2011). According to Lysø et al. (2011) this indicates that there needs to be a collective activity joining the ALP and the organization (such as a supervisor) in order to generate change processes. ALPs only work for companies that are able to provide managers with support and engagement from their supervisor in order to avoid the discrepancy between what the managers are learning and the way in which their organization conducts business. As a result, Lysø et al. (2011) hold that this type of development program is best for organizations that can provide the support to their employees as well as develop systems that encourage and support change.

In conclusion, Lysø et al. (2011) argue three organizational conditions need to be met in order to experience organizational impact, beyond that of individual learning. These conditions include having clear reasons for enrolling managers in manager development programs. These reasons must include benefits not only for the individual, but for the organization as well. Next, the organization must ensure that the manager participating in ALP has support from their immediate supervisor and that there is involvement in the ALP from others within the organization (Lysø et al., 2011). Although this study was limited in terms of its sample size, it provided much insight into the conditions necessary for impactful organizational change. Action learning activities have been included in Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program in order to provide the executives the opportunity to support one another, as well as hold each other accountable.

In a study conducted by Culpin, Eichenberg, Hayward and Abraham (2014) the relationship between training participants’ (middle and senior executives) intention to transfer training knowledge to job tasks and actual training transfer is evaluated. For the purpose of this study, training transfer is defined as the application, generalizability and maintenance of new
knowledge and skills to a wide variety of managerial situations, and fundamentally examines the extent to which course content is transferred or applied by participants back in their workplace (Culpin et al., 2014).

Culpin et al. (2014) followed participants who attended a four-day leadership training. The training was designed to transform the company from working in independent silos, to a more unified international workforce. Frameworks and tools to assist managers during this challenging time were presented with the ultimate goal of optimal training transfer. Each day began with participants being introduced to a variety of frameworks and tools focused on organizational application. This was done in a relevant way that would apply to the participants in both a professional and personal way. At the end of each training day there was a review of the key points. In order for there to be training retention, as well as an additional opportunity to network and build trusting relationships amongst managers, participants were asked to review learning in small groups. This provided the participants with a deeper understanding of the material covered. The last day of training summarized all the learning points as well as prompted participants to verbally commit to implementing change in their “typical workdays” (Culpin et al., 2014).

The study was conducted concurrently with the training and consisted of 403 individuals, from a German IT company. The mean age of the participants was 41.9, with a range between 24.4 years and 59.8 years, and the average length of time the individuals worked in their organization was 9.3 years, within a range of 0.1 and 38.8 years. Before training began on the first day, participants completed a questionnaire. The participants completed the same questionnaire on the last day of training. A total of 338 participants completed pre and post training questionnaires. A month after training an email was sent out requesting participants to
answer the question ‘What have you done as a consequence of your participation on the training, and if you have not started yet, what do you intend to do?’ One hundred thirty-one individual responses were received; the drop in number was attributed to the removal of anonymity due to responses needing to be emailed back. The data set was used to obtain information on what learning had been, or what learning intended to be, applied within the organization (Culpin et al., 2014).

The questionnaire used to examine post training learning was anonymous and included 16 questions focusing on the four key areas of development addressed within the training: leadership, multi-cultural teams, remote working and leading change. Five questions related to leadership skills generally (e.g. ‘I know how to listen effectively’) and more specific leadership competencies within the company (e.g. ‘I understand how the company’s leadership model relates to my leadership behavior’). Four questions examined leadership within the specific context of remote working (e.g. ‘I understand the challenges of working at a distance’). Four questions focused on leading multicultural teams (e.g. ‘I know what it takes to create a climate of trust in a team working across national boundaries’) and the final three questions related to leading change ‘I know how to support my team through change processes’). Participants were required to consider each question and respond on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being ‘Not at all true’ and 5 being ‘Completely true’. The data set was used to assess the participants’ self-evaluation of their change in learning during the course of the training itself (Culpin et al., 2014).

