



# CUTTINGS

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Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

## A SHORTAGE OF LEADERS

There is a predicted shortage of leadership talent worldwide, coupled with a dangerous drain on the knowledge banks of most organisations caused by the aging of the baby-boomer bulge.

The first warning comes from the Human Resource Institute (HRI) in the USA. Every two years they conduct a survey to identify the most critical issues in people management. Attracting, developing and retaining leadership talent has topped the list for the past few iterations, and in 2004 leadership was ranked as first or second in importance by executives in Europe and Asia as well.

Jay Jamrog, director of HRI explained the demographics. The 35-54 year old age cohort is a prime source group for leadership talent in many organisations, but the baby boomer

cohort is aging and the Generation-X cohort is substantially smaller. So a decline in the leadership population while demand is predicted to increase.

There is also an issue of turnover in management currently at an all time high of 40 percent of the top executives in the largest 2,500 companies churned over the past 3 years.

Jamrog also raises the issue of retention and attraction. Companies need leaders at all levels, but often people in positions don't have the experience or the training to do the job.

One of the major issues is that we don't measure and reward leadership skills like communication, engagement, interaction, direction. Instead we measure and reward management skills—smooth running processes and work getting done. So the foundation for building leadership is missing.

As a baby boomer myself I noticed an article in the same LeaderValues newsletter. As we are about to retire in droves, there will be a significant impact on the knowledge levels in the organisations we leave. This is easily predictable, but precious few organisations are addressing the issue.

Rene Petrin suggests a tool to help alleviate this problem—executive mentoring. A formal, structured programme to the transfer knowledge, practical experience, grass roots know-how and nuances from senior-level executives to mid-level managers to prepare them to move successfully into senior-level positions.

*Leaders in Short Supply Just When We Need Them* by Albert Vicere.

*The Retirement of the Baby Boom Generation: The Coming Knowledge Drain* by Rene Petrin [www.LeaderValues.com](http://www.LeaderValues.com)

## A NON-STYLE OF LEADERSHIP?

An enduring image of modern working life is undoubtedly the nameless but universally recognisable "Pointy Haired Boss" in the Dilbert cartoons, famed for his incompetence and his lack of leadership qualities. Even managers laugh at the character because, as its creator Scott Adams says, "they think it's talking about someone else". Paradoxically, those of us who work with managers find them to be intelligent, well-educated and intent on doing a professional job. How is it possible to have two such contradictory images?

Surveys on situational leadership define four distinctive styles that managers use: Directing, Coaching, Supporting and Delegating. However, this assumes that the manager always uses a recognisable style; what if (s)he does not – simply supposing their staff will "do the right thing" with no

management input at all? This might seem like a wildly optimistic, or even foolhardy, assumption, but it would explain the unlimited quantities of true stories from bewildered employees that Scott Adams receives daily. How could this possibly tally with the dedicated and smart managers we meet in real life?

My colleague Ben Johnson has a theory that this assumption is based on the way they were "managed" themselves. Their ability to appear competent in a leadership void was the very reason for their promotion. They quite naturally believe that what worked for them will work for others, blissfully unaware that they have succeeded in situations where most people will fail, or at least struggle.

To test his theory Ben has piloted a survey using a version of the situational leadership styles modified to include a "non-style". This "non-

style" was identified by employees as being used about 11% of the time, although the managers believed they only used it less than 1%. As this pilot was part of a training course, the results may not be fully representative: the results may be even more extreme – surveys done with other employees have shown their manager's use of the "non style" to be as high as 50%.

So this "non style" of leadership may be quite prevalent. Its impact is invisible for the managers themselves but highly visible to the Dilberts, Wallys and Alices. If you would like to take part in the research then log on to [www.hintsltd.com/surveys](http://www.hintsltd.com/surveys). All those who participate will receive a personalised summary and a copy of the overall findings from the survey.

*Leadership and the One Minute Manager* by Kenneth Blanchard, Patricia Zigarmi, Drea Zigarmi

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# Snippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations ...

- ✂ "Over the years, leaders consistently have chosen power rather than productivity. They would rather be in control than have the organization work at optimal efficiency. And now there's another belief surfacing: When risk runs high, power must be wielded by only a few people. Just the opposite is true. Reflective leaders, including those in the military, have learned that the higher the risk, the more we need everyone's commitment and intelligence." *Margaret Wheatley*
- ✂ "Most great men and women are not perfectly rounded in their personalities, but are instead people whose one driving enthusiasm is so great it makes their faults seem insignificant." *Charles A. Cerami*
- ✂ "Many of life's failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up." *Thomas Alva Edison*
- ✂ "The world is full of willing people; some willing to work, the rest willing to let them." *Robert Frost*
- ✂ "Consistency is contrary to nature, contrary to life. The only completely consistent people are the dead." *Aldous Huxley*
- ✂ "Whenever two people meet there are really six people present. There is each man as he sees himself, each man as the other person sees him, and each man as he really is." *William James*
- ✂ "The only difference between a problem and a solution is that people understand the solution." *Charles F. Kettering*
- ✂ "Some of the world's greatest feats were accomplished by people not smart enough to know they were impossible." *Doug Larson*
- ✂ "It is a good thing for an uneducated man to read books of quotations." *Sir Winston Churchill*
- ✂ "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm." *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
- ✂ "We can do anything we want to do if we stick to it long enough." *Helen Keller*

## The Power of Positive Feedback

Bruce Elkin is one of many who have quoted the recent Gallup poll which asked parents:

"Your child shows you the following grades: English: A; Social Studies: A, Biology: C; Algebra: F. Which grade deserves the most attention from you?"

The vast majority of parents in every country focused on the F. The USA and Canada had the biggest gap. In Canada, only 6% of parents focused on As, while 83% focused on the F. In the UK, 22% of parents focused on the As, while 52% focused on the F.

We all want to help our kids turn those Fs and Cs into As and Bs. But why start with a negative focus, with the F? "Why not start with a positive focus on the A's before working on strategies for improving the F?" is the question posed by Tom Rath and Donald Clifton.

Would it not be more productive if discussions with your child began with a focus on the positive, with praise and recognition? Might then the discussion about the F be more amiable and productive?

In another study, researcher Dr. Elizabeth Hurlock wanted to find out what was more effective? Praise? Criticism? Or just ignoring the students? She found that children who were praised experienced a 71% rate of overall improvement. Those who were criticized improved by 19% and the ignored improved by only 5%.

Work studies show that leaders who are the most effective work to their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses by delegating. They spend very little time doing remedial work.

And in a sporting example, Tiger Woods is rated amongst the top of his peers for the length and direction of his drives off the tee, his long irons and his putting. But his ability to get out of bunkers is only average: he is ranked 61<sup>st</sup> for 'sand saves'. His strategy is to maintain an acceptable level of performance in his weak areas and concentrate on continuing to develop his strengths.

*Bruce Elkin, Simplicity and Success*  
*How Full Is Your Bucket by Tom Rath and Donald Clifton*  
*Now, Discover Your Strengths by Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton*

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Learning Consortium

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