



THE ART AND SCIENCE OF LEADER DEVELOPMENT TRAINING EXECUTION

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Table of Contents

Chapter	Page
Chapter 1: Introduction	4
Chapter 2: Understanding Leader Development	6
Chapter 3: Designing Impactful Leader Development Programs	10
Chapter 4: Small Group vs. Large Group: When and Why It Matters	13
Chapter 5: Delivering with Precision	17
Chapter 6: Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them	23
Chapter 7: Final Thoughts & Call to Action	25

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The Art & Science of Leader Development Training Execution

By Dr. Jacqueline Ortiz

About This eBook

This eBook offers a **foundational guide** to the *art* and *science* of leader development training execution. Drawing from decades of experience, I've curated essential strategies, frameworks, and real-world insights to help practitioners move leader development from theory to action with measurable impact.

The Art & Science of Leader Development Training Execution is designed for facilitators, training designers, and organizational leaders seeking to elevate their programs from routine to transformational. Blending the rigor of instructional design with the heart of leadership facilitation, this book explores what it truly takes to deliver lasting growth in today's evolving leadership landscape.

Authored by Dr. Jacqueline Ortiz—an accomplished leader with over four decades of distinguished service to the United States Army which reflects a career of directing enterprise-level initiatives, including the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command Initial Military Training Leadership School and national cadre development programs spanning 48 sites across 25 states.

Supported by a Doctorate in Global Training & Development, a Master's in Curriculum & Instruction, and a Bachelor's in Human Resource Development, Dr. Ortiz integrates scholarly research with lived leadership experience to deliver a practical and inspiring roadmap for those charged with developing the next generation of leaders.

Whether you're designing for aspiring leaders or coaching senior executives, this eBook will help you bridge theory with execution—turning training into a catalyst for lifelong growth and organizational impact.



Chapter 1: Introduction

The Case for Intentional Leader Development

In an era of rapid change, uncertainty, and increasing complexity, the need for adaptive, resilient, and emotionally intelligent leaders has never been greater. Organizations—from military units to corporate enterprises—are seeking leader development strategies that move beyond surface-level training. The true transformation happens not just in what leaders know, but how they grow.

This book is built on the conviction that **leader development training execution** must balance the rigor of scientific instructional design with the human-centered artistry of engagement. Whether you are designing programs for emerging leaders or coaching seasoned executives, your role as a leader developer is pivotal.

Leader development is distinct from leadership training. While leadership training often focuses on discrete skills (e.g., communication, delegation), **leader development** is a broader, more strategic process that cultivates **identity, purpose, and adaptability over time** (Day, 2000).

This book provides both a theoretical foundation and a practical playbook. It draws from fields such as adult learning theory, organizational psychology, neuroscience, and experiential education to offer actionable insights for designing, delivering, and evaluating transformative leader development experiences.

Key Objectives of This eBook:

1. Clarify the distinction between leadership training and leader development.
2. Offer frameworks for designing evidence-based leader development programs.
3. Provide facilitation strategies that foster trust, self-reflection, and growth.
4. Highlight real-world examples and templates to support execution.
5. Equip readers with tools to measure impact and promote accountability.

Why This Matters

Organizations often equate training with transformation. But knowledge transfer alone doesn't produce leaders. True leader development happens when learners internalize values, reframe their beliefs, and apply learning in context (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). Effective execution of leader development is thus not simply instructional—it is developmental, relational, and strategic.

What You'll Gain

By the end of this eBook, you'll have practical tools and insights to help you confidently begin applying what you've learned.

- Build leader development programs aligned with mission, values, and context.
- Blend learning science with the emotional intelligence of facilitation.
- Embed assessment and evaluation from the start.
- Elevate the impact of your training engagements by focusing on **execution, not just design**.