A total of 338 participants completed the pre- and post-training questionnaires. The 16 questions from the questionnaire were entered into a principal components analysis (PCA) using SPSS. Three factors emerged from the results; communicating change, contributing 23.32 percent of the variance, intercultural working, contributing 20.14 percent of the variance, and
company specific leadership, contributing 12.55 percent of the variance (Culpin et al., 2014). In addition, a series of t-tests were conducted to examine the difference in mean scores for the three factors pre- and post-training. For communicating change, there was a significant increase in scores post-training \((t = -10.120, \text{df} = 654.681, p = 0.001)\). For inter-cultural working, there was a significant increase in scores post-training \((t = -12.938, \text{df} = 664.627, p = 0.001)\). For company-specific leadership, there was a significant increase in scores post-training \((t = -5.789, \text{df} = 662, p = 0.001)\). A priori content analysis was conducted on all of the responses to the emailed question ‘What have you done as a consequence of your participation on the training and if you have not started yet, what do you intend to do?’ The answers to the question were coded into ten categories. The categories included increased networking, use of the change house model, increased English skills, use of the team charter, use of coaching skills, adapting communication style, improving team communication, improving listening skills, increased use of storytelling and sharing the vision and increased trust (Culpin et al., 2014).

The study revealed that training transfer is greater for skill based learning versus knowledge or affect behavior (Culpin et al., 2014). Culpin et al. (2014) propose that a possible reason for this is that participants are more actively engaged when they feel a certain exercise will equip them with the necessary skills to address real workplace issues. In addition, the three categories that ranked highest, in terms of times mentioned, were practical tools as well as frameworks and ideas designed to change the way managers think. Training tools that enable training transfer must include overlearning (repetitive practice), varied practice (variety of activities), and skills sets that provide the most opportunity for feedback (Culpin et al., 2014). Although this study presented useful evidence of transfer of training, it looked at the participants as same level employees and did not identify specific strategies a designer might utilize as they
design training specific to executive employees. Executive learning research continues to be an area requiring further in-depth research. Moreover, when designing training for executive managers, it is imperative that the elements listed above be present in order for the learning to have a lasting and impactful effect. It is not enough to present training participants with information; an expert training designer and educator must take into account what changes have to happen after employees leave training and create learning activities that will support them.

**Synthesis**

The literature substantiates the need for *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program*. Abundant research points at the fundamental elements that support the development of an executive team. It is evident that communication, trust, and executive learning principles must be integrated into the design of the program in order to ensure success. Developing a training and development program for an executive team is a complex task. There are a variety of layers that need to be taken into consideration when conceptualizing an effective coaching program. As Argyris (1991) stated, it is not about creating system, but rather about teaching them how to learn, that matters. The research discussed lays a substantial foundation for the design and development of *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program*. In order for an executive learning program to be effective it must take into consideration the participants’ knowledge and experiences in addition to it including complex vignettes and opportunities for the team to come together to solve problems. When executives come together as a team to solve organizational issues it creates trust between the team, it holds them accountable, and it produces positive changes.

The literature indicates that communication skills are key in developing any team,
especially an executive team. Finding a common ground amongst the team helps bring them together. Storytelling unarms the audience and guides individuals into seeing where they have been and where they are going. It’s an insightful and effective tool. Furthermore, modeling and presenting on balanced influencing skills will also have an impact on team dynamics. Lastly, high-level teams thrive on feedback. Although they strive to learn more, executives can find difficult conversations challenging. In designing and developing *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program*, all areas of the program activities will contain elements of storytelling, influence tactics, and strategies for having effective difficult conversations.

The literature also indicates that executive team development requires a trusting foundation. The relationship between a supervisor and employee is key in the employee’s success and workplace satisfaction. Wells and Kipnis (2011) declared managers and employees had differing dependencies on each other. They affirmed that managers trust employees who have high work performance, and employees generally trust managers based on their moral compass. Displaying in-groupness behavior leads to improved relationships (Willemyns et al., 2003). *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program* will provide participants with opportunities for them to be empathetic, self-disclose, and be supportive. Similarly, it is important to note that there are antecedents to trust, as well as moderators and great outcomes. At the end of their program, executives will be able to implement changes that display their expert abilities, show they care for others, and display integrity.

Lastly, the literature indicates that executive learning is a complex phenomenon. Kets de Vries (2005) endorsed the use of leadership coaches, in as long as they provided the team with safety, the ability to be storytellers, and give them with the tools to be open and honest. He believed that group coaching was effective because it kept the team accountable with one
another. Accountability is one of the most important elements in my program. Additionally, the use of Action Learning will provide the executive team with the knowledge to inform strategic organizational changes. As stated by Lysø et al. (2011), ALPs alone are not sufficient in creating substantial organizational change. Organizational support serves as the impetus for all changes.

