Supporting Initiatives To Enhance Leadership Development

William L. Johnson

August 2021
Advisor: Eve Rifkin

Acknowledgements and Gratitude

The past three years have presented a great opportunity for learning and self-reflection. This program challenged us to view the world a little differently and to seek understanding from many different perspectives. Our learning process made us uncomfortable at times and forced us to evaluate our beliefs in the light of increased understanding. It has been comforting to be part of a learning community that is open to new ideas and respectful of each of our differences.

Cohort #4 you are a tremendous group of overachievers and you have stretched me beyond the point of what I thought was possible. Thanks for accepting me and showing me grace as I learned new terms and gained insight into the world of education. It is going to be great watching each of you make a real difference with your lives in the years to come.

To our instructors, you embraced stretching our cognitive abilities and at times, endurance. You showed sincere caring and wanted us to learn each night. It is obvious that you each approach education as a calling versus a career. You just can't hide that level of sincerity.

To Dr. Eve Rifkin, you pushed us to become scholar-practitioners and perform at levels we didn't believe possible. Your guidance throughout the capstone season and patience for our endless questions will help me become a better leader. Keep up the good work.

Finally to my family, it will be great to become reacquainted with each of you in the weeks ahead. You tolerated my three-year absence from family activities to pursue my dream of a doctorate. Thank you seems a little inadequate but I look forward to making up for lost time.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Table of Contents

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Executive Summary

The purpose of this capstone project was to identify how additional support initiatives will enhance training transfer and positively impact leadership effectiveness.

The focal organization for this study was Fission (pseudonym), a nuclear power plant located in the western United States. Fission, like many organizations, faces the challenge of developing new leaders with the skills necessary to lead the workforce of the future, while attempting to help experienced leaders change their beliefs about effective leadership. Over the past few years, Fission has implemented several leadership development training programs, but it is not realizing the desired level of success in transferring training concepts into leadership practice. Fission's current employee engagement and turnover levels are two indicators that reflect some of the leadership training transfer challenges. The organization also faces the challenge of replacing approximately 30 percent of its leaders over the next five years due to retirements and turnover.

To address these challenges, leadership wants to evaluate the current leadership development program design and implementation processes; discover challenges leaders are facing in transferring training into practice; and identify organizational factors that may be impacting the training transfer climate.

After initial conversations with Fission leadership and a preliminary literature review, my research narrowed toward Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer of training theory. The transfer of training conceptual framework provided a foundation for analysis using the three training inputs of trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment which helped to organize data collection and analysis. These inputs are theorized as essential building blocks for the outputs of learning and retention. The inputs and outputs work together to create the overall conditions for

VANDERBILT Peabody College

training transfer to support generalization and maintenance of new knowledge. This approach also provided space to build on more recent scholarly research and take into consideration the current needs of the focal organization.

This capstone project used a mixed methods approach that included a qualitative document review, a quantitative survey, and qualitative interviews designed to answer one primary research question: What conditions support learning transfer for leadership training participants?

The qualitative document review focused on Fission's leadership model (FLM) which defines leadership expectations along with supporting performance documents (job descriptions, performance objectives, and development goals) to gain insight into the trainee characteristic of motivation. The quantitative survey and qualitative interviews focused on motivation to transfer, training design, and work environment.

The research question guided my analysis of the various components of transfer of training and provided the basis of five primary findings. The first finding identified that leaders are missing opportunities to enhance motivation to transfer by failing to reinforce training expectations before and after training. The second finding confirmed that leadership development training programs are not integrated or linked to specific organizational objectives. The third finding identified that trainees value interactions with cohort group members and believe those interactions are beneficial to their personal development. The fourth finding discovered that leadership behaviors are being inconsistently applied across the organization. Finally, the fifth finding highlighted a culture in which desired leadership behaviors appear to be less valued than operating results.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Three recommendations were developed to help Fission leadership enhance leadership development at all levels within the organization. The recommendations build on one another to create a more holistic and integrated approach to leadership development. However, implementing each recommendation will be increasingly more difficult. Recommendations include:

1. Encourage leaders to play an active role in leadership development by establishing a formal process for pre- and post-training coaching conversations with required progress reporting.

2. Redesign training to reflect a holistic approach to leadership development that integrates performance management and rewards systems.

3. Reset leader expectations for active participation in training and use of defined leadership behaviors at a refresher course starting with the senior leader team and cascading to all leaders across the organization.

The core organizational leadership challenge resides within recommendation #3 where culture change is needed. Fission has taken an important first step in developing the FLM which defines the value of leadership. However to create sustainable change, senior leadership will need to actively engage in the planning and delivery of leadership development training. They will also need to model the desired leadership behaviors and create a work environment that values the work of leadership, while achieving desired operating results. These are foundational steps required to create positive conditions for transfer and enhance opportunities for improving leadership effectiveness.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Introduction

Leadership development is a $356 billion global industry designed to enhance individual leader and organizational effectiveness (Beer et al., 2016). However, based on the results of the State of Leadership Development Survey only seven percent of organizations believe their leadership training is best in class and many believe their programs are not effective at transferring training into practice (Harvard Business Publishing, 2016). Other research points to several possible reasons for this low return on investment but most involve the inability to align culture and operating practices with longer-term organizational objectives before training is delivered (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Reichard & Johnson, 2011).

Several additional factors may impact the effectiveness of leadership development training and ultimately the success in transferring the learned skills into leadership behaviors. For example, many organizations do not take the time to define expectations for leader performance and link those actions to the desired long-term organizational outcomes (Yukl, 2008). Others fail to create a culture and the working environment that values the actual work of leadership (Charan et al., 2011). Without this cultural change, leadership development training can create confusion among leaders and impact leader motivation by sending mixed messages when the organization values operational results more than their defined leadership behaviors (Besharov & Khurana, 2015).

Leadership development training has also proven to be ineffective when it is viewed as a standalone event versus being seen as an ongoing process of tightly integrated training sessions and experiential learning experiences (Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007). Because training is just one small piece of the learning process, it is important to evaluate all of the other factors that

VANDERBILT Peabody College

impact a trainee's motivation to put training concepts and desired leadership behaviors into practice (Hawley & Barnard, 2005).

Training that results in sustained behavior change is a demonstration of training transfer. "For transfer to have occurred, learned behavior must be generalized to the job context and maintained over a period of time on the job" (Baldwin & Ford, 1988, p. 63). It is not enough for leaders to learn effective behaviors; they must apply them on the job.

It is also important to understand that leaders are under intense pressure to deliver operating results and it can be challenging to create time to experiment with new skills (Santos & Stuart, 2003). In contrast, human learning takes time and individual leaders develop at different speeds (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010; Vandergoot et al., 2019).

