Learning to Lead

A Report Prepared By
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Acknowledgements:

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This report describes a new approach to training public school principals and directors. The approach is being carried out as part of the Minnesota Leadership Academy for Charter and Alternative Public Schools. These ideas come from an 18-month study that included interviews with 24 leaders of highly regarded companies, along with research on preparation of leaders in education. CEO's and senior executives of companies such as Cargill, Carlson, General Mills, Helzberg Diamonds, Ken Davis Barbeque, Latino Communications Network, Life Science Applied Systems, MTS Systems, Medtronic, and Target provided extremely valuable information. Key conclusions include:

- School leaders should insure that newly hired individuals understand from the first week – and if possible the first day that they are hired, what the school's (and if relevant) district's central priorities are, and how their work will help the school/district accomplish its goals.

- School director, principals and superintendents should view development of one or more strong candidates to replace them as a core responsibility.

- Listening to, and learning from your customer is vital.

- Assessment should be done regularly to help evaluate how effectively an organization is operating. Assessment is central to helping any program improve – it should be viewed as valuable, rather than burdensome.

- It's important to encourage some risk-taking among employees.

- Mistakes within some limits are a vital part of growth. Organizations making a great deal of progress sometimes will make errors. Learning from mistakes is an important part of progress.

- Leaders must have integrity. This is something that cannot be taught.

- Mentors from both the business and education world should be used to help prepare a new generation of educational leaders.

- As part of their preparation, people aspiring to be leaders should be given projects to complete that will help them develop skills needed to be effective, and help supervisors determine whether they are ready to assume more responsibility.

- Prospective leaders should have the opportunity to meet with and learn from directors of some of the finest public schools in the country.

- Visits and technology should be used to help prospective leaders learn about some of the finest public schools in the nation.

- A cohort model of training administrators should be used, with extensive interaction among participants and with outstanding administrators.

- There are trade-offs between a full time training program and a program that is carried out while a person is employed with other responsibilities. It is not clear which model is more effective in the long run. In the short run, a program with participants who are not full time interns is more cost effective. Further review of results among different programs will help policy-makers make good decisions about which training models should be encouraged.

- Technical skills needed by any organization can be taught. They are necessary but not sufficient for great leadership.

- The most effective leaders encourage and inspire people. Threats and fear will not produce the highest achievement.

Background on this report

This report began with three central assumptions:

1. Leadership in any organization makes a huge difference in what the organization accomplishes. This is true in business and in schools.

2. Leadership in schools is one of the most important factors in producing excellent results.

3. While there are important differences between role, missions and functions between public schools and private corporations, there are potentially important lessons to be learned about leadership development from corporations, as well as from highly successful public schools.

As we began this work, we also were collaborating with the National Governors Association in providing assistance to governors in six states. Our research led us to a study that concluded:

> *Of all the factors that contribute to what students learn at school, present evidence leads to the conclusion that leadership is second only in strength to classroom instruction. Furthermore, effective leadership has the greatest impact in those circumstances (e.g., schools "in trouble") in which it is most needed. (Leithwood et. al).*

This confirms the importance of school leaders. Meanwhile, Dr. Arthur Levine, former president of Teachers College, Columbia University recently expressed a great deal of concern about most school administrator preparation programs. Dr. Levine of Columbia found that:

> *Educational administration is the weakest program that schools of education offer…few strong programs exist; most vary in quality from inadequate to appalling.. Mine is the latest in a long line of reports going back decades that have decried the state of school-leadership programs. In recent years the pace of such criticism has accelerated, but the programs have for the most part continued to conduct business as usual. (Levine)*

Another source of concern came from a 2008 survey of state charter public school associations. Leaders from 25 states were virtually unanimous (85% or more agreement) that
- preparation programs offered in universities for charter school leaders were not producing the quality of leaders needed;

- schools that were succeeding with students should be given opportunities to create leadership training programs (Center for School Change).

Given this background, the Center concluded it was important to consider what might be learned from businesses about leadership development. We set out to talk with a variety of business leaders. We looked for companies of various sizes – from organizations with less than 100 employees, to businesses with more than 150,000 employees. We looked for businesses that had been recognized as outstanding places to work, and for businesses that had consistent records of profitability.

Over an 18 month period (February, 2007 – October, 2008), we interviewed 24 Chief Executive Officers or Vice Presidents from a number of corporations. These corporations are primarily based in Minnesota. We also interviewed several executives based in Missouri, one in Kansas and one in California.