Chapter 2: Understanding Leader Development (*Art*)

From Potential to Proficiency: What It Truly Means to Develop Leaders

Overview

Leader development is as much an art as it is a discipline. This chapter emphasizes the *art*—the human journey of growth, meaning-making, and identity formation. Here, the focus is on perspectives, values, and the evolving maturity that enables leaders to guide with wisdom and authenticity. Too often, leader development is misunderstood, either lumped together with leadership training or viewed as a one-time intervention. In reality, it is a lifelong process of cultivating the mindsets, competencies, and values required to lead effectively in complex environments. Unlike leadership training, which typically targets specific skills or behaviors, leader development nurtures the internal growth of the leader over time (Day, 2000). This chapter defines leader development, distinguishes it from leadership development and training, and introduces a model that highlights how identity, capacity, and efficacy shape an individual's trajectory toward becoming an impactful leader.

1. Definitions and Core Concepts

- **Leader Development** refers to the *intrapersonal* growth of individuals to enhance their capacity for leadership roles. It emphasizes self-awareness, reflection, character, and long-term learning.
- **Leadership Development**, by contrast, includes *interpersonal* and organizational dynamics—often emphasizing team or group performance.
- **Leadership Training** typically focuses on short-term, task-oriented skill acquisition (e.g., communication, conflict resolution).

Leader development focuses on enhancing a person's ability to succeed in leadership roles and processes, emphasizing growth of capacity over time (Day, 2000).

2. Three Pillars of Leader Development

Leader development, whether in the public or military sector, is most effective when built upon three interrelated pillars: ***institutional learning***, ***operational/experiential learning***, and ***self-development***. These pillars represent complementary approaches that, when integrated, foster holistic and sustainable leadership growth (U.S. Army, 2013; Day et al., 2014).

Institutional Learning (Formal Education and Training)

The first pillar emphasizes structured, formalized learning through institutions. In the military, this includes professional military education courses and doctrine-driven training programs conducted by organizations such as the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC). In the public and corporate sectors, institutional learning occurs through

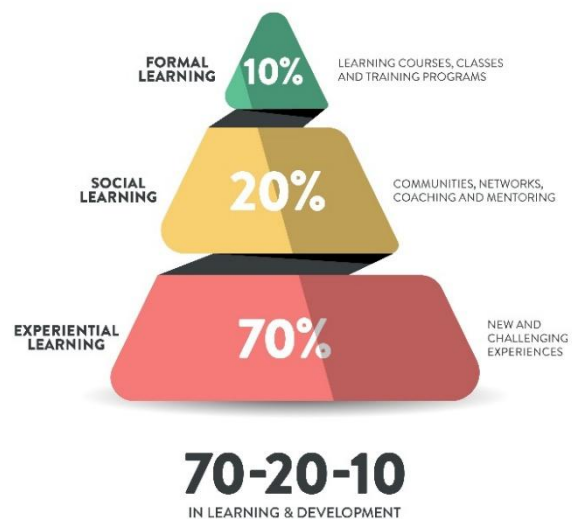


leadership academies, corporate universities, and higher education programs. This approach provides leaders with a consistent knowledge base and the theoretical frameworks necessary to guide practice (Salas, Tannenbaum, Kraiger, & Smith-Jentsch, 2012).



Operational / Experiential Learning (Learning by Doing)

The second pillar highlights the significance of learning through real-world experiences. In the military, this occurs in command assignments, deployments, and complex problem-solving in operational environments. Within civilian organizations, experiential learning is achieved through stretch assignments, cross-functional projects, and rotational programs. Research suggests that up to 70% of leadership development occurs through such challenging job experiences, reflecting the principles of the widely adopted 70-20-10 model (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002). These experiences allow leaders to refine decision-making, resilience, and adaptability in complex and uncertain contexts (Day et al., 2014).



Self-Development (Personal Initiative and Lifelong Learning)

The third pillar recognizes the importance of personal responsibility for growth. In the military, this includes professional reading programs, independent study, and deliberate self-reflection. Similarly, in the public and corporate domains, self-development takes the form of executive coaching, professional membership, microlearning, and reflective practices. Leaders who engage in intentional self-directed learning demonstrate higher levels of adaptability and sustained growth (London, 2002; Yukl, 2013).



