The How-To of Vertical Leadership Development–Part 2
30 Experts, 3 Conditions, and 15 Approaches

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Creative
Leadership®

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Executive Summary

Horizontal Development = More information, skills, competencies

Vertical Development = More complex and sophisticated ways of thinking[1]

In *Vertical Development Part I*, I introduced you to the "what and why" of vertical development. Since then many people have asked, "Yes, but how do you do vertical development?"

Over the past three months, I interviewed 30 experts from China, Great Britain, Canada, the United States, Belgium, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Australia. The goal was not to create a prescriptive approach. It was to discover the conditions required for vertical development and then show examples of the types of approaches that create those conditions. The result is a guide for practitioners who already design

leadership programs but want to add more vertical elements to what they are doing.

This paper is neither about vertical development nor leadership development, but what happens when you take the best thinking from both worlds and combine them into something new—vertical leadership development.

The essence of the paper is summarized below. Three "primary" conditions support vertical leadership development and under each are tools and approaches that practitioners can use to create those conditions.

Three Primary Conditions of Vertical Development

	Heat Experiences (The What)	Colliding Perspectives (The Who)	Elevated Sensemaking (The How)
Tools and Approaches	1. Give Assignments to the *Least* Qualified Person	1. Replace "Bad" Action Learning with Peer Coaching	1. Learn from the Gurus: Use Stage Maps
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So, that's the high level. Now let's go deeper.

Get Focused on What Really Works

Warren Buffett tells the story about the first time he and Bill Gates met. They were at a party when Bill Gates, Sr. (father of the younger Gates) asked members of their table, "What was the one thing that most helped you to succeed?" According to Buffett, both he and Gates gave the same answer, "I know how to focus."[2]

Most leadership development programs aren't focused. They are a grab bag of different tools, techniques, and methodologies thrown together, which don't really coalesce around any guiding principles. But if you really want to help leaders develop, you must begin with one simple fact—development is hard. And when things are hard, you can't afford to waste time and energy doing things that don't work. Instead, you must know the conditions that really lead to development and focus everything on them. The 30 experts whom I interviewed used a wide variety of methods, but they coalesced around three key conditions. Think of them as the *primary colors* of vertical development.

The Primary Colors of Vertical Development

The primary colors in art are the three base colors (red, yellow, blue) that can be combined to create any other color. To create a new color, an artist simply increases or decreases the amounts of each of the primaries.[3]

My interviews suggest that there is something similar to these primary colors in vertical development. There are three primary conditions that when combined in different ways, produce different flavors of vertical development.

The three primary conditions are:

1. Heat Experiences

The leader faces a complex situation that disrupts and disorients his habitual way of thinking. He discovers that his current way of making sense of the world is inadequate. His mind starts to open and search for new and better ways to make sense of his challenge.[4]
(The What—Initiates)
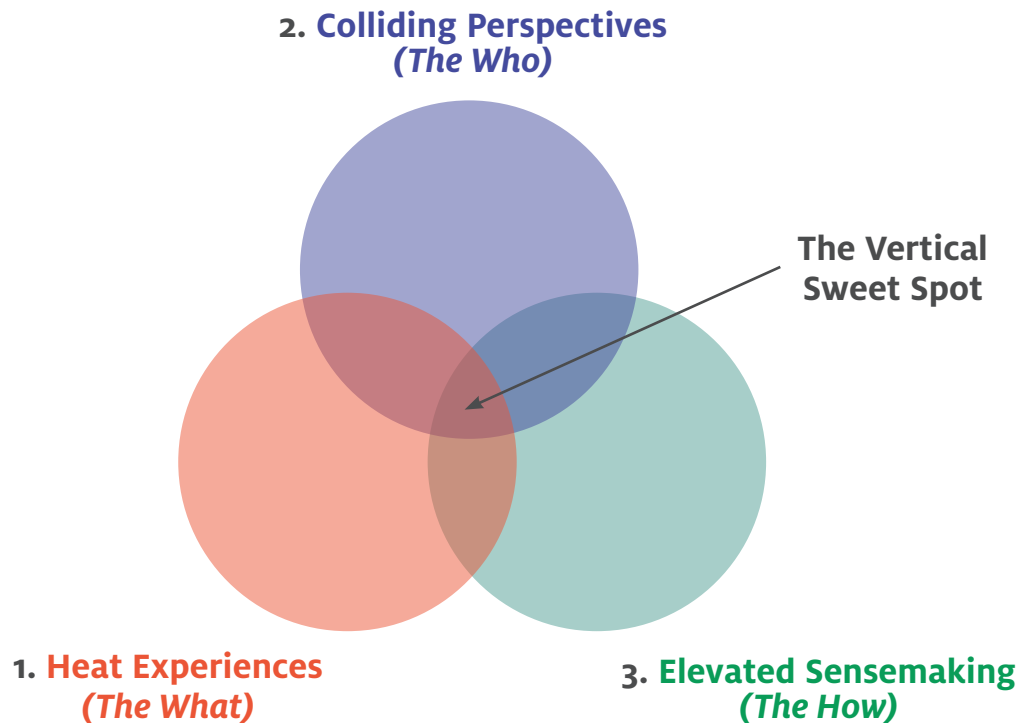
2. Colliding Perspectives