Business leaders who were interviewed

- Bob Bloss, Senior Vice President, Human Resources, Hallmark Cards
- Mark Chronister, former managing partner, Price Waterhouse, Minneapolis
- Rick Clevette, Vice President, Leadership and Organizational Development, Carlson Companies
- Reatha Clark King, former director, General Mills Foundation
- Barbara Jo Davis, CEO, Ken Davis Products
- Chuck Denny, former CEO ADC
- Chip Emery, former CEO, MTS Systems
- Al Fan, Director, Strategic Planning, Consumer Food Group, General Mills And Cofounder, Irving Ventures, LLC
- Skip Gage, Chairman and CEO, Gage Marketing Group
- Mike Hunkapiller, Life Science Applied Biosystems
- Dave Larson, Executive Vice President, Cargill
- Barnett Helzberg, former CEO, Helzberg Diamonds
- Bush Helzberg, principal, Helzberg Angrist Capital, LLC
- Kris Johnson, former Chief Administrative Officer, Medtronic
- Wendell Maddox, ION Corporation
- Jim Mahoney, Koch Industries
- Alberto Monserrate, CEO, Latino Communications Network
- Marilyn Carson Nelson, CEO, Carlson Companies
- Paul Ostergaard, McDonalds
- Jim Porter, Executive Vice President, Human Resources, Carlson Companies
- Warren Staley, CEO, Cargill
- Jim Van Houten, former CEO, Mutual Service Insurance
- Kevin Wilde, Vice President and Chief Learning Officer, General Mills
- Rich Varda, Vice President for Store Design, Target
- Curt Ulrich, Vice President, Store Planning and Engineering, Target

Limitations of this Report

We do not believe that educators and schools could or should adopt every policy or procedure suggested by any of the business leaders we interviewed. We do not suggest that these are the only businesses from which educators might learn. These businesses do not represent a random sample of corporations. They are not necessarily the most effective businesses in their fields.

As noted above, we believe it is important to examine research on effective leadership development programs that have been created by educators, as well as business people. Information from this report was one, but only one source of information used to develop key components of the Minnesota Leadership Academy for Alternative and Charter Public School Directors. We agreed with Minnesota Department of Education officials with whom we worked that multiple sources of research and information should be used as we created the Leadership Academy.

Detailed Responses to Key Questions

We asked six key questions of the corporate leaders named earlier in this paper. Their responses provided many ideas for details of the training program that was developed. (A number of these people also volunteered to be mentors for the program). Below we present a summary of the responses to these questions. This section of the report was prepared by Joanna Plotz and Joe Nathan, based on notes from Joe Nathan, Cindy Moeller and Laura Bloomberg. We recognize that these comments are a summary, but hope they are useful and a fair representation of rich, detailed comments and insights from those who were interviewed.

1. **What do you think are two or three of the most important factors that have led to growth in your company?**

    - Bob Bloss (Hallmark)
        - Focus on the core consumer
        - Innovate in categories that we are best in
        - Do a lot of personalization and individualization

    - Mark Chronister (Price Waterhouse)
        - Frequent evaluations
        - People paid according to performance measures
        - Everything tied to needs of client

- Barbara Jo Davis (Ken Davis Barbeque)
  - Take the long view: ask ourselves, "How will this decision affect all our constituents ten years down the line?"
  - Too much growth too quickly leads you to "outstrip" you resources.
  - Smart growth MUST be preceded by the RIGHT vision, the RIGHT people, and the RIGHT need.

- Chip Emery (MTS Systems)
  - Economic development is moving around the globe. We have had to be "fast followers" because of a general slowdown in the US. We had to recognize what is going on and respond quickly in a cost effective manner.
  - Go backward; try not to wander from core competence. Step back and ask, "What are we really good at and who are our customers?"
  - Be high performance and position sensitive.

- Barnett Helzberg (Helzberg Diamonds)
  - Pushing for the absolute best people in the stores.
  - Creating an environment where people feel empowered to do special things for customers.
  - Treating customers right.
  - Measuring quality

- Reatha Clark King (General Mills)
  - Leadership and the ability to work together
  - Connection between vision and strategy and how to execute strategy
  - Clients are customers; leadership needs to address client's needs, aspirations and issues
  - Focus on results; understanding of what success means

- Dave Larson (Cargill)
  - Leadership is very important
  - Present a clear, simple vision—inspirational and meaningful

- Wendell Maddox (Ion)
  - When everyone is committed to doing their job a little better everyday, we all improve.
  - Big innovation. Sometimes incremental change is enough, but often it isn't. Growth and success comes from thinking big and then getting specific about achieving the vision.

- Jim Mahoney (Koch Industries)
  - Vision; have a fundamental question. We all need something to aspire to.

- Complete commitment to your philosophy; higher likelihood that growth will be strategic and ultimately successful for shareholders, customers, and employees
- Expanding; sharing vision and instilling principles into the culture of a new venture
- Knowing capacities and how to maximize them to meet the needs, wants, and values of our customers and share holders
- Humility; without humility, mistakes get made. Need to balance the skills and talents of multiple people in order to grow

- Marilyn Carlson Nelson (Carlson Companies)
  - Importance of a clear, strong, widely understood vision and mission; should be discussed with all new employees
  - Importance of well understood and applied corporate values
  - Importance of having the right people in key positions. These people must have both technical skills and emotional intelligence.