In conclusion, integrating effective communication, trust building, and executive learning strategies into the learning program can ensure high success. Success will be measured by the transfer and intention to transfer, as highlighted by Culpin et al. (2014). Most importantly, Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program will be successful if the executive team is able to learn differently by the end of the program. Success will also be measured when noting the changes that have come about because of the executive team’s ability to communicate effectively, develop trusting teams, and integrate what they have learned into tremendous changes.
Chapter Three

Project Design and Development

Introduction

Having considered all of the research and best practices presented in Chapters One and Two regarding facilitation of executive coaching programs, the design of Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program seems vital. The evidence supports the belief that teaching executives how to learn more collaboratively makes the difference between a successful organization and an unsuccessful one. Executives need the necessary tools to develop and unify their team, which in turn will have a positive impact on the organization. In this chapter, I first introduce relevant learning theories, followed by an overview of the instructional design model that I used to create Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program. This chapter ends with the program description, including a discussion of how it is laid out, its contents, and its physical appearance.

Design Foundation

Two learning theories were drawn from when designing Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program. The first theory was Albert Bandura’s Social Cognitive Learning Theory, (SCT). SCT declares that learning is socially and cognitively constructed (Bandura, 1977). He goes on to state that there are factors required for learning to occur. The first factor would be learning by direct experience. Learning by direct experience occurs when a person encounters a behavior and links it to a consequence and decides whether it’s a desired outcome. They also analyze what happens to others when it occurs. This information is coded into a person’s brain
and a risk analysis ensues (Bandura, 1977). The learners are not a passive entity and make decisions about their learning. SCT was integrated into the coaching program to ensure optimal learning results. SCT flows into other theories due to its extensive supported research.

The second learning theory that provided further evidence and support was Malcolm Knowles’ Adult Learning Theory. Knowles (2012) posits that there are six elements that make up adult learning. They are the need to know, self-concept, the role of experiences, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation. Adults are autonomous learners and need to make the decision to learn something, before they begin learning. Adults notions of themselves as self-directed is also said to contribute to learning. An adult learner wants to believe that he or she is solely responsible for initiating learning (Knowles, pp. 63). In addition, adults utilize previous experience as a reference point for new information. According to Knowles (2012), learning is at its highest when paired with the developmental tasks needed in that moment. Prime learning environments are created when adults are asked to solve “real life” problems. Lastly, an adult’s motivational drive is centered on intrinsic factors such as “job satisfaction, self-esteem, and quality of life” (Knowles, pp. 67). Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program was designed taking into consideration Knowles’ andragogy model. Every activity and scenario was designed with the autonomous, reflective, and motivated adult learner in mind.

**Project Development**

**Instructional design model.** In designing Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program I used the ADDIE Instructional Development Model. This model was chosen because of its flexibility and capacity to include continual formative feedback. This instructional model
consists of five phases that aid in the development of an instructional event. The phases are analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation.

**Analysis.** This phase identifies the instructional problems, goals, and objectives. The instructional problems were a lack of effective communication skills, a lack of trust within the executive team, and a lack of agency vision and management philosophy. The instructional goals are the following:

During difficult situations, the executive team will analyze the facts surrounding the issue and utilize effective communication skills to discuss the challenges with one another.

When presented with divisive situations, the executive team will consistently operationalize aspects of trusts with one another to ensure unity.

When provided with a list of invaluable workplace elements, the executive team will successfully develop a specific agency vision that will be integrated into the management philosophy.

The performance objectives are as follows:

When presented with the opportunity to build trust with their teams and the Directors, the executive team will utilize trust-building skills.

When presented with difficult situations, the executive team will utilize strategies learned in *Better Together: An Execute Coaching Program*, when discussing challenging topics.

Toward the end of the *Better Together: An Execute Coaching Program*, the executive team will set up a plan for daily communication opportunities with the Directors that will include/prompt for at least two feedback exchanges.