The leader is then exposed to people with different worldviews, opinions, backgrounds, and training. This both challenges his existing mental models and increases the number of perspectives through which he can see the world.
(The Who—Enables)

3. Elevated Sensemaking

The leader then uses a process or a coach to help him integrate and make sense of these perspectives and experiences from more elevated stages of development. A larger, more advanced worldview emerges and, with time, stabilizes.
(The How—Integrates)

2. Colliding Perspectives
(The Who)

The Vertical Sweet Spot

1. Heat Experiences
(The What)

3. Elevated Sensemaking
(The How)

Many leadership programs contain one or two of the primary vertical conditions but not all three. The absence of one or more of the conditions often leads to anemic development for the leaders and significant challenges in making the development stick back in the workplace. For example:

Heat Experiences + **Colliding Perspectives** *(but no Elevated Sensemaking)* = The leaders are motivated to grow and are exposed to new perspectives, but lack time and support to integrate these perspectives into a larger worldview. The leaders find the program interesting, but nothing holds once they get back to their real world.

Colliding Perspectives + **Elevated Sensemaking** *(but no Heat)* = The leader lacks a reason to grow. She treats the development process like an intellectual exercise. Any learning that does occur is "classroom learning" and little gets transferred back to the real world.

Heat Experiences + **Elevated Sensemaking** *(but no Colliding Perspectives)* = The heat produces positive disequilibrium for the leader who starts searching for new answers. However, because the program fails to expose her to fresh perspectives, she falls back into her status quo thinking and arrives at the same conclusions she always has. No development takes place.

Many well-intentioned leadership development programs fail to deliver results because they hit on only one or two of the primary conditions. Any one of the conditions can provide some value, but it is not until you combine all three that development really takes off.

In order to help you assess the balance of your current leadership programs, take the Vertical Leadership Development Audit at www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/landing/vertical-leadership-development-audit.pdf.

In the next section, I'll show you 15 tools that you can use to create these conditions, but first a word on how to assess a leader's current stage of development.

Support Development, Don't Force It

There is an important difference between helping a leader grow and trying to force her to. Susanne Cook-Greuter points out that each stage of development is important and worthy. Horizontal growth within a stage is just as important as vertical growth beyond a stage. Your job is not to force development on someone. Your job is to create the right conditions in which someone *can* grow. Challenge and support, but don't force.[5]

First Things First—Should We Use Vertical Stage Assessments?

Before you begin adding vertical approaches into your leadership programs, you need to decide whether you want to assess the leader's current stages of development (appendix 1). The power of these assessments is that they can help leaders understand the following:

• their current stage of development[6]

• the strengths and limitations of this stage of development

• what their next stage of development looks like

• why people they work with view the world differently from them

It is important to realize that vertical assessments are different from horizontal assessments such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and DiSC (Dominance, Inducement, Submission, Compliance), which say that all types are "equal, but different." Because vertical assessments measure a stage of development rather than a preference, they can be used to imply that people at later stages are inherently "better." While it is true that late-stage thinkers are often better matched for leading in complexity, this doesn't make them better people. My five-year-old can think in more advanced ways than my three-year-old. That doesn't make him a more valuable human being, just a fraction more developed.

My advice is that if you use stage assessments, partner with an experienced practitioner (like those listed in this paper). With that caveat, here are my recommended stage assessments:

1. **Sentence Completion Tests:** Leaders complete a survey consisting of short sentence stems, such as "Work is . . ." or "Relationships are . . ." Each answer is then coded by an accredited rater to correspond with the different stages. A very strong tool, the most well-known and highly validated versions are Susanne Cook-Greuter's Leadership Maturity Assessment (LMA) (http://bit.ly/1mcVBUM); Bill Torbert's Global Leadership Profile (GLP) (http://bit.ly/1nqotcg); and David Rooke's Leadership Development Framework (LDF) (http://bit.ly/1xndDt9).

2. **Subject-Object Interviews:** This assessment is based on a face-to-face interview of about 90 minutes. The interviews can be very powerful, though also time-intensive for assessing groups of leaders (http://bit.ly/1eJmno7). This is the method used by Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey, as well as Jennifer Garvey-Berger (http://bit.ly/1xh7r6W).

3. **Leadership Circle 360:** This instrument is designed to give leaders insight into both their competencies (horizontal development) and their mental and emotional maturity (vertical development). The excellent visual reports and 360-degree format are making it increasingly popular with leaders (http://bit.ly/1ez3X9f).

4. **Lectical™ Assessments:** A robust set of customizable diagnostics that focus on various lines of development, including ethics, leadership decision-making, reflective judgment, self-understanding, and mindfulness. (http://bit.ly/1lZtmuf).