- Warren Staley (Cargill)
  - Leadership is everything.
  - Do not hire people who lack certain values.
  - Need a clear and concise vision, mission statement, approach, and performance measures
  - Lack of emotional intelligence is the number one killer of people's careers. People skills are the toughest, but most important, skills to teach.
  - In getting into new business, think about: extensions of what you already do; things you need to do; acquiring a company with people or technical skills you do not have
  - Constantly measure progress, with defined standards and benchmarks.
  - Learn more about the customer than the customer knows
  - Strategy is important but execution is critical; assess and refine execution if it is not going well.

- Rich Varda (Target)
  - Strategy; analyzing and understanding the market
  - CEO who has molded the company over time so that all employees follow the same path.
  - Quality in operations

- Kris Johnson (Medtronic)
  - Have a mission that is discussed with all new employees when they start. Vital to have alignment between what a person is doing and what the organization has established as priorities. Medtronic gets an enormously high response rate to the question, "I understand how my work connects with the Medtronic's mission."

- Culture: it must be clear what is and is not acceptable. There must be great respect for people and ideas. There must be a culture that invites and accepts debate, along with an expectation that once a key decision is made, we will pull together.
- Willingness to accept a certain amount of failure. Organizations that punish failure become risk-averse and generally don't grow. Try things with the expectation that sometimes they won't work and the people who tried something new won't be punished for failure.

- Kevin Wilde (General Mills)
  - "Value proposition"—build consumer trust and deliver on your "brand promise"
  - Have outstanding talent
  - Be in the right place in the marketplace, i.e., where you can deliver on your brand promise

2. **As you think about how your company develops its leaders, what would you say are the two or three most important things that the company does?**

- Bob Bloss (Hallmark Cards)
  - Try to create a culture that gives more direct feedback to people
  - Contract with consulting firms
  - Apply Meyers Briggs ™—how you can be a loyalist to your constituents versus benign saboteur or terrorist?
  - Principles of leadership: everyone is accountable for their own results; you are accountable for the results of those depending on you; you need to subordinate your agenda to the agenda of the organization

- Reatha Clark King (General Mills)
  - Understand goals and strategies; know that different strategies are appropriate for different leaders
  - Have an ethical framework; judge leaders on the how, not the what
  - Leaders at lower levels should understand the "big picture"
  - Pick up best practices from other organizations and use them to enhance own organization

- Chuck Denny (ADC)
  - Establish a hierarchy of mangers and leaders
  - Try to educate people by giving them a variety of jobs; by learning new techniques and management systems, they can become leaders of next generation.
  - Send people to outside training courses
  - Keep pushing knowledge further down; a little academic training, lots of mentoring, always in the context of mission

- Alberto Monserrate (Latino Communications Network)
    - Mentorship, personal as well as professional
    - Pull leaders out periodically to avoid overwhelming them or making them too busy.
    - Learn that leaders should be respected, not necessarily liked
    - Hire people with somewhat more experience
    - Skill development can be done via training offered by MEDA (Metropolitan Economic Development Association)

- Dave Larson (Cargill)
    - Cannot achieve excellence without a meritocracy; rank employees in terms of value creation, both objective and subjective
    - Lots of ways to reward people besides salary
    - Do honest candid reviews; share the results of employee surveys

- Jim Van Houten (Mutual Service Insurance)
    - Reaching down—find people with potential and get them involved in projects. This tests them to see if they are ready for the next level of management
    - Importance of the boss—everyone deserves a competent boss
    - Evaluation of staff; critical to determine who is a good manager
    - Use peer group consensus
    - Current leaders should prepare the next generation of leaders
    - If you don't have the right person inside the organization, go outside
    - Some great salespeople are terrible managers; try an acting manager position to see how he/she does
    - Respect is critical

- Kevin Wilde (General Mills)
    - Smart selection—hire people with great potential and "upside." Pass on people who could probably do the job but do not have the potential for greater responsibility
    - Make clear that people development is part of line management's responsibility
    - Need great succession planning and processes—strategic planning, measurable goals, and talent management process. Need to invest in these processes
    - Supplement these basic processes with things like leadership classes, mentoring programs, and individual development programs

- Jim Mahoney (Koch Industries)
    - Expect complete commitment to company philosophy
    - Decision rights. Give responsibility and authority based on demonstrated capacity, not on longevity or hierarchy

- Incentives, individual or team. When people create value for the company, they should be treated like entrepreneurs and share in that value creation.

