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STUDYING THE IMPACTS OF LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT TRAINING WITHIN A MID-SIZED
ENGINEERING CONSULTING FIRM

A Research Project
Presented to the Faculty of
The Graziadio Business School
Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science
in
Organization Development

by
Patrick Nelson
June 2019

This research project, completed by

PATRICK NELSON

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The Graziadio Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: June 2019

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Abstract

This study assessed the impact of leadership development training on retention, career progression, and behavior adaptation inside a mid-sized engineering consulting firm. This study used a mixed-method design and gathered data in three phases using two surveys and one interview. These methods were used to capture participants' reactions, learning, application, and outcomes related to the Leading from the Front training. Descriptive statistics were calculated for quantitative data, and a content analysis was used to examine the qualitative data. Overall, the leadership training was found to have an impact on retention, career progression, and behavior adaptation. Although certain limitations affected the data collection procedures, the results of this study are positive. Further study of this topic can add to these results and generate more specific insights into the direct impact of leadership training.

Keywords: leadership development, retention, career progression, behavior adaptation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A recent survey of more than 1,000 organizations found that leadership development was their biggest challenge (Wellins, Bernthal, & Phelps, 2015). Further, a study found that CEOs devote 50% of their time to leadership development and talent management (Silzer, 2002). For organizations to succeed with high performance, employees at all levels need to demonstrate essential leadership behaviors. Developing leaders should be one of the most critical priorities for an organization as effective leadership helps provide an increase in competitive advantage and organizational effectiveness (Vardiman, Houghston, & Jinkerson, 2006). Effective leaders help build cultures of engagement within their organizations, leading to higher levels of trust, optimal levels of productivity, and increased overall satisfaction and retention; they also help guide the company into a better position for success (Bass, 2008; Leskiw & Singh, 2007; Vardiman, Houghston, & Jinkerson, 2006; Wiley, 2010).

Leadership development activities allow for employees to develop specific behaviors and skills to be an active leader and increase their performance (Lord & Hall, 1992). These behaviors and skills include the ability to craft and communicate a specific vision, inspire employees, and influence organizational outcomes (Kotter, 1990). The progressive landscape of business, technology, politics, and social factors has led to an increased response from organizations to develop practical leadership skills in their employees.

In the late 20th century, Cohen and Tichy (1997) found that most leadership development efforts fell drastically short because they were too rote,

backward thinking, and too theoretical. Cohen and Tichy (1997) noted that programs did little to prepare leaders for the future, and most programs did not connect to the business's immediate needs. Turner (2007) agreed and surmised the ineffectiveness of leadership development training was due to inadequate program design.

Despite deficiencies in leadership development efforts, organizations across the United States spent nearly \$31 billion on leadership development in 2014 (O'Leonard & Krider, 2014), which is double what they spent 10 years earlier (Dolezalek, 2005). The growth of leadership development efforts can mainly be attributed to globalization, especially emerging markets, and an aging population that has increased the demand for effective leaders. Even with large amounts of money invested in leadership development, research has shown that little time or effort is spent in measuring the effectiveness (Sogunro, 1997).

Extant studies have shown substantial variance in the effectiveness of one program to the next (Collins & Holton, 2004). According to Allen and Hartman (2008), leadership development efforts must focus on the objectives and the method of learning being practiced. As Cook (2006) noted, many organizations subscribe to the myth that conducting leadership development training automatically yields results as opposed to utilizing factual data to evaluate the impact. Organizations that measure the impact of leadership development training are in a better position to adapt their development efforts to maximize effectiveness (Leskiw & Singh, 2007).

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to discover the impact of leadership development training within a mid-sized engineering consulting firm. One research question was explored: What is the impact of leadership training on retention, career progression, and individual behavior adaptation?

A case study design was utilized to explore the research question. The focus was on the leadership development training series entitled *Leading from the Front*. This series consists of three one-and-a-half day workshops focused on leadership training within a single organization. *Leading from the Front* was part of a broader leadership development effort the organization initiated that included bi-monthly leadership webinars, lunch-and-learns, strategic consulting on leadership-focused areas, and an online community-based, gamified, learning development platform.

Study Setting

The study organization is a mid-sized engineering consulting firm. The organization employs approximately 279 employees within its corporate headquarters in the Midwest and its three branch offices scattered throughout the United States. The vision of the organization is to unleash the power of the nation's top talent, and the strategic intent statement is to influence and shape a secure energy future through unique, sustainable, and mutually beneficial solutions with its valued partners. The organization is employee owned.

The study organization engaged an external leadership development consulting firm in 2015 to develop its culture in order to help achieve its strategy

and vision for the future. The organization had established seven key strategic bridges to achieve its goals. One of the bridges was leadership, with the aim of unleashing the nation's top talent to influence and shape the secure energy future by equipping professionals with the skills necessary to lead people, projects, and organizations and by developing thought leaders in the markets the organization serves.

The organization developed a strategic plan in 2016 that planned out its vision for 2020. This plan focused on people, processes, clients, and success. These foci have provided the organization with a navigation tool that has led to exceptional quality and customer service, enabling it to become a thought leader in the industry and develop an engaged culture making it an employer of choice.

The consulting firm sought to create a self-sustaining learning organization that can deliver leader-led leadership development programming. It sought to transform the organization into a learning culture that embraces its vision, lives its values, and ensures that its professionals have a clear understanding of how they can be effective leaders in all the roles they fulfill. They did this through four distinct phases of the engagement:

- Cultural research and immersion activities, which included interviews with professionals in the organization, assessments (Leadership Gap Indicator and 360 Benchmarks by Design), and goal setting.
- Design activities, which included identifying training populations and curriculum, collecting data, designing and developing curriculum and collateral, and conducting an engagement survey.

- Solution delivery activities, which included workshop delivery, team facilitation, coaching, online learning platform, assessment delivery (DiSC), data collection, and strategy session.
- Solution transfer activities, which included train-the-trainer, learning roadmap, and resource kit.

The goals of the partnership were to:

- Strengthen the trust level among the Extended Leadership Team to perform at its highest level;
- Introduce leadership development to all professionals in the organization to ensure that everyone understands how they influence outcomes and inspire others;
- Create customized leadership development training that will be piloted by external facilitators and, ultimately, delivered by leaders within the organization;
- Identify and develop a cadre of trainers outside of the Human Resources Department who can help sustain the leadership development initiatives in the organization once the partnership wraps up; and
- Create a learning framework to guide organization professionals and further support their strategic intent.

As part of its partnership with the external consulting firm, the study organization was looking to engage its supervisor population and high potential employees in leadership development training. One of the aspects of this engagement was that two cohorts of professionals attended *Leading from the*

Front in 2016 and another two cohorts attended in 2017. This training centered around behavioral leadership theory and consisted of new knowledge, self-reflection, and experiential activities. The impact of this training on these four cohort participants is the focus of the study.

Significance of Study

Effective leadership makes organizations better (Vardiman, Houghston, & Jinkerson, 2006). Organizations armed with this knowledge and a changing environment have invested significant amounts of money into developing their employees as leaders. As in any business, understanding the return on investment is critical to the success of these initiatives and the future development of leaders. This study helps add to the growing body of research on the effect of leadership development training by examining the impact on participants who completed a leadership development training program. This study focuses on three areas of impact: retention, career progression, and individual behavior adaptation.

Organization of Study

This chapter has outlined the background and purpose of the study, described the study's setting, and identified the significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviews literature pertinent to leadership development, leadership theory, retention, and career progression. Chapter 3 delineates the methods used in the study. Chapter 4 reports the study results. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This research assessed the impact of a leadership training program within a mid-sized engineering consulting firm. A plethora of literature related to leadership theory and research has been conducted over the last century; however, comparatively speaking, the research on leadership development training lags far behind (Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, Walumbwa, & Chan, 2009).

Various scholars have explored the impacts of effective leadership development on the retention of employees, career progression, and behavioral changes. An analysis of their studies shows conclusively that effective leadership development is the foundation for organizational success. The objective of this chapter is to distinguish the best practices to maximize the effectiveness of leadership development training.

A Brief History of Leadership

Leadership scholars have traced the history of leadership to the beginning of written history. From early religious documents to writings about Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great, the theory and application of leadership have been well documented (Bryman, 2014). Scholars have also traced the history of leadership training as early as the Greek philosopher Plato, who established one of the first known leadership training centers in 356 BC (Kakabadse, Nortier, & Abramovici, 1998).

From an academic perspective, while there is an abundance of research on leadership, the core ideas are broken down into five central pillars: trait theory (Galton & Eysenck, 1869), power and influence theory (French & Raven, 1959),

behavioral theory (Cartwright & Zander, 1970; Katz & Kahn, 1951; Likert, 1961, 1967), contingency theory (Fiedler, 1967), and transformational theory (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Many of these theories continue to ask a simple question: are people born with natural leadership abilities (e.g., Galton & Eysenck, 1869) or can leadership be learned (Kreitner, 2004)?

Luckily, the idea that leaders must be born naturally leaders, and thus not able to be developed, has been thoroughly debunked in the last few decades. However, the early dichotomy (born v. developed) has now shifted to another dichotomy: worth it or worthless?