5. **Leadership Evolution and Actualization Profile (LEAP):** This sentence completion test builds on the research and models of Cook-Greuter and Torbert. Because the designers are grounded in both adult development and business, the assessment does a great job of using the language of business and leadership (http://www.theholosgroup.com/leap/).

6. **Leadership Agility 360:** Created by Bill Joiner and based on the research underlying his book, *Leadership Agility*, this 360 assesses observable behavior related to specific developmental stages and is particularly strong at helping leaders understand the transitions from one stage to the next (http://bit.ly/L5DJgP).

Each of these assessments will provide you with rich data, but remember these are powerful tools so handle with care.

15 Tools and Approaches for Vertical Development

Now that you understand the three primary conditions of vertical development and the assessments available, it is time to look at specific tools you can use to develop your leaders.

In my opinion, vertical development should not follow a prescriptive approach since specific tools and methods that work in one organization (an advertising company) may be rejected at the next (a law firm). Instead, your focus should be on helping the leaders experience the three conditions in roughly equal balance. In addition, I wouldn't consider any of the tools on their own to be "vertical tools." They are merely the ingredients you combine to create the vertical conditions for development to occur.

Below I'll give you examples of 15 approaches the experts used to create the three primary conditions of vertical development. This is not supposed to be an exhaustive list, but it will give you a strong set of tools to draw on as you design your own development programs. I've divided the tools into three groups, with each focused on creating one of the primary conditions.

Let's begin by bringing the heat.

1. Heat Experiences

Newton's First Law of Motion: Every object continues in its state of rest, or of uniform motion in a straight line, unless compelled to change that state by external forces acted upon it.

Could just as easily be:

Petrie's First Law of Leadership Development: Every leader continues in his state of rest, or in the habitual direction he was heading, unless compelled to change that state by external forces acted upon him.

Leaders don't grow because they like to; they grow because they have to. Vertical growth begins when you face a challenge that is so difficult to solve from your current stage of development that you almost *have* to grow to survive it. Some life events, such as a serious illness or a change of country, force you to reevaluate and see the world in a new way. Others, such as the Organizational Workshop and Polarity Thinking—methods you'll soon learn about—are designed to create that same developmental heat, but at a level that leaders can tolerate.

Here are five approaches your organization can use to create developmental heat:

1. Create "Heat-Seeking" Leaders

Thirty years of Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) research shows that leaders develop most rapidly when facing what are known as "heat experiences." You know that you are in a heat experience when confronted with a task or assignment that has the following conditions:[7]

1. It is a first-time experience.

2. Results matter.

3. There is a chance of success and failure.

4. Important people are watching.

5. It is *extremely* uncomfortable.

When leaders look back at their careers and describe their time of greatest growth, they invariably tell stories of their most intense heat experiences. While most people work hard to avoid the heat, learning-agile people actually seek it, often over three-year cycles:

Year 1
They take on an assignment in which they are in over their heads.
They scramble to work out how to stay afloat.

Year 2
They start to get the hang of it and performance and results improve.

Year 3
They experience some mastery. They begin to feel bored and restless.
They start looking around for more heat.

In my years doing this work, the greatest developmental advantage I've seen is a leader who has learned to love the heat. Have the leaders in your organization learned to love the heat? Have you?

Key Design Lesson

Many leaders are fascinated by the concept of heat experiences because it accurately explains their career growth. At CCL, we use a tool called Experience Explorer to bring it to life. Participants complete two card sorts to identify two or three of the greatest heat experiences they have had and the key lessons learned from each. Small groups then engage in deep storytelling sessions. In two hours, many leaders come to a completely new understanding of how to develop themselves and their people. Many come to realize that heat isn't their enemy; it's their career accelerant.

2. Create a Culture of Developmental Risk-Taking

If heat experiences are the great accelerator of development, what are the most powerful types of heat? The most recent CCL study of leaders around the world identified four big developmental experiences:[8]

1. **Increase in scope:** You were managing 15 people; you're now managing 150.

2. **Turnaround:** You are asked to urgently fix an underperforming business unit where morale is low.

3. **Horizontal move:** You did a great job in human resources, so you've now been "promoted" to operations.

4. **New initiative:** You've lived in the West all your life, and now you've been asked to open and grow an office in China.

As with any heat experience, all of these challenges carry a healthy chance of failure. But how does your organization view leaders who fail on stretch assignments? Most organizations create a culture that encourages people to opt for *safe/low-learning* projects rather than *some risk of failure/high-learning* projects. This is a recipe for organizational stagnation. To succeed, organizations need to build a "growth mindset" culture that rewards smart risk-taking in the pursuit of growth.

Key Design Lesson

In programs for high potentials, ask respected senior executives to tell the story of their greatest "failures" (not successes), what they learned from them, and how these failures helped them ultimately succeed in their career. I've seen huge breakthroughs for both the executives and the high potentials as they realize that the price of long-term success is learning from short-term failures.