- Mike Hunkapiller (Life Science Bio Systems)
    - Hire really smart people
    - Trial by interview—get a good sense of how they will fit in, what their motivations are
    - Once hired, give people opportunities to show what they can do
    - In some cases, take risks; push people along

- Rich Varda (Target)
    - Online training for lower level employees
    - Store leaders come to HQ twice a year to help develop broad view of what's happening
    - Training and evaluation helps identify people with high potential; leads to further training
    - Applicants for all exec positions evaluated in 4-hour sessions, including personality test, interview with industrial psychologist

- Wendell Maddox (Ion)
    - Respect the skills, knowledge, and abilities of others.
    - Live by the Golden Rule; trying to prove you're the smartest doesn't build a sustainable growth model for a corporation

- Mark Chronister (Price Waterhouse)
    - People constantly have quality reviews, at least twice a year.
    - For senior people, we bring in folks from another city to do reviews.
    - We do not take on a client unless we think we can do better for them.

- Barnett Helzberg (Helzberg Diamond)
    - Helzberg Diamond University- brought people from all over the country and trained them
    - Inculcation of values is vital
    - Classes on important skills- negotiation scales, customer sales
    - Don't make any assumptions about the customer
    - Chemistry is vital.

- Chip Emery (MTS Systems)
    - Implement a formal system of performance assessment, including written objectives and formal management development.
    - Board needs to understand what company needs.
    - CEO has 2 fundamental jobs: developing and implementing strategy approved by board and building his/her successor.

- Barbara Jo Davis (Ken Davis Barbeque)
  - Mentorship is absolutely key. Can be from inside or outside organization (sometimes having both is best).
  - Mentors have to help younger professionals learn about the "soft skills": professionalism, commitment, attitude, dress, willingness to learn. Particularly true for lifting up new employees with limited experience (often low income people and people of color).
  - It's not enough to have a degree; you have to understand what you are doing and why.
  - Leaders must constantly be thinking about how to develop a succession plan—the most important thing we do.

- Kris Johnson (Medtronic)
  - Mentoring—a really good experience. Mentors helped me over some rough spots.
  - Providing different experiences—put people in various settings so that they can learn what works across various situations.
  - Being in a setting long enough to 'go through a cycle—see what happens when something is tried."

3. **As you think about how your company has grown, what are the three or four most important strategies your company uses to retain quality as it has grown, whether within an existing industry, and or in expanding to another industry?**

- Bob Bloss (Hallmark Cards)
  - Have a core set of beliefs
  - Integrity, ethics, things we value, good community citizenship

- Chuck Denny (ADC)
  - Importance of setting goals; measurement
  - Insure quality through operations

- Chip Emery (MTS Systems)
  - Don't view innovation and quality as opposites.
  - Balance innovation and efficiency.
  - Sometimes to be efficient, you have to be dictatorial.
  Need to focus on what quality means for the customer

- Mike Hunkapiller (Applied Bio Systems)
  - Getting good feedback from customers. Do this frequently—don't blame problems on them.
  - Really understand what customer needs are

- Kris Johnson (Medtronic)

- Focus on customer opinions. Quality has to be defined from outside in – not just what government regulators sat, but what the actual customer says about what you are doing.
- Recognize that assessment is an ongoing process. You can always improve, and you MUST improve to stay competitive.

- Reatha Clark King (General Mills)
  - Put in controls to monitor risk
  - Board and leaders should make thoughtful decisions; look at qualities of people in the pipeline and plan for sustainable, quality growth
  - Do not focus on "big" for the sake of bigness

- Dave Larson (Cargill)
  - Behave in ways such that other people will want to be your partner—be trustworthy, enterprising, and creative
  - Treat employees with dignity and respect; nothing good comes without engaged employees
  - Give to communities if you want them to support your efforts; not in existence JUST to make money
  - Constantly look for best practices
  - Cannot succeed without trust

- Alberto Monserrate (Latino Communications Network)
  - Beware of rapid growth—full of landmines
  - Do not delegate focus on quality, and constantly remind people of this
  - Set clear values; integrity is vital
  - Have a clear and concise plan, mission and vision.

- Jim Van Houten (Mutual Service Insurance)
  - Take someone who is doing well to help lead the expansion into new markets
  - Licensing issues can come up – policy language may need to be changed because of differences among state laws

- Paul Ostergaard (McDonalds)
  - Stores part of a cooperative; negotiate for various things, include advertising. If stores in a coop vote on something, all stores must do it. Coop meets four times a year.
  - Field consultant visits each store 3-4 times a year, sometimes more if there are problems. Sometimes visits are announced ahead of time, sometimes not.
  - Company, as opposed to owners, screens suppliers, insurance companies.
  - Invest in best practices and refine practices over time.
  - Communication is critical; move towards paperless communications.

- Rich Varda (Target)
  - Prototyping stores has helped cut costs; the larger the organization, the easier it is to develop a prototype system

- Kevin Wilde (General Mills)
  - Strive to keep employees
  - Key drives to making employees feel committed: believing in the leadership of the company; feeling empowered in their jobs; feeling they are growing in their jobs; sense of inclusiveness
  - Find which parts of the organization are doing well and find ways for them to share their ideas and practices with other parts of the company
  - Listen to the unique needs of employees; there is no universal definition of what employees value

4. Is there an example of a mistake your company made, or a decision your company made that was later changed, as you grew?