In addition to the challenges mentioned above, Fission has the unique challenge of operating in a highly regulated industry where safety and operational requirements place great value on a leader's technical expertise. This has reinforced a culture that highly values the concept of "getting the job done."

The purpose of this capstone project was to identify how additional support initiatives will enhance training transfer and positively impact leadership effectiveness. The project was designed to evaluate leadership development program design and implementation processes; discover challenges leaders are facing in transferring training into practice; and identify organizational factors that may be impacting the training transfer climate.

The capstone project used a mixed methods approach to answer one primary research question. Data was collected through a qualitative document review, a quantitative survey, and qualitative interviews. Findings were identified through data analysis and recommendations developed for Fission leadership's consideration.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Organizational Context

Fission (pseudonym required by client organization) is a nuclear power plant located in the western United States that has safely provided clean, affordable, and reliable energy to meet the changing needs of customers for over 30 years. Fission is a mission-based organization that has invested heavily in developing a culture that both supports their values and achieves operational excellence. Fission operates in a highly regulated industry that requires a focus on safety and a culture in which "speaking up" is essential to long-term success. Because of the inherent safety risk of a nuclear facility, it is essential that everyone in the organization feels responsible and comfortable asking questions and identifying any safety concerns. Without this deliberate approach to building an open culture, the focus on safety could be compromised.

The organization also employs comprehensive talent management strategies to enhance functional skills, increase knowledge retention, and promote the personal development of team members. These efforts are further guided by a detailed set of company values which stress the importance of safety, integrity, trust, respect, inclusion, and accountability. The values are discussed as part of each employee's onboarding process and reinforced through ongoing communications.

Fission employs approximately 2,500 full time employees, 300 of whom are in leadership roles. Fission also utilizes approximately 1,000 contractors for ongoing maintenance. Roughly one-third of its employees have some form of military experience and leadership is primarily male.

Fission's leadership is structured into four categories of leaders:

- leader of others - section leader, team leader, supervisor
- leader of leaders - department leader, manager
- leader of leaders plus - director
- functional leader - executive

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Each level of leadership has specific competencies and fundamentals that further define the job expectations. Leadership behaviors have been further defined to establish both expectations and provide a basis on which to evaluate leadership effectiveness. The competencies, fundamentals, and behaviors were created as tangible steps in implementing a leadership framework where leaders:

- set direction
- maximize competence
- engage the workforce
- cope with risk
- achieve sustainable results

The company's operations not only provide significant employment but also create substantial economic impact for the local community in which it operates. The parent organization has also made a commitment to become a 100 percent clean energy producer by 2050 and Fission will play a critical role in helping the organization meet this aggressive goal.

Over the past few years, the organization has implemented several leadership development training programs for all levels of leadership as a step toward improving leadership effectiveness. This training created uniform leadership terminology for use in training courses. In addition to implementing leadership training, the organization has also developed a comprehensive Fission Leadership Model (FLM) to communicate direction and establish expectations across the entire organization. Fission leadership believes the FLM and the training programs are well designed to help its leaders be more effective in their roles, but they are not realizing the desired level of success in transferring training concepts into leadership practice. Company leaders identified challenges with the current level of employee engagement, ongoing turnover, and inconsistencies in leadership practices as some of the indicators that point to the lack of training transfer from leadership development training. Also, Fission anticipates that over

VANDERBILT Peabody College

the next five years it will need to replace approximately 30 percent of its current leaders due to retirements and ongoing turnover. These changes in leaders will put additional pressure on preparing new and less experienced leaders for more significant leadership roles.

To address these concerns, senior leadership desires to further evaluate their overall leadership development approach to determine how to enhance training transfer of desired leadership behaviors. Leadership also wants to evaluate options for monitoring leader development progress after training sessions and explore additional supporting initiatives that could be implemented to further enhance overall leadership effectiveness.

Problem of Practice

The purpose of this capstone study was to identify how additional support initiatives will enhance training transfer and positively impact leadership effectiveness. The findings of the research will provide Fission leadership with insight about the design of current leadership development programs; the challenges leaders are facing in transferring training content into their daily roles; and identify other factors that may be impacting the transfer climate of the organization.

Fission has implemented several leadership training programs over recent years but are not realizing the expected benefits from transferring the classroom learning into desired leadership behaviors. Fission leadership and human resources staff point to poor employee engagement, increased turnover, and inconsistencies in leadership behaviors as indicators of the lack of training transfer. In addition, Fission will need to replace approximately 30 percent of its leaders in the coming five years due to retirements and anticipated turnover. While some new leaders have been recently hired, these new leaders will need, as research suggests, time to develop and will require increased supervisor support to effectively grow into their leadership

VANDERBILT Peabody College

roles (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Richman & Hirsch, 2001; Kets de Fries & Korotov, 2010; Van den Bossche et al., 2010).

Fission, like many organizations, faces the growing challenge of developing new leaders with the skills necessary to lead the workforce of the future, while attempting to help experienced leaders change their beliefs about effective leadership. These change management efforts create additional challenges for training transfer and will likely require additional changes in operational and support practices for transfer to be successful (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Ready & Conger, 2003; Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Vardiman et al., 2006).

Preliminary discussions with Fission leadership indicates a desire to improve leader performance and evolve the organization toward a more collaborative approach to leadership. However, these desires are tempered by a history of a very structured and directive approach to leadership. Change is further challenged by the highly technical backgrounds of many leaders and the required focus on safety. Senior leadership has taken the initiative to develop a new leadership model (FLM) to communicate desired leader behaviors, but it will take time for sustainable cultural change to occur (Kets de Fries & Korotov, 2010; Vandergoot et al., 2019).

In addition to current leadership challenges, Fission senior leadership has the desire to improve operating efficiency. A common phrase showed up in early conversations about "doing more with less." As this objective is shared across the organization, it can create additional pressure on middle managers to achieve financial and operational results. While these results are necessary for long-term company success, the increased focus on financial results puts additional pressure on leaders as they deal with change and attempt to find time to implement desired leadership behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2000; Packard & Jones, 2013). Senior leadership also risks their credibility if organizational support for leaders described in the FLM is not appropriately

modeled through leader actions at all levels of the organization (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Govaerts et al., 2018; Stillman et al., 2018; Vardiman, 2006).

Even though this capstone project focuses on the needs of a nuclear power plant, these same leadership challenges are faced by many organizations as they implement new approaches to developing leaders. Identifying these challenges, exploring interventions, and creating senior leader awareness appear to be transferrable to other organizations.

Considering the broader impact of the transfer of training problem, current research indicates that the problem is becoming even more acute (Baldwin et al., 2017). For example, it is estimated that organizations spend over $356 billion annually on leadership training alone (Beer et al., 2016). However a survey by Harvard Business Publishing (2016) indicates that only seven percent of senior leaders believe training results in improved leadership behaviors.