For decades, researchers around the world sought to show that leadership development could hold its own as an academic discipline. Weiner and Mahoney (1981) examined the profit, profitability, and stock price of 193 manufacturing companies and found that upwards of a 40% of an organizations performance was due to leadership. A variety of leadership models and leadership development strategies were proposed throughout the turn of the century (e.g., Ardichvili & Manderscheid, 2008; Bass, 2008; de Vries, 2003; London, 2002; Safferstone, 2005; Yukl, 2002).

Retention

One of the biggest challenges that organizations face is turnover as it is costly in terms of both time and money for organizations. According to the American Management Association, turnover costs can range from 25% to 200% of annual compensation (Branham, 2005). Organizations with high turnover rates have seen adverse effects on outcomes such as productivity and safety in

manufacturing and transportation (Shaw, Gupta, & Delery, 2005) and sales performance in customer service industries (Batt, Colvin, & Keefe, 2002; Kacmar, Andrews, Van Rooy, Steilberg, & Cerrone, 2006). Research has shown that job satisfaction (Branham, 2005; Knox & Anfara, 2013) and effective leadership (Carsten, 2006) are key to retaining employees.

Regarding job satisfaction, there are many examples showcasing the demand for this in the workplace. Specifically, The Blessing White (2006) reported that 60% of employees want more development opportunities in order to maintain their job satisfaction. McAlearney (2008) found that one benefit of leadership development programs in a healthcare setting was a reduction in turnover rates. Organizations often, incorrectly, make leadership development a simple math equation: if I spend X will I get back X+Y? However, employees wanting more developmental opportunities will make them happier with their jobs. How can organizations begin to assess the value of leadership development programs if the primary value gained is not monetary? One way could be effective leadership practices.

Effective leadership is another major key to retaining employees (Carsten, 2006). Carsten (2006) found that most employees leave organizations because of their managers, NOT because of the organization. On its surface, this may appear to dampen the argument of the last paragraph. Why spend time and money on leadership development programs if employees do not leave because of the organization? Because of the reason they are leaving: the lack of effective leadership. Several scholars have shown that an organizations emphasis on

leadership development leads to positive organizational outcomes (e.g., Cacioppe, 1998; Shaw, Dineen, Fang, & Vellella, 2009; Wiley, 2010). For example, Shaw et al. (2009) found an increase in the efficiency of employees' commitment to a trucking company after investment from top management. Wiley (2010) found that effective leadership development solidified employee motivation. These studies ultimately show that employees are more loyal and more motivated when leaders create a positive culture that appreciates the employees and improves their overall working experience.

The development of transformational leadership helps leaders broaden their interests in employees (Bass, 2008). Charismatic leaders inspire their employees by stimulating them intellectually and meeting their emotional needs. Charismatic leaders encourage employees on issues of trust and confidence in their performance in an organization. Such leaders motivate the workers by tapping into their discretionary effort (Anatonakis, Fenley, & Liechi, 2012). These leaders also pay attention to the employees based on their differences in abilities and at the same time act as a mentor to those who might need help. Bass (2008) found that transformational leadership helps boosts employee morale and increases their importance in the company.

Cohen and Tichy (1997) asserted that effective leadership development inspires leaders to coach and mentor by sharing their leadership experience, thereby linking them with the organizational goals. Cohen and Tichy (1997) asserted that leaders who engage employees in leadership development and the teaching of new skills help more employees stay. Such development leads to

higher levels of autonomy among employees, which Pink (2009) found to be a key motivator, along with mastery and purpose. Employees who gain their leadership skills while operating in the company are more efficient compared to new employees, thereby leading to further career progression (Oxman, 2002).

Thibodeaux, Labatt, Lee, and Labat (2015) explained the effects of leadership on teachers' retention in the educational field. A significant factor leading teachers to stay was their job satisfaction. Thibodeaux et al. (2015) utilized a mixed-methods study to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The success of students was also found to be a common motivational aspect for the teachers. Some factors that cause teachers to leave a job include a lack of proper administrative support, a lack of student discipline, and teachers' workload and pressure. The study concluded that leadership in any organization affects the retention and leaving of employees based on the identified factors.

Career Progression

Organizations who focus on career progression have shown positive organizational outcomes (e.g., Bettin & Kennedy, 1990; McCauley, 2008; Packard & Jones, 2015). Employee engagement is also a critical factor in an organization's success and is driven higher by employees that are motivated by career progression (Rich et al. 2010). Employee engagement has been a trending topic in the leadership development field over the last several years and has seen a large increase in related research (Ghosh et al., 2014; Saks & Grunman, 2014; Roof, 2015).

. Career progression is related to the efficiency of an employee in contributing effectively to achieving the set goals of the company Packard and Jones (2015) found that participants in a leadership development initiative reported higher levels of performance, which was positively correlated to a higher probability of career progression. McCauley (2008) found that training for leaders needed to be more operational because this hands-on, practical training led to more efficient employees, which resulted in the formal promotion of the employees in the business. Bettin and Kennedy (1990) found that employees' experience and performance in their roles lead to their career progression. Obtaining the leadership knowledge and skills and the ability to associate them in their daily tasks can result in promotion. Chaimongkonrojna and Steane (2015) posited that effective leadership development leads to improved abilities, relationships, and skills for the leaders who influence and inspire employees over the course of the performance of the company.

Behavioral Change

Scholars such as Jenkins (1947) and Mann (1959) encouraged researchers to focus on behavioral changes and how they impact an institution. Leadership development aligns with behavioral changes as it aims to equip an individual with the behaviors needed to influence outcomes and inspire others. Early researchers, such as Bennis (1959) have critiqued data claiming that leadership development and behavior traits need to be integrated as they co-relate. Bennis (1959) lamented over the gap that exists in research due to the lack of integration.

Avolio (2007) utilized the integrated model to demonstrate how trait and behavior correspond. According to Avolio et al. (2003) and Bass (2008), the effectiveness of leadership is influenced by behavioral changes and leadership traits. Although no clear distinction exists between how the two complement each other, they still affect leadership development.

Kotter (1990) demonstrated a crucial need for leadership in any given institution. Kotter (1990) believed that for leadership to be competent, leadership development needs to be part of the organization. These traits and characteristics result in behavioral change. Kotter (1990) explained that leadership development differs with the needs of an organization. Therefore, the behavioral changes of a leader connect to the strategies of the institution.

Costa and McCrae (1992) found that leadership traits can be grouped into three areas: demographics, interpersonal aspects, and task competence. The vital traits include gender, personality traits (also referred to as the big five), and intelligence. In leadership behavior, the sole focus is on how the behavior directs change, task processes, and relational dynamics. Costa and McCrae (1992) suggested that research should consider both the traits and behaviors to develop an integrated model that propels leadership development. For instance, when looking at the gender trait, research has highlighted the action related to gender. The behavior should be one that is suitable for both group and individual performance. If not, then behavioral change must be implemented to enable leadership effectiveness.

Halpern (1997) explained that one's leadership behavior should ensure task competence and individual and group performance. This happens through the development of behaviors whose outcomes benefit the organization. Thus, leadership development surpasses the behaviors relating to a person's personality and gender and focuses on behaviors that are effective to an organization.

Bass (2008) defined interpersonal attributes as a trait that describes how a person socializes with other people. This trait is co-dependent on behavior as it determines how an individual will relate with other people. The leader's personal attributes at most times influence employees in an organization. Their driving force is the behavior of their leader. According to Klimosky and Hayes (1980), personal attributes affect social interactions. Leadership development equips an individual with personal traits that enable him/her to interact with others effectively. The behavioral change allows competent leadership in that employees can relate with their leader.

According to Nahrgang, Morgeson, and Ilies (2009), behavioral changes are more likely to happen when the development activity is relevant to the situation at hand. The relevancy increases the chance of leadership effectiveness and, thus, the achievement of the overall strategy of the organization. They also found that a leader who is an extrovert is more likely to construct emotional ties with his/her team, creating strong work relationships. This alternatively increases the task competence in the organization, leading to the accomplishment of strategy. This case also applies to agreeableness: A leader who is agreeable also

creates a strong foundation for effective task performance through the work relationships created.

Summary

Based on the literature, an effective leader with the required skills and behaviors will bring positive implications to the organization (Lord & Hall, 1992). Organizations that invest in leadership development training have experienced a positive impact on retention rates, career progression, and behavior change that can help improve the overall performance of the company (Kotter, 1990; McAlearney, 2008; Packard & Jones, 2015). Employee retention in business is partially dependent upon the organization's development initiatives to retain employees in the organization. Such strategies are aimed at motivating the employees so that they stay in the organization for the maximum time and contribute efficiently to the company (Wiley, 2010). In addition, career progression entails the formal promotion and professional advancement of employees and is one of the aspects positively affected through proper leadership. It enhances the efficiency of an employee, thereby contributing to achieving the business goals of the company (Chaimongkonrojna & Steane 2015). As employees scale in their respective professions, they tend to have more responsibility in management, finances, and increased autonomy. Finally, anyone in an organization who wants to influence outcomes, inspire others, and instill change in the company's culture will first need to change the way he/she behaves and interacts with the workers.

