

Study Finds a Sea Change in Leadership Approaches

André Martin and Allan Calarco

Recently, there has been much discussion about the need for organizations to move from seeing leadership as something carried out by individuals to seeing it as something accomplished collectively. To gain a sense of whether such a change in philosophy is occurring in practice, a team of CCL faculty members asked 305 executives and managers from around the world who were participating in CCL programs to rate their organization's approach to leadership five years ago and today and also to project what that approach will be five years in the future. (See the sidebar on page 21.)

The participants performed these three ratings on wall charts posted outside their classrooms on the first day of the program. The charts portrayed eleven views of leadership, each expressed by two statements representing the two ends of a continuum.

The statements were

Leadership is a position.
Leadership is a process.

Leadership should have a functional orientation.

Leadership should have a boundary-less orientation.

Editor's note: In Focus is an occasional series that takes close looks at specific topics of importance to leadership and leaders.

Leadership happens at the top.
Leadership happens throughout the organization.

Leaders should be rewarded for being a star.
Leaders should be rewarded for the success of others.

Leadership requires independent decision making.
Leadership requires interdependent decision making.

Leadership should develop via individual competencies.
Leadership should develop via groups and networks.

Leadership power lies in position.
Leadership power lies in knowledge.

Leadership is competitive.
Leadership is collaborative.

Leadership is logical and rational.
Leadership is emotional.

Leaders should choose a strategy and stay the course.
Leaders should see strategy as emergent and flexible.

Leaders sell their opinions.
Leaders conduct inquiry and gain buy-in.

For each of these views, participants indicated where they believed their organizations fell on the contin-

uum between the two statements at each of the times in question. In general, the continuums can be characterized as moving from an individually oriented view of leadership to a group-oriented view.

To evaluate and compare everyone's responses, after the charts had been marked by participants, the survey team placed eleven points along each continuum. The points ran from -5, on the individually oriented side, through +5, on the group-oriented side, with 0 being the midpoint between the two ends (that is, a balance of the two views). The team could then assign a numerical value to each response. The assignment of minuses and pluses was not meant to imply a judgment of the relative value of either view, and the continuums presented to participants were varied in that sometimes the individually oriented side appeared on the left and sometimes the group-oriented side did.

SHIFTING TIDES

The average response for each continuum is shown in Table 1 on page 21.

The ratings support the idea that organizational philosophies of leadership are changing. These executives and managers believe their organizations' approaches to leadership have shifted notably in the past five years across all but one of the continuums. The largest changes were on the independent/interdependent (2.43 points), position/process (2.38), and at-the-

Inside the Study

The 305 people doing the ratings in this study were participants in CCL's Leadership Development Program or Leadership Development for Human Resource Professionals program. The programs were conducted at CCL's campuses in Greensboro, San Diego, Colorado Springs, and Brussels.

Participants were predominantly male (67.2 percent) and mostly between the ages of thirty-six and forty-four (49.2 percent); 30.5 per-

cent identified themselves as executives and 51 percent as upper-middle managers; 46.5 percent were from organizations with 100 to 999 employees.

Most of the participants (66.7 percent) were living in the United States. Of the remaining 33.3 percent, most were from European countries, including the United Kingdom (31.1 percent), Germany (7.9 percent), Belgium (6.8 percent),

Ireland (4.9 percent), and France (3.9 percent). The total non-U.S. sample represented twenty-eight countries.

This study was conducted as part of a larger research effort aimed at understanding the changing nature of leadership. If you want to know more about this work and what has been learned, contact André Martin at martina@leaders.ccl.org, or go to www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/research/NatureLeadership.pdf.

top/throughout-the-organization (2.24) continuums. Only on the rational/emotional continuum did these leaders see their organizations as essentially maintaining their positions.

Looking at the future, respondents believe that the leadership philosophy of organizations will continue to change. The two continuums with the greatest change from five years ago until today (independent/interdependent and at the top/throughout) were also projected to witness the greatest change between now and five years from now. Interestingly, the third-

greatest change was on the star/success-of-others continuum. Once again, only on the rational/emotional continuum did the executives and managers see little change.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

With the rise of global organizations, it will become increasingly important to understand how views on leadership vary internationally. The data from this study indicate that although leadership philosophies are changing in the United States and in other countries, the U.S. group sees a

smaller swing from individual to group approaches than do executives and managers from other countries. (See Tables 2, 3, and 4 on page 22.)

The research team can only speculate on the reasons for this difference in perspective. One reason may be that there are differing views of organizations. In the United States there is a strong tendency to understand organizations in psychological terms, whereas in other parts of the world the tendency is to understand organizations in more sociological terms. These orientations play out repeatedly in leadership research, with U.S.-based leadership research tending to focus on the unique attributes, skills, and abilities of individual leaders and European leadership research focusing more often on systems thinking and group dynamics.

It is also interesting to note that these two groups have different senses of the future change in leadership philosophy. The U.S. executives and managers anticipate the greatest increases will come in viewing leadership as a process that happens throughout the organization. They show a resistance both to a further increase in development through groups and networks and to greater reliance on emergent strategy.

