

Story of Impact

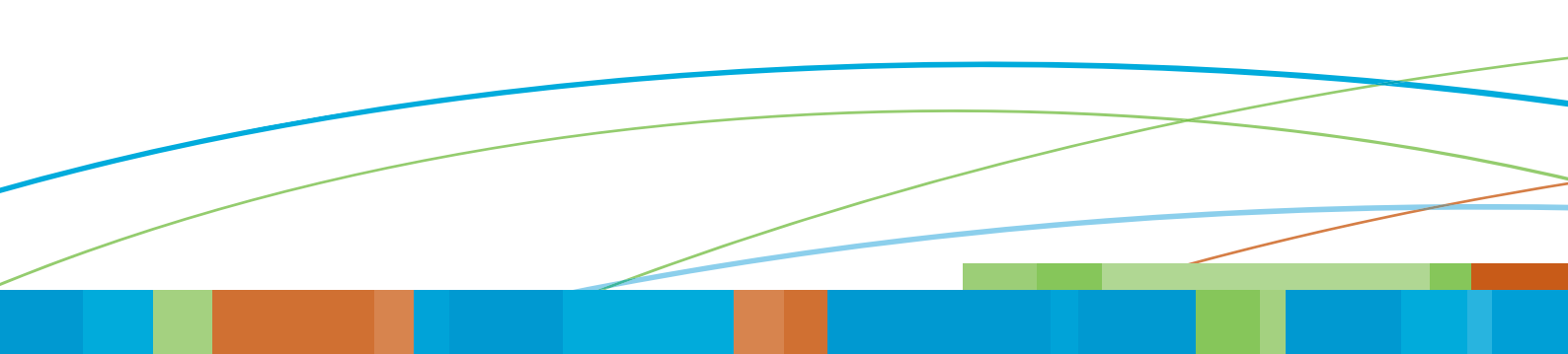
Syngenta

**Industry:**  
Agribusiness

**CCL Solutions:**  
Custom Solutions  
360 Assessments  
Post-program coaching

**syngenta**

 Center for  
Creative  
Leadership  
[www.ccl.org](http://www.ccl.org)



When Syngenta was formed in 2000 from the merger of Novartis Agribusiness and Zeneca Agrochemicals, expectations were high. As the leading agribusiness company in a \$40 billion global industry, Syngenta was closely watched by the industry and financial markets. The company's Executive Committee set the expectation that the merger would quickly be successful in terms of market share and earnings, and also remain strong over the long term. Today, Syngenta is the overall agribusiness leader with reported sales of \$9.2 billion in 2007. It employs over 21,000 people in more than 90 countries.

"Most mergers don't succeed," says Michael Wakefield of the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®). "Many operational and human elements can derail merged organizations. Syngenta has a different story to tell."

## BUILDING A NETWORK OF LEADERS

At the time of the merger, the collective leadership at Syngenta was perceived as being results driven, team oriented and pragmatic. An internal survey also showed that the organization's leaders needed to improve in several key areas, including setting a clear strategic vision, streamlining decision-making processes and accepting risk.

Bruno Frei, head of capability development for Syngenta, saw this information as a mandate to invest in leadership talent alongside the push for operational excellence. He envisioned a leadership initiative to develop a cadre of global leaders who would move the newly created organization toward its ambitious goals. CCL came on board and helped create the Syngenta Leadership Development Program (LDP®).

In broad terms, the goals of LDP were to develop a culture of high-performance and leadership responsibility, assess individual leadership styles, and enhance the organization's "cultural glue." Specifically, the program set out to show global managers in the new organization how they would be expected to lead. Leadership effectiveness would be based on several criteria, including:

- The ability to communicate the Syngenta strategic plan, vision and business principles.
- Understanding and communicating the impact of change and transition.
- Empowering people to their full potential.
- Being visible as a leader.
- Being bold and practicing pragmatic risk-taking management.
- Shaping the culture by walking the talk.
- Creating trust.
- Encouraging and rewarding leadership behavior.
- Implementing means to ensure sustainability.

To begin, participants selected from different countries, cultures and Syngenta businesses complete several behavioral assessments and meet with their line manager to discuss an overall development plan and specific leadership challenges. Working in small, virtual groups, participants complete an activity that helps to set the stage for a week-long development session.

During their week together, the managers gain a clear view of their individual strengths and challenges. They hone in on specific competencies that are needed to lead their areas of business and they set goals for improvement. Participants come to see how they fit into the larger organization and global context.

After the program, participants follow up with their supervisors at home, stay connected with their peers, and have the option of telephone coaching sessions. Syngenta and CCL have also hosted several regional LDP alumni workshops to review participants' progress, share updates and continue to build a leadership network throughout the organization.