While the financial impact of the transfer of training problem would be enough to warrant immediate attention, the problem has also been linked to poor employee engagement, increased turnover, and lost productivity (Avolio et al., 2010; Baldwin et al., 2017; Ford et al., 2008; Grossman & Salas, 2011). These issues create additional challenges for organizations as they attempt to respond to change and develop new leadership skills that will help team members adapt to new ways of working (Baldwin et al., 2017; Grossman & Salas, 2011).

Moving from organizational impact to the practical implications of the transfer of training problem, trainers and leaders also face many challenges in creating training programs that are consistent with organizational strategies and supported by individual leaders. Transfer of training involves many factors that go well beyond the content or quality of training programs. These challenges will be explored in more detail in the literature review.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Literature Review

Leadership effectiveness is thought to be impacted by a leader's cognitive abilities, practical experiences, and the internal support processes provided by the organization (Fiedler, 1996). Ready and Conger (2003) also support the need for an integrated approach that normalizes leadership terminology, performance expectations, and rewards consistent with desired leadership behaviors that support effective leadership. Their research further stresses the need to define the standard approaches for teaching leadership and establishing expectations for grooming leaders. Vardiman et al. (2006) point out the importance of creating an organizational environment and culture that facilitates the development of effective leaders at every organizational level. This type of environment places value on and actively encourages the process of leadership development. It is also important to create a culture that identifies development of others as central to their work activity (Vardiman et al., 2006; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005). Reichard and Johnson (2011) propose a multi-level model for leader self-development which incorporates organizational business strategies and active learning opportunities to teach adaptability to change. This model or theory of self-development requires senior leaders to create the conditions necessary for leaders to engage in and benefit from self-development behaviors. This includes allocating appropriate resources and developing measures to evaluate the application of leadership skills in ongoing organizational activities and aligning reward systems to support the leader's self-development efforts (Reichard & Johnson, 2011).

One challenge leaders typically face is transferring what is learned in the classroom to their jobs. Moldoveanu and Narayandas (2019) describe this challenge as "the distance between the locus of learning with the locus of application" (p. 42). An ideal learning community is thought to be both personalized to the trainee and within the context of the organization's goals

VANDERBILT Peabody College

and reporting processes (Moldoveanu & Narayandas, 2019). They further describe the benefit of training transfer through collaboration with other leaders in shared assignments across functions. Baldwin and Ford (1988) use a similar concept to describe the elements of transfer of training by analyzing trainee characteristics, training design, and the work environment to determine how training transfer can be generated, maintained, and adapted to specific job settings.

Leadership development can take many forms and achieve varying levels of success depending on a range of features. Day's (2000) research supports the need for development programs to include action learning and ongoing feedback to ensure that training concepts are put to use by leaders within the organization. Conger and Toegel (2002) further identify the importance of creating educational experiences and follow-on activities to facilitate deeper and more lasting learning transfer. This approach appears to work best when it is supported through structured curriculum that includes both skills development and experiential learning combined with ongoing performance feedback (Stillman et al., 2018). Another element which may enhance the experiential process is working in learning groups of five to eight individuals, ideally from different parts of the organization (Peters & Smith, 1998). Peters and Smith (1998) also identify that learning groups may provide opportunities to identify diverse ideas for solving ongoing challenges and support development of working relationships that may further enhance organizational performance. Their research also identifies the benefit for executives to work with these groups to discuss their experiences and offer insight into personal development efforts.

Since leadership development is an essential building block for leadership effectiveness, it is important to measure the impact of training efforts on individual performance. Research suggests that establishing leadership competencies and clear performance expectations are first steps in defining what will be measured in an attempt to ensure that results are consistent with

VANDERBILT Peabody College

organizational strategies (Cacioppe, 1998). Another important step is integrating the leadership competencies with job descriptions and performance reviews (Reichard & Johnson, 2011). 360-degree feedback is another measurement tool that can provide individual leaders increased awareness about how their actions are perceived by others and focus their individual development efforts on those areas with the greatest need (Waldman et al., 1998). Aligning the feedback tool with the previously identified leadership competencies provides one more method for evaluating progress of leadership development activities (Reichard & Johnson, 2011).

Building on the initial review of research on leadership effectiveness, combined with Fission's desire to enhance the transfer of leadership training concepts into leadership behaviors, my research focus narrowed to concentrate on the research by Baldwin and Ford (1988) that theorizes about the conditions for successful transfer of training. The following sections describe these conditions and how the theory has evolved over time.

Trainee Characteristics

Baldwin and Ford (1988) identify ability, personality, and motivation as characteristics that a trainee needs to possess as essential inputs to training. Much research shows that cognitive ability impacts a learner's capability to learn new skills and retain new information (Blume et al., 2010; Fiedler, 1996). However, since ability and personality are generally believed to remain relatively unchanged over time, it appears that motivation is the trainee characteristic which can be the most impacted in the training transfer process (Grossman & Salas, 2011; Lee, 2020; Van den Bossche et al., 2010). Grossman and Salas (2011) expanded on this assumption by identifying how a trainee's motivation to transfer can be influenced by their self-efficacy and its downstream impact on absorption and application of training concepts. Further, self-efficacy is thought to impact an individual's confidence and enhance motivation to seek positive outcomes

VANDERBILT Peabody College

(Colquitt et al., 2000). Self-efficacy may also impact some leaders more intensely if they are less tenured, female, or persons of color (Colquitt et al. 2000; Fritz & Van Kippenberg, 2017). Also, organizations that place high value on experience or membership in a dominate group, may need to guard against stereotype threat which could decrease motivation within underrepresented groups (Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). Since self-efficacy is thought to play a significant role in determining a trainee's motivation to transfer, it may be beneficial to expand leadership training to include identity development.

Trainee motivation can also be impacted by the concept of implementation intention (Govaerts et al., 2018; Vandergoot et al., 2020). This research focuses on goal striving and achievement as they approach training. Said another way, the trainee's intention to transfer the skills learned in training to their actual leadership role is another component of trainee motivation (Govaerts et al., 2018; Vandergoot, et al., 2020). One way to enhance implementation intention is for supervisors to provide ongoing feedback with a specific link to a trainee's personal development and career aspirations (Seyler et al., 1998). Goal setting and supervisor support in reinforcing training concepts has also been shown to impact a trainee's motivation (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Van den Bossche et al., 2010).

Training Design

Training design may also impact motivation through the perceived value of the training in comparison to actual job requirements (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). This perception may be enhanced by the trainee's leader participating in similar training and including change management concepts as part of leadership development (Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007).