The non-U.S. executives and managers see different trends. They

Table 1. Average Responses

<i>Leadership Philosophy</i>	<i>5 Years Ago</i>	<i>Today</i>	<i>5 Years from Now</i>
Position/process	-2.39	-0.01	2.18
Functional orientation/boundary-less orientation	-1.29	-0.60	0.93
At the top/throughout the organization	-2.04	0.20	2.16
A star/success of others	-1.45	-0.28	1.50
Independent decision making/interdependent decision making	-1.70	0.73	2.26
Individual competencies/groups and networks	-1.13	-0.25	0.70
Position/knowledge	-2.22	-0.27	1.34
Competitive/collaborative	-1.32	0.32	1.43
Logical and rational/feeling and emotional	-1.51	-1.36	-1.22
Stay the course/emergence and flexibility	-0.39	1.05	2.02
Sell opinions/inquire for buy-in	-2.14	-0.34	1.21

<i>Leadership Philosophy</i>	<i>U.S.</i>	<i>World</i>
Position/process	-2.25	-2.69
Functional orientation/boundary-less orientation	-1.33	-1.23
At the top/throughout the organization	-1.80	-2.52
A star/success of others	-1.21	-1.93
Independent decision making/interdependent decision making	-1.51	-2.06
Individual competencies/groups and networks	-0.92	-1.56
Position/knowledge	-2.28	-2.16
Competitive/collaborative	-1.14	-1.71
Logical and rational/feeling and emotional	-1.45	-1.63
Stay the course/emergence and flexibility	-0.19	-0.81
Sell opinions/inquire for buy-in	-2.25	-2.00

<i>Leadership Philosophy</i>	<i>U.S.</i>	<i>World</i>
Position/process	0.24	-0.46
Functional orientation/boundary-less orientation	-0.82	-0.19
At the top/throughout the organization	0.26	0.04
A star/success of others	-0.07	-0.72
Independent decision making/interdependent decision making	0.82	0.54
Individual competencies/groups and networks	-0.42	0.08
Position/knowledge	-0.32	-0.17
Competitive/collaborative	0.27	0.41
Logical and rational/feeling and emotional	-1.33	-1.40
Stay the course/emergence and flexibility	0.96	1.22
Sell opinions/inquire for buy-in	-0.22	-0.58

<i>Leadership Philosophy</i>	<i>U.S.</i>	<i>World</i>
Position/process	2.22	2.10
Functional orientation/boundary-less orientation	0.39	1.88
At the top/throughout the organization	2.01	2.41
A star/success of others	1.36	1.71
Independent decision making/interdependent decision making	2.27	2.22
Individual competencies/groups and networks	0.43	1.13
Position/knowledge	0.99	1.92
Competitive/collaborative	1.27	1.67
Logical and rational/feeling and emotional	-1.46	-0.83
Stay the course/emergence and flexibility	1.67	2.60
Sell opinions/inquire for buy-in	1.18	1.23


expect to see a shift toward leadership as a process, as a boundary-less orientation, as happening throughout the organization, and as based on the success of others. They anticipate that the least significant shift will be in development through groups and networks.

A common finding for both groups points to some resistance toward leadership approaches that focus on development through groups and networks. A number of factors could account for this resistance.

First, leadership development for groups and networks is an emerging field, without the proven impact of individual development experiences.

Second, as suggested by CCL's Connected Leadership project (see *LiA*, March/April 2003, for a description), to develop groups and networks there must be a basis of *common leadership language* at the individual level.

GROUP PROCESS

The study suggests that there is a definite shift toward viewing leadership as a shared group process that happens throughout the organization by means of interdependent decision making. It also suggests that executives and managers outside the United States may view leadership as a more malleable and flexible construct than do executives and managers in the United States. Whereas the social constructions of *heroic leadership* and leadership as *the person at the top* have become firmly embedded in the American psyche, the understanding of leadership outside the United States is perhaps more nuanced and variable. 

André Martin is an enterprise associate with CCL in Colorado Springs. He holds a Ph.D. degree from Saint Louis University. Allan Calarco is group manager, open-enrollment programs, at CCL in Brussels. He holds an M.S. degree from Shippensburg University.

SUBSCRIBE TO *LEADERSHIP IN ACTION* NOW!

This is an article that was featured in *Leadership in Action*, a periodical from the Center for Creative Leadership, published in association with Jossey-Bass.

We are confident that you will find *Leadership in Action* to be an excellent value and an indispensable tool for improving your leadership and your organization. By uniting the insights of top scholars and the experience of working executives, each issue provides the best strategies for confronting such critical issues as leading a diverse workforce, maximizing the effectiveness of teamwork, stimulating creativity in the workforce, and more.

You can subscribe by printing and mailing this form to Jossey-Bass, 989 Market Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-1741. For fastest service, call 888/378-2537 (toll-free) or 415/433-1767; fax to 888/481-2665 (toll-free) or 415/951-8553; or e-mail to jbsubsub@jbp.com.

Thank you!

Yes! I want to subscribe to *Leadership in Action* now.

For a one-year (six issues) subscription:

INDIVIDUAL: U.S./Canada/Mexico \$189 Outside N. America \$225

INSTITUTION: U.S. \$325 Canada/Mexico \$385 Outside N. America \$436

Payment enclosed (New York and Canadian residents, please add sales tax). Make check payable to Jossey-Bass.

Bill my organization (**purchase order and phone number required**)

Purchase Order # _____ Phone _____

Charge my credit card. Visa MasterCard American Express Discover (circle one)

Card # _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____ Phone _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Copyright © Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Imprint. All rights reserved.

Reproduction or translation of any part of this work beyond that permitted by Sections 7 or 8 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act without permission of the copyright owner is unlawful. Requests for permission or further information should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030; phone 201/748-6011, fax 201/748-6008, e-mail: permreq@wiley.com