3. Give Assignments to the Least Qualified Person

Shouldn't we give assignments to the most qualified person? Not if you want leaders to grow. Google's director of leadership, David Peterson, told me that we usually give assignments to the most overqualified person who will, by definition, learn the least. His belief is that organizations should give it to the least qualified person since she is the person who will *grow* the most from the experience. Let's be clear: You don't give it to an unqualified person; that would be bad. You give it to the person who could do the assignment but will have to grow the most to succeed. A CEO with whom I work recently met with his top team for a day to decide on assignments for his top 50 leaders based on two criteria: Who's qualified? Who will learn the most? This requires the organization to take a longer-term growth mindset rather than a shorter-term task mindset. Most organizations are too shortsighted to do this, which is a huge advantage for the ones that do.

Key Design Lesson

Encourage leaders to search out assignments that they can only succeed at if they grow significantly. Invite senior leaders to debate to what extent we should staff for development versus staff for task completion. This uncovers the hidden beliefs driving the organization, and you'll discover to what extent senior executives really believe in developing their people.

4. Manufacture Heat in the Classroom

Most leadership programs have too much comfort and not enough heat. The Case-in-Point method popularized by Ronald Heifitz at Harvard puts smart, task-focused leaders in a workshop with no prescribed goal, no structure, and no authority figure to tell them what to do—"You are the leaders, begin." Chaos ensues as participants realize that to make sense of their situation, they must speak up, find partners, and work through conflicting agendas in the room. A big aha for many people is that being an authority figure has nothing to do with being a leader. ("Why isn't anyone listening to me? I'm VP of sales!") Participants harvest learning through journaling, small group dialogues, and speaking with a mentor. Tim O'Brien points out that much of the learning occurs as leaders learn how to lead when no one has to follow you, which is exactly what is needed in the modern workplace. For more, see http://bit.ly/1stDDA5.

Key Design Lesson

Create experiences that produce ambiguity, uncertainty, and confusion for leaders— not comfort. This is also very uncomfortable for facilitators who will almost certainly be blamed for the confusion. But for development to occur, "trainers" must learn to stop teaching and step aside; it's not about you.

5. Uncover Your Immunity to Change

To really grow vertically, you need to uncover and unhook from what holds you static. Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey's Immunity to Change method focuses leaders on one key behavior they are highly motivated to change and then leads them through a mapping exercise to identify the hidden beliefs that hold them back from changing, e.g., *If I delegate more work* (behavior), *I will lose control and feel redundant* (belief). The leader then runs a series of small experiments to test the validity of her beliefs to see if there is a more accurate way to make sense of her world—*Rather than losing control and feeling redundant, I actually felt free to be more strategic, which made me feel more significant.* This combination of action and reflection makes visible to the leader the powerful unconscious beliefs to which she is subject and holds her at her current stage of development. More than one practitioner I interviewed described this as the gold standard of vertical practices. For more, see http://amzn.to/1s8o7KW and http://bit.ly/1pLQ8JN.

Key Design Lesson

Ask leaders to use 360-degree feedback to identify behavioral patterns that feel most detrimental, e.g., "Jamie always avoids conflict." Then help them identify and question the powerful beliefs that are holding that pattern in place. When leaders unhook, growth follows.

2. Colliding Perspectives

While heat is necessary for vertical development, it is not sufficient. The heat creates a positive disequilibrium for the leader, shaking his sense of certainty, and unfreezes his mind long enough to open him to new ways of making sense of the world. At this point, he is not only open to perspectives different from his own but also motivated to try them on and test them out.

This is when formal leadership programs can be most powerful because you can orchestrate collisions between individuals who hold strongly differing opinions, values, worldviews, and stages of development. My CCL colleagues and I try to create what we call "unnatural collisions" between people who would never usually interact, e.g., Finance and Operations, or an executive and a customer. Equally, we avoid cohort groups that are overly homogenous (all sales managers) and instead aim for collections that are a "max-mix" of leaders from up, down, and across the organization (plus "unusual suspects" from the outside).

This expands the number of perspectives through which leaders can see the world, which is a core driver of vertical development. While simple thinkers see situations through one perspective, complex thinkers can see the same situation from many different angles. The more complex your business is, the more skilled your leaders need to be at shifting between multiple perspectives. There is nothing more risky than a complex business led by simplistic thinkers.

Below are some of the most powerful methods for orchestrating collisions and increasing perspectives.

1. Spend a Day in Your Customer's Rice Paddy: Frame-Breaking Experiences

Few experiences are more developmental than seeing the world through someone else's eyes. My favorite example is John Deere's "Farmer Experiential" in which high-level leaders are driven out to a rice paddy in India to do the work of their customers. The executives begin the day by planting crops by hand in 100°F/40°C temperatures with water and mud up to their knees. They then compare what a John Deere tractor can achieve in the same amount of time. The experience of living a day in their customer's rice paddy helps them truly see the value their product makes to the lives of a farmer and his family. Walking a mile in another's shoes is informative; spending a day in their rice paddy is transformational.