Expanding on the concept of training design, Baldwin et al. (2017) pointed out an unintended consequence of Baldwin and Ford's 1988 study in which research shifted away from

the fundamentals of learning design. These researchers now believe more emphasis should be placed on the learning process and the importance of integrated training versus a series of sequential tasks. In reality, trainees make a series of choices to transfer what they learned in the classroom to their actual work (Blume et al., 2019). Transfer can also be enhanced through training if it is structured in a manner that is consistent with the work environment and linked to expected behaviors by the trainee (Blume et al., 2019).

Training design can be further enhanced by appropriately sequencing training sessions and incorporating sound learning principles that activate meaningful learning (Karpicke, 2012; Mahan et al., 2014). Effectively sequenced training sessions can also enhance learning by interleaving content from one session to the next to support content retrieval and provide context in using a variety of skills to solve leadership challenges (Carpenter et al., 2012). This approach further supports the concept of far transfer which allows trainees to use the information gained in current training to solve future challenges across different contexts (Mahan et al., 2014.

Work Environment

The support to immediately apply the training is essential to creating a work environment that promotes transfer of training (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). However, more recent research has expanded these concepts to include a wide array of activities that begin prior to training and continue well beyond the initial training transfer period. For example, supervisor goal setting and establishing clear expectations with the trainee pre- and post-training are also key elements of a supportive environment (Richman-Hirsch, 2001). Peer support is another variable in the work environment that is thought to enhance training transfer (Hawley & Barnard, 2005). Their concept expands the requirement of supervisor support to also include the role of peer support in enhancing the trainee's willingness to apply new skills. They found this was especially important

VANDERBILT Peabody College

in forming cohort groups for trainees to reconnect with their peers to discuss ongoing challenges and practice new leadership skills (Hawley & Barnard, 2005). This study also identified the importance of senior management participating in training and modeling the identified behaviors that were being taught. Baldwin & Magjuka (1991) also identify that trainees look to their supervisor's actions as a guide for their own behaviors.

Involvement in learning groups and peer support have also been found to enhance transfer through identity development (Hand & Gresalfi, 2015). They found that identity evolves through a trainee's participation in and across activities. This study also theorizes that who a person is becoming is inseparable from the activities in which they participate. Becoming a leader is more of an evolution of the individual and can be impacted by many factors in the work environment (Lave & Wagner, 1991). Cohort groups also provide trainee's with the opportunity to express their changing views of what it means for them to be developing as leaders (Greeno & Gresalfi, 2008).

Supervisor and peer support can also be enhanced by both formal and informal feedback (Van den Bossche et al., 2010). This study found that linking the feedback to specific elements of training further reinforced the importance of transfer and increased motivation among trainees. This feedback could also enhance the development of social networks and promote the acceptance of leadership development interventions (Blume et al., 2010).

Another critical aspect of work environment is helping supervisors and trainees understand the time it takes to effectively transfer leadership training skills (Blume et al., 2016). This would apply to the time it takes to learn or adapt the training to actual work experience. More importantly, supervisors need to provide adequate time for trainees to experiment with new skills and offer constructive feedback linked to their use of the new skills (Blume et al., 2010;

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Huang et al., 2017). This feedback can be further enhanced by the use of 360-degree evaluations as one method to measure training transfer (Van den Bossche et al., 2010; Waldman et al., 1998). This type of measurement has the advantage of including the trainee's direct reports, supervisor, and peers. Frequent and sustained use of this type of tool helps to enhance the work environment by supporting the trainee's efforts and reinforcing the opportunity to use the new skills (Baldwin & Ford, 1998; Van den Bossche et al., 2010; Waldman et al., 1998).

Training transfer can be further supported in the work environment by creating structured active learning opportunities (Day, 2000). Conger and Toegel (2002) further identify the importance of creating educational experiences and post-training assignments to facilitate deeper and more meaningful learning. This approach appears to work best when it is supported through structured curriculum that includes both skills development and experiential learning combined with ongoing feedback (Stillman et al., 2018). Another element which may enhance the experiential process is working in learning groups of five to eight individuals, ideally from different parts of the organization (Peters & Smith, 1998). Peters and Smith (1998) also identify that learning groups may provide opportunities to identify diverse ideas for solving ongoing challenges and support development of working relationships that may further enhance organizational performance. Research also identifies benefits for executives to work with these groups to discuss their experiences and offer insight into personal development efforts (Moldoveanu & Narayandas, 2019; Peters & Smith, 1998).

Building on the role of supervisors in training transfer, it is important for supervisors to establish clear performance expectations that include the use of leadership training concepts and alignment of rewards with those expectations (Ready & Conger, 2003). Research also identifies the important role senior leadership plays in modeling consistent behaviors and holding middle

VANDERBILT Peabody College

managers accountable for supporting trainees as they develop as leaders (Govaerts et al., 2018; Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Vardiman et al., 2006).

In considering senior leadership's responsibility in training transfer, it is important to develop leadership training programs that are consistent with strategic initiatives and reinforce training efforts by creating a culture that supports and rewards leader development at all levels (Reichard & Johnson, 2011). Organizational alignment around these initiatives will likely require significant change in operating practices, rewards systems, and ongoing communications (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991).

Other responsibilities for senior leadership include the establishment of a long-term approach to leadership development and creation of integrated evaluation processes to monitor effectiveness of training transfer (Baldwin et al., 2017; Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2018). As previously identified, evaluation measures should align with an organization's strategic objectives and focus on training outcomes that support leader development (Reichard & Johnson, 2011).

Transfer of Training

The original Baldwin and Ford (1988) research synthesized what was known about transfer of training at the time. Over the years the research expanded beyond the original concepts of trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment. Several themes have emerged regarding the need for integrating training transfer concepts into a more holistic approach that includes consistent organizational processes, proactive leadership support, and alignment of reward systems (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Ready & Conger, 2003; Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Vardiman et al., 2006). Leaders also play a critical role in consistently communicating leadership expectations, attending training, and modeling behaviors consistent

VANDERBILT Peabody College

with training (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Foldy et al., 2008; Vardiman et al., 2006). While training design and delivery are important, training transfer appears to be significantly impacted by the overall level of organizational support that occurs pre- and post-training (Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007; Seyler et al., 1988).

Organizational Support

Since training is just one element of training transfer, it is critical for organizations to focus on all of the elements that facilitate the development of individual leaders (Semeijin et al., 2014). Specifically, creating a work environment and culture that will help to support effective leaders at every level of the organization is essential (Vardiman et al., 2006). Developing leaders presents significant challenges for organizations and is further complicated by the highly competitive industry it has created globally (Beer et al., 2016). Many organizations believe developing leaders is important, but they look for immediate results and may not consider the human development research which indicates people need time to evolve and develop leadership skills (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010). Individual leaders may also develop at different speeds which can be impacted by the support they receive from their direct leader and the organization (Vandergoot et al., 2019).

