Articles

Developing Leadership for Creative Efforts: A Preface

Michael D. Mumford[1] and Carter Gibson[1]

Abstract

Effective leader performance is critical to the success of creative efforts. Although, in recent years, the importance of leadership to creative efforts has begun to be recognized, little work has been done examining how organizations should develop people to lead these efforts. The present issue of *Advances in Developing Human Resources* presents a number of techniques that might be used to develop those who will be asked to lead creative efforts. The implications of these observations for HRD professionals in developing the leaders of creative efforts are discussed.

Leadership does not always make a difference to the performance of organizations or teams (Yukl, 2010). In recent years, however, it has become clearer exactly when leadership is critical to organizational and team performance (Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999). More specifically, leadership is a critical influence on organization and team performance under crisis conditions (Weick, 1995). Crisis conditions refer to situations where novel responses to ill-defined, or poorly structured, problems are required under conditions of high risk and high reward. What should be recognized here, however, is that these are exactly the conditions that characterize virtually all creative work in organizations (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis, & Strange, 2002).

In keeping with this observation, the evidence compiled over the past 60 years indicates that leader effectiveness is critical to the success of creative work in organizations (Andrews & Farris, 1967; Barnowe, 1975; Vinarski-Peretz & Carmeli, 2011). In fact, studies of the impact of leader effectiveness on the success of creative efforts typically produce validity coefficients in the .30-to-.40 range with leaders exerting

[1]The University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK, USA

Corresponding Author:
Michael D. Mumford, Department of Psychology, The University of Oklahoma, 455 West Lindsey Street, Norman, OK 73019, USA
Email: mmumford@ou.edu

effects through a variety of mechanisms—direction, climate, autonomy, and motivation (Mumford et al., 2002). These sizable effects, in turn, suggest that one way we might improve creativity, the production of new ideas, and innovation, the translation of those ideas into viable products, is by improving leadership performance.

Although there is a need for interventions intended to improve the performance of those asked to lead creative efforts, in point of fact, relatively little work has been done on the kind of interventions that might enhance the capability for effective leadership of creative efforts. The need for systematic work along these lines has, in fact, become ever more important as we move into a 21st-century workplace where innovation is the key to organizational success. Thus, the present volume of *Advances in Developing Human Resources* represents an important step to filling this critical gap in the techniques available to organizations for improving the performance of those asked to lead creative efforts.

The first article in the volume by Hunter and Cushenbery (2011) presents a theoretical model describing how leaders influence the performance of teams working on creative efforts. Although this model discounts the need for leaders to interact with technical and organizational systems (Howell & Boies, 2004), it is noteworthy in that it points to a number of direct, and indirect, effects leaders may have on creative teams—climate, role modeling, vision definition, and recognition. All of these direct and indirect effects of leadership provide avenues that would permit the development of interventions likely to enhance the effective leadership of creative efforts.

One type of intervention that might be used to improve the performance of those asked to lead creative efforts is the development of formal election systems. McEntire and Greene-Shortridge (2011) describe a variety of techniques that might be used to recruit and select the leaders of creative efforts. Of particular importance in this regard is the use of professional networks for recruitment and panel interviews for selection. Although both these techniques appear viable, a number of key questions need to be addressed in this regard, such as how position announcements should be structured with respect to the work? Should technical fundamentals be emphasized? How interviews should be conducted? And who should conduct these interviews?

The articles in this volume stress the need to prepare leaders to take responsibility for creative groups. The article by Williams and Foti (2011) stresses the potential value of formal classroom instruction in the requirement for leading creative work. The article by Ligon, Wallace, and Osburn (2011) stresses the importance of "informal" developmental interventions through systematic mentoring. Given the availability of studies pointing to the impact of systematic developmental programs on creativity (Basadur & Basadur, 2011; Scott, Leritz, & Mumford, 2004), the recommendations flowing from these two pieces appear promising. In this regard, however, it is important for practitioners to bear in mind the need for formal and informal systems to flow together in the development of those who will be asked to lead creative efforts.

Although formal instruction and mentoring have substantial value as vehicles for developing those who will be asked to lead creative efforts, a variety of other

developmental techniques exist. Antes and Schuelke (2011) describe a number of these potential alternatives—including work simulations and multisource feedback. These alternative techniques warrant consideration in systematic developmental programs, in part, because they will allow leaders to capitalize on experiential, or case-based, knowledge in the leadership of creative efforts.

The potential impact of experience on effective leadership of creative efforts, and the need for leaders to guide the day-to-day work of those doing creative work, points to the potential value of performance management systems as a vehicle for improving the leadership of creative efforts. Waples and Friedrich (2011) describe how extant principles of performance management, for example, goal setting and performance appraisal, might be applied to those involved in creative efforts. Given the importance of structuring activities in the leadership of creative efforts (Barrowe, 1975), interventions along those lines are likely to prove of value if they are applied in an open, flexible fashion as appropriate to the nature of the creative work people are being asked to do.

