

# Organizational and Professional Development in the Fire Service

Building the Bench  
Strength of Fire  
Agencies

# Why is bench strength important?

- Retirements will decimate the executive leadership of fire agencies in the next 6 to 8 years.
- Many agencies will have to make immediate improvements to leadership development so that they can turn over the reins to qualified leaders in the future.
- 50 percent of the organizational leaders will have to be replaced every decade from 2012 on.
- The alternatives are to select (buy) future leaders rather than develop (make) for future leaders.
- We should make leaders father than buy them.

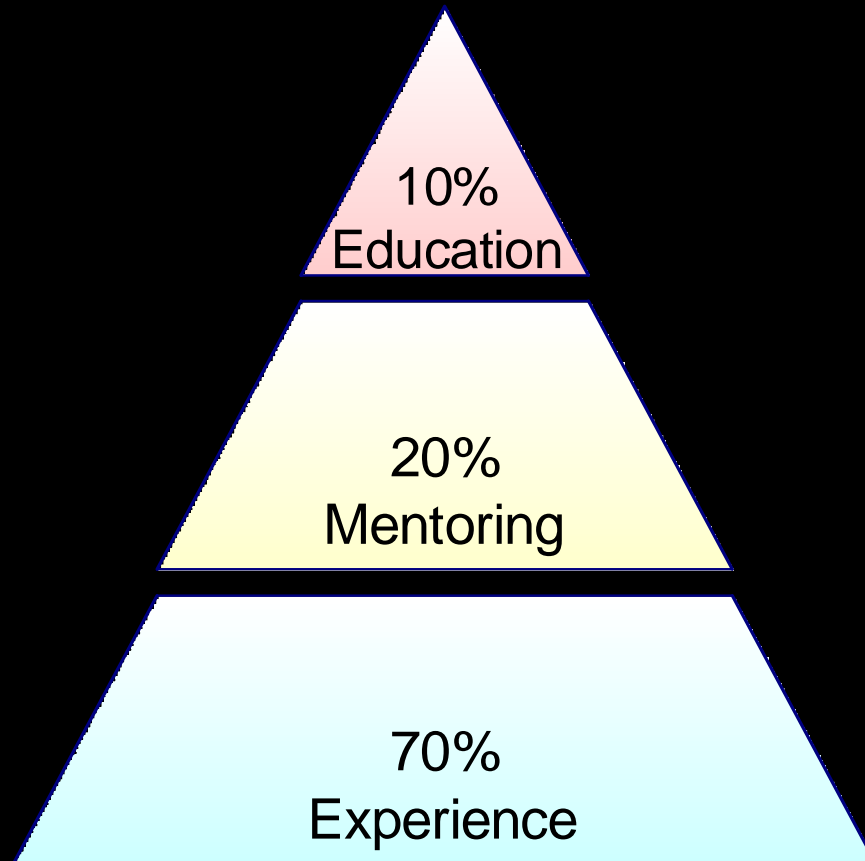
# How should we develop leaders?

- By develop their leadership competencies.
  - Thousands of studies have attacked the question from every angle—looking at flight crews, executives, managers, government officials, military officers, sales, marketing—across industries, countries and economic models.
  - One firm, DDI, has reviewed all of the data from thousands of studies and uses the same set of roughly 70 competencies to describe all jobs in all organizations.