Some organizations also launch development programs without first identifying what is expected of prospective leaders or linking those objectives to business priorities (Conger & Toegel, 2002). Also, senior leadership holding all leaders to consistent leadership expectations and rewarding or disciplining leaders for how they lead, are foundational requirements for successful leadership development (Ford et al., 2008; Govaerts et al., 2018).

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Leader Support

Even if organizational support is not present, individual supervisors can have a

significant impact on training transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010; Foldy et al.,

2008; Lee, 2020). The frequency and approach to providing feedback or coaching impacts the

trainee's motivation to transfer (Lee, 2020). Also, creating an open environment that promotes

discussion and uses mistakes as learning opportunities are thought to create a supportive

environment for transfer (Blume et al., 2010; Lee, 2020; Seyler, 1998).

Inconsistency between senior leadership and direct supervisors can create doubt and

decrease motivation to transfer. If a trainee's supervisor does not consistently support senior

leader direction and connect the trainee's performance expectations to that direction, their self-

efficacy may be impacted which can lead to decreased motivation (Colquitt et al., 2000; Packard

& Jones, 2013). Creating accountability for consistent application of defined leadership

behaviors at each level of leadership is essential to a sustained leadership development program

(Govaerts et al.2018; Stillman et al., 2018; Vardiman, 2006).

Evaluation

Another way for senior leaders to signal that leadership development training is important

is to develop objective outcome measures for transfer (Packard & Jones, 2013; Sitzmann &

Weinhardt, 2019). This requires a more proactive approach to evaluation that builds measures

into the process and defines how those measures will be used to determine success in training

transfer (Tafvelin et al., 2021).

Day (2000) also stresses the importance of linking job experiences and development

goals as a way to enhance training effectiveness. With this in mind, it is essential for evaluation

measures to factor in both organizational training transfer goals and the factors that are important

VANDERBILT Peabody College

to the individual trainee (Packard & Jones, 2013). Integrating measurement into existing organizational processes also streamlines the evaluation process and strengthens the link to leadership training transfer outcomes (Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2019).

This literature review identified how Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer of training model continues to provide a foundation for research and the flexibility for the theory to evolve through ongoing research. Interestingly, research continues to place increasing value on the actions that an organization and its individual leaders take to build a positive training transfer environment. The research also identified the critical need for training to be developed in a way that is consistent with an organization's strategic direction and be supported through organizational processes. In addition, the role senior leaders play in training and supporting training concepts through their actions and the impact their actions have on motivation, continues to be a focus of ongoing research.

Conceptual Framework

With the goal of enhancing Fission's leadership development efforts to increase overall leadership effectiveness, the literature review revealed several potential conceptual frameworks to provide structure to this capstone project. Considering the various theories on effective learning, my inquiry narrowed to the theory of transfer of training. Baldwin and Ford's (1988) seminal research and transfer of training framework (Figure 1) provides a foundation for exploring how organizations, like Fission, can enhance training transfer, including that of leadership development training. This framework provides a holistic approach to analyze training transfer by integrating the characteristics of the trainee, the actual design of training, and the various ways the overall work environment may impact the trainee as they attempt to apply training concepts to their actual work. This conceptual framework also provides a practical

VANDERBILT Peabody College

approach which can be easily explained to the client organization and can be directly applied to many of the identified challenges in the problem of practice.

Trainee characteristics include ability, personality, and motivation. However, additional research identified that ability and personality change little over time, which required me to refine the focus of this part of the study to those actions that can impact trainee motivation (Blume et al., 2019; Grossman & Salas, 2011; Lee, 2020; Van den Bossche et al., 2010). This collection of research builds on Baldwin and Ford's (1988) transfer of training framework by focusing on the trainee characteristic of motivation to transfer. These studies also attempted to link the impact of training design and work environment to the trainee's motivation to transfer.

Training design includes principles of learning, sequencing, and training content. These inputs focus on the structure of the training itself and how the trainee perceives the value of training to their role (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Design can also impact motivation by creating a linkage to the actual work environment (Blume et al., 2019).

Finally, work environment focuses on support and opportunity to use the training concepts. Motivation and training design concepts can also be impacted by work environment in how the trainee perceives the level of support at the organizational and direct supervisor level (Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Richman-Hirsch, 2001). Work environment also continues to draw attention in more current research and specifically the impact of leader actions in creating the overall transfer climate.

Because each of these training inputs are thought to be interrelated, the research was designed in a way to determine how the inputs collectively impacted the actual transfer of leadership training. This structure was thought to provide a more practical way to examine the impact of several key input variables to determine their impact on the training outputs of learning

VANDERBILT Peabody College

and retention. In addition, Baldwin and Ford's (1988) framework also emphasized how training inputs and outputs come together to create the overall conditions of transfer which leads to generalization and maintenance of learning or in the case of Fission, the application of the desired leadership behaviors.

Baldwin and Ford's (1988) framework was grounded in transfer research up to that time and they have evolved their concepts over the years as they have worked with other scholars in various collaborations. These later studies provided insight into how research scholars learn and grow over time as their evolution and the work of other scholars have expanded the concepts of transfer of training. More recent research has attempted to better understand the conditions beyond training which can have a significant impact on creating an environment that supports training transfer. While these other conditions were categorized as work environment in the original framework, the ideas around support and opportunity to use the training have been expanded through current research including other studies by Baldwin and Ford.

Using the transfer of training framework as a foundation and expanding on the original inputs of trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988) helped me to form the basis for the methodology created for this capstone project. This approach also builds on scholarly research over time and allows space for consideration of practical elements associated with the focal organization's current needs.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Figure 1