Integrating the Three Pillars



While each pillar plays a distinct role, they are most effective when integrated. Overemphasis on institutional training risks producing leaders who are theoretically competent but lack practical adaptability, while exclusive reliance on experience may reinforce ineffective habits. Likewise, without self-reflection, leaders may fail to translate lessons into long-term growth. A balanced approach ensures that leader development is both comprehensive and sustainable (Day et al., 2014).

3. Vertical vs. Horizontal Development

A powerful concept in leader development is the distinction between two types of growth:

- **Horizontal Development:** Adding more skills, tools, and knowledge—traditional training.
- **Vertical Development:** Transforming how leaders think, make sense of complexity, and adapting their mental models. This is achieved through challenges, reflection, and facilitated developmental experiences.

Leadership growth often comes less from acquiring new skills and more from environments that challenge leaders to think with greater complexity (Petrie, 2014).

4. Context Matters: Environment and Culture

Leader development must be contextualized. What works in one environment (e.g., military, nonprofit, corporate) may not translate to another. Factors such as:

- Organizational culture
- Psychological safety
- Demographics and diversity
- Generational and global perspectives

...must be accounted for in development plans.

Context plays an active role in shaping leader development, rather than serving only as background conditions (McCauley et al., 2010).

5. Distinguishing Leader Development from Leadership Training

When building or executing a leader development program, consider the following questions:

- ☒ **Does the program promote identity development, not just skills?**
Leader development emphasizes who a person is becoming, not just what they can do.
- ☒ **Are learners given complex, real-world challenges?**
Development requires ambiguity and problem-solving that mirrors authentic contexts.
- ☒ **Is reflection, journaling, or coaching included?**
Deep growth occurs when leaders pause, process, and internalize their experiences.
- ☒ **Is the content culturally responsive and inclusive?**
True development equips leaders to navigate diversity and lead inclusively.
- ☒ **Does the experience encourage self-efficacy and decision-making?**
Development empowers leaders with confidence to act and own their decisions.

How to Interpret This Checklist

- If the answer is “**yes**” to **three or more**, the program is delivering *leader development* — expanding identity, capacity, and adaptability.
- If the answer is “**yes**” to only **zero, one, or two**, the program is more accurately *leadership training* — providing useful skills, but without the deeper transformation.

Chapter 3: Designing Impactful Leader Development Programs (*Science*)

Strategy, Structure, and Substance Aligned with Outcomes

Overview

Designing leader development is grounded in evidence-based science. This chapter emphasizes the *science*—structured models, instructional design principles, and evaluation frameworks that ensure programs are effective, measurable, and replicable.

Even the most dynamic facilitation cannot overcome weak design. Design is the strategic foundation upon which effective execution rests. A well-structured leader development program aligns organizational priorities with adult learning principles and developmental psychology. More importantly, effective design is **outcome-driven**: it begins with the end in mind, identifying the specific leader outcomes to be achieved and then working backward to select methods, activities, and assessments.

1. Start with the End in Mind

Using the backward design model (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), facilitators should:

1. Define learning outcomes tied to leadership competencies.
2. Identify observable evidence of learning (performance, decisions, feedback).
3. Design instructional experiences that foster those outcomes.

Instruction serves as a pathway to achieve defined goals, and clarity of those goals helps focus planning and learning (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

2. Conduct a Leadership Needs Assessment

Design is grounded in gathering organizational and learner input:

- Leadership gaps
- Succession planning data
- Performance trends
- Learner demographics, motivation, and readiness

Tools: Focus groups, surveys, competency mapping, interviews

3. Align to Leader Levels

A developmental design framework must distinguish between leader readiness stages. Below is a suggested model that incorporates aspiring, emerging, mid-level, and executive leaders—each

representing a vital segment of the talent pipeline that is often overlooked when considered in isolation.

Leader Level	Primary Focus	Bloom's Domain
Aspiring	Leadership Potential, Confidence-Building, Foundational Mindsets	Understand / Apply
Emerging	Self-Awareness, Communication, Time Management	Apply / Analyze
Mid-Level	Influence, Systems Thinking, Team Development	Analyze / Evaluate
Executive	Strategy, Vision, Cultural Intelligence	Evaluate / Create

Application: Structure content progression to match each level's cognitive and professional maturity.