In organizations, attempts to develop the capacities needed in leadership roles are commonly managed through competency-based approaches. Gilley, Shelton, and Gilley (2011) propose one potential competency-based system for the management of creative efforts—a system that stresses both key competencies such as accountability, trustworthiness, advocacy, and organizational improvement and key roles such as leading facilitation, motivation, performance coaching, and servant leadership. Although this system discounts certain key competencies such as technical expertise and project sales known to be important to the leadership of creative efforts (Mumford et al., 2002), it does suggest that competency-based systems might be developed intended to facilitate the performance of those asked to lead creative efforts.

Our foregoing observations with regard to competency management point to a broader conclusion. The articles presented in the present volume point to a number of techniques that might be used to improve the performance of those asked to lead creative efforts. Although it is not clear which approach, or approaches, will prove most effective in improving the performance of those asked to lead creative efforts, the articles presented in this volume suggest a variety of approaches that might be employed and, with further investigation, might provide a basis for developing the capacity of organizations for the effective leadership of creative efforts. We believe that the present volume provides a key piece of infrastructure needed to guide future work along these lines—work of great importance given the known impact of effective leadership to the performance of organizations in the 21st-century economy.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

References

Andrews, F. M., & Farris, G. F. (1967). Supervisory practices and innovation on scientific teams. *Personnel Psychology, 20*, 497-515.

Antes, A. L., & Schuelke, M. J. (2011). Leveraging technology to develop creative leadership capacity. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*.

Basadur, M. S., & Basadur, T. M. (2011). Where are the generators? *Journal of Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity and the Art, 5*(1), 29-42. doi:10.1037/a0017757

Barnowe, J. T. (1975). Leadership and performance outcomes in research organizations. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 14*, 264-280.

Gilley, J. W., Shelton, P. M., & Gilley, A. (2011). Leading creatively in the 21st century: An HRD perspective. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*.

Howell, J. M., & Boies, K. (2004). Champions of technological innovation: The influence of contextual knowledge, role orientation, idea generation, and idea promotion on champion emergence. *Leadership Quarterly, 15*, 130-149. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.12.008

Hunt, J. G., Boal, K. B., & Dodge, G. E. (1999). The effects of visionary and crisis-responsive charisma on followers: An experimental examination of two kinds of charismatic leadership. *Leadership Quarterly, 10*, 423-448. doi:10.1016/S1048-9843(99)00027-2

Hunter, S. T., & Cushenbery, L. (2011). Leading for innovation: Direct and indirect influences. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*.

Ligon, G. M., Wallace, J. H., & Osburn, H. K. (2011). Experiential development and mentoring processes for leaders for innovation. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*.

McEntire, L., & Greene-Shortridge, T. (2011). Recruiting and selecting leaders for innovation: How to find the right leader. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*.

Mumford, M. D., Scott, G. M., Gaddis, B., & Strange, J. M. (2002). Leading creative people: Orchestrating expertise and relationships. *Leadership Quarterly, 13*, 705-750.

Scott, G. M., Leritz, L. E., & Mumford, M. D. (2004). The effectiveness of creativity training: A meta-analysis. *Creativity Research Journal, 16*, 361-388.

Vinarski-Peretz, H., & Carmeli, A. (2011). Linking care felt to engagement in innovative behaviors in the workplace: The mediating role of psychological conditions. *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts, 5*(1), 43-53.

Waples, E. P., & Friedrich, T. (2011). Managing creative performance: Important strategies for leaders of creative efforts. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*.

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Williams, F., & Foti, R. J. (2011). Formally developing creative leadership as a driver of organizational innovation. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*.

Yukl, G. (2010). Leadership in Organizations (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bios

Michael D. Mumford is the George Lynn Cross distinguished research professor of psychology at the University of Oklahoma where he directs the Center for Applied Social Research. He received his doctoral degree from the University of Georgia in 1983 in the fields of industrial and organizational psychology and psychometrics. He is a fellow of the American Psychological Association (Divisions 3, 5, 10, 14), the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, and the American Psychological Society. He has written more than 270 articles on leadership, creativity, innovation, planning, and ethics. He has served as senior editor of *The Leadership Quarterly*, and he sits on the editorial boards of the *Creativity Research Journal*, *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, and *Ethics and Behavior*, among other journals. He has served as principal investor on grants totaling more than US$30 million from the National Science Foundation, The National Institute of Health, the Department of Defense, the Department of Labor, and the Department of State. He is a recipient of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology's M. Scott Myers Award for Applied Research in the Workplace.

Carter Gibson is a doctoral student in the University of Oklahoma's program in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. His research interests include leadership and creativity.