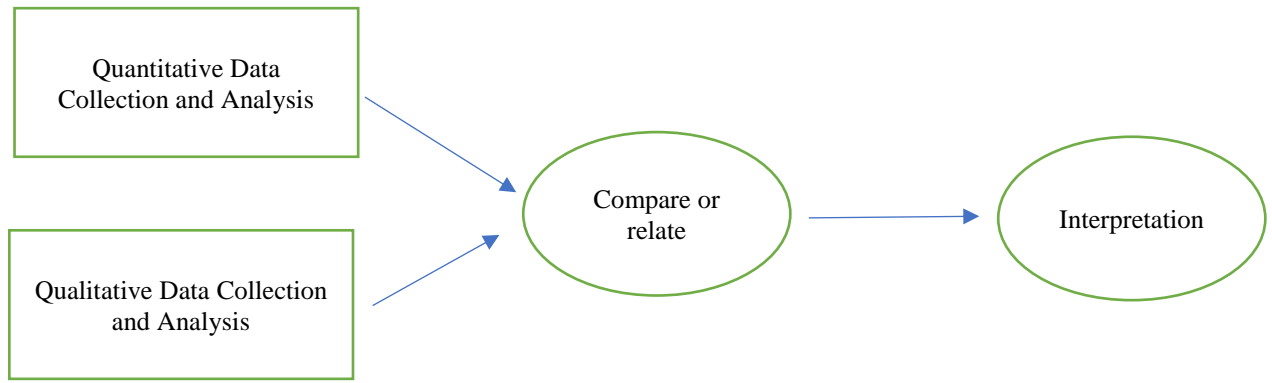
Chapter 3: Methods

This study examined the impact of leadership development training on a mid-sized engineering consulting firm. One research question was explored: What is the impact of leadership development workshops on retention, career progression, and behavioral change? This research was prompted by the critical need for organizations to understand the return on investment they are receiving for leadership development efforts—specifically, leadership training. This chapter describes the research design, sample, protection of human subjects, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis procedures.

Research Design

A mixed-method survey study was used for this research design. Mixed-methods research is the rigorous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in response to a research question (Creswell, 2014). This specific method traces its roots back to Campbell and Fiske (1959).

This method was chosen because it helped provide a more complete understanding of the research question and minimized the limitations of using one method exclusively. This design tends to help explain quantitative results through themes that emerge in the qualitative collection of data. It also helps provide a deeper understanding in developing potential action items based on the data. Specifically, a convergent parallel mixed-methods design was applied in this research (Figure 1) to enable the researcher to replicate the comparison of qualitative and quantitative data for the three main areas of focus for this study: retention, career progression, and behavioral change.

Figure 1***Convergent Parallel Mixed Methods Design***

As Creswell (2008) noted, quantitative frameworks are descriptive, scientific, and analytical whereas qualitative frameworks can take several different alternative forms, such as thematic, descriptive, scientific, and storytelling. The quantitative data help examine the research question using deductive reasoning while the qualitative data help examine it utilizing inductive reasoning (Leedy & Ormrod 2010).

The existing data for this research were collected at the end of each of the three workshops in 2016 and 2017 via course evaluations. Further data were collected for this study using a 1- or 2-year post-training online survey and a 1- or 2-year post-training interview.

Sample

A single-stage sampling procedure was used for this study. The population for this study was 103 employees, all of whom completed the *Leading from the Front* leadership training in either 2016 or 2017. The survey was sent to 97

employees as six had left the company since the training and no contact information was available. Thus, the response rate for the survey was 44.33% (43/97). The position of the employees throughout the program varied from section managers to high-potential front-line employees.

Protection of Human Subjects

The Director of Human Resources, the CEO, and the COO approved this study on February 21, 2018. The Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University approved this study on October 10, 2018. The researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative web-based training course on September 21, 2017. All safeguards for the protection of human subjects were followed.

Methodology

Immediate post-training course evaluation. Participants were provided an evaluation upon completion of each of the three workshops. Participants were told that their feedback was voluntary and would be utilized to evaluate the success of the program and make necessary adjustments, as seen fit. Consent was implied based upon their completion of the survey (see Table 1).

Table 1

Immediate Post-Training Course Evaluation Completion

Cohort	Lead Yourself First	Communicating like a Leader	Leading Others
Cohort 1	92%	88%	84%
Cohort 2	96%	89%	81%
Cohort 3	92%	80%	88%
Cohort 4	81%	100%	78%

N = 103

One- to two-year post-workshop survey. 97 participants were sent an email, providing them with the purpose of the study and a link to complete the survey. The survey instruments also explained to participants the purpose of the research study along with the voluntary nature of the study. Consent to voluntarily participate in the study was implied by the completion of the survey.

Post-workshop interview. The initial email to participants explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, and the link to the survey along with an invitation to participate in a 20- to 30-minute semi-structured interview conducted in person. Verbal consent for the interview was provided by the participant at the beginning of each interview.

Participants' responses were kept entirely confidential. Participants were not obligated to identify themselves on their surveys. Only aggregate data are reported in this study and any subsequent analysis or future publication of results. Upon completion of the study, participants were offered a summary report of the data. All paper copies of data collected have been scanned into a computer and saved to a backup storage device. The paper copies were then destroyed.

Human Subject Consideration

Participants in this study did not face any apparent risks or costs and received no financial incentives to participate. The only inconvenience to participants was the time involved in completing the surveys and interviews.

Leading from the Front

This study focused on a series of leadership development training courses entitled *Leading from the Front*. The genesis of this training was the result of a

consultative relationship with the company that identified behavioral leadership gaps along with leadership opportunities to continue to leverage. *Leading from the Front* was a set of three different one-and-a-half-day leadership development courses entitled: Lead Yourself First, Communicating like a Leader, and Leading Others (see Table 2). Workshops were designed and facilitated by an external vendor.

Table 2

Leading from the Front Workshops and Modules

Workshop	Modules Covered
Leading Yourself First	self-awareness, credibility, personal accountability, confidence, and decision making
Communicating like a Leader	verbal and non-verbal communication, feedback, conflict, performance management
Leading Others	service-based leadership, coaching and mentoring, motivation

Leading from the Front was part of a more significant leadership development program effort that also included bi-monthly webinars on different leadership topics, lunch-and-learns, and access to an online community-based leadership development platform. The webinars and the platform were open to all employees in the organization. This study focuses on the impact of the Leading from the Front courses.

Instrumentation

Three instruments were utilized to collect data for this study: an immediate post-workshop course evaluation, a 1- to 2-year post-program survey, and a 1- to 2-year post-program interview. The following sections describe the design of these instruments.

Immediate post-workshop course evaluation. The purpose of the immediate post-workshop evaluation was to collect participants' reactions to the training. The evaluation (Appendix A) was designed to be completed in five minutes and consisted of nine questions using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), along with an open area for additional comments. The purpose of the immediate post-training survey was to gather participants' immediate attitude and reactions to the training (Likert, 1932). The evaluation was organized into three sections:

- Overall reaction: Collecting data regarding participants' reaction immediately after the training is the most important part in the evaluation process. This helps the curriculum designers and facilitators better understand if any adjustments are necessary. Participants were asked if they felt the training was valuable for their development, if they will be able to use what they learned immediately, their level of engagement throughout the training, and whether they would recommend this workshop to others. Phillips and Phillips (2007) described these measures as having predictive capabilities in relation to whether participants

benefited from the training and their likelihood for implementing what they learned.

- **Learning:** This training focused on three methods of leadership development based on research conducted at the Center for Creative Leadership, known as the 70–20–10 rule (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2004). To gain better insights into participants' learning, they were asked questions related to their ability to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses in the training, insights they gained related to their personal leadership style, and if the activities and exercises aided in their learning. These items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5).
- **Open-ended comments:** One optional open-ended question allowed participants to share any additional comments or feedback regarding the training.

One- to two-year post-training survey. The purpose of the 1- to 2-year post-training survey (Appendix B) was to assess the impact the training workshops had on retention, career progression, and behavioral change/adoption of specific leadership behaviors addressed in the workshops. An invitation to participate in the study was sent to 97 participants. 43 participants completed the survey. Questions were rated using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5), along with the opportunity to leave additional comments.

One- to two-year post-training interview. The purpose of the 1- to 2-year post-training interview (Appendix C) was to gather further insights into how participants have been impacted by training. Interviews were conducted with nine participants. The conversations began with a description of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and consent procedures. Anonymity was guaranteed to all participants.

A semi-structured interview design with open-ended questions was utilized for this instrument in the research design. As Nohl (2009) posited, a semi-structured interview allows participants the time and space to express their opinions while also leaving the researcher the latitude to explore other unexplored phenomena that develop. A set list of questions were utilized to provide a framework for every conversation. The open-ended questions also help minimize the bias of the researcher.

Data Collection

Data was collected using a three-step evaluation process. Step 1 was the immediate post-course evaluation designed to capture immediate reactions and satisfaction with the training. Steps 2 and 3 consisted of reaching out to participants still with the company via email. The survey in Step 2 assessed the application of leadership behaviors, the impact on the participants' career progression, and retention. Step 3 was the post-training interviews that gathered qualitative data using the parallel concepts principle. Every participant of the course was invited to participate in all three steps of the evaluation process.

The immediate post-training course evaluation was distributed to all 103 participants after each one of the three courses. The average response rate for all four cohorts covering all three courses was 87%. The 1- to 2-year post-training survey was distributed to 97 participants and yielded a response rate of 44%. Nine in-person interviews were completed, which equaled a 9% response rate among all training participants.

