



Getting Results from the Leadership Challenge

About the Series

I have been very fortunate to have had the privilege of working with the Leadership Challenge body of work for over twenty years. I have gained some very practical insights from the successes, and yes, the failures from my efforts. I have also been a beneficiary of the wonderful community of TLC practitioners and guidance from the authors. In one small way, this is my way of giving a little back. Please keep in mind, the lens I see things through is shaped by:

- I come from a background in operations and organization development, not training and development. I think in terms of interventions, not workshops.
- I am passionate about TLC, but recognize we just dispense knowledge. The client is the sole determinant of how, and if, they will use the knowledge.
- If the learner has more options coming out of the workshop than they had coming in, I have done my job as an educator. However, my consulting has just begun!
- If the need for leadership was self evident and easy to do, they would be doing it. Without us!

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP: *Position the intervention as a solution to a current issue and align to other organizational improvement efforts. Build the foundation for being a trusted advisor.*

RATIONALE:

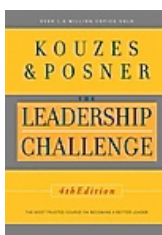
As consultants, we know the research clearly supports leadership development as a key strategy for successful organizations. However, our clients may not have access to, or even interest in, this research. It is important that the key decision makers see leadership development as a specific solution to their business situation.

- One potential stumbling block to a successful implementation is when the decision makers see the provider as a “workshop” seller. Be careful not to be perceived as selling a solution in search of a problem.
- If, on the other hand, the consultant can be seen as a partner in fulfilling a strategic goal, he/she gains the credibility necessary to shape the intervention.
- The learner is more likely to use the classroom knowledge when they see it as helping to solve a current issue, rather than just being “useful” information.
- Leadership development efforts are competing for scarce funding against many other potential development activities. The consultant needs to be prepared to show the present and future value specifically related to the client’s needs.

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES:

- Following the initial inquiry from the potential client, research the requesting organization. Their website and the business press are good places to start. Check financial performance over time, any analyst reports, annual reports, biographies of key decision makers, current market conditions in their industry, and any business intelligence you can gather. Google is our friend!
- They love their products as much as we love ours. Learn about them. Get comfortable speaking their language. Know their competitors.
- The original client contact will probably not come from the

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RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES CONTINUED:

- decision makers. Use your consulting skills to probe the initial contact about how they came to identify leadership development as a possible improvement strategy. It is fine to ask if there are any executive sponsors and if you might talk with them to get a deeper understanding of the need. Make sure you pay all due respect to the initial contact. Communicate a desire to partner with the initiator to insure a successful implementation.
- Your initial contacts should be heavily weighted toward understanding their need, not informing them about our product. That will come when you have learned enough to frame TLC back to one of their compelling needs.
- Request a meeting with key HR practitioners inside the organization. You will want to learn about their historical development efforts, any succession planning, any work on competencies, retention of key people, whether they rely on outside recruitment of talent versus growing their own, any emergent talent issues, diversity initiatives, their overall development strategies, etc. Probe gently to get a sense of HR's perceived status in the organization.
- Based on what you discover in your meetings with HR, show how TLC can reinforce other initiatives. One client recently requested I meet with other HR consultants they were using in other efforts. One winning proposal gained heavy favor when we correlated the practices, commitments, and LPI behaviors back to their management competencies.
- In your meetings with key decision makers, let them tell you about the business. Get their sense of the successes and challenges they face. If your business intelligence has raised any questions in your mind (and surely it should), ask about them. Probe how developing more effective leaders would help them. Be brief, respectful of their time, and all business.
- Get clear on the vision, mission, strategies, and values of the organization. You will want to use them to customize the TLC materials. Also, look for stories that can be used in the workshop. I often find it very useful to understand as much as I can about the founding entrepreneur that started the business. And I have had some success working with internal communications folks that have provided relevant video clips. One client had the CEO tape an introductory message citing the importance of leadership in the organization.
- If possible, start with the executive team. If you can't get them to go through the whole session, at the least, have them complete the LPI. You can make a strong case that their combined results on the frequency ranking of the 30 LPI behaviors is a snapshot of their culture. This information will help you shape intervention and roll out.
- Once you feel comfortable with your understanding of the client's needs and how TLC can meet them, communicate honestly with the client. Be direct, yet respectful. My favorite client comment explaining why I had won the work over other very good providers was that I told them their baby was ugly. I hope tactfully, but, it was.