A Model of the Transfer of Training Process
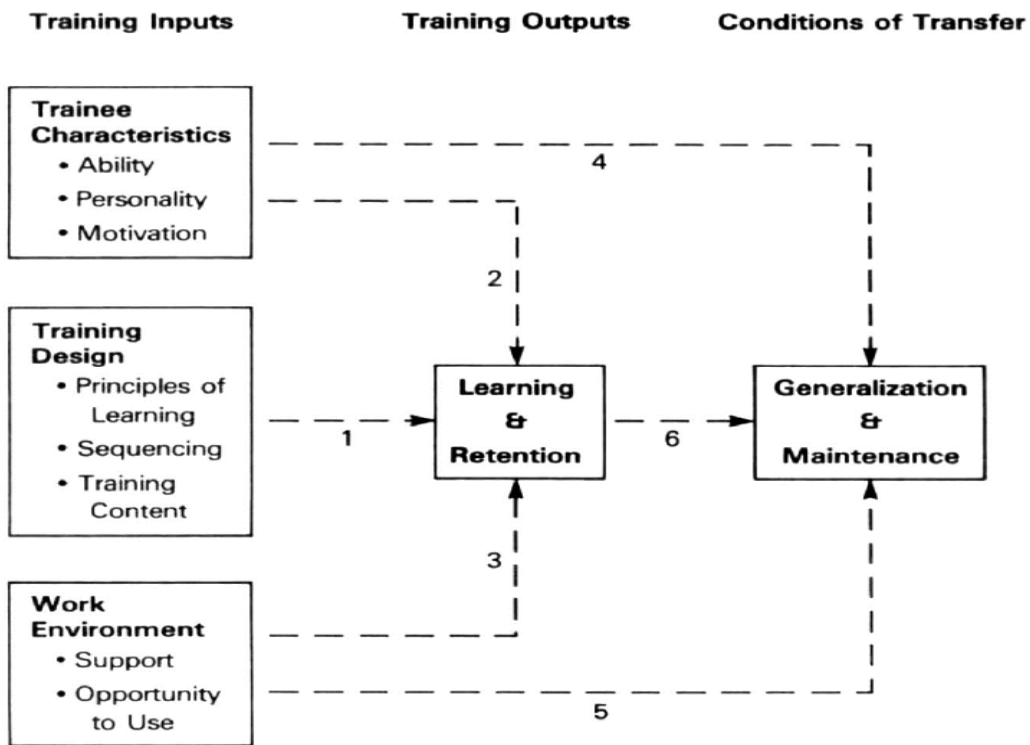
Note. (Baldwin & Ford, 1988)

As described earlier, this conceptual framework appears to best match the needs of the

focal organization but other learning theories were considered which included:

- Communities of practice: where learning occurs within a group with common purpose.

- Experiential learning: knowledge is built by active learning and influenced by the

  physical environment.

- Situated learning: active participation in learning and creating meaning from activities in

  real life situations.

- Leader self-development: where learners evolve through factors influenced by self,

  group, and organization.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Research Question

My inquiry was primarily focused on how leaders are supported after participating in an organization-based leadership training program. The primary question was further explored through the framework of transfer of training theory (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). The primary research question was analyzed through the three categories of training inputs: trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). These inputs are theorized as essential building blocks for learning and retention. The inputs and outputs impact the overall conditions for transfer which collectively are believed to enhance generalization and maintenance of knowledge. Working together the inputs, outputs, and conditions enable training transfer.

Research question:

1. What conditions support learning transfer for leadership training participants?

Even though the research question closely follows the Baldwin and Ford (1988) framework, the project design was structured to allow for broader data collection and additional observations based on additional transfer of training concepts from the literature review. These concepts appear to be supportive of the original framework but include additional factors that can be considered consistent with the original three training inputs: trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment.

Based on findings from the literature review, the analysis of trainee characteristics was narrowed to factors that impact the trainee's motivation to transfer. This refinement was in response to the limited amount of change that is thought to occur in a trainee's ability and attitude as a result of leadership training (Grossman & Salas, 2011; Lee, 2020; Van den Bossche

VANDERBILT Peabody College

et al., 2010). This approach was also reflective of more current research associated with

motivation and how motivation can be influenced by training design and work environment

(Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Richman-Hirsch, 2001). The interrelated

nature of the Baldwin and Ford (1988) transfer of training framework and the literature review

further supported a refinement of multiple research questions into one primary research question

focused on identifying conditions to support transfer for leadership training participants.

Research Question	Conceptual Framework	Data Collection Method

1. What conditions support learning transfer for leadership training participants?	Training Transfer Theory
	• Trainee Characteristics
	  - Motivation to transfer
	• Training Design
	  - Principles of learning
	  - Sequencing
	  - Training content
	• Work Environment
	  - Support
	  - Opportunity to use
		Document Review
		Quantitative Survey
		Qualitative Interviews

The literature review further identified several actions that an organization and its

individual leaders need to take to build a positive training transfer environment. The three data

collection methods were designed to identify the current training transfer environment and the

perceptions of leaders regarding organizational support for leadership development training. For

example, the qualitative document review was designed to determine what information was

shared with trainees before and after training which may impact their motivation and willingness

to transfer training (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Grossman & Salas, 2011; Lee, 2020; Packard &

Jones, 2013; Van den Bossche et al., 2010). The quantitative survey and qualitative interviews

focused on the impact on motivation through training design and identifying other factors that

VANDERBILT Peabody College

may impact the work environment. The findings from these three data collection methods were focused on accomplishing Fission leadership's desire to evaluate the current leadership development program design and implementation processes; discover challenges leaders are facing in transferring training into practice; and identify organizational factors that may be impacting the training transfer climate.

Project Design

This capstone project utilized a mixed methods approach to evaluate the effectiveness of Fission's leadership development program in transferring training into practice. The analysis, informed by a model developed by Baldwin and Ford (1988), sought to understand how the organization supports leaders. This model uses a framework to examine transfer of training through the inputs of trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment. The model further attempts to determine how the transfer of training process outcomes can be generalized, maintained, and adapted to job settings.

The first phase of the analysis was to conduct a qualitative document review of the FLM which defines leadership expectations and determines how those expectations are communicated across the organization. The review also included an analysis of the processes for creating job descriptions, establishing performance goals, and conducting performance reviews. The document and process reviews focused on understanding how these foundational elements influence the trainee characteristic of motivation to transfer training.

The second phase was a quantitative questionnaire developed to identify leaders' perceptions of how leadership development training was designed and implemented. In addition, the survey sought to identify how training design and the work environment support training

VANDERBILT Peabody College

transfer. The quantitative survey was also designed to collect information about leader perceptions of how they are supported before and after training with a focus on motivation.

The third phase of the analysis was to conduct a series of qualitative interviews with leaders across the organization. The early conversations with human resource staff and trainers, along with results from the quantitative survey, were used to create the qualitative interview questions related to motivation, training design, and work environment. It was also important to explore leader perceptions about the level of support for using the skills from leadership development training. The qualitative interviews built on the knowledge obtained in the qualitative document review and quantitative survey. This knowledge provided the perspective to ask additional questions about the interrelated nature of training transfer.

A logic model (Figure 2) was developed to graphically demonstrate the interrelated nature of the transfer of training framework (Baldwin & Ford, 1988) and how the three phases of data collection link back to the three training inputs of motivation to transfer, training design, and work environment. As described in the following section, the three phases of data collection were designed to be additive in nature and the knowledge gained in each phase was used to enhance the next phase of data collection consistent with transfer of training theory.