Data Analysis

Evans (2007) and Leedy and Ormrod (2010) asserted in a qualitative research study data collection and data analysis should occur simultaneously. In analyzing the data, the researcher converged the data using a side-by-side comparison of the three primary impact areas of the study (Creswell, 2014). Common themes were identified amongst the qualitative data gathered through the telephone interviews in each area.

Validity

Potential threats were identified to the validity of both the quantitative and qualitative data collected. The primary internal threat to the quantitative data was the amount of time that passed between the leadership training and invitation to participate in Steps 2 and 3 of the research. The methodological triangulation method was used to validate the findings by comparing the quantitative data from surveys and qualitative data from semi-structured interviews.

Summary

This chapter detailed the methods utilized to identify the impact that leadership development training had on individuals and their organization. The

study used a mixed-method design and gathered data in three phases using three course evaluations, one survey, and one interview. The purpose of these methods was to assess the learning and application of leadership behaviors from the Leading from the Front workshops. Of the 103 participants, an average of 87% individuals completed the course evaluations immediately following each workshop, 44% completed the 1- to 2-year post-training survey, and 9% participated in the interview. Descriptive statistics were used for the quantitative data, and the qualitative data were subjected to a content analysis. The findings of the research are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings of the study through an analysis of the raw data. The data collected during the three phases of the study are presented sequentially.

Immediate Post-Training Course Evaluation

Each cohort's overall reaction to the *Leading from the Front* training was positive immediately following each of the three workshops. Upon completion of each course, participants in each cohort were asked the same set of questions (Table 3).

Table 3

Immediate Post-Training Evaluation Questions

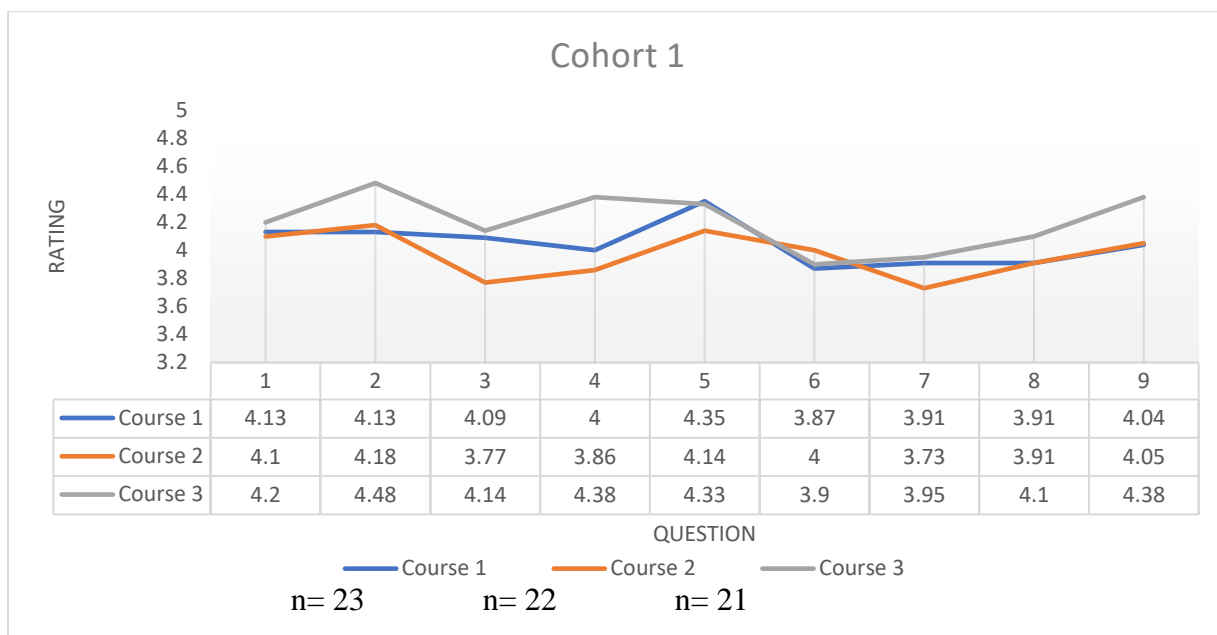
Questions
1. The workshop was valuable for my development.
2. The workshop provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my leadership strengths and areas for development.
3. The workshop allowed me to gain insight into my personal leadership style.
4. The workshop allowed me to identify areas for my continued leadership development.
5. I was engaged with what was going on during the workshop.
6. The activities and exercises aided in my learning.
7. I will be able to use what I learned immediately.
8. The program material will contribute to my future success.
9. I would recommend this workshop to others.

Cohort 1. Participants from cohort 1 consistently evaluated the first course lower than the other three cohorts (Figure 2). The highest mean score for course one was reported level of engagement during the workshop ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .76$). The lowest mean score reported was for how the exercises and activities aided in the participants' learning ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .74$). This was followed

closely by two questions that both had a mean score of 3.91, one of which asked participants if they would be able to use what they learned immediately ($SD = 0.88$) and the other of which asked participants to rate how the program material would contribute to their future success ($SD = 0.83$).

Participants from cohort 1 reported a mean rating lower than 4.00 for four out of nine questions following course two whereas the other cohorts did not have an average rating lower than 4.18 for any questions. The highest mean score for course two was reported for participants gaining insight into their personal leadership style ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.83$). Compared to the scores from the first course, five of the same questions had a lower mean score upon completion of the second course.

In the third course's post-training evaluation, participants in Cohort 1 rated the question on the course providing an opportunity to reflect upon their leadership strengths and areas for development the highest out of all questions, at 4.48 ($SD = 0.59$). The lowest rated question was how the activities and exercises aided in participants' learning ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.61$). Among all three courses, participants from Cohort 1 rated seven of the nine questions the highest for the third course.

Figure 2***Cohort 1 immediate post-training evaluation data***

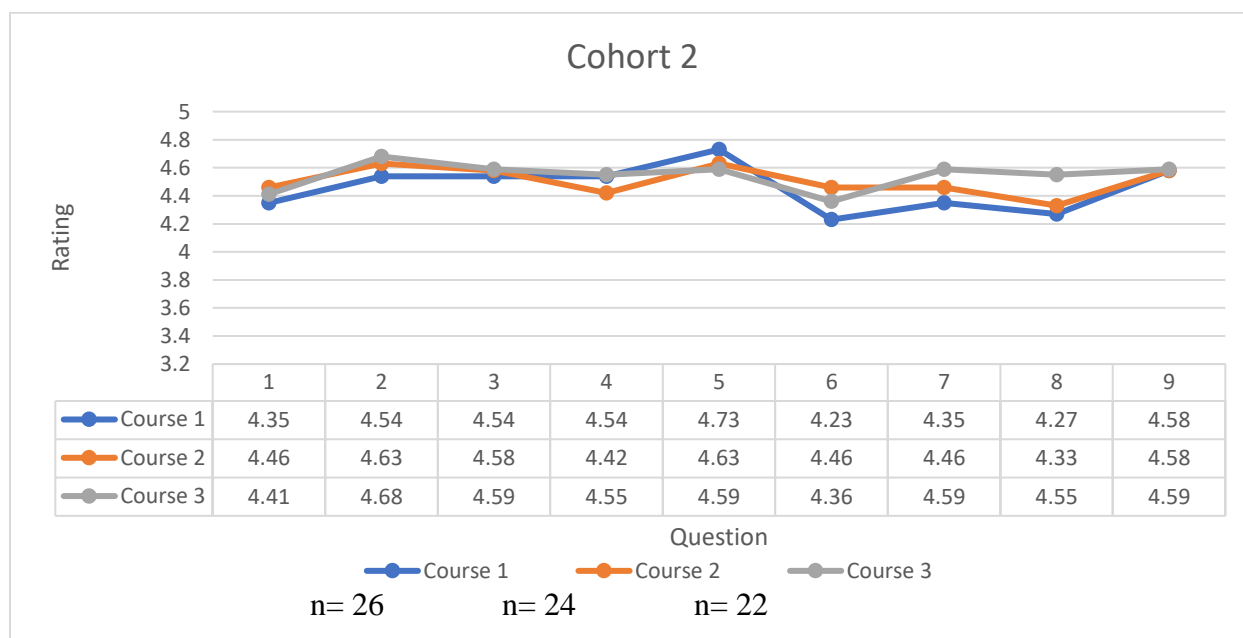
Cohort 2. The lowest mean score reported from participants in Cohort 2 following course one was 4.23 (Figure 3), which was also the same question with the lowest average score from Cohort 1 and Cohort 4. Based on scores from all cohorts, participants from Cohort 2 reported the highest mean score following course one for the question about gaining insight into their personal leadership style ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.57$).

Participants from Cohort 2 reported a mean score of 4.58 in regard to recommending the course to others following the completion of course two; this was the same average score as the first course. The highest mean score following course two came from the question around their engagement level during the workshop ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.48$), which was .10 lower than for the first course.

Participants from Cohort 2 reported a mean rating of at least a 4.36 or higher for every question following the completion of course three. Upon completion of course three, participants reported a mean score of 4.59 ($SD = 0.72$) for the question asking if they would recommend the course to others. This result was consistent with the scores from the previous two courses, which both had an average rating of 4.58.