4. Structure the Learning Journey

Design for durational impact, not one-time events. High-quality programs include:

- Pre-Work: Readings, self-assessments, visioning tools
- Core Training: Interactive workshops, team challenges
- Application Lab: Scenario-based practice, simulations
- Coaching: 1:1 or peer-based, post-session
- Post-Work: Reflective assignments, development planning

5. Embed Experiential and Scenario-Based Learning

Leader development thrives when learners are immersed in real-world simulations, such as:

- Mission-based planning
- Ethical dilemmas
- Interdepartmental conflict
- Crisis response table-tops
- Diversity and inclusion dialogues

These experiences push learners to act, reflect, and refine under simulated pressure.

6. Integrate Coaching and Peer Learning

Enhance development with:

- Executive coaching (for mid-level and up)
- Peer circles or pods

- Leader-as-teacher opportunities
- Feedback loops that build trust and insight

7. Ensure Cultural Responsiveness

Include diverse voices in:

- Case studies
- Facilitator pool
- Success definitions
- Examples of effective leadership

Design must be intersectional and inclusive, considering race, gender, generation, neurodiversity, and global perspectives.

8. Sample Program Design (All Levels)

Phase	Activity	Outcome
Pre-Work	Self-assessment + Video Intro	Establish baseline, spark curiosity
Session 1	Values-Based Leadership	Clarify purpose, build leader identity
Session 2	Leading Through Conflict	Practice emotional regulation and influence
Session 3	Systems Thinking Simulation	Deepen complexity navigation
Coaching	1:1 or Peer Group Coaching	Personalize growth, foster accountability
Post-Work	Leadership Impact Plan	Cement transfer of learning to the workplace

9. Outcome-Driven Design Checklist

Use this checklist to keep your program focused on results:

- Have I clearly articulated the desired **outcomes** (not just outputs or activities)?
- Do the outcomes align directly with **organizational priorities**?
- Are the **activities and learning methods** intentionally designed to achieve the outcomes?
- Have I identified **metrics or evaluation methods** that demonstrate progress toward outcomes?
- Do the outcomes apply across **different leader levels** (aspiring, emerging, mid-level, executive)?

Chapter 4: Small Group vs. Large Group: “When and Why It Matters” (Art)

Facilitation choices are not mechanical—they require the *art* of discernment. This chapter examines the nuanced dynamics of small and large groups, where context, relationships, and culture play defining roles in shaping leader development outcomes.

The format you choose matters. Group size can alter the depth of dialogue, the level of engagement, and even how knowledge is retained. Both small and large group settings have unique strengths. The key is understanding when and why to use each so your design remains purposeful, strategic, and aligned with learner needs.

Advantages of Small Group Instruction

1. Increased Engagement & Participation

Learners are more likely to contribute actively, ask questions, and share personal experiences in smaller settings. This creates a psychologically safe environment that supports risk-taking, vulnerability, and deeper learning (Edmondson, 1999).

2. Personalized Feedback

Facilitators can more easily observe individual performance and provide targeted coaching, correction, or reinforcement—essential for developing leadership identity and confidence (Komives et al., 2005).

3. Peer-to-Peer Learning

Small groups foster dialogue, debate, and collaborative problem-solving, helping participants co-construct meaning through interaction. This aligns with Vygotsky’s social constructivist theory and the principles of adult learning (Brookfield, 2013; Knowles et al., 2015).

4. Flexibility & Adaptability

Activities can be adjusted in real-time to accommodate the group’s pace, interest level, or situational needs, increasing relevance and learner ownership (Day et al., 2009).



Disadvantages of Small Group Instruction

1. Resource Intensive

Small groups require more facilitators, breakout spaces, and time to reach scale, which can strain organizational capacity and scheduling (Allen & Sites, 2012).

2. Inconsistent Quality

The facilitator's skill level can significantly affect the experience. Without strong facilitation, small groups risk becoming unfocused or dominated by assertive participants (Schwarz, 2002).

3. Limited Exposure to Diverse Perspectives

Smaller groups may reduce opportunities for learners to hear a wide range of viewpoints unless rotated frequently or structured intentionally.