We promised that we would not identify specific companies in this section of the report. People interviewed identified the following mistakes they had participated in or observed. Please note that these mistakes were not necessarily made by the companies represented by people cited above.

- One company that felt that offering flowers was compatible with other products it sold. However, the company discovered that although it was a leader in its field, there was a great deal it did not understand about the flower business. Ultimately, after losing a great deal of money, the company withdrew from the flower business.

- Another company that tried to develop a new food. The company learned that some consumers were interested in food with lower fat and cholesterol. They proceeded to develop a product that met these needs. However the company had not learned two other things that also are important to potential buyers: that the food not only be lower in fat and cholesterol, but also have an attractive taste and feel good in the mouth. Because there were problems with "taste and feel", the product was not successful.

- One executive described a reorganization suggested by outside consultants. While there were advantages, there also was a dramatic loss of internal communication. Ultimately the company decided that although there had been a substantial financial investment in the reorganization, it was overall, not a good idea, and the plan was reversed.

- Several executives discussed the mistake of tolerating a supervisor who had many skills, but lacked either integrity or the ability to work effectively with

other people. In each case, the executives felt they had waited too long to intervene and replace the person.

- Several executives noted that ignoring or tolerating a person who is unethical, or commits illegal acts is a big mistake. Employees watch carefully to see what leaders will do when someone does this. If action is not taken, employees conclude that this behavior will be tolerated. The long term health of the company demands that such behavior not be tolerated.

- Several companies tried to combine with other organizations, only to learn that two very different cultures were not compatible.

- One company tried to expand but found that its partners had the necessary technical skills, but did not share the original organization's core values and stress on integrity. Despite the advantages of expansion, the original company withdrew until it could find partners who shared its values.

- Several executives have concluded that admitting you made a mistake in strategy or in selection of a key employee is one of the hardest things for an organization to do. But acknowledging the problem, dealing with it and moving on are critical for a successful organization.

- Several executives pointed out the value of looking around to see how other organizations are dealing with a situation. They think organizations need to resist the impulse to "try to invent every solution," or reject what others have done because it "wasn't developed here." As one executive explained "Don't try to do everything on your own. Go outside to find excellent solutions."

- Several executives pointed to the importance of bringing people from quite different perspectives together to solve major problems. If this is not done, a potentially valuable solution might not be discovered.

- Several executives described times when their company became too cautious as a mistake. As one noted, "If you're not falling occasionally, you're not pushing yourself enough."

5. What are two or three of the most important things that your company has done to promote create a climate that values quality, along with innovation?

- Reatha Clark King
    - Essential to bring leaders together; one strategy is through regular workshops and retreats
    - Encourage people to think outside the box and free up their thinking (and to reassure them that they won't be penalized for it)

- Dave Larson
  - Respect individual cultures; however, central key elements of integrity and other things are not negotiable

- Bob Bloss
  - Creation of a corporate culture
  - Understand how your product is viewed versus competition by consumer

- Jim Van Houten
  - Need processes in place to develop innovative products; you don't want people putting road blocks in the way of innovative, good people
  - Give people who are smart, mature, and independent a lot of rope
  - The more you know how the customer feels about you, the better
  - Want people who create high quality, not people who just focus on low cost
  - Reinforce pride in the organization

- Kevin Wilde
  - Do not do anything that would hurt consumer trust
  - "Do the right thing"

- Jim Mahoney
  - Everything hinges on the honesty and integrity of employees. Want to work with people who operate by our principles because they believe in them. You cannot train people to have virtue.
  - Knowledge processes. Understanding what clients want, need and value. Never innovate or grow into new arenas without knowing there is a want, need, or value we have the potential to address in the process.

- Warren Staley
  - Praise solid accomplishments; senior corporate leaders should be coaches
  - Innovation; actively work on next generation of products
  - Importance of soft skills—employees want to know why they matter and be treated with respect
  - Do many surveys of employees and give feedback. Employees can take bad news but they must have candor and facts. If you don't take an employee's suggestions, explain why not.
  - Retaining employees is in part about doing things that make employees feel proud of working with you.

- Marilyn Carlson Nelson
  - Emotional intelligence is vital—leaders must obtain the respect of those they lead and be aware of how they come off to others

- Maximize the contributions that each individual can make and manage tensions that develop as people try to achieve company and personal goals.
  - Periodically praise real accomplishments—email messages
  - Quality is defined by customers. Look forward and periodically assess customers' reactions to products
  - Trust among employees is vital. Build internal systems to help people develop relationships with each other.

- Mike Hunkapiller
  - Make sure the whole organization responds to how well things work.
  - Create incentive programs, both for individuals and for groups.
  - Balance getting things out quickly with getting things out that work well for customers.