Figure 3

Cohort 2 immediate post-training evaluation data

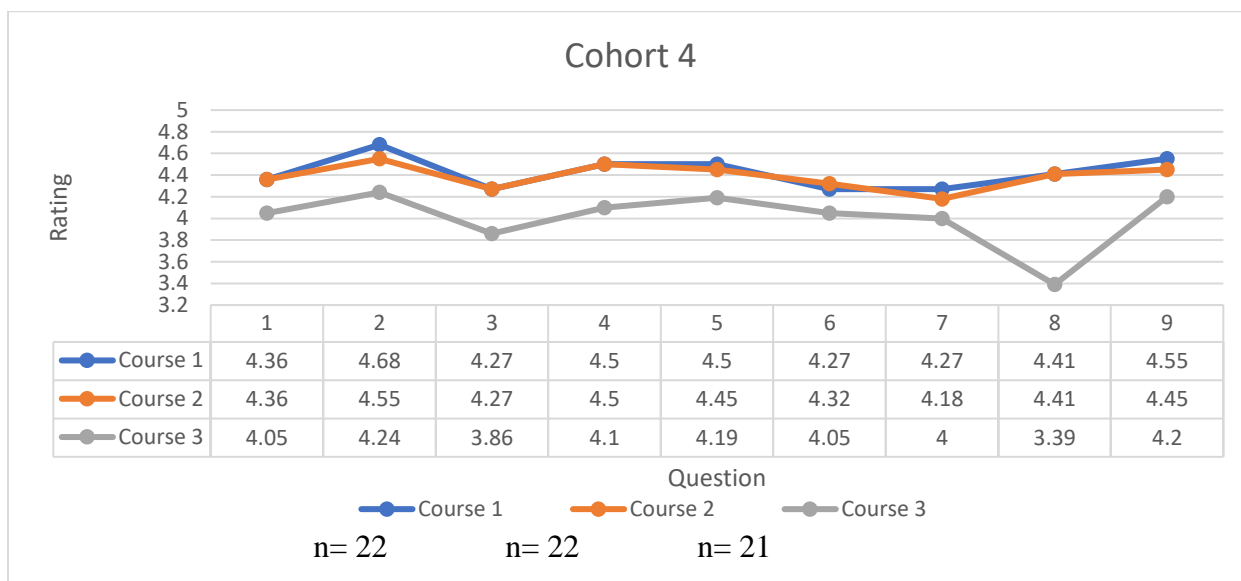


Cohort 3. Participants from Cohort 3 reported the highest mean score, 4.78, following course one out of all the questions and cohorts in response to their level of engagement during the workshop (Figure 4). That same question also produced the lowest standard deviation amongst all questions and cohorts for course one, at 0.41. Cohort 3 responded to the question regarding recommending

Cohort 4. Participants from Cohort 4 did not rate any question lower than an average of 4.27 following course one, which was the highest out of all low mean scores for all cohorts (Figure 5). Cohort 4 participants rated the question on the workshop providing an opportunity to reflect on their leadership strengths and areas of development the highest out of all questions upon completion of course one ($M = 4.68, SD = .47$).

Participants in Cohort 4 reported the highest mean rating following course two for the question on the workshop providing them with an opportunity to reflect upon their leadership strengths and areas for development ($M = 4.55, SD = 0.59$). That same question was also the cohort's highest rated question from course one. Cohort 4 participants rated the question on being able to use what they learned immediately the lowest out of all questions following the completion of course two ($M = 4.18, SD = 0.65$). That same question also had the largest standard deviation out of all questions in Cohort 4 after course two.

Participants from Cohort 4 did not have a lower standard deviation than 1.09 following course three. No other cohort for any course previously had a standard deviation higher than 0.83. Scores for every question following course three ranged between 1 and 5, which did not happen after any other course for other cohorts. The lowest rated question was on the course contributing to participants' future success ($M = 3.39, SD = 1.13$).

Figure 5***Cohort 4 immediate post-training evaluation data***

Open-ended comments. Participants were provided the opportunity to provide comments on the immediate post-training course evaluations. All cohort comments were combined to provide a more populated sample of emergent themes throughout the program.

Course one. Participants' comments following the completion of course one were generally positive (Table 4). Most participants ($N = 33$) commented that the facilitation of the course was excellent. One participant wrote, "Good, eloquent speaker. Keeps the conversation going and makes the attendees think constantly to reflect on their own lives." Another participant said,

I thought the class was wonderful. Everyone participated and was highly engaged. [SPEAKER] did a great job facilitating and made the past couple days a lot of fun. It was so nice to see members of different line departments engage in conversation—breaking down the "silo" mentality.

Several participants also commented on the quality of the course by describing it as excellent, valuable, or above expectations ($N = 20$). One participant wrote “Class was better than expected and exceeded expectations,” whereas another commented “Excellent! I felt the principles taught were speaking directly to what I need. It was interesting and engaging. Well worth the time. I was able to forget the pressures of work and concentrate on what I need personally to succeed.”

Participants made a few suggestions related to allowing more time for debriefing conversations ($N = 4$). One participant noted, “Nice job! Good flow. The 1-2-3 activity left me flat. Not sure what I was supposed to gain from it. Maybe a bit more debrief after that one?” Other suggestions included wanting more information prior to the course ($N = 2$) and providing opportunities to create accountability relationships between sessions ($N = 2$).

Table 4

Participants’ Open-Ended Comments Immediately After Course One

Theme	Frequency
Excellent Facilitation	33
Excellent Course	20
Course Content	
Great Activities	7
Good Use of Personal Stories	8
Good Videos	11
Suggestions	
More Information Prior to Course	2
More Time for Activity Debriefs	4
Between Session Accountability Opportunities	2

$N = 94$

Course two. Participants provided several comments following the completion of course two (Table 5). Most of the comments focused on the excellent facilitation of the course. One participant said, “[SPEAKER] is a great instructor. He keeps the class entertaining and fun but provides new ideas to use in my job and in my personal life.” Another participant explained, “I enjoyed the training. I thought [TRAINER] did a great job. I appreciated his enthusiasm and confidence while leading the course.”

Several participants from course two also commented on their pleasure with the course content. Specifically, 20 comments were left related to the activities, such as one participant who explained, “The activities were really helpful in identifying where I stand in communicating with other professionals.” Another participant wrote, “Utilizing the hands-on activities was extremely beneficial in making real world situations relatable.” A few participants also commented on their pleasure with the relatability and practicality of the course, including one participant who said:

I liked how I was able to relate to what we learned to the current situations I have ongoing in the company. I learned how to use feedback to communicate issues and provide praise. Also, the “put the pictures in order” showed me a different way to look at the disorganization of PPL.

Table 5***Participants' Open-Ended Comments Immediately After Course Two***

Theme	Frequency
Excellent Facilitation	25
Course Content	23
Valuable Activities	20
Great Realistic Examples	5
Good Videos	3

N = 88

Course three. Upon completion of course three, participants provided several comments (Table 6). As was the case with the other two courses, the vast majority of comments were focused on the excellent facilitation of the course (19). One participant said, “[SPEAKERS] were great. ‘Soft’ info can be hard/impossible to present to a technical crowd, but they did an excellent job of keeping us engaged.” Another participant explained, “[SPEAKER] was a great influence to our group. As the other sessions were, this one was very informative, fun and interactive. I’m going to miss these classes and interacting with everyone in it (including [SPEAKER])!”

Participants from the course also provided several comments on the quality of the course (13). One commenter said, “The program was very eye-opening and empowering! Thank you!” Another wrote, “This was a very enjoyable and educational course.”

Participants also provided comments relating to the content of the course—specifically, the activities (*N* = 11) and the videos (*N* = 7). In one example, a participant remarked,

I liked the color/shape exercise and how the instructor said 2 shapes would be missing but we had 3 missing. It created a higher challenge the group had to overcome. The group discussions after the exercises helped get a perspective of others.

Another participant said, “Excellent thought-provoking exercises.”

Table 6

Participants’ Open-Ended Comments Immediately After Course Three

Theme	Frequency
Excellent Facilitation	19
Excellent Course	13
Course Content	12
Great Activities	11
Good Videos	7

N = 86

In summary, at the initial evaluation of the leadership training, participants from all four cohorts expressed their satisfaction with the course and reported that they would recommend the training to others. Participants in all cohorts also reported high levels of engagement and praised the ability of the facilitator(s) to bring the material to life and make it fun. Participants also expressed their appreciation with the content, especially with the activities and videos utilized to aid in the training.

One- to Two-Year Post-Training Survey

All participants were invited to complete a 1- to 2-year post-training survey online, and 43 participants completed it (see Table 7). Participants were asked to identify their cohort, rate their engagement levels during the training, and indicate the value of the courses toward their professional development. They

were also asked to rate questions on retention, career progression, and behavioral change since the training took place.