When developing the new agency-wide “vision,” the executive team will operationalize initiatives that will support organizational change, as measured by leadership surveys.
When given a variety of management philosophies, the executive team will analyze them and determine which one best suits the agency’s needs, as measured by the implementation of initiatives that would support it.

In addition, the learners and their characteristics were addressed. The learners (intended target audience) is the executive team while the secondary target audience is the people the executives are interacting with and managing, the Directors. There are five executive members in total, three women and two men. The women are all fairly new to the agency, having worked there between a year and a half, and a year. The two males have been with the agency between eight and eleven years. Further, the executive team consists of two white males, two white females, and one African American female. Four of them are between 40 and 48 years old. One male is between 63 and 65 years old. The Directors group includes nine employees with ages between 33 and 46. The directors group includes one Asian female, two Latino males, three Latina females, two African American females, and one White female. The majority of the directors are Masters level professionals with a great deal of experience in their respective areas. Six of them work in direct care programs, which work directly with our “at-risk” population. The design will support the needs of the Directors in an effort to get the executive team to develop a strategic plan that will relieve the frustrations and poor morale the Directors are currently experiencing.

Further, the executive employees are experts in their respective areas and have rich and diverse work experience. Due to their extensive knowledge, executives struggle to see challenges that are outside their scope. The executive team’s perception of their current state is skewed. Most of them do not believe that they have an issue. Due to their very demanding schedules, there is a limited delivery option. The teaching strategies that were employed include modeling
and imitation, ensuring that they had enough practice of the desired behavior and were given the tools to make accurate risks analysis. This was based on Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, which states that people learn by modeling appropriate behavior and discussing the benefits of imitating said behaviors. In addition, the design included strategies related to adult learning principles. The activities that were used to support the learning objectives included Malcolm Knowles Adult Learning Theory’s use of the adult learner as an active participant in the learning process. The discussions, vignettes and information presented during the program are minimal but concise in order to scaffold the executive team. The executive team’s previous knowledge was acknowledged and distributed practice was provided throughout the design. Moreover, problem-centered activities were included by way of action learning programming that would stimulate and inspire the executive team to learn.

**Design.** The design phase includes all the elements that went into planning and organizing *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program.* For this phase I considered the learning theories and strategies that I need to include to ensure the learning goals are met. The learning objectives revolved around communication and trust building. Information from surveys completed in 2014 was utilized to address those concerns as well. The trends extracted from the surveys included issues of communication (not clear, not honest, not transparent) and issues of trust with leadership. Each coaching session has a theme, which was chosen based on the identified needs and will be listed in the program outline. Supporting each theme are activities designed to provide the executives with knowledge, insight and practice that will build up the areas of concern. The activities also included evidence-based practices aimed at improving communication, developing trust, and accommodating executive learners. Lastly, action-learning activities were designed that are proven to ensure optimal executive learning. Each session
begins with a question, followed by an activity. The executive team will be leading the discussions while the facilitator is serving as a guide. The facilitator’s task will be to keep them focused on coming up with solutions to organizational problems. A PowerPoint presentation has been designed that includes statistical information as well as quotes that will provoke thought and dialogue. After each session the team will receive a “recap” via email, to foster further thought about the topics covered, as well as serve as a reminder of what their goals are. The PowerPoint presentation and handouts are included in the appendix. There was continual assessment and evaluation of the content and delivery of the program and changes were made as necessary.

**Development.** In this phase the coaching sessions, PowerPoint presentation, and email blasts were developed according to the design. The PowerPoint presentation was played in order to ensure it was complete. The coaching themes were compared to the learning objectives and the email blasts were created according to the problems that were identified. Lastly, necessary changes were made based on the formative feedback.

**Implementation.** This is the phase where the learning product is put into action. I intend to use the PowerPoint presentation as a facilitator guide during *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program*. I have added notes on the slides to help move me through the different sessions. During the implementation phase I plan on utilizing training strategies as well as the strategies that support effective communication, trust building and executive learning principles and motivation principles. I have embedded all these elements into the design but intend on modifying any session, based on the need for it.