> ### Key Design Lesson
>
> *Design experiences that ask leaders to look through the eyes of different stakeholders in the organization and outside. For most of us, taking and holding others' perspectives is both very hard and very developmental. Sneak it into your designs wherever you can and amplify it by giving it an emotional charge like this farmer example.*

2. Replace "Bad" Action Learning with Peer Coaching

While action learning can be great,[9] in practice it is one of the most poorly applied methods in all of leadership development. Too often, organizations select the most overloaded leaders and just give them another project. Rather than feeling like a developmental opportunity, it usually just feels like more work. Instead, try creating groups made of the maximum mix of different backgrounds, training, and worldviews (Finance, HR, Operations, IT, Strategy, Manufacturing). Then teach them how to peer-coach each other on real work issues they are each actually facing (not fake projects they are given). As part of their jobs, each of these functions focuses on different questions; therefore, peer-coaching forces each of the leaders to look at their personal challenges through many different perspectives such as Finance and Operations leaders coaching HR and vice versa.

> ### Key Design Lesson
>
> *The problem with most workplaces is not the lack of developmental opportunities, but that no one is learning anything from them. Begin by creating forums where people learn how to learn. It doesn't take anything fancy, just a process for asking each other questions about real work and real problems. We don't need to keep adding development; we just need to start extracting it.*

3. Step into Another Worldview: Deep Listening

Few people listen well. Part of the reason is because our brains prefer to reinforce what we already know, rather than what someone else does. But development requires us to go against the grain of our brain and instead stretch to take on more perspectives. One of the most direct ways to do this is by practicing deep listening. CCL does this by asking leaders to take on deeper aspects of their peers' perspective: from listening for content, to listening for emotions, to listening for values. This progresses to team dialogue in which the group puts a "fish on the table" (a difficult topic e.g., Do we avoid conflict with each other?) and members ask questions to probe for the different beliefs and assumptions people hold about the topic. This shift from advocating my own point of view to getting curious about others' point of view is a radical shift for many leaders. In an increasingly fragmented world, it will be only those leaders who hear and represent many perspectives that will be trusted and followed by all.

Key Design Lesson

The process of vertical development is the process of taking on and holding more and more perspectives. Design experiences where leaders must suspend their own assumptions and beliefs so they can practice the skill of taking on another's—hard to do, very developmental.

4. Hold Two Opposing Ideas in Your Mind: Polarity Thinking

Are you able to hold two opposing ideas in your mind and see both as right? A breakthrough for many leaders is the realization that their business is full of natural tensions that can never be resolved, only managed. These tensions, or polarities, are pairs of interdependent opposites that pull against each other, e.g., centralization versus decentralization, standardization versus customization. Managing polarities requires a move from either/or (black and white) thinking to both/and (shades of gray) thinking.

This creates a tremendous developmental pull for leaders as they try to grapple with the question of how to get the best of both sides of a polarity, e.g., centralization AND decentralization ("It's not possible!"). Leaders practice this by taking on real polarities in the business and working through a five-stage process to see, map, assess, learn, and leverage the polarities. This leaves many leaders feeling dizzy but also leaves them with new perspectives they didn't previously possess.

Key Design Lesson

Leaders develop blind spots when they overvalue one side of a polarity (e.g., flexibility) and neglect the other (planning). Have the leaders examine real business issues and identify the polarities that exist within them. Also get them to identify the polarities they wrestle with in relation to their own leadership style, e.g., supportive and demanding. For more, see http://www.polaritypartnerships.com/.

5. Develop a Systems Perspective: The Organizational Workshop

This is a frame-breaking one- to two-day experience that requires leaders to see their organization from a systems perspective. Leaders are placed into a mock organization at different levels and asked to collaborate up and down the organization to meet customers' needs. Everyone promises to collaborate but as the experience begins, system dynamics dictate otherwise. Coalitions form, enemies are identified, and the blame game erupts. Halfway through, there is a facilitated discussion on what is really happening in this system. Perceptions change, collaborations form, and with a higher-level systems lens, leaders rise above their interpersonal biases (sometimes) to create a higher-functioning organization (or sometimes not, which is always rich for development). For more, see Barry Oshry— http://bit.ly/1lCeClP.

Key Design Lesson

Many leadership programs focus only on behaviors (360 feedback, influence) and personality (Myers-Briggs, conflict styles). When you help leaders to also see systems, you give them not only more perspectives to work with but also a more accurate view of how organizations really function.

Note to trainers and consultants

If you really want to help leaders develop, you must show them what development looks like. I see a lot of trainers asking other people to open up, share their worldview, and have collisions, but they are unprepared to do it themselves. It doesn't work. The very best facilitators I have seen aren't spectators; they show the way by opening themselves up and becoming vulnerable. If you're not prepared to go first, don't expect anyone else in the room to move either.

3. Elevated Sensemaking

The third vertical condition asks leaders to take what they have learned from the heat experience and new perspectives and make sense of them from more advanced stages of development (appendix 1). In doing this the leader's development starts to move from being informational to transformational.

Vertical sensemaking is perhaps the most neglected of the three conditions. To do this well, organizations need to provide leaders with three key ingredients.