Advantages of Large Group Instruction

1. Efficiency in Delivery

Large groups allow for consistent message delivery to many learners at once, which is ideal for onboarding, orientation, or conceptual overviews (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

2. Scalability

Fewer facilitators are needed, and more learners can be reached in a shorter period—making it cost-effective and practical for large organizations or units.



3. Shared Experience & Cultural Alignment

When well-facilitated, large group settings can reinforce organizational identity, mission alignment, and collective commitment. This is especially powerful in military or public service settings (Day, 2000).

Disadvantages of Large Group Instruction

1. Reduced Interaction

Opportunities for individual participation, question-asking, or dialogue are limited, often leading to passive learning or disengagement (Garrison et al., 2010).

2. Difficulty in Assessing Understanding

Facilitators may struggle to “read the room” or assess whether concepts are being internalized without real-time interaction (Kolb, 1984).

3. One-Size-Fits-All Risk

Diverse learners in a large audience may have varying levels of experience, readiness, and interest. Without adaptive strategies, instruction may fail to meet individual developmental needs (DeRue & Myers, 2014).



Instructional Implications

Effective leader development requires intentional use of both formats. A **blended approach**—starting with large group conceptual alignment followed by small group application—can maximize strengths while mitigating limitations.

Facilitators should consider factors such as:

- Learner readiness and background knowledge
- Training objectives (awareness vs. application)
- Available resources and facilitator bandwidth
- Desired outcomes (shared understanding vs. behavioral transformation)
- Self-Directed Learning Activities
- Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning



Use the matrix below to determine which instructional format—small group or large group—is most appropriate for your learning environment. Ask yourself how each criterion fits your training context.

Criteria	Small Group Instruction	Large Group Instruction
Training Objective	Skill Development, Peer Discussion, Problem-Solving	Information Delivery, Broad Alignment, Conceptual Overview
Ideal Group Size	4–12 Learners	20+ Learners
Participant Engagement Level	High	Low to Moderate
Facilitator-to-Learner Ratio	1:4–1:6	1:20 or more
Required Resources	Breakout Space, Interactive Tools, Facilitator Presence	Projector, Microphone, Presentation Materials
Classroom Setup	Collaborative, Roundtable, Flexible Layout	Lecture-Style, Auditorium or Theater Setup
Time Flexibility	Moderate to High	Limited or Fixed
Feedback Opportunity	High—Individualized and Interactive	Low—Mostly Generalized or Post-Session
Learning Mode	Highly Active	Primarily Passive
Peer Collaboration Need	Essential	Low

Facilitator Reflection Prompts

1. What is the intended outcome of this session—skill acquisition, mindset shift, or knowledge retention?
2. What size and type of audience am I expecting, and how will that influence facilitation strategy?
3. What tools, space, and staffing do I have available for this session?
4. How critical is real-time feedback and interaction for learner success?
5. Would a hybrid approach provide greater instructional effectiveness for this audience?

Reflection Prompt

How might you restructure an upcoming training session to leverage both large group energy and small group depth?

Chapter 5: Delivering with Precision (Science)

“Excellence in the Learning Environment”

Overview

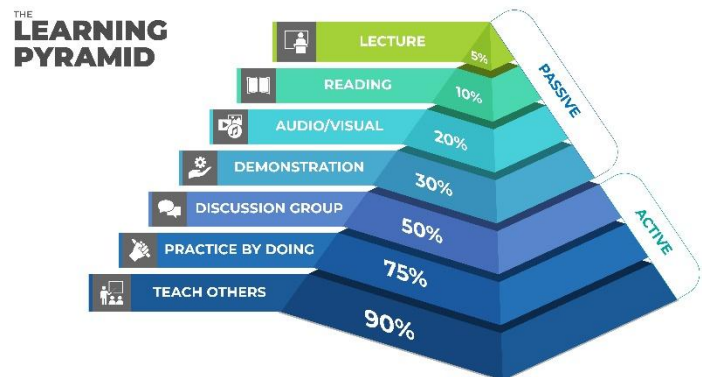
Execution is the moment when the *science* of leader development comes alive. Here, precision matters—timing, facilitation, and delivery techniques make the difference between a program that connects and one that falls flat.