**Evaluation.** The evaluation phase of the ADDIE model consists of formative and summative evaluations. During EPC 615 a mock-up of the *Better Together: An Executive*
Coaching Program was introduced via a product pitch to a class of experts who provided feedback and suggestions. The feedback was reviewed and changes were made, as necessary. In addition, three experts reviewed the program and were interviewed afterward. They were asked specific questions pertaining to the content and visual appeal of the program. Chapter four details these suggestions and changes. Lastly, the Jeffries Instructional Product Checklist (JIP) was utilized to evaluate Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program. The JIP is an evaluation checklist that analyzes the different elements of an educational product and its effectiveness. After completing the JIP, the area that needed more attention was the artwork and graphics section. The design was not vibrant enough as compared to other like products. The PowerPoint presentation was reviewed and changed to include brighter colors and more pronounced fonts. There was a limited need for graphics as the content doesn’t require a significant number of visual aids, other than the slides themselves. The summative evaluation will come at the conclusion of the program. For this I will set up a comparison study of two executive teams; This will include pre and post-tests, assessing executive team member skill and knowledge level stated in objectives along with interviews and observations, along with surveys of secondary audience. The survey results will be analyzed and compared to the instructional goals and performance objectives in order to measure program effectiveness. The results of the study will inform training changes and possible further training needs.

Project Outline
A general topic outline of Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program is presented below. Samples of the PowerPoint presentation, Formative Evaluation Interview Questions, and handouts can be found in Appendices A, B and C.
I. Workshop Introduction
   A. Topic review
   B. Activity
   C. Session guideline
   D. Leadership activity

II. Discussion of Topic A
   A. Leadership activity
   B. Case study review
   C. Team issues
   D. Mail blast

III. Discussion of Topic B
   A. Supporting information
   B. Discussion
   C. Activity
   D. Homework assignment
   E. Mail blast

IV. Discussion of Topic C
   A. Supporting information
   B. Discussion
   C. Activity
   D. Homework assignment
   E. Mail blast

V. Discussion of Topic D
   A. Activity
   B. Debrief activity
   C. Discussion
   D. Homework assignment
   E. Mail blast

VI. Discussion of Topic E
   A. Supporting information
   B. Activity
   C. Homework assignment

VII. Discussion of Topic F
   A. Activity
   B. Activity Debrief
C. Homework assignment
D. Mail blast

VIII. Discussion of Topic G
A. Supporting Information
B. Activity
C. Mail blast

IX. Discussion of Topic H
A. Supporting Information
B. Activity
C. Homework assignment
D. Mail blast

X. Discussion of Topic I
A. Session review
B. Activity
C. Planning
Chapter Four

Conclusion

Summary

In Chapter One a detailed account about the dynamics of the existing executive team in the organization was provided. It was suggested that the potential consequences for the team’s lack of unity could have lasting effects on the direction of the agency. The research reviewed in the previous chapter substantiated the need for an executive coaching program that support the organizational change efforts. The design and development of an executive coaching program would provide the executive team with the necessary tools to relate to one another and communicate more effectively so that they can build the trust that is essential not only in an executive team, but agency-wide. Furthermore, in Chapter Two relevant research as it pertained to communication, trust, and executive learning principles was reviewed. The research results were utilized as the foundation for the design and development of Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program. In Chapter Three learning theories that supported the design were provided. In addition, a detailed explanation of the types of strategies utilized in the design was identified. Based on the information, a thoughtful, insightful, and educational program was designed, in hopes that it will bridge together different levels of management. Effective communication skills and team trust are imperative elements of any successful leadership team. Plenty of thought went into how to integrate elements of communication and trust building, keeping in mind that the learning program was for executives. Additional steps were taken in the design process to ensure that the information presented to them would not only teach something, but also inspire them to do better, which is a must for all executive coaching programs.
Evaluation

**Formative evaluation.** During the EPC 615 Introduction to Instructional Design course, a mock-up of the *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program* was presented to a class of Master’s level students from a variety of fields. They provided invaluable suggestions for the improvement of the design. They suggested that my design be more concise and to the point. They also suggested I make the slides more appealing with a pop of color, or moving text around and including pictures. In addition to the Master’s students, a three-person panel of experts also completed a more in-depth review of *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program* to provide feedback on its effectiveness. The panel consisted of a veteran Senior Director for a similar agency, a high school teacher, and the Chief of Human Resources for another similar agency. I conducted phone interviews with each of the experts to get their feedback on the design. During the phone interviews open-ended questions related to the use of communication, trust, engaging in difficult conversations, and providing useful feedback in the *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program* were asked.