Figure 2

Project Design Logic Model
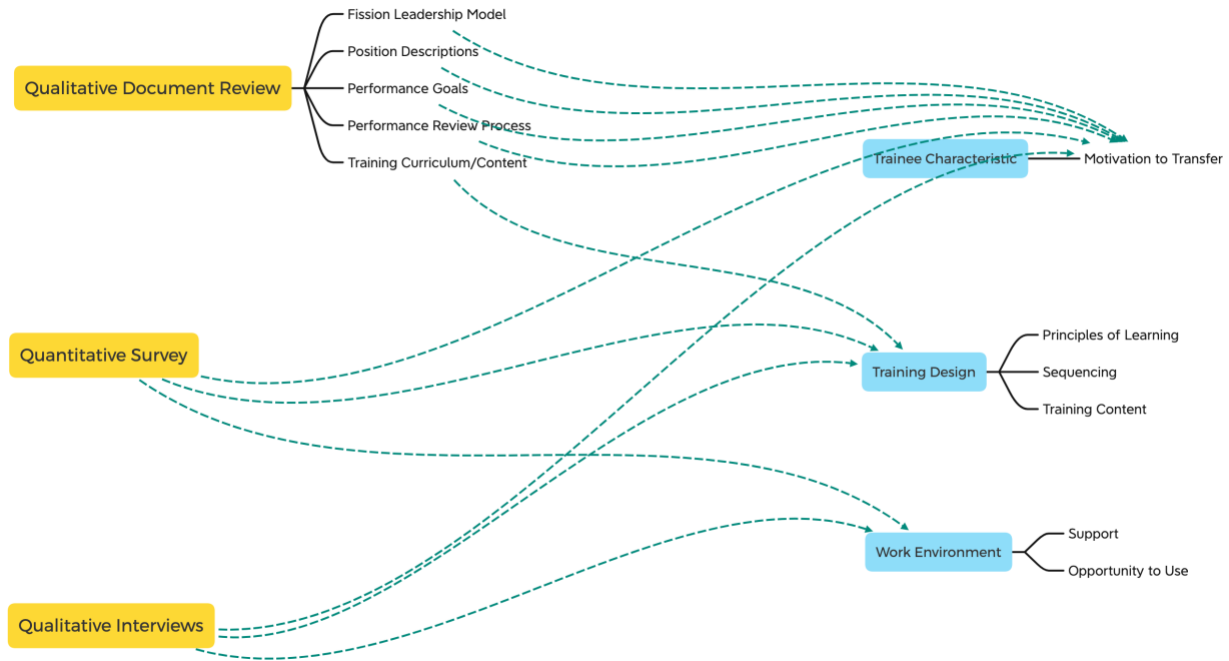
Note. Yellow boxes represent data collection phases and blue boxes represent the training inputs of the transfer of training framework (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

Data Collection

Data collection was organized into three phases to gather information related to the trainee characteristic of motivation to transfer, training design, and work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). The three phases were designed to answer the research question: What conditions support learning transfer for leadership training participants? My objective was to collect formal documents related to leadership philosophy and expectations, performance management documents, curriculum used in leadership training, and direct feedback through surveys and interviews with leaders across the organization. These documents and the leader feedback were collected to provide an in-depth understanding of the organization's approach to developing and

VANDERBILT V Peabody College

supporting leaders consistent with the primary training inputs from the Baldwin and Ford (1988) transfer of training model. My specific goals for each data collection method will be further explained in the following sections.

Qualitative Document Review

My data collection started with preliminary conversations with Fission human resources and organizational development leaders to discover what documents had been created that defined competencies and performance expectations for leaders. These documents were selected to determine how leadership philosophy and expectations were communicated to leaders to better understand the trainee characteristic of motivation. Research indicates that establishing clear expectations for leadership behaviors and providing training that is focused on building the identified skills enhances a trainee's motivation to transfer the new skills to their work (Baldwin et al., 2009; Blume et al., 2010; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Grossman & Salas, 2011). The qualitative document review was a first step in determining that the foundation for communicating expectations was in place and to determine if training was delivered in a way that was consistent with those expectations through the quantitative survey and qualitative interview questions.

My focus on motivation was also influenced by the fact that leaders are selected for their role based on their abilities and personality prior to training. This pre-selection factor guided my analysis toward the trainee characteristic of motivation which would be the most influenced through the transfer of training process (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Baldwin & Magjuka 1991; Colquitt et al., 2000; Packard & Jones, 2013; Seyler et al., 1988).

In addition, I conducted several searches on the internet and through social media to learn more about the organization and its leadership. Since I agreed to a strict confidential approach to

this study, I cannot share the outcomes from those searches within this document. However, the focus of the company-specific searches was designed to learn more about the parent company of Fission, senior leadership, employee and community relations, and to identify any pending regulatory or legal issues. In addition, I used several internet resources to gain knowledge about the nuclear power industry and its current challenges. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission site (NRC.gov) was very helpful in learning terms and gaining a general understanding about operating a nuclear power station. Garcia and Stevahn (2020) point to the essential need for researchers to build situational awareness and interpersonal competence as they work with focal organizations. My review of the company specific information, discussions with human resources staff, and industry searches helped me to increase my awareness and competence as I prepared for the qualitative interviews. This information was also essential in building rapport with Fission leaders and it helped to inform my requests for documents, as well as creating follow up questions for the interviews.

The first document collected was the FLM which provided an overview of organizational objectives and defined Fission's overall leadership philosophy. The qualitative review of this document focused on consistency and integration of wording between organizational goals and leadership behaviors. One specific section of this document provided a profile for each level of leadership that describes the role, responsibilities, and desired leadership behaviors. This was important to determine if clear expectations for leaders had been established and allow for analysis of the impact on motivation to transfer. As previously mentioned, if clear expectations for leadership behaviors had not been established, motivation to transfer training could be compromised and motivation negatively impacted (Baldwin et al., 2010; Blume et al., 2010; Packard & Jones, 2013).

VANDERBILT Peabody College

The next group of documents collected were position descriptions, performance goals, and performance management procedures. These documents were collected to determine if leaders were also being provided clear direction regarding their performance expectations and whether the documents consistently applied the philosophies contained within the FLM. Follow up discussions with human resource staff provided an overview of the actual performance management process and the extent to which compensation was linked to performance goals. Each of these documents provided insight into the overall communications about leadership that has occurred in the organization and provided a foundation for examining consistency within training design and work environment.

The document review also helped to inform the creation of questions in the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. Consistent phrases from the documents that described leadership training, leadership levels, and performance management processes were used in the survey and interviews to add clarity and consistency to data collection (Babbie, 2014; McGrath et al., 2018). The FLM was also used as a foundation for additional follow up questions regarding supervisor support, especially as it relates to trainee perceptions which can impact motivation to transfer (Blume et al., 2010; Lee, 2020). Establishing clear expectations for leadership behaviors and how those behaviors will be evaluated as part of leader performance was a critical piece of the data collection process related to determining the impact on trainee motivation to transfer of training concepts.