Design sets direction, but execution determines impact. True precision means balancing content, logistics, energy, and environment so they work together seamlessly.

In this chapter, you’ll find practical strategies for preparing, delivering, and adapting high-impact sessions—whether in **live** classrooms, **virtual** environments, or **hybrid** spaces.

1. Pre-Session Preparation

Effective facilitation begins long before participants log in or enter the room. Pre-session preparation ensures that both the **learning environment** and the **facilitator** are ready to maximize engagement. Research emphasizes that aligning objectives with learner needs and creating structured plans increases relevance and knowledge transfer (Morrison et al., 2019). Preparation also conveys facilitator credibility and care, fostering psychological safety from the outset (Edmondson, 1999).



Best Practices

- **Review objectives and learner profiles** – Clarify session goals, analyze learner backgrounds, and adjust content to align with participant roles and experiences.
- **Plan flow and timing** – Script transitions and allocate time blocks for instruction, discussion, and application. This reduces uncertainty and maintains pacing.
- **Prepare contingencies** – Develop backup materials such as printed handouts, simplified slides, or discussion cards in case of technical failures.
- **Set up the space for engagement** – Whether physical or virtual, arrange seating, breakout groups, or shared documents in a way that promotes collaboration.

Well-prepared facilitators model professionalism and create conditions where learners feel their time is valued. Adult learners can easily distinguish between prepared, caring instructors and those who are unprepared or disengaged (Brookfield, 2006).

2. Manage Session Flow

The rhythm of a session is as critical as its content. Research shows that learning is most effective when participants alternate between **receiving information, discussing it, and applying it** (Kolb, 1984). Equally, poor pacing or content overload can lead to cognitive fatigue and disengagement (Sweller, 1988). Effective facilitators orchestrate session flow with both intentionality and flexibility.

Best Practices

- **Start strong** – Capture attention with an energizing activity, compelling story, or thought-provoking question. First impressions shape learner expectations.
- **Pace intentionally** – Follow a cycle of *learn* → *discuss* → *apply* to reinforce retention and promote deeper understanding.
- **Avoid content overload** – Build in micro-pauses, reflective moments, or short energizers to respect cognitive load limitations.
- **Use time management tools** – Visual timers, co-facilitators, or cue cards help keep the session on track while preserving energy.



By monitoring session flow, facilitators ensure both momentum and reflection, balancing rigor with engagement.

3. Facilitating Across Modalities: Formats and Tactics

Facilitators today must be fluent in **multiple delivery modalities**—in-person, virtual, and hybrid. Each format requires distinct tactics to engage learners effectively while ensuring equity of experience. Research shows that modality impacts learner participation, interaction quality, and sense of inclusion (Raes et al., 2020). Skilled facilitators adapt not only their content but also their strategies to match the strengths and limitations of each environment.

Formats and Key Tactics

In-Person

- *Room dynamics* – Arrange seating to encourage eye contact and collaboration.
- *Flip charts and visuals* – Capture group input visibly, reinforcing contributions and maintaining shared focus.
- *Live polls* – Use quick voting methods (show of hands, polling cards, or mobile apps) to spark interaction and gather feedback.

Virtual

- *Camera use* – Encourage (but don't require) cameras on, while respecting privacy and bandwidth. This promotes presence and accountability.
- *Breakout rooms* – Structure small-group discussions for deeper dialogue and inclusion of all voices.
- *Digital whiteboards* – Leverage tools like Miro, MURAL, or integrated platform whiteboards to co-create and visualize ideas.
- *Chat threads* – Use chat to capture running commentary, questions, and insights, allowing quieter participants to contribute.

Hybrid

- *Co-facilitators* – Assign one facilitator to monitor the in-person group and another to champion the virtual audience, ensuring equal access.
- *Equity of experience* – Avoid creating a “second-class” experience for virtual learners by mirroring activities (e.g., shared polls, collaborative documents, equal speaking turns).
- *Technology bridges* – Use microphones, cameras, and shared digital platforms so both audiences can interact seamlessly.