The first expert, a Senior Director at a social service agency, was the only one to actually implement the presentation program with two of her employees. She was not able to use all ten weeks of it because she will be leaving that agency. During our interview she informed me that she appreciated the safe space the sessions provide for the managers. She stated that it disarmed the managers and allowed them to feel comfortable by the beginning of the first session. She suggested that the vignettes be made more complex so that they are more engaging. She felt they were bordering on basic and felt there was some opportunities for the managers to come together by using a unified skill set that the basic vignettes do not encourage. In addition, she stated that these issues cannot be addressed in such a short time and suggested the sessions be extended by
at least ten minutes. Overall, she felt that the program was effective in beginning difficult conversations that are necessary in executive level positions. She suggested that a follow up “program” that analyzes the changes that were made as a result of the program be designed.

The second expert was a high school teacher with over twelve years teaching experience. The reason I asked him to be an expert was because adult learning principles are similar to secondary teacher learning principles, and he has plenty of experience with the latter. He suggested the use of more visual aids in the presentation to accommodate visual learners. He suggested the development of a case study “vignette” that includes all agency issues and for it to be presented on the first day as a pre-test. He suggested that this same vignette be presented at the end as a post-test to see if there were any changes. Overall, he felt the program was brief but concise and specific. He thought these vignette elements would help improve communication and trust within a group.

The third expert was a Human Resources veteran who is currently the Chief Human Resources Officer at a non-profit organization. He has worked in the Human Resources field for over twenty years. After reviewing the project he suggested that the first session begin with the facilitator’s own story as an employee dealing with the implications of a divided leadership team. He stated that stories were more meaningful than going right into teaching a topic that doesn’t have context. This was especially helpful because executive employees do not like to be told what to do, so a story would set a nice tone. Further, he suggested that the stories be treated as confidential information. He said they were a great opportunity to gather and identify team values and that information should be safeguarded. He suggested that the facilitator who is also an employee use that dual role, especially towards the end of the program when the executives
are developing a strategic plan to address the issues, to directly connect to the source. He also strongly discouraged post-discussion of the sessions with anyone at the agency, as it could breakdown trust within the sessions.

All of the experts’ feedback was taken into account and some changes to the project were made. The feedback was analyzed based on theory, research, and needs analysis before any changes were made. More details were added to all the vignettes and also different management level issues were included. The sessions on communication were extended by fifteen minutes, in order to allow longer time for processing of the material. The PowerPoint slides were reviewed and made brighter and shorter. Lastly, the story of the facilitator as an employee was written. This story will be presented during the first session. During the same session the facilitator will discuss with the team the nature of these sessions and the importance of them remaining confidential.

**Summative evaluation.** Since other like agencies exist, the best way of conducting a summative evaluation of *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program* is to design a comparative study on a similar type of agency doing pre/post tasks with a control group attending traditional workshops in their fields and the experimental group attending *Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program*. In addition, a study would be conducted on the middle managers who are the secondary audience for the program. They will be asked to take a pre-test when the executive team begins attending the coaching sessions, and they will complete a post-test at the conclusion of the program. The information will be analyzed and used to make necessary changes to the program and improve its effectiveness.
Future Work/Research

A running theme amidst all the research was that there were insufficient studies on effective communication and trust within a leadership group. Most of the program design is based on research on leadership and employee relationships. I relied heavily on the executive learning research to guide the design. It is my hope that this project sheds some light on the need for further research within this group, as it would improve leadership teams across all industries.