Time

If you want to help leaders develop vertically, you have to help them carve out time for reflection. Leadership programs offer the perfect opportunity for this, but too many are so jam-packed with content that the opportunity to solidify development is lost. A third of leadership development should be devoted to structured reflection and sensemaking. Remember that Nelson Mandela took 27 years to reflect on his heat experiences, and he turned into a pretty good leader.

Map

Leaders develop faster with a map. For horizontal development, we give them a competency map and 360 assessments to tell them how they are doing horizontally. With vertical, give them stage maps that show them how their thinking is progressing over time. The good news, as you'll see below, is that researchers have already done much of the hard work for you. You just need to apply what they've learned.

Guide

It is faster and easier to navigate new terrain if you're traveling with a guide who knows the territory and has guided others on the path. Good coaches or mentors can play this role because they know the developmental terrain. Especially effective are coaches with a vertical lens, since they can coach you from the stage at which you are currently, but then keep pushing you out to your developmental edge.

Here are five approaches to help leaders engage in vertical sensemaking.

1. Learn from the Gurus: Use Stage Maps

Many of us can look back to earlier times in our lives, such as our teens and 20s, and see how much our thinking and emotions have evolved. But can you look forward and see where your thinking and feeling is going next? Researchers such as Susanne Cook-Greuter, Robert Kegan, and Bill Torbert have dedicated decades to interviewing, cataloging, and mapping the sequence of stages through which adults evolve.[10] There are few activities that I have found more developmental than reading, discussing, and looking through the stage lens just beyond my current one. To do this with a group of leaders, a facilitator typically teaches them about the stages, asks each person to estimate his/her current stage, and then gives a personal stage assessment report to digest. Coaching then becomes crucial to help the leaders find and explore their developmental edges.

Key Design Lesson

Organizations have spent a great deal of time helping leaders see each other from different horizontal perspectives ("I'm an ENTJ and you're an ISFP."), but little to no time helping them see vertical perspectives. This is a huge opportunity for organizations to add a new powerful dimension to the way they develop their leaders (think competency maps + vertical stages).

2. Coach with a Vertical Lens

In many ways, coaching can be the ultimate vertical practice as it pulls on nearly all the levers of development (heat challenges, different perspectives, and new mapmaking). The coach's job is largely to help coachees see the beliefs, values, and mental maps they are subject to so they can examine what is still useful and what may be discarded. This opens the space for coaches, especially those operating from a later stage of development, to offer up new and higher frames of thinking for the person to try on. Bill Joiner, for example, asks the coachee to read stories of leaders at the same developmental stage as them and then stories of leaders at one stage higher. He asks questions to help the leader compare the difference between the two stages and then asks them how their own leadership challenge might be approached differently from the higher stage view.

Key Design Lesson

Whenever possible, use coaches who are both skilled coaches AND who understand the stages of adult development. This vertical lens means the coach can meet people where they are developmentally and have them explore how they might view their challenge differently one stage beyond their current edge.

3. Pair High Potentials with Late-Stage Mentors

A powerful developmental experience is spending time with a mentor who is operating from a later stage of development. If you have ever had this experience, you can't help but notice that these mentors ask different questions than you and that their perspectives don't mesh with the way you see the world. They are often happy to take your adversaries' point-of-view or tell you how your challenge looks different from three levels higher in the organization or two below. If your readiness is right, they can also help you start to create new maps of reality that are more suited to where your career and life might be headed. The experience of partnering with late-stage thinkers can be both discomforting and enlightening. If the trust is high and the relationship endures, these repetitive "peek" experiences into a new way of thinking can act as a powerful pull to later stages.

Key Design Lesson

They say your greatest teacher is the one just ahead of you on the path. See if you can identify some of the leaders in your organization who are thinking just beyond the leaders you are developing. Then bring them in as mentors or storytellers to help the leaders make sense of their challenges through later, more advanced lenses.

4. Vertical Development for the Executive Team

In CCL's experience, the most effective way to shift the vertical development of an organization is to shift the mindset of the Executive Team (ET). This is because the beliefs and decisions of the ET create a vertical ceiling in the organization that is hard for others to advance beyond. When you elevate the thinking of the ET you raise the ceiling for everyone else, unleashing a much previously locked-up potential. The CCL process, developed by John McGuire and known as creating headroom, involves these four steps:

- Ask the exec team to look at the business strategy and map out the leadership culture required to execute the strategy (covertly you are really asking them, "What stage of vertical development does your strategy require?")

- Explain that a more advanced leadership culture requires the ET to model it first, not only in their words but also more importantly, in their beliefs and behaviors.

- Over the next 12 months a facilitator joins ET monthly meetings during which:

    The team chooses three difficult business issues and uses action inquiry tools (6 box, dialogue, polarities)[11] to surface the beliefs and mental models at play on these issues.

    As they uncover the beliefs and thinking driving their behavior, the execs begin to discard, maintain, or update their mindsets to align it with the required leadership culture of their business strategy.

Once the leaders fully embody the more advanced leadership culture, the tools and mindset are cascaded (by them) across the leadership network.