- Chuck Denny
  - Reward success
  - Keep a democratic feel in the company. You need hierarchies, but ones that do not speak to the quality of individuals.

- Rich Varda
  - Measurement is key to quality; based on clear formulas
  - Do not provide such big incentives that people cheat.
  - Have a scientific, systematic organization
  - Get a lot of smart people and motivate them
  - Annual surveys; use to help put together an action plan
  - Want a stable secure environment for employees; want employees to be proud of working for the company
  - Support people taking time to volunteer

- Wendell Maddox
  - Foster an egalitarian culture. Create an environment that recognizes that we all share responsibility for innovation and quality.
  - Maintain a stellar reputation. Even small problems must be addressed right away.

- Barbara Jo Davis
  - Constantly discuss the balance of "what we have" (our current capacity) with "what we know" (our potential capacity). You can't let the first hold you back, but you can't let potential capacity get too far out in front or you will fail.

- Kris Johnson
  - Willingness to identify and address shortcomings
  - Accepting some failure can go too far
  - Setting stretch goals

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6. Given what you know about public education, what are one or two things that your company has learned that public educators might try to adopt or adapt?

- Bob Bloss
    - Focus on fundamental integrity and values
    - Accepting accountability for personal actions and RESULTS
    - Don't work in silos – you can not survive on your own

- Mark Chronister
    - If you can't get what you need from Colleges of Education, create your own preparation program.
    - Go to a place where you are pushing for results without excuses.

- Barbara Jo Davis
    - It's not enough to have a degree, you have to understand what you are doing and why. We MUST ensure that the education students receive has value and relevance.
    - Read, read, read. It's the most important thing learners can do. Especially true for low income students of color with limited world experience. Reading opens doors and makes people more able to participate in the outside world.
    - Too much emphasis on athletics is too much focus on the wrong priorities. Educators need to provide leadership to help parents shift priorities from a focus on athletics as well.
    - Too much focus on compliance and testing. Educators do need to be accountable, but when you go overboard, it limits teachers' creativity.
    - Leaders must encourage creativity in staff and students; leaders set the standard, well prepared staff set the objectives.

- Chuck Denny
    - Have high expectations
    - Create reward systems that reinforce the outcomes that you want
    - Reexamine the system and model and the way that students, teachers, and principal are treated. Try until you succeed.
    - Develop communication skills
    - Learn on the job. Question what you need to learn.

- Chip Emery
    - Leadership skills of the principal are the crux of whether a school is successful.
    - Need to develop people. Schools that do well seem to have a strong emphasis on teacher skills development.
    - Networks of people working on the same kind of thing can be very helpful.

- Principals should interact with local industry- really untapped area for many schools.

- Al Fan
  - Educators should focus on results
  - State and local policies should encourage create more schools based on the models producing the best results
  - More choice is not necessarily better unless the choices are based on successful schools
  - Train leaders with both technical and people skills.

- Barnett Helzberg
  - Mentors for leaders are very valuable. Christina Blunt can be very helpful in describing lessons learned in the mentoring program she directs
  - Competition can help produce improvements
  - Look around for what is working best elsewhere and adopt that – it is not necessary to develop your own approach when schools serving similar students are having great success

- Mike Hunkapiller
  - Success comes down to the quality of people who are in place. You can't make too much effort to hire the right people in the beginning.
  - Work with people to help them buy into the goals of the corporation
  - Need processes in place to identify the right people for a job. You spend so much time dealing with problems from people who are not contributing.

- Kris Johnson
  - The culture in education seems to allow people to continue dissenting and disagreeing long after a decision is made in public education. Decisions are never finally made.
  - Importance of constant measure and use of this to improve quality
  - Don't accept excuses – don't accept a response that we couldn't accomplish this or that goal because this happened. Ultimately company (and schools) must have success or others will take their place.

- Reatha Clark King
  - Encourage people to visit the schools, to volunteer, to experience what is going on at school.
  - Provide more support, encouragement, and appreciation to teachers.
  - Learn how to be more effective and efficient

- Dave Larson

- Emotional intelligence critical; every youngster should take the Myers Briggs to understand how they and others operate
- Leaders should be results oriented but also able to work with other people
- Every school needs a clear, compelling mission and strong indicators of progress. Every person in the school should understand their role in helping the school achieve its goals.

- Wendell Maddox
  - Invest in the excellent education of young children. Maybe reverse the tendency to spend more money in upper grades than in lower grades.
  - Culture shift back to excellent math and science instruction in public schools. Start in early childhood getting kids excited about education and learning about their world.
  - Need to deal with racism in education. The younger generation has less power and less experience, but more will to change the system and move beyond our civil-rights era thinking about race relations. We need to capitalize on these relationships—and share our power with the next generation.
  - Need big innovation in education. Incremental change hasn't and won't do it. The last big innovation we've seen was the charter school movement. Another one we should see is a fundamental shift in how money flows to early education vs. secondary education.