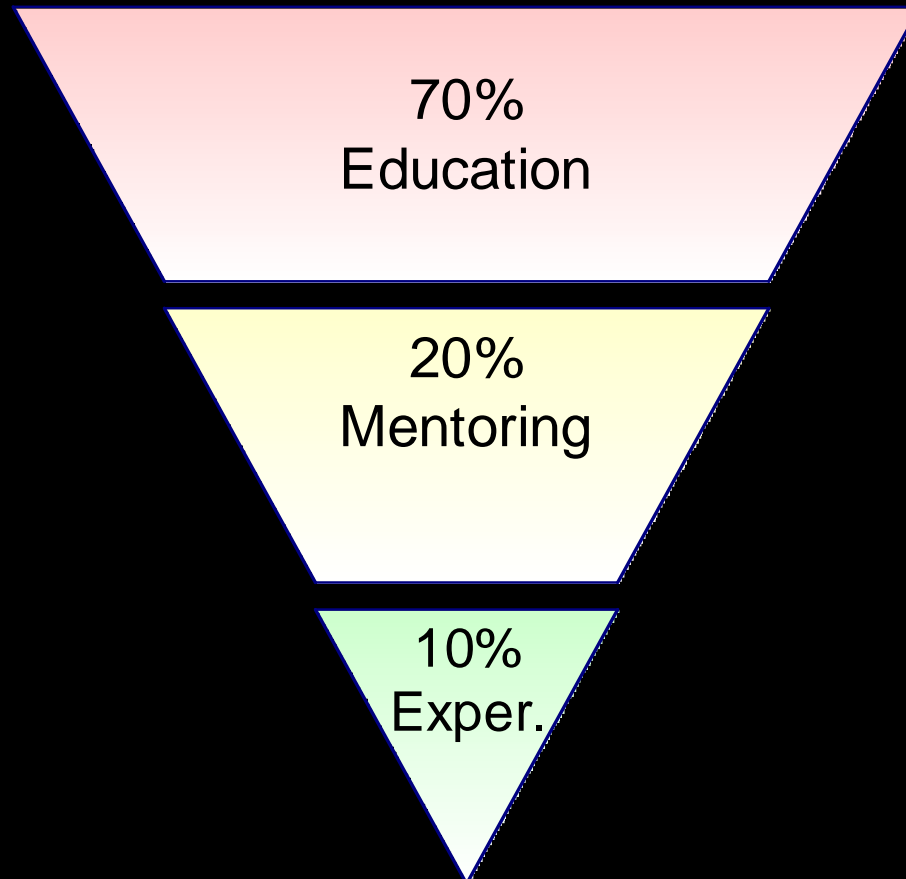
# True or False

“If we need to develop leaders in our agency, we must get them more training.”

# What works for development.



# What we do for development.



# What competencies matter?

- These 70 competencies are the same across organizations and business models and were the same about 85 percent of the time.
- The competencies are the same everywhere—strategic thinking is always strategic thinking, perseverance is always perseverance, etc.
- What differs is how much each competency matters in a particular job, level, function, or organization.

# Multiple research supports the development model.

- Studies from many major researchers support and measure the same major competencies:
  - Center for Creative Leadership
  - Saville Holdsworth Ltd
  - DDI
  - Hay-McBer
  - Personal Decisions, Inc.
  - Lominger, inc.



# Should fire agencies create our own methods to develop competencies?

- After all:
  - We are unique.
  - We would need to get broad buy-in, which is perhaps not possible with a model developed outside.
  - The model must work for us.

# So, should we develop our own method?

- No.
  - We are unique in what we do, not in the leadership competencies needed to accomplish what we do.
  - The “Not Invented Here” syndrome tends to dilute the value of the outcome. We can get the same thing (with an 85 percent solution) with less time, less resources, and be more professional.
  - This creates a significant challenge for fire agencies.

# The skills that matter have and always will matter.

- 85 percent of the leadership skills that matter are known.
- The other 15 percent are specialized to particular jobs or industries.
- How about if we focus just on the 85 percent?

# Competencies

- Competencies are the basic building blocks to job success and organizational success.
- Getting to core competencies that drive success is complex.
- We intend to focus on the “Big Eight” competencies that are important to success and that are hard to find.

# ABOUT THE BIG EIGHT

- The “Big 8” refers to the eight competencies significantly correlated with performance and promotion potential across organizational levels and with generally rated low skill levels.
- The eight competencies are generally rated low in the population. The following table depicts the population rank order of the eight competencies. The data were obtained from 5,354 learners rated by 47,592 raters from 140 organizations collected from 1997 to 2002.