Key Design Lesson

When an executive team transforms itself, it reverberates throughout the organization. The best way we've found is to start with the business strategy. Once leaders see that they can't achieve their business strategy with their current leadership culture (e.g., siloed, risk averse, noncollaborative) they become open to new solutions. The above process is hard work but in our experience the results have proved profound for both individuals and organizations.

5. Follow Google . . . and Buddha: Teach Mindfulness and Meditation

There are few practices that produce as many benefits on as many levels (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) as mindfulness and meditation. What was once alternative is now coming into the mainstream big time. Google's most popular program is a seven-week mindfulness process called Search Inside Yourself. General Mills offers meditation classes to all employees and has meditation rooms in every building. The Marines now teach meditation to reduce stress, and Mindful Resilience has become a major part of many CCL programs. From a vertical perspective, the regular practice of turning inward and observing one's own thoughts helps leaders observe the constant process of their own mean-making. Stick with it long enough and you start to notice that who you think "you" are is mainly just a story you are constructing and reconstructing moment to moment.

Key Design Lesson

It is important to introduce meditation in a practical way. At CCL, we start with the research and benefits and then give program participants some simple techniques to try out. Keep the exercises very short (3–5 minutes) and emphasize that it is more important to build a habit than have a special experience. Most leaders I meet are desperate to find ways to calm their hyperactive minds; they are just waiting for someone to show them how.

Bonus: Most Thought-Provoking—Change the Body, Repattern Your Mind

For the last 60 years, much of leadership development has focused on what happens in a leader's head. Maybe that's only half the equation. The most thought-provoking idea I came across in this research was that our memories, fears, and ambitions are not just stored in our head but carried in the cells of our bodies. Neuroscientists are now telling us that we have not one, but two brains; one in our head and one in our gut and that most of our senses are below the shoulders not above. According to neuroscientist Daniel Siegel, "The mind is embodied, not just enskulled." Kate Ogden points out, "Chronic postural and movement tendencies serve to sustain certain beliefs and cognitive distortions, and the physical patterns, in turn, contribute to the same beliefs."[7]

The implication for leadership development is that if we want to help adults develop and evolve, the most direct path may not be through the head but through the body.

Jane Weber and Roelien Bokxem use a body-based assessment (LBSI) that gives a leader an immediate sense of where in his body he is strongest, relative to nine body power centers. With a profile of three or four strongest dimensions, he can understand a lot about his characteristics: strengths, talents, gifts, and challenges. Body-based experiences also are used on leadership challenges in order to get people out of their heads (where we have all been trained to death) and to access and use their body intelligence (http://bit.ly/1EkZfTy).

Key Design Lesson

Have a fresh look at your own leadership programs and ask whether you are doing anything to help leaders understand how their bodies affect their leadership. The body has been much neglected in leadership development. I have a strong feeling that this will change (for more, visit www.embodimentinternational.com).

What to Do Next: Six Quick Wins

The preceding sections should give you plenty of food for thought for your own leadership programs, but where to start? In my experience, momentum builds from small victories. Here are six steps you can take immediately to get some quick wins under your belt.

1. **Take the Free Vertical Leader Development Audit.** This checklist shows you 16 best practices for vertical leadership development and asks you to rate your current leadership programs against each. This gives you a quick view of how vertical your programs are at the moment and where your greatest opportunities for improvement are. www.ccl.org/leadership/pdf/landing/vertical-leadership-development-audit.pdf

2. **Check your Horizontal/Vertical Balance.** Look to see if your organization is over-focusing on skills and competencies (horizontal) or mindsets and new sensemaking (vertical). If you are low in vertical, try adding some of the 15 approaches outlined in this paper into your programs.

3. **Assess Your Programs on the Three Primary Conditions.** Look at your organization's leadership programs and rate them on a scale of 1 to 5 for how well they are focusing on the three primary conditions of vertical. A good visual way to do this is to draw three circles proportionate to the size of the rating you give each.

4. **Check Out Two to Three Vertical Assessments.** Look at the assessments from the start of this paper and investigate some that you think might be a good fit for the leaders with whom you work.

5. **Send Me Your Questions.** I will gather them and answer them over the next few months on these two blogs: www.leadingeffectively.com and www.nicholaspetrie.com

6. **Partner with CCL and Nick.** If you have a program you are interested in making more vertical, send me an e-mail and tell me more about it at petrien@ccl.org. Also speak with the list of practitioners at the end of this paper about working with your organization.

Final Thoughts

For the last 30 years, a small group of academics (many mentioned in this paper) have built the foundations of vertical development. They came from academic institutions and doctoral programs and focused largely on their research into the stages of development. It is time to take the work they have done and make it more accessible and well-known in the modern workplace; call it Vertical 2.0.

To do this we need organizations that realize their leaders need more than just new skills; they need breakthroughs in thinking.

We need leaders who recognize that their greatest growth happens not just in the classroom, but on real, complex work (with the right supports in place).

Most of all, we need practitioners who can take the best of what they know about horizontal development (building skills and competencies) and combine it with the best approaches for developing leaders vertically.