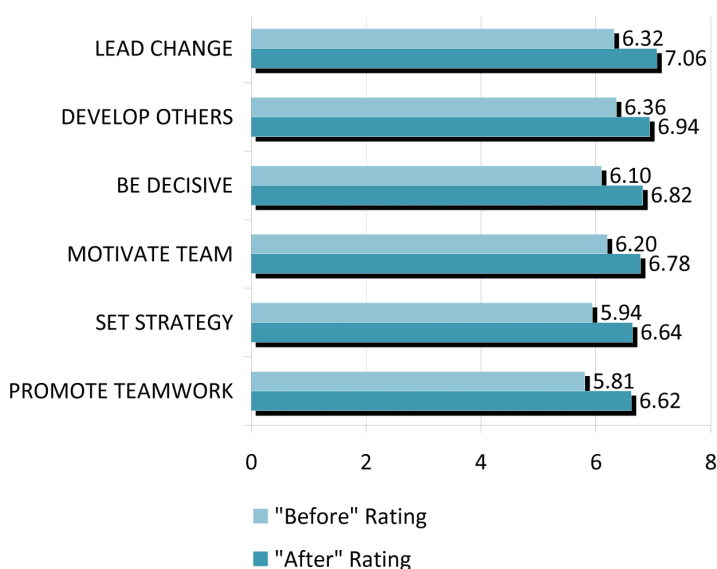
More than 550 leaders, in cohorts of 20-24, participated in the Syngenta LDP between November 2001 and November 2007. LDP has earned a reputation among Syngenta managers for being a powerful experience. The program, while remaining true to its original mission, has grown along with the company. CCL has used new tools and adapted its approach over time to ensure LDP is just as relevant today as it was in 2001.

## SEEING RESULTS

LDP has been a core component of the comprehensive Syngenta talent management process, one that is giving people in the leadership “pipeline” the skills to cope with change and work in a culturally diverse global organization. Individual and organizational benefits have been realized and reported over the years through word of mouth and participant surveys. Recently a new CCL tool for evaluating impact of the LDP has been incorporated into the program design. REFLECTIONS is a 360-degree assessment that is designed specifically for post-program evaluation and has been customized to reflect the core leadership competencies required by Syngenta managers.

The initial REFLECTIONS data offers a limited but powerful sense of the benefits of LDP to individuals and to the Syngenta culture of leadership. Data from 31 participants and 284 observers show positive change in all 16 targeted leadership competencies, with an average increase of 8.2% across all competencies. Observers (including bosses, peers, direct reports and others) reported notable improvements in participants’ abilities to lead change, develop others, be decisive, promote teamwork, set strategy and motivate teams.

### LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS - BEFORE AND NOW AREAS SHOWING THE GREATEST POSITIVE CHANGE



The five most improved areas of individual impact according to observers were ability to lead change, ability to use feedback to make changes, leadership effectiveness, confidence, and readiness for leadership responsibilities. In areas of participant responsibility, the most notable improvements were in the ability to work with other groups, effectiveness, openness to diverse perspectives and employee empowerment.

“LDP gave me a solid perspective which helped me to interact in a diverse business and cultural environment – from Latin culture in Venezuela to countries with different historical influences – Jamaica, Suriname, the Windward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago,” says Jose Antonio Ysambert, business unit manager, who took part in LDP in 2003. “This experience is again helping in my current territories Ecuador and Peru.”

Tim Bangasser attended LDP in 2006 at a time when “massive changes” were underway in the Seeds NAFTA unit. “Two U.S. acquisitions were in the process of being integrated. In addition, there were numerous changes in our staff as people were leaving the organization or moving into different roles,” he recalls. “LDP helped me to recognize and develop my management style to fit the individual needs both of seasoned employees having to deal with the huge amount of change and new employees stepping into a difficult situation.”

Managers who have been through the program continue to grow in their careers. In a 2007 survey of LDP alumni, 93 percent report that their effectiveness as a leader has improved as a result of the program and 89 percent continue to apply tools and insights they learned in LDP. Sixty percent of participants have been through a job change since participating in LDP, with 80 percent of those being a promotion or increase in responsibility. Steven Hawkins attended LDP in 2005, when he was a US-based manager. Since then, he has made two significant international moves. First, he was promoted to general manager for Crop Protection in Korea and recently made the move to GM in Japan.

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Hawkins, like many LDP alumni, is also finding success as a coach to others. "I am able to support others in developing their leadership skills to enable promotion of new talent" he notes, adding that in Korea he had, "three reports who attended the LDP; it gives some consistency in coaching them. My sales manager has really worked on his personal style recognizing his strengths and weaknesses. Another person has gained great confidence based on his LDP course and this has contributed to him being promoted and considered for further promotions."

"Without a doubt Syngenta leaders are developing common competencies in support of our ambition and strategy," says Bruno Frei. "They are able to grow as leaders and pass that capacity on to others in order to face the many future changes at Syngenta."



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#### GET STARTED WITH CCL

If building organizational leadership capacity is a concern for you, the Center can offer creative and customized solutions for addressing your leadership needs. Whether your goal is to improve the effectiveness of the executive team, to systematically develop your high-potential managers, expand your organization's ability to work globally or to create a shared leadership culture at all levels of the organization, we can help. To get started, visit [www.ccl.org/custom](http://www.ccl.org/custom) or contact us at the CCL location most convenient to you.

#### ABOUT THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL<sup>®</sup>) is a top-ranked, global provider of executive education that develops better leaders through its exclusive focus on leadership education and research. Founded in 1970 as a nonprofit, educational institution, CCL helps clients worldwide cultivate creative leadership – the capacity to achieve more than imagined by thinking and acting beyond boundaries – through an array of programs, products and other services.