On that same thread, the need for additional coaching programs designed by consultants who are “implanted” in the culture are also necessary. A consultant who merely provides a cookie-cutter design to an organization without taking into consideration his or her specific challenges cannot be successful. Moreover, middle management buy-in is also key to organizational success. This project can, and will, be modified to include middle management challenges and presented to the next generation of leaders. In addition, Better Together: An Executive Coaching Program will be followed by follow-up sessions to support the implementation efforts. Coaching programs such as this one can help any organization improve upon its leadership skills. Anything is possible.
References


Appendix A

Training Leaders to Lead: Sample Slides for Training Workshop

BETTER TOGETHER

An Executive Coaching Program
KEY FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

- Establish a sense of urgency
  - Identify reason for why the changes is so important
- Form a guiding coalition
  - Consisting of influential employees (across levels)
- Create a vision
  - Helps clarify the new direction the organization needs to move towards
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION INCLUDES:

- Being trustworthy
  - Your message must match your actions
- Keeping it simple
  - Message must be concise and specific
- Provide context
  - Provide examples to ensure your message is received in the way it was intended
- Being genuine
  - Display authenticity
- Being an active listener
  - Listen with your ears and your eyes (cue in on non-verbal cues)
    - Avoid interrupting others when they are speaking
- Continuous feedback
CREATING MUTUAL TRUST

- Minimal power distance
  - Being accessible and open to all, regardless of titles and chain of command
- Self-disclosure
  - Tell them your story
- Active listening
- Support
- Empathy
- Inclusive communication
- Positive face messages
Appendix B

Formative Evaluation Interview Questions

1. After reviewing the project, what do you think about its ability to provide effective communication skills to an executive team?

2. After reviewing the project, what do you think about its ability to provide trust building information and opportunities to an executive team?

3. After reviewing the project, do you think an executive team will have the tools that are necessary for developing their vision?

4. How do you feel this project would support change efforts?

5. What was successful, and why?

6. What changes would you make?
Appendix C

Sample Workshop Handout

How the Best Leaders Build Trust

By: Stephen M. R. Covey  From: LeadershipNow.com | Return to Web Version of this Article

Almost everywhere we turn, trust is on the decline. Trust in our culture at large, in our institutions, and in our companies is significantly lower than a generation ago. Research shows that only 49% of employees trust senior management, and only 28% believe CEOs are a credible source of information. Consider the loss of trust and confidence in the financial markets today. Indeed, "trust makes the world go 'round," and right now we're experiencing a crisis of trust. This crisis compels us to ask three questions. First, is there a measurable cost to low trust? Second, is there a tangible benefit to high trust? Third, how can the best leaders build trust in and within their organizations to reap the benefits of high trust?

Most people don't know how to think about the organizational and societal consequences of low trust because they don't know how to quantify or measure the costs of such a so-called "soft" factor as trust. For many, trust is intangible, ethereal, unquantifiable. If it remains that way, then people don't know how to get their arms around it or how to improve it. But the fact is, the costs of low trust are very real, they are quantifiable, and they are staggering.

In 2004, one estimate put the cost of complying with federal rules and regulations alone in the United States -- put in place essentially due to lack of trust -- at $1.1 trillion, which is more than 10% of the gross domestic product. A recent study conducted by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners estimated that the average American company lost 6% of its annual revenue to some sort of fraudulent activity. Research shows similar effects for the other disguised low-trust taxes as well.

Think about it this way: When trust is low, in a company or in a relationship, it places a hidden "tax" on every transaction: every communication, every interaction, every strategy, every decision is taxed, bringing speed down and sending costs up. My experience is that significant distrust doubles the cost of doing business and triples the time it takes to get things done.

By contrast, individuals and organizations that have earned and operate with high trust experience the opposite of a tax -- a "dividend" that is like a performance multiplier, enabling them to succeed in their communications, interactions, and decisions, and to move with incredible speed. A recent Watson Wyatt study showed that high trust companies outperform low trust companies by nearly 300%!
I contend that the ability to establish, grow, extend, and (where needed) restore trust among stakeholders is the critical competency of leadership needed today. It is needed more than any other competency. Engendering trust is, in fact, a competency that can be learned, applied, and understood. It is something that you can get good at, something you can measure and improve, something for which you can "move the needle." You cannot be an effective leader without trust. As Warren Bennis put it, "Leadership without mutual trust is a contradiction in terms."

**How do the best leaders build trust?**

The first job of any leader is to inspire trust. Trust is confidence born of two dimensions: character and competence. Character includes your integrity, motive, and intent with people. Competence includes your capabilities, skills, results, and track record. Both dimensions are vital.