By mastering cross-modality facilitation, leaders signal flexibility and inclusivity, ensuring that all participants—regardless of format—are fully engaged.

4. Monitor Energy and Engagement

Delivery—whether virtual or in-person—requires attentiveness to learner cues. In face-to-face settings, subtle signals such as body language, eye contact, and group dynamics are more readily available, while in virtual settings these cues may be harder to detect and therefore demand heightened awareness from the facilitator.

Research has shown that extended time in video meetings can lead to *videoconferencing fatigue*, often described colloquially as “Zoom fatigue” (Bailenson, 2021). This fatigue is marked by reduced eye contact, overstimulation from prolonged screen focus, and diminished nonverbal feedback, all of which can lower engagement.

Watch for:

- Body language and fatigue – slouching, lack of eye contact, muted cameras, or distracted gazes may signal disengagement.
- Verbal contributions – fewer responses, minimal elaboration, or long pauses can suggest cognitive overload.
- Drop in participation – reduced chat activity, less involvement in polls, or passive silence in breakout groups are red flags.



Adjust with:

- Breaks and energizers – incorporate short pauses or quick, interactive activities to reset attention.
- Learning style shifts – alternate between visuals, discussion, and applied exercises to re-engage different cognitive pathways.
- Open-ended, non-threatening questions – invite learners to share perspectives in low-risk ways that encourage re-entry into dialogue.
- Small group discussions – leverage breakout rooms or paired activities to restore connection and distribute participation.

By monitoring these signals and intervening with deliberate strategies, facilitators maintain precision in delivery while protecting learner energy.

5. Ensure Technical Precision

Technical delivery shapes learner trust in the facilitator and confidence in the learning environment. Online learning Research highlights that disruptions, unclear instructions, or inaccessible features can reduce engagement and increase learner frustration (Martin et al., 2020). By anticipating challenges and ensuring technical fluency, facilitators demonstrate professionalism and create conditions for meaningful learning.

Best Practices

- **Rehearse delivery flow** – Practice transitions between slides, embedded media, and breakout rooms. Familiarity with platform functions reduces delays and signals credibility to participants.
- **Conduct pre-session tech checks** – Send clear instructions in advance for testing audio, video, and platform features (chat, polls, screen sharing). This helps minimize troubleshooting during the session and sets expectations.
- **Plan for accessibility** – Record sessions (when appropriate) and provide features like closed captioning, transcripts, or alternative formats. Research shows that captioning not only assists participants with hearing differences but also improves focus and comprehension for all learners (Gernsbacher, 2015).
- **Have a backup plan** – Keep alternate communication channels (e.g., email, phone, or a backup conferencing link) in case of platform failure, ensuring continuity of learning.



When technical elements are seamless, learners are more likely to stay engaged with the *content* rather than distracted by the *delivery medium*. Precision in the technical domain is therefore an essential dimension of facilitation in virtual environments.

6. Post-Session Follow-Up

Learning does not end when the virtual session concludes. Post-session follow-up is essential to reinforce key takeaways, sustain engagement, and demonstrate facilitator presence beyond the live event. Research on knowledge transfer shows that reinforcement and spaced repetition improve retention and application of new skills (Cepeda et al., 2006).

Moreover, timely follow-up strengthens learner accountability and signals facilitator commitment to their success (Salas et al., 2012).



Best Practices

- Send a recap or highlights – Provide participants with concise session notes, key points, or a one-page summary to refresh memory and focus on application.
- Share recordings and resources – Offer session recordings (if appropriate), slides, reference lists, and additional tools to support review and deeper exploration.
- Encourage reflection – Send a short reflective prompt or journal question to help learners connect insights to their work or context.
- Invite feedback – Distribute a post-session evaluation survey to assess relevance, clarity, and engagement. Participant feedback guides continuous improvement.
- Maintain connection – Establish channels for ongoing dialogue (discussion boards, follow-up emails, or community groups) to extend learning into practice.

By integrating follow-up into the learning design, facilitators transform virtual sessions from one-time events into ongoing development opportunities.