When we do this, we might find that leadership development can be done a lot more efficiently and effectively than it currently is. Developing leaders need not be expensive and it need not be time-consuming. It must, however, be thoughtfully approached for what actually works, and in the words of Warren Buffett and Bill Gates, it must be focused. We have all the pieces and we know what's required; it's time to focus.

Endnotes

[1] Several of the experts suggested that vertical and horizontal development are really two sides of the same coin, and as such, should not be made to seem polar opposites. I agree that the process of horizontal and vertical development often occurs at the same time. I also feel that it is helpful to make a distinction between the two as most people have little or no knowledge of vertical development to start with.

[2] http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/fed2ad82-8c2e-11dd-8a4c-0000779fd18c.html

[3] Digby Scott was a great contributor to thinking around the three conditions and primary colors.

[4] Derived from the work of Bob Eichinger and Michael Lombardo.

[5] Susanne Cook-Greuter also points out "the need for respecting people's own wishes and not to push-pull people towards vertical development out of one's own bias towards the latter. We can only repeat, optimal well-being is a matter of fit between person, cultural and corporate environment, task demands, health, talents, expertise, and interests. 'Higher' is not automatically better when taken in isolation."

[6] While it is convenient and often helpful to think of ourselves as "being at a stage," there is likely more nuance to it. Some researchers believe that you have a "center of gravity" that you operate from but that you will also stretch into stages just above and below. Others such as Kurt Fischer, Theo Dawson, and Aiden Thornton point out firstly, there may in fact be multiple lines of development for any individual (not just ego development) and secondly, that context (social support, culture, task type) plays an important part in development and performance— for more, see Fischer's Dynamic Skills theory.

[7] Derived from the work of former CCL faculty Michael Lombardo and Bob Eichenger.

[8] Van Velsor, E., Wilson, M., Criswell, C., & Chandrasekar N. A. (2013, July 17). Learning to lead: A comparison of developmental events and learning among managers in China, India and the United States. *Asian Business & Management, 12*, 455–476.

[9] Jennifer Garvey-Berger points out that Action Learning can be very powerful when done right: "It just needs to have some core features; focus on real work, on new perspectives, on learning from doing. I basically use them to find and fix the pain point in a business." She's right, of course, and she and others like Bill Torbert have set the standard. When done well, Action Learning can be very helpful for leaders. Just be sure not to create "bad" action learning projects by giving leaders "development" that is really just more work.

[10] Bill Joiner, Theo Dawson, Kurt Fischer, and John McGuire are others who stand out for their work in this area.

[11] These are tools created by Bill Torbert and Barry Johnson.

Appendix 1—Vertical Stages of Development

Kegan's Adult Levels of Development

- **3–Socialized mind:** At this level we are shaped by the expectations of those around us. What we think and say is strongly influenced by what we think others want to hear.

- **4–Self-authoring mind:** We have developed our own ideology or internal compass to guide us. Our sense of self is aligned with our own belief system, personal code, and values. We can take stands, set limits on behalf of our own internal "voice."

- **5–Self-transforming mind:** We have our own ideology, but can now step back from that ideology and see it as limited or partial. We can hold contradiction and oppositeness in our own thinking and no longer feel the need to gravitate toward polarized thinking.

Adult Levels of Development

Level	Kegan Levels	CCL Action Logics	Torbert & Rookes Action Logics*
5	Self-transforming	Interdependent-Collaborator	Ironist (>1%)* Alchemist (2%) Strategist (5%)
4	Self-authoring	Independent-Achiever	Individualist (11%) Achiever (30%) Expert (37%)
3	Socialized	Dependent-Conformer	Diplomat (11%) Opportunist (4%)

*Study of 4,510 managers. The percentages denote the number of managers measured at each stage of development using the sentence completion test.

Torbert's and Rooke's Seven Ways of Leading

Action Logic	Characteristics	% of Leaders	Effect as Leaders
1. Opportunist	***Wins any way possible.*** Self-oriented; manipulative; "might makes right."	5%	Significantly less effective at implementing organizational strategies.
2. Diplomat	***Avoids overt conflict.*** Wants to belong; obeys group norms, rarely rocks the boat.	12%	
3. Expert	***Rules by logic and expertise.*** Seeks rational efficiency.	38%	
4. Achiever	***Achieves goals through teams and with appreciation for outside forces.*** Juggles managerial duties and market demands.	30%	Effective manager. Action- and goal-oriented.
5. Individualist	***Integrates competing personal and organizational goals.*** Creates unique structures to resolve gaps in motivation, strategies, and performance.	10%	Consistent capacity to innovate and transform organizations.
6. Strategist	***Generates organizational and personal transformations.*** Exercises the power of mutual inquiry, vigilance, and vulnerability for both the short and long.	4%	
7. Alchemist	***Generates social transformations.*** Integrates material, spiritual, and societal transformation.	1%	

Exerpt from *Seven Transformations of Leadership* by David Rooke and William R. Torbert, *Harvard Business Review*, April 2005. More information is available at www.harthill.co.uk.

About the Author

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