With the increasing focus on ethics in our society, the character side of trust is fast becoming the price of entry in the new global economy. However, the differentiating and often ignored side of trust -- competence -- is equally essential. You might think a person is sincere, even honest, but you won't trust that person fully if he or she doesn't get results. And the opposite is true. A person might have great skills and talents and a good track record, but if he or she is not honest, you're not going to trust that person either.

The best leaders begin by framing trust in economic terms for their companies. When an organization recognizes that it has low trust, huge economic consequences can be expected. Everything will take longer and everything will cost more because of the steps organizations will need to take to compensate for their lack of trust. These costs can be quantified and, when they are, suddenly leaders recognize how low trust is not merely a social issue, but that it is an economic matter. The dividends of high trust can be similarly quantified, enabling leaders to make a compelling business case for trust.

The best leaders then focus on making the creation of trust an explicit objective. It must become like any other goal that is focused on, measured, and improved. It must be communicated that trust matters to management and leadership. It must be expressed that it is the right thing to do and it is the economic thing to do. One of the best ways to do this is to make an initial baseline measurement of organizational trust and then to track improvements over time.

The true transformation starts with building credibility at the personal level. The foundation of trust is your own credibility, and it can be a real differentiator for any leader. A person's reputation is a direct reflection of their credibility, and it precedes them in any interactions or negotiations they might have. When a leader's credibility and reputation are high, it enables them to establish trust fast -- speed goes up, cost goes down.

There are 4 Cores of Credibility, and it's about all 4 Cores working in Integrity, Intent, Capabilities, and Results. Part of building trust is understanding -- clarifying -- what the organization wants and what you can offer them. Be the one that does that best. Then add to your credibility the kind of behavior that builds trust. (see the 13 high trust behaviors below). Next, take it beyond just you as the leader and extend it to your entire organization. The combination
of that type of credibility and behavior and organizational alignment results in a culture of high trust.

Consider the example of Warren Buffett -- CEO of Berkshire Hathaway (and generally considered one of the most trusted leaders in the world) -- who completed a major acquisition of McLane Distribution (a $23 billion company) from Wal-Mart. As public companies, both Berkshire Hathaway and Wal-Mart are subject to all kinds of market and regulatory scrutiny. Typically, a merger of this size would take several months to complete and cost several million dollars to pay for accountants, auditors, and attorneys to verify and validate all kinds of information. But in this instance, because both parties operated with high trust, the deal was made with one two-hour meeting and a handshake. In less than a month, it was completed. High trust, high speed, low cost.

**13 Behaviors of High-Trust Leaders Worldwide**

I approach this strategy primarily as a practitioner, both in my own experience and in my extensive work with other organizations. Throughout this learning process, have identified 13 common behaviors of trusted leaders around the world that build -- and allow you to maintain -- trust. When you adopt these ways of behaving, it's like making deposits into a "trust account" of another party.


Remember that the 13 Behaviors always need to be balanced by each other (e.g., Talk Straight needs to be balanced by Demonstrate Respect) and that any behavior pushed to the extreme can become a weakness.

Depending on your roles and responsibilities, you may have more or less influence on others. However, you can always have extraordinary influence on your starting points: Self-Trust (the confidence you have in yourself -- in your ability to set and achieve goals, to keep commitments, to walk your talk, and also with your ability to inspire trust in others) and Relationship Trust (how to establish and increase the trust accounts we have with others).

The job of a leader is to go first, to extend trust first. Not a blind trust without expectations and accountability, but rather a "smart trust" with clear expectations and strong accountability built into the process. The best leaders always lead out with a decided propensity to trust, as opposed to a propensity not to trust. As Craig Weatherup, former CEO of PepsiCo said, "Trust cannot become a performance multiplier unless the leader is prepared to go first."

The best leaders recognize that trust impacts us 24/7, 365 days a year. It undergirds and affects the quality of every relationship, every communication, every work project, every business venture, every effort in which we are engaged. It changes the quality of every present moment and alters the trajectory and outcome of every future moment of our lives -- both personally and professionally. I am convinced that in every situation, nothing is as fast as the speed of trust.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Stephen M. R. Covey is the author of The Speed of Trust: The One Thing That Changes Everything and keynote speaker at Linkage's Eleventh Annual Best of Organization Development Summit in Chicago, IL, May 12-14, 2009. For more information on the Summit, visit linkageinc.com.

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