- Jim Mahoney
  - Allow businesses to be partners with you—we know a few things, we have capacity, and we have a vested interest in the success of students in school today. ASK us for help, but also LISTEN to us—we can tell you something about what your students will need to be successful.
  - The world is changing quickly—need to be able to change, adjust, adapt with relative efficiency. Inflexible systems get left behind
  - Too many students are not coming our of school with the "soft skills" they will need to be successful
  - I understand that schools (and educators as professionals) may be underfunded. HOWEVER, I often wonder how much incentive there is for schools to explore efficiencies in their non-student operations (business, payroll, materials acquisition). I see waste and inefficiency that could be corrected

- Alberto Monserrate
  - Encourage risk-taking, but not unethical behavior. In business, you just lose money and perhaps a job; in schools, you can damage students for a long time.
  - Hire top people
  - Don't compromise on quality
  - Have a very strong, competent person working on finances

- Curt Ulrich
  - Encourage and reward strong employees. Recognizing excellent work is vital for an organization that wants to make progress.
  - Recognize that some employees may be ok people, but that their performance is not acceptable. It's important to be honest with people whose performance is not satisfactory. Ultimately it is important to move people out of an organization if, after assistance is provided, the performance is below acceptable levels.
  - Schools need to do more to help students learn to work together.

- Jim Van Houten
  - Public education does not have to worry too much about getting customers. That's a problem.
  - Public education seems to tolerate too much mediocrity. Industry needs you only so long as you are a superior player
  - Focus should be on outcomes rather than who the players are
  - It does not matter who delivers the products so long as needs are met and solved. Competition should be vigorous.

- Kevin Wilde
  - Consider strategies to build personal resilience. Resources include: *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, is the Key to High Performance and Renewal* by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz.

Two Helpful Vision/Mission Statements

As we carried out interviews, senior executives at many companies shared their vision/mission statements. We include two here. They are illustrative of the statements that are the center of many successful companies.

As Dave Larson of Cargill explained, the statement below was distilled from 14 pages of ideas that previously had guided the company. A card with the statement below is given to every new Cargill employee during the first week they join the organization. It is part of the orientation for each new employee. This also includes a discussion of what the corporation and division goals are for the year, and how the new employee's work will help Cargill achieve these goals.

Cargill Vision Statement:
- Our Purpose is to be the global leader in nourishing people.
- Our Mission is to create distinctive value.
- Our Approach is to be trustworthy, creative and enterprising.
- Our Performance Measures are engaged employees, satisfied customers, enriched communities and profitable growth.

Marilyn Carlson Nelson, CEO of Carlson Companies (which owns, among other businesses, the Radisson Hotels and TGIFridays restaurants), shared the following statement. It is posted in every business that the company owns, and is discussed frequently with employees.

Our vision: To become the most respected private company on earth.

Our strategies: Build the team. Satisfy the customer. Deliver our family of businesses. Work smarter, not harder.

Credo: Whatever you do, do with Integrity, Wherever you go, go as a Leader, Whomever you serve, serve with Caring, Whenever you dream, dream with your All; And never, ever give up

Key Lessons Learned from Interviews of Corporate Officials:

MISSION

1. Having a clear, compelling, concise mission is vital – one that is widely understood within an organization.

2. From the first day of employment, each person needs to understand how she/he helps the organization achieve its mission. This should be the basis of ongoing assessment of individuals and the organization. Alignment between individuals and organization mission and priorities is vital.

UNDERSTANDING/LISTENING TO CUSTOMER

3. Based on mission and goals, data is gathered constantly (in some companies, DAILY), using multiple measures. There is a bottom line – but it is not the only important measure of what is happening in the company.

4. Organizations must know customers' needs as well as, or better than, customers know themselves. For example, one food processing company was asked by other companies to help develop lower fat, lower cholesterol foods. The original company met with consumers who made it clear that unless they liked the food's taste and texture, they would not buy it, regardless of other benefits.

5. Continually assess how consumers rate your organization relative to competitors.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS

6. An optimistic, positive attitude is vital. Leaders must model this, along with other values described below.

7. Accept accountability for personal actions and RESULTS

8. It is impossible to over-emphasize the value of hiring great employees.

9. Ethical values and behavior are essential. These cannot be taught. Even the most talented people must leave an organization if they are not ethical.

10. Employees are treated with great respect. The organization encourages, respects and praises progress and accomplishment. Financial bonuses are only one part of this. Highlighting good work regularly is ESSENTIAL. Employee morale is assessed and reported. Senior management describes what steps it will take to deal with problems employees identify. If senior leaders decide, after careful study, not to follow employee recommendations, they make time to explain why.

