



Are You Flying by the Seat of Your Pants?

The term "fly by the seat of your pants" is an expression coined by early pilots that flew aircrafts without the navigation aids, radios or other high-tech instruments that exist today.

If you approach leadership development without the guidance of a map, compass or flight plan, it is time to reconsider! What might have worked many moons ago piloting single engine aircrafts will not work today piloting jumbo jets – let alone spaceships to the moon!

Leaders today are operating in a fast-paced, continually evolving and complex environment. Competent leaders are in demand as never before but the challenge is how to intertwine the work intensities that a leader faces with sensible leadership development strategies.

So how do we develop better leadership skills and competencies?

You may have heard about the 70-20-10 model of leadership development. This was developed by Morgan McCall and the Centre for Creative Leadership as a result of extensive research in the 1980's involving in-depth interviews with top-level leaders. They were asked about what experiences, they believed, helped them grow and develop as leaders.

Results suggested there were three ways leaders develop themselves and others, however interestingly, the impact from each was substantially different:

- 70% of leadership development was a result of challenging assignments and experiences;
- 20% was a result of developmental relationships; and
- 10% came from coursework and training.

Now many of us are familiar with the 10% part of this model where - through formal training from workshops, courses or classrooms - a new leader can acquire and hone their technical skills. But if 70% of learning how to lead comes from real-world experiences, then we need to focus much more on the following question: "How can we make leadership development AND learning from experience, intentional not incidental?"

Whether these skills and competencies are cognitive, interpersonal, business or strategic in nature, leaders must continue to seek out experiences to help them grow, diversify and stretch. For example, have you purposefully sought out experiences where you:

- Directly provide instruction, guidance, feedback, coaching and mentoring; and indirectly observe how other leaders behave and approach challenges?
- Lead a turnaround that involves fixing an underperforming operation so it can operate efficiently within budget or turn a profit?
- Gain an increase in job scope to include an increase in budget, number of people to manage, access to resources and/or complexity of tasks?
- Make a horizontal transition to another function, line of business, organisation, industry sector or region?
- Develop or launch new products and services, adopt new technologies, craft a new policy or process, build a plant or unit from scratch, develop a new market, embark on a new line of business or create a new business entity?

These are just a few examples from a total of 15 well-researched types of leadership experiences that you should intentionally focus on developing. If you would like to explore personal leadership growth opportunities in order to lead with greater impact, please drop me a note.

Just remember, as Vince Lombardi so famously stated "Leaders are made, they are not born".



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