# Rank Order of Big 8 Competencies in the Workforce

Competency	Rank Order
Dealing with Ambiguity	47
Creativity	49
Innovation Management	52
Motivating Others	56
Planning	51
Strategic Agility	58
Building Effective Teams	60
Managing Vision and Purpose	62

# The Value of Experience

- Certain types of experience develop leadership competencies.
- People in all organizations learn the same from the same type of experiences.
- Some individuals learn much more from experiences than others.
- Learning how to benefit from experience is developable.

# Different types of experiences benefit employees.

- Key jobs
- Important other people--good bosses, bad bosses, and mentors
- Hardships
- Courses (and books, tapes, etc.)



# Key jobs are critical to developing experience.

- Most of the hard job skills that matter (strategy, planning) are learned on the job with fresh challenges.
- The jobs that are least likely to teach are
  - straight upward promotions,
  - doing the same jobs again and again, and
  - job switches aimed at exposure rather than true challenges.
- What do most fire agencies do?

# Aligning Jobs to Development

<b>Development Jobs</b>	<b>Big 8 Competencies Addressed</b>
<b>Member of Projects/Task Forces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dealing with ambiguity</li><li>• Strategic agility</li></ul>
<b>Lead Projects / Tasks Forces</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dealing with ambiguity.</li><li>• Innovation management.</li></ul>
<b>Heavy Strategic Demands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dealing with ambiguity.</li><li>• Innovation management.</li><li>• Planning.</li><li>• Strategic agility.</li></ul>
<b>Line to Staff Switches</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dealing with ambiguity.</li><li>• Innovation management.</li><li>• Motivating others.</li><li>• Strategic agility.</li></ul>

# Aligning Jobs to Development

<b>Development Jobs</b>	<b>Big 8 Competencies Addressed</b>
<b>Scope Assignments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dealing with ambiguity.</li><li>• Planning.</li><li>• Strategic agility.</li></ul>
<b>Scale Assignments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dealing with ambiguity.</li><li>• Innovation management.</li><li>• Motivating others.</li><li>• Strategic Agility</li><li>• Managing vision and purpose.</li></ul>
<b>Change Manager</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Motivating others.</li><li>• Planning.</li><li>• Building effective teams.</li><li>• Managing vision and purpose.</li></ul>
<b>Cross Moves</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dealing with ambiguity.</li><li>• Innovation management.</li><li>• Motivating others.</li><li>• Managing vision and purpose.</li></ul>

# Those who can “learn to learn” will benefit most from experience.

- There are different ways to measure people—assessment centers, instruments, structured interviews—regardless, learners almost always win.
- Trying to find people with high intelligence and high learning agility is difficult. There is a limited labor market.
- Learners = “Learning agile” people

# What do learners look like?

- Learners are willing to feel and look stupid.
- They are keen observers of themselves.
- Learners have more tactics at their disposal to solve and resolve problems.
- They compare things, and make sense through rules of thumb.
- They have a plan and ways to measure success and failure.

# Low performing learners

- Operate on preconceived notions.
- Prejudge what is necessary to develop future leaders.
- They don't develop others.
- They confuse being a manager with being a technical expert.
- They head down the path of habit.
- They use position rather than personality to drive changes.

# Opportunities to create learners?

- Expand scope and scale.
- Assign as member of project or task force
- Assign to lead a project or task force
- Heavy strategic demands
- Line to staff switches
- Change manager

# What can the PDC do to make industry wide improvements?

- Provide a discussion on the value of experience in the Officer Development Handbook (ODH).
- Identify experience opportunities in each of the sections to advance the concept of experience for different levels in the organizations.
- Use the collective experience of the members of the PDC to identify experience opportunities for career, volunteer, and combination departments.
- Consider adding experiential recommendations for supervising, managing and administrative fire officer ranks.



**Questions?**

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