11. Identify very knowledgeable people inside and outside organization – ask for their advice and assistance. You cannot know everything. Model and create a culture where people know it is a good idea to ask others for assistance.

12. Mistakes will happen, and should be acknowledged, studied, and used. Employees must know that within some limits, risk-taking and experiments are ok.

13. It is vital/critical to "give back" to the community. People deeply appreciate it when your organization is an active, positive member of the community. Doing so helps attract and retain excellent employees, improves morale, and is part of being a member of a democratic society.

TRAINING NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

14. Senior officials see development of the next generation of leaders as a central responsibility. They are deeply involved in planning and implementation of leadership development programs.

15. Both McDonalds and KIPP require their leaders to spend an intensive year as a student AND an intern with some of the very best restaurants/schools.

16. Most companies involved in this study bring together cohorts of potential leaders who have other responsibilities while spending some time on leadership development.

17. Teaching "soft skills" of working effectively with people is central to leadership development. Emotional intelligence is vital for top leaders.

18. Role-plays, videotaping and other means are used to help prospective leaders learn to be more effective.

19. Give prospective leaders projects and opportunity to use their creativity. Give them clear, specific feedback.

20. Businesses make extensive use of mentors who help prospective leaders develop the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes.

21. Don't work in silos. You cannot survive on your own – develop strong allies.

Key Applications for a Minnesota School Leadership Academy

In developing the Minnesota Leadership Academy for Charter and Alternative Schools, we applied lessons summarized above in a number of ways. In this section, we describe key features of the Leadership Academy, based on lessons learned from interviews with the business people.

- In most corporations, people who are being trained for leadership positions are carrying out other job responsibilities. They are not spending full time on leadership development. *So the Leadership Academy is a part time program in which people are employed in other positions, while participating in the Leadership Academy.*

- Mentoring from senior, successful business people is an important part of most corporate leadership programs. *So the Minnesota Leadership Academy provides both corporate and educational leaders, who are meeting at least monthly with their mentees.*

- Most corporate leadership programs require participants to carry out several projects to help improve their skills and readiness to take on additional responsibilities. *Each participant in the Minnesota Leadership academy will develop and carrying out projects designed to help improve the schools in which they work, and help them develop new skills vital for successful leadership.*

- Corporate leadership programs generally use a cohort model that lasts from 12-18 months, with participants meeting periodically to share their work, build their skills and learn from outstanding leaders, in and sometimes outside the company. *The Minnesota Academy uses a cohort model, with intensive work in the beginning and periodic meetings of all participants over a 12*

month period. Outstanding corporate and educational leaders (from several of the nation's finest charters) will be meeting with Academy participants.

- Corporate leadership programs help participants learn only technical skills, but also methods of leading, working with and supervising adults. These "people skills" are viewed as critical for successful leaders. *A major component of the Minnesota Academy is helping participants learn to lead, supervise and evaluate adults.*

- Governors and their aides have described the significant financial challenges states are facing. Investing state funds in programs that cost $100,000-200,000 per participant (as some of the best, well-known charter leadership development programs do) is unrealistic. But more modest expenditures may be possible. *So this is an effort to provide another option as a way to train a new generation of leaders – not an attempt to replace other models, but an effort to create a strong new option.*

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Joe Nathan, PhD, directs the Center for School Change at the University of Minnesota's
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He has written a dozen reports published by the Center. The Bill and Melinda Gates,
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Nathan to his Educational Policy Advisory Committee.

Joanna Plotz is a junior at Carleton College, focusing American Studies and Educational
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Attachment:
Business Mentors and Program Participants in Cohort 1,
Minnesota Leadership Academy for Charter and Alternative Public Schools

Mentor	Title	Organization	Leadership Academy Mentee
Terri Barreiro	Director	St. John's University Center for Entrepreneurship	Dyanne Parsons
Jeff Bata	V.P. & Chief Accounting Officer	Carlson Companies	Chenelle Boatswain
Mark Chronister	Retired managing partner	Price Waterhouse Cooper	John Ross
Rick Clevette	V. P. Leadership and Org Dev	Carlson Companies	Bryan Rossi
Barbara Jo Davis	President	Ken Davis BBQ	Erin Johnson
Chip Emory	Chairman	MTS	David Nunez
Al Fan	Cofounder	Irving Ventures	Mfon Archibong
Michele	Editor	Minnesota Women's Press	Suzanne Splinter
Justin Hu	Associate	Norwest Equity Partners	Mark Pegors
Phil Jemielita	Chief Financial Officer	Scanlan International	Linda Duncanson
Gary Marquardt	Regional CEO	American Reprographics	Dan Hurley
Alberto Monserrate	President and CEO	Latino Communications Network	Greg Herder
Pennie Viggiano	Director, Special Populations	Health East	Robert Andresen
Steve Waters	President	NewLevel Consulting	Julie Guy
Sue Wollan Fan	Co-founder	Irving Ventures LLC	Jane Davin