Table 7

One- to Two-Year Post-Training Survey Participation Numbers

Cohort	Participants who attended training	Participants who completed survey	Percent of participants who completed survey
1	25	5	20%
2	27	14	52%
3	25	15	60%
4	27	9	33%
Total	104	43	41%

Cohort 1. Five participants from Cohort 1 completed the 1- to 2-year post-training survey (Table 8). The highest mean score reported from Cohort 1 related to wanting to work for a company that invests in their professional development ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 0.8$). A mean score of 4.4 was reported when participants were asked if investing in their professional development made them more engaged at work ($SD = 0.8$). Three participants from Cohort 1 identified that they have been promoted in the last two years while three of them also indicated they were passed over for promotion in the last two years. The lowest mean score was reported for the question on training playing a part in their promotion ($M = 2.4$, $SD = 0.49$).

In the seven questions related to behavioral change following the training, participants from Cohort 1 rated the questions between a 3.4 to 3.8. Participants reported a mean score of 3.8 when asked if they are a better leader because of the training ($SD = 1.17$). A net promoter score of 20 was reported when participants

were asked how likely they would recommend the training to friends or colleagues.

Table 8
One- to Two-Year Post-Training Survey Cohort 1

Question	Range	Mean	SD
		Yes	No
I was engaged during the LFTF workshops	2–5	4.2	1.7
The LFTF workshops were valuable for my development	3–5	4.0	0.89
I have looked for other jobs within the last 2 years	NA	2 Yes	3 No
I have been contacted by a recruiter within the last 2 years	NA	4 Yes	1 No
Investing in my professional development makes me more engaged at work	3–5	4.4	0.8
I want to work for a company that invests in my development	3–5	4.6	0.8
Investing in my development is a factor for me staying at a job	2–5	4	1.1
I have been promoted within the last 2 years	NA	3 Yes	2 No
I was passed over for promotion within the last 2 years	NA	3 Yes	2 No
The LFTF training played a part in my promotion	2–3	2.4	0.49
I believe the LFTF training will play a part in future promotions	2–5	3.4	1.2
I have utilized some of what I have learned in the LFTF workshops in my career	3–5	4.2	0.98
I provide better feedback since attending the LFTF workshops	3–5	3.8	0.75
I am more self-aware since attending the LFTF workshops	3–5	3.8	1.7
I am more confident since the LFTF workshops	2–5	3.6	1.36
I am a better listener since the LFTF training	2–5	3.6	1.36
I am more empathetic since the LFTF training	2–5	3.4	1.02
I know how to motivate others since the LFTF training	3–5	3.8	0.75
I have been more proactive in coaching others since LFTF training	2–5	3.6	1.02
I have seen a positive change in others who attended the LFTF training	3–4	3.6	0.49
I am a better leader because of the LFTF training	2–5	3.8	1.17
How likely is it that you would recommend Leading from the Front training to a friend or colleague?	NA	NPS = 20	NA

$N = 47$

Cohort 2. 14 participants from Cohort 2 completed the 1- to 2-year post-training survey (Table 9). A high mean score of 4.71 was reported for questions

related to their engagement during the workshops and their desire to work for a company that invests in their professional development. This score was also the highest mean out of all questions and cohorts. 12 of the 14 participants reported being contacted by a recruiter in the last two years while two of the 14 indicated that they had looked for other jobs within the last two years.

Participants reported mean scores ranging from 3.86 to 4.43 on questions related to behavioral adaptation. Specifically, the behavior-based question on more self-awareness had the highest mean of 4.43 ($SD = 0.73$). That was the highest out of all four cohorts. Participants from Cohort 2 also had the highest mean score out of all cohorts for the question on being a better leader because of the training ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.72$).

Table 9

One- to Two-Year Post-Training Survey Cohort 2

Question	Range	Mean/Yes	SD/No
I was engaged during the LFTF workshops	4–5	4.71	0.45
The LFTF workshops were valuable for my development	3–5	4.43	0.62
I have looked for other jobs within the last 2 years	NA	2 Yes	12 No
I have been contacted by a recruiter within the last 2 years	NA	12 Yes	2 No
Investing in my professional development makes me more engaged at work	3–5	4.5	0.73
I want to work for a company that invests in my development	3–5	4.71	0.59
Investing in my development is a factor for me staying at a job	3–5	4.57	0.62
I have been promoted within the last 2 years	NA	10 Yes	4 No
I was passed over for promotion within the last 2 years	NA	4 Yes	10 No
The LFTF training played a part in my promotion	1–5	3.43	1.12
I believe the LFTF training will play a part in future promotions	2–5	3.93	0.88
I have utilized some of what I have learned in the LFTF workshops in my career	3–5	4.36	0.61
I provide better feedback since attending the LFTF workshops	3–5	4.21	0.67
I am more self-aware since attending the LFTF workshops	3–5	4.43	0.73
I am more confident since the LFTF workshops	3–5	4.07	0.59
I am a better listener since the LFTF training	4–5	4.21	0.41
I am more empathetic since the LFTF training	2–5	4.14	0.91

I know how to motivate others since the LFTF training	3–5	3.86	0.84
I have been more proactive in coaching others since LFTF training	3–5	4.07	0.46
I have seen a positive change in others who attended the LFTF training	3–5	4.21	0.77
I am a better leader because of the LFTF training	3–5	4.36	0.72
How likely is it that you would recommend Leading from the Front training to a friend or colleague?	NA	NPS 50	NA

$N = 14$

Cohort 3. 15 participants from Cohort 3 completed the 1- to 2-year post-training survey (Table 10). This was the highest number of participants out of all four cohorts. 13 participants indicated being promoted within the last two years while one participant reported being passed over for promotion. Out of all four cohorts, Cohort 3 reported the highest mean score for the question regarding the training being valuable for their development, at 4.47 ($SD = 0.5$).

Participants reported a mean score of 4.2 when asked if they were better leaders because of the training ($SD = 0.65$). This was the second highest score for that question out of all cohorts. When asked if they had utilized some of what they learned from the training, Cohort 3 participants had a mean score of 4.27 ($SD = 0.44$). A net promoter score of 40 was reported when participants were asked if they would recommend the training to friends or colleagues.

Table 10***One- to Two-Year Post-Training Survey Cohort 3***

Question	Range	Mean/Yes	SD/No
I was engaged during the LFTF workshops	1–5	4.27	1.0
The LFTF workshops were valuable for my development	4–5	4.47	0.5
I have looked for other jobs within the last 2 years	NA	5 Yes	10 No
I have been contacted by a recruiter within the last 2 years	NA	13 Yes	2 No
Investing in my professional development makes me more engaged at work	4–5	4.47	0.5
I want to work for a company that invests in my development	3–5	4.53	0.62
Investing in my development is a factor for me staying at a job	2–5	4.27	0.93
I have been promoted within the last 2 years	NA	13 Yes	2 No
I was passed over for promotion within the last 2 years	NA	1 Yes	14 No
The LFTF training played a part in my promotion	1–5	3.67	1.19
I believe the LFTF training will play a part in future promotions	2–5	3.87	0.96
I have utilized some of what I have learned in the LFTF workshops in my career	4–5	4.27	0.44
I provide better feedback since attending the LFTF workshops	3–5	4.13	0.72
I am more self-aware since attending the LFTF workshops	3–5	4.27	0.68
I am more confident since the LFTF workshops	2–5	3.87	0.88
I am a better listener since the LFTF training	2–5	4.0	0.73
I am more empathetic since the LFTF training	2–5	3.73	1.06
I know how to motivate others since the LFTF training	2–5	3.87	0.62
I have been more proactive in coaching others since LFTF training	2–5	4.0	0.82
I have seen a positive change in others who attended the LFTF training	1–5	3.8	1.05
I am a better leader because of the LFTF training	3–5	4.2	0.65
How likely is it that you would recommend Leading from the Front training to a friend or colleague?	NA	NPS 40	NA

N = 15

Cohort 4. Nine participants from Cohort 4 completed the 1- to 2-year post-training survey (Table 11). The highest reported mean score was 4.33 for the question about wanting to work for a company that invests in their development (*SD* = 0.47). Six participants identified as having been contacted by a recruiter over the last two years while two participants identified as having looked for other

jobs. When asked if they were a better leader because of the training, participants reported a mean score of 3.78, which was lowest amongst all cohorts ($SD = 0.63$).

In the questions pertaining to behavior adaptation, participants reported a mean score of 3.67 when asked if they were more self-aware since attending the training. This was their highest mean score on all behavior-based questions. The other cohorts also reported their high scores (or tied) for this same question out of all behavior-based questions. Participants reported a net promoter score of 22 when asked if they would recommend the training to friends or colleagues.