Execution Precision Checklist

Use this checklist to ensure delivery is seamless and impactful:

- **Content Aligned** → Is the material clearly tied to learning objectives and outcomes?
- **Logistics Ready** → Are technology, materials, and space prepared and tested?
- **Facilitation Planned** → Do I have strategies for pacing, transitions, and engagement?
- **Learner Energy Managed** → Have I built in movement, interaction, and reflection to maintain attention?
- **Environment Optimized** → Is the physical, virtual, or hybrid environment set to minimize distractions and maximize participation?
- **Adaptability Built-In** → Do I have contingency plans for unexpected challenges (tech issues, time shifts, resistant participants)?

Chapter 6: Common Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

Why Some Leader Development Programs Fail—and How to Course Correct

Overview

Even the most well-intentioned leader development efforts can fall short. Common issues range from misaligned goals and disengaging delivery to poor follow-up and lack of organizational support. This chapter highlights frequent pitfalls and offers practical solutions.

1. Mistaking Training for Development

Problem: Short-term training is often confusing with long-term development.

Fix: Build experiences that scaffold growth over time, reinforce learning, and integrate coaching and practice.

While training often addresses short-term skill needs, development is a continuous process integrating experiences, feedback, and reflection into a leader's long-term identity (Day, 2000).

2. Lack of Alignment to Strategy

Problem: Programs don't tie to organizational values or performance goals.

Fix: Start with stakeholder interviews, mission analysis, and leadership competency mapping.

Effective leader development connects individual leader identity with the broader mission and institutional goals (Day et al., 2009).

3. No Post-Training Support

Problem: Learners return to the same environment with no reinforcement.

Fix: Provide accountability tools (coaching, reflection assignments, leader impact plans).

In the absence of structured reinforcement, much of the learning acquired during training dissipates once learners return to the workplace (Salas et al., 2012).

4. Focusing Only on High Potentials

Problem: Development is reserved for the few, not the many.

Fix: Offer scalable programs for **aspiring**, **emerging**, and **mid-level** leaders to build a pipeline.

Limiting leader development to only ‘high potentials’ overlooks long-term sustainability; organizations need to broaden access to maintain a strong leadership pipeline (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002).

5. Overloading Learners

Problem: Too much content leads to fatigue and low retention.

Fix: Emphasize quality over quantity. Apply **cognitive load** and chunk content into digestible formats.

When cognitive load surpasses working memory limits, learning suffers; instructional strategies should minimize excess demands to enhance retention (Sweller, 1988).

6. Excluding Diverse Perspectives

Problem: Programs reinforce dominant leadership styles and exclude diverse perspective.

Fix: Build inclusive case studies, integrate facilitation practices that emphasize fairness and representation, and invite feedback from varied stakeholders.

Leader development programs that overlook issues of representation and inclusion may unintentionally sustain systemic inequities (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011).

7. Not Evaluating Outcomes

Problem: No measurement = no credibility.

Fix: Use Kirkpatrick, Brinkerhoff, or ROI frameworks. Even anecdotal success stories offer value.

Without evaluation, organizations cannot confirm the effectiveness or value of training investments (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006).

Chapter 7: Final Thoughts & Call to Action

Execution Is the Bridge from Vision to Transformation

Leader development is more than a curriculum—it is a **culture of investment, reflection, and bold facilitation**. Designing programs without executing them with excellence is like planting seeds but never watering them.

This book has offered frameworks, research, and tools—but ultimately, leader development lives in **how you show up**. The way you build trust, foster reflection, and challenge comfort zones determines whether the training sticks—or slips away.

Call to Action

- Reassess your current programs — Are they truly developmental?
- Design with identity and application in mind—not just content.
- Facilitate with empathy, presence, and cultural humility.
- Measure what matters. Share the stories of impact.
- Build leaders who build leaders.



Daily News

Through Leader Development, Individuals
Increase Their Competence To Fulfill Leadership
Responsibilities and Guide Process Effectively
(Leroy, 2022)

Closing Note

From workshop to enterprise, you now **carry forward the art and science to transform potential into performance**. Your next move? **Deliver with wisdom—and lead with heart.**

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