Table 11

One- to Two-Year Post-Training Survey Cohort 4

Question	Range	Mean		SD	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
I was engaged during the LFTF workshops	3–5	4.0		0.47	
The LFTF workshops were valuable for my development	2–5	3.78		0.79	
I have looked for other jobs within the last 2 years	NA	2 Yes	7 No		
I have been contacted by a recruiter within the last 2 years	NA	6 Yes	3 No		
Investing in my professional development makes me more engaged at work	3–4	3.89		0.31	
I want to work for a company that invests in my development	4–5	4.33		0.47	
Investing in my development is a factor for me staying at a job	2–5	3.67		1.05	
I have been promoted within the last 2 years	NA	4 Yes	5 No		
I was passed over for promotion within the last 2 years	NA	1 yes	8 No		
The LFTF training played a part in my promotion	3–4	3.11		0.31	
I believe the LFTF training will play a part in future promotions	2–5	3.22		0.92	
I have utilized some of what I have learned in the LFTF workshops in my career	1–4	3.43		1.05	
I provide better feedback since attending the LFTF workshops	1–5	3.56		1.17	
I am more self-aware since attending the LFTF workshops	1–5	3.67		1.15	
I am more confident since the LFTF workshops	1–4	3.22		1.03	
I am a better listener since the LFTF training	1–4	3.44		1.07	
I am more empathetic since the LFTF training	1–4	3.44		0.96	
I know how to motivate others since the LFTF training	2–5	3.33		0.94	
I have been more proactive in coaching others since LFTF training	1–5	3.11		1.1	

I have seen a positive change in others who attended the LFTF training	1–4	3.11	0.87
I am a better leader because of the LFTF training	3–5	3.78	0.63
How likely is it that you would recommend Leading from the Front training to a friend or colleague?	NA	NPS 22	NA

$N = 9$

Overall, 43 participants completed the 1- to 2-year post-training survey (Table 12). Participants reported a mean score of 4.28 when asked if they were engaged during the workshops ($SD = 1.02$). In addition, 26% of participants reported having looked for another job within the last two years while 81% reported being contacted by a recruiter within the last two years.

Participants of the training reported a high mean score of 4.56 when asked if they wanted to work for a company that invests in their professional development ($SD = 0.62$). Furthermore, 70% of participants identified as having been promoted during the last two years while 21% indicated having been passed over for promotion during the last two years. A mean score of 3.7 was reported when participants were asked if the training would play a part in future promotions.

Mean scores for the seven behavior-based questions were rated between 3.74 for knowing how to motivate others since the training and 4.14 for increased self-awareness since the training. A net promoter score of 22 was reported when asked if they would recommend the training to their friends or colleagues.

Table 12***One- to Two-Year Post-Training Survey All Cohorts***

Question	Range	Mean	SD
		Yes	No
I was engaged during the LFTF workshops	1–5	4.28	1.02
The LFTF workshops were valuable for my development	2–5	4.26	0.72
I have looked for other jobs within the last 2 years	NA	11	32 No
		Yes	
I have been contacted by a recruiter within the last 2 years	NA	35	8 No
		Yes	
Investing in my professional development makes me more engaged at work	3–5	4.35	0.64
I want to work for a company that invests in my development	3–5	4.56	0.62
Investing in my development is a factor for me staying at a job	2–5	4.19	0.95
I have been promoted within the last 2 years	NA	30	13 No
		Yes	
I was passed over for promotion within the last 2 years	NA	9 yes	34 No
The LFTF training played a part in my promotion	1–5	3.33	1.05
I believe the LFTF training will play a part in future promotions	2–5	3.7	1.00
I have utilized some of what I have learned in the LFTF workshops in my career	1–5	4.14	0.76
I provide better feedback since attending the LFTF workshops	1–5	4.00	0.86
I am more self-aware since attending the LFTF workshops	1–5	4.14	0.92
I am more confident since the LFTF workshops	1–5	3.77	0.92
I am a better listener since the LFTF training	1–5	3.9	0.88
I am more empathetic since the LFTF training	1–5	3.77	1.06
I know how to motivate others since the LFTF training	2–5	3.74	0.56
I have been more proactive in coaching others since LFTF training	1–5	3.79	0.82
I have seen a positive change in others who attended the LFTF training	1–5	3.77	0.92
I am a better leader because of the LFTF training	1–5	4.12	0.61
How likely is it that you would recommend Leading from the Front training to a friend or colleague?	NA	NPS	NA
		22	

N = 43

One- to Two-Year Post-Training Interviews

Nine participants voluntarily completed a 1- to 2-year post-training interview. Participants were asked how their leadership behaviors have changed

since attending the training (Table 13). The most frequently cited behavior, made by seven participants, related to improved communication. One participant said, “I communicate better with others now and give more effective feedback.” Another stated, “I listen more and try to be more transparent in my communication and also try to give more details so everyone is on the same page.” Five participants mentioned how they have higher levels of emotional intelligence and are better able to manage their emotions while also empathizing with others. One of those participants said, “I’m much more aware of how I impact others around me, which helps me to better understand them.” Four participants explicitly mentioned they exercise a growth mindset more frequently. One participant remarked, “I’ve been intentional in trying to find things that I used to hold myself back from because it was out of my wheel house. I’m more likely to take on a new challenge now.”

Table 13

Relevant and Valuable Aspects of the Training

Theme	Frequency
Better Communication	7
Higher Emotional Intelligence	5
Growth Mindset	4
More Confident	2
More positive	2
<i>N</i> = 9	

Table 14 presents a list of experiences the interviewees mentioned when asked about the most relevant and/or valuable aspect of the training for them. The most frequently cited response related to the DiSC assessment that participants took in the first course. One participant explained, “I liked the DiSC because it

has helped me better understand others that I work and now I can communicate with them more effectively.” Five participants mentioned the applicability of the exercises to current challenges they face at work. One participant said,

The activities were challenging and simulated a lot of experiences I have had recently at work. The debriefs from them were very powerful because it helped us all have a conversation about these challenges which is something we usually do not make time for.

Four participants mentioned team building and developing new relationships as being very valuable for them. One participant said, “It was nice to get away from the office and interact with others in the company. I feel much more comfortable now as I have those relationships developed and can ask them for their advice or help.”

Table 14

Behaviors Changed since the Training

Theme	Frequency
DiSC Assessment	8
Relevant Exercises	5
Team Building	4
SBI Feedback Model	4

$N = 9$

Table 15 presents a list of themes related to participants’ responses around how their career has progressed since the training. Six out of the nine participants identified as being promoted since the training. One participant said, “I’ve been promoted twice now, which has given me eight direct reports.” Another participant remarked, “I came in as a CAD 1 and since the training I am now a supervisor and was chosen over others who had more experience than me.” Five

participants remarked that they received more responsibility since the training. One participant said, “I have more responsibility now and I think that’s because others can see more potential in me now.”

Table 15

Career Progression since the Training

Theme	Frequency
Promoted	6
More Responsibility	5
Leadership Training Ambassador	2
No Change	1
<i>N</i> = 9	

Table 16 presents a list of themes related to participants’ responses around what factors impact whether they stay at a job or not. Six out of the nine participants specifically cited the current leadership team as a reason for them staying at their current job. One participant explained, “I like our current leadership. We’ve had some ups and downs, but I really appreciate how transparent they are in their communication to everyone.” Five out of nine participants commented how they appreciated the opportunities for growth and development in the organization. One participant remarked, “I like that there is room for growth in the company and the fact that they picked me to attend the Leading from the Front training. It makes me feel like they are invested in my future.”

Table 16***Factors Impacting Job Retention***

Theme	Frequency
Leadership	6
Growth and Development	5
Challenge	4
Location	2
Security	2

—————*N* = 9

Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study. Overall, the reaction to the training was positive. There were differences in the from the immediate post-training evaluations, and potential factors for the differences that did occur will be explored in the next chapter. The scores on the 1- to 2-year post-training survey were noticeably lower than the scores from the evaluations taken immediately after each course. These changes may be due to changes in the sample and/or the method of inquiry. The 1- to 2-year post-training interviews provided participants with the opportunity to provide context to their answers on the survey. Their responses were generally more positive than the answers on the survey.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to discover the impact of leadership development training within a mid-sized engineering consulting firm. One research question was explored: What is the impact of leadership training on retention, career progression, and individual behavior adaptation? This chapter presents a discussion of the study results, including conclusions, recommendations, study limitations, and suggestions for future study.

Conclusions

Impact on retention. Retention is a major expense and challenge for organizations. The data from the 1- to 2-year post-training survey and the interviews clearly demonstrated the positive impact that professional development has on employees. This impact directly supports research that found 60% of employees want more development opportunities to maintain their job satisfaction (BlessingWhite, 2006).

The majority of participants agreed that they are more engaged at work when a company is invested in their professional development. This directly correlates to participants who identified in interviews that one of the factors that keeps them at a job is being challenged.

Professional development opportunities, such as the Leading from the Front training, are capable of challenging participants by taking them outside of their comfort zone and teaching them how to make positive leadership behavior changes.

The data collected also demonstrated that the desire of the vast majority of participants was to work for an employer that invests in their professional development, which is similar to McAlearney's (2008) results that a reduction in turnover is one of the four significant opportunities provided by leadership development. A majority also identified through the survey and interviews that professional development opportunities are a factor for them staying at a job. These results point to the fact that organizations are more likely to retain an employee if they invest in their professional development than if they did not.

The implications of these findings are that the *Leading from the Front* training had a direct impact on retention. Overall, employees identified at the time that the training was valuable for their development and that they were engaged throughout the training. Employers should continue to invest in professional development opportunities for employees as it will not only impact retention, but also help organizations function more effectively (Black & Earnest, 2009).

Impact on career progression. The data on career progression show that the *Leading from the Front* training affected individual participant career progression. Packard and Jones (2015) found that participants in a leadership development initiative reported higher levels of performance that ultimately led to further career progression. In the current study, the majority of participants were promoted in the years following the training; however, the direct correlation to the specific training being studied was not possible due to the lack of relevant data collected. Slightly more participants identified that the training would affect future promotions compared to promotions that have already happened.

The implications of these findings are that the *Leading from the Front* training had a positive impact on participants career progression. Based on the data, the amount of impact is unable to be measured due to other contributing factors.

Impact on behavior adaptation. The data demonstrated that the training had a slightly positive impact on leadership behavior adaptation. A majority of participants agreed that they had utilized some of what they learned in the training during their professional careers. Specifically, the data indicated a positive impact of the training on participants by enabling them to provide better feedback and increased self-awareness, which was a key focus in two of the three workshops. The data show a positive impact, although slightly less than the previous two areas mentioned, on participants being more confident, better listeners, more empathetic, more knowledgeable on motivating others, and more proactive in coaching others. The positive impact on behavior adaptation from the training relates to what Nahrgang et al. (2009) posited as behavioral changes being more likely to happen when the development activity is relevant to the participants' current situation. This was seen more so in Cohorts 2 and 3.

A majority of participants said they were better leaders because of the training. The interviews allowed participants to provide more context on how they have improved as leaders. In those discussions, every participant identified experiencing positive leadership-based behavior changes due to the training. Several of the participants voiced their concern that the survey data may not tell

the entire story on how impactful the training was because of other challenges that the organization was facing.

It is believed that the variance in data during all three phases and from cohort to cohort—specifically, the differences between Cohorts 2 and 3 compared to Cohorts 1 and 4—can be attributed to the participants' position level. There was no concrete data collected to back up this assertion, but anecdotally, Cohort 1 was comprised of more senior-level professionals whereas Cohort 4 was comprised of very young professionals. Cohorts 2 and 3 were comprised of individuals who would be considered as having high potential; thus, the training was more relevant to their current roles and responsibilities.

The implications of these findings are that the *Leading from the Front* training had a positive impact on participants behavior change and helped participants develop in to more effective leaders. The biggest impact came in participants increased self-awareness and their ability to provide feedback.

Recommendations

The leading practical recommendation from this study is for the organization to continue to invest in its employees' development by offering leadership training opportunities. This is based on the data pointing to increased engagement through professional development, the impact professional development has on retention, and participants' positive behavior change.

Based on the findings of this study, other organizations should invest in their employees' professional development by offering leadership training. The training should be facilitated by someone who is inspirational, has real-world

leadership experience, and can easily keep an audience engaged. The training should include a variety of exercises to simulate challenges the participants are facing and include a variety of resources for content distribution, such video and audio recordings.

To maximize the benefit of the training, participants are advised to identify situations in their professional careers where they can begin to implement what they have learned. It is also recommended that they have an accountability partner with whom they can discuss how the training is impacting them between courses and to hold each other accountable in their action planning. This dialogue will enable participants to continue to develop relationships and hear different perspectives than from those with whom they work on a daily basis.

Senior position employees must provide support for these types of programs, and that support must be tangible. It is recommended that they demonstrate visibility during the training and explain to participants why this is important for them and how it impacts their careers along with how it maps toward the organization's vision and strategy. The CEO for the study organization helped kick off each cohort, which showed employees they understood that they cared about their feedback and that it was important for the organization for them grow and develop as they worked toward their 2020 vision.

Limitations

Limitations in this study included survey question variability, the self-reported nature of the data, conflict of interests, sample size inconsistency, and data collection timing. Each of these limitations is discussed in more detail below.

A key limitation of this study is that the data collected immediately after each training course and one to two years later were not consistent. Different questions were asked in the evaluations immediately after each course and in the surveys and interviews. For example, there were no retention-related questions immediately following the training. Comparing data temporally would have been helpful. The absence of baseline data also prevented stronger conclusions, specifically in terms of behavioral change.

Another limitation of this study is that all the collected data were based on participants' self-reporting. Limitations to self-reported data are that the participants might have consciously or subconsciously reported inaccurate data in order to make themselves and/or the training appear better, also known as social desirability bias.

Furthermore, the author of this paper was one of the facilitators for this training. This may have caused participants to not fully report accurate data due to a fear of upsetting the person leading the training. The author may have also subconsciously affected the interpretation of the data.

The lack of consistency in the sample size across all data collection was also a limitation. Specifically, some cohorts had up to three times the number of participants as others did in the research study. It is possible that the results of the study could be very different if participation rates were higher.

Finally, it is important to note that no data were captured immediately after the training to assess participants' feelings on how the training may impact their professional careers. Such data could have helped set a baseline for

participants' feelings on the impact of the training over a time period in which the majority of them experienced career progression through either promotions and/or more responsibilities in their roles.

Suggestions for Future Study

Future researchers should conduct this study again, implementing the various recommendations for data collection discussed in the previous section. To increase objectivity, a future study should include self-reported data, 360-degree assessments, and other, more objective performance data that can be measured. Most importantly, the data should be collected immediately before the training, immediately after the training, and at various intervals thereafter to measure changes around retention, career progression, and behavior adaptation.

Future studies should also gather new data and be consistent in the questions asked. Demographic data such as age, gender, position, years in industry, and years in the organization should also be gathered to generate insights into whether these factors are associated with any of the impacts of the training.

Finally, the study should ensure that the sample is consistent and code each participant's survey responses across the duration of the study in order to better measure changes. This will be necessary to rule out the possibility that the observed changes are the result of shifts in the sample. A study of this nature is expected to generate findings that are insightful and credible, making it an important follow-up to the present study.

Summary

Organizations around the world spend billions of dollars annually on leadership development (O'Leonard & Krider, 2014); however, little time or effort is spent to measure the effectiveness (Sogunro, 1997). Leadership training and development do not automatically produce results, so it is imperative that an organization take steps to measure the program's effectiveness (Cook, 2006). The published research on the impact of leadership development training has produced mixed results (Collins & Holton, 2004).

This study assessed the impact of leadership development training on retention, career progression, and behavior adaptation inside one mid-sized engineering consulting firm. Participants' reactions to the training were positive immediately after the training as well as 1 to 2 years after the training. Participants reported high levels of engagement throughout the training and felt the training made them better leaders. Overall, the leadership training researched in this study was found to have an impact on retention, career progression, and behavior adaptation; however, the impact could not be measured against other factors. Although certain limitations affected the data collection procedures, lack of contextual data, and shifts in sample size, the results of this study are positive. Further study of this topic can add to these results and generate more specific insights into the direct impact of leadership training.

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Appendix A: Post Training Course Evaluation

Post Training Course Evaluation


**COURSE EVALUATION:
LEADING FROM THE FRONT**

Course date: _____

Please circle a rating for each statement.

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Undecided</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
The workshop was valuable for my development.	1	2	3	4	5
The workshop provided me with an opportunity to reflect on my leadership strengths and areas for development.	1	2	3	4	5
The workshop allowed me to gain insight into my personal leadership style.	1	2	3	4	5
The workshop allowed me to identify areas for my continued leadership development.	1	2	3	4	5
I was engaged with what was going on during the workshop.	1	2	3	4	5
The activities and exercises aided in my learning.	1	2	3	4	5
I will be able to use what I learned immediately.	1	2	3	4	5
The program material will contribute to my future success.	1	2	3	4	5
I would recommend this workshop to others.	1	2	3	4	5

Is there any additional feedback that you'd like to share?

Appendix B: One- to Two-Year Post-Training Survey

One- to Two-Year Post-Training Survey

1. What year and cohort did you attend Leading from the Front (LFTF)?
 - A. 2016 Cohort 1
 - B. 2016 Cohort 2
 - C. 2017 Cohort 1
 - D. 2017 Cohort 2

On a scale of 1–5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, please respond to the following statements:

2. I was engaged during the LFTF workshops.
3. The LFTF workshops were valuable for my development.

Please answer yes or no to the following questions:

4. I have looked for other jobs within the last 2 years.
5. I have been contacted by a recruiter within the last 2 years.

On a scale of 1–5, with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree, please respond to the following statements:

6. Investing in my professional development makes me more engaged at work.
7. I want to work for a company that invests in my development.
8. Investing in my professional development is a factor in me staying at a job.
9. I have been promoted within the last 2 years.
10. I was passed over for promotion within the last 2 years.
11. The LFTF training helped play a part in my promotion.
12. I believe the LFTF training will play a part in future promotions.
13. I have utilized some of what I learned in the LFTF workshops in my career.
14. I provide better feedback since attending the LFTF workshops.
15. I am more self-aware since attending the LFTF workshops.

16. I am more confident since the LFTF workshops.
17. I am a better listener since the LFTF training.
18. I am more empathetic since the LFTF training.
19. I know how to motivate others better since the LFTF training.
20. I have been more proactive in coaching others since LFTF training.
21. I have seen a positive change in others who attended the LFTF training.
22. I am a better leader because of the LFTF training.

Appendix C: One- to Two-Year Post-Training Interview Questions

One- to Two-Year Post-Training Interview Questions

Semi-structured Interview Questions:

1. What experience was most relevant to you in the Leading from the Front (LFTF) training.
2. How has what you learned and experienced in the training impacted you at work?
3. Tell me what was the most valuable part of the LFTF training for you.
4. How have your leadership behaviors changed since the LFTF training?
5. Talk about the factors that impact whether you stay at a job or not.
6. How has your career progressed since you completed the LFTF training?