Quantitative Survey

Conversations with human resource staff, trainers, and the qualitative document review helped guide the creation of a quantitative survey. As previously mentioned, company specific language was used to create a customized survey. It was thought that data quality and

VANDERBILT Peabody College

participation would be enhanced if the questions followed existing Fission terminology and leadership philosophies (Babbie, 2014; McGrath et al., 2018). The survey questions were created to better understand the support leaders received before and after their training to help with analysis of motivation to transfer. Questions were also included that focused on training design and open-ended questions to elicit ideas for improvement. The survey also included questions about how the work environment may be impacting trainees' personal development and the overall training transfer climate.

The original survey included 20 questions but four were deleted as redundant after trial runs with human resource staff (Babbie, 2014). Reducing the number of questions was also thought to enhance the likelihood of response to the survey by reducing the overall time commitment for completion.

The literature review also helped shape the survey questions and I focused on the three training inputs: trainee characteristic of motivation to transfer, training design, and work environment. The literature review provided insight into factors to consider when evaluating each training input and established a basis for developing potential recommendations supported by previous research studies. The questions were also designed so that answers could be used to guide the development of questions for the qualitative interviews.

Quantitative survey questions were divided into three categories for analysis:

Training characteristic - motivation to transfer

Q2.   My leader discussed learning expectations before and after I attended training.
Q4.   Leadership performance expectations are consistent with training received.
Q8.   I receive actionable feedback from my leader on a regular basis.
Q14.   What additional steps could your leader take to support your ongoing leadership development.

Training design

Q3.   The skills were applicable to my job.

Q15.   What additional leadership training skills would you like to see included in future training (open ended question designed to capture comments).

Work environment

Q5.   My performance is based on department results and leadership behaviors.

Q6.   My leader discusses my development and I have a personal development plan.

Q7.   Leadership skills are considered a key requirement of career advancement.

Q8.   I receive actionable feedback from my leader on a regular basis.

Q9.   I am provided opportunities to participate in projects with other departments.

Q10.   Senior leaders communicate leadership expectations on a regular basis.

Q11.   I am comfortable asking other leaders for advice when facing a leadership challenge.

Q12.   Leadership behaviors are consistently applied across the organization.

Q13.   Having opportunities to discuss leadership challenges with a peer group of leaders.
       would benefit my development.

Q16.   What other suggestions do you have about leadership development (open ended question to capture comments).

The quantitative survey was developed using Qualtrics and a link was sent by electronic mail to all Fission leaders (N=300). The survey yielded 162 responses for a 54% response rate. Electronic mail messages were sent at two week intervals during the active survey period of December 10, 2020, to February 16, 2021. Respondents were informed that their participation in the surveys was optional and results would be kept confidential. The invitation included the purpose of the survey and contact information for the faculty advisor at Vanderbilt University. The language used to introduce the survey can be found in Appendix B. The quantitative survey can be found in Appendix E.

Each respondent self-identified as one of four levels of leadership (leader of others, leader of leaders, leader of leaders plus, and functional leader). In addition to the self-selection question, the survey had 12 questions that used a Likert scale with five response choices: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Three open-

VANDERBILT Peabody College

ended questions were also included in the survey that provided respondents the ability to provide their feedback in an unstructured manner.

Qualitative Interviews

Similar to the quantitative survey, the early conversations with human resource staff and trainers along with responses from several questions from the quantitative survey, were used to create the qualitative interview questions. This phase of data collection was designed to bring together the data from the qualitative document review and quantitative survey to probe deeper into the training inputs from the Baldwin and Ford (1988) transfer of training model.

Interviews were structured as conversations and designed to last no more than 60 minutes. Early questions were focused on building rapport and gaining an understanding of the interviewee's role within the organization. The conversation began by me thanking them for their participation and reinforcing that their responses would be kept confidential. Originally the interviews were planned to be in person but due to COVID-19 the interviews were conducted via Webex. This platform was chosen by the client due to security concerns with other online platforms. The interviewees were formally invited to participate by electronic mail which contained the purpose of the interviews and stated that their responses would be kept confidential. Their permission to record the conversations was also obtained verbally. I reinforced that I would still be jotting down some notes to help prompt additional follow up questions and participants were informed that they could skip any question they were uncomfortable answering and could stop the interview at any time. I restated my overall goal was to identify how Fission can improve effectiveness of its leadership development training programs. The qualitative interview invitation can be viewed in Appendix D. The Survey questions are identified in Appendix F.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Qualitative interview questions were divided into three categories for analysis:

Trainee characteristic – motivation to transfer

Q5.   Identify challenges you faced putting the skills presented in leadership training into practice.

Q6.   Tell me about your personal leadership development goals.

Q7.   Describe a recent leadership challenge and where you turned to for ideas.

Training design

Q8.   Provide an example of a leadership skill in which your peers would like additional training.

Q9.   Share your thoughts about improving leadership development within the organization (this question provides insight about both training design and work environment).

Work environment

Q9.   Share your thoughts about improving leadership development within the organization (this question provides insight about both training design and work environment).

Q10.   Is there anything else you would like to share (this question provides insight about both training design and work environment, as well as providing the interviewee with the chance to disclose any other issues related to training transfer).

The preliminary goal for qualitative interview data collection was to interview five leaders from each leadership level but this was modified based on responses from the quantitative surveys and the disproportionate number of "leaders of others" in the organization. This group was also thought to be the most impacted by work environment as they receive information from senior leadership through multiple layers of leaders (Govaerts et al., 2018; Richman-Hirsch, 2001). Communication can change as it is passed from one level of leadership to another. Focusing on frontline leaders provided the most potential to observe inconsistencies in communications. To provide perspective and add balance, one-third of the interviews were conducted with leaders from other levels of leadership.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Leaders were selected for interviews using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling (Babbie, 2014). Human resources assisted in identifying a few less-tenured leaders who had attended training in the past two years. As part of each interview, I asked the individuals in this initial group for names of other leaders who might be good to talk to about leadership development and repeated this question in each interview. A total of 12 leaders were formally interviewed. The 12 interviews averaged 58.75 minutes and were conducted between March 18 – 30, 2021. Research notes were developed after each interview and strengthened after reviewing the recorded interviews in Webex.

To ensure compliance with human research requirements, the proposed mixed methods quality improvement project was submitted to Vanderbilt University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was approved on August 19, 2020.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process was designed to take advantage of the mixed methods approach to collecting quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more in-depth understanding of the interrelated nature of transfer of training inputs (Babbie, 2014). The analysis was organized around the three training transfer inputs of the trainee characteristic of motivation to transfer, training design, and work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). The data was collected and analyzed to answer the primary research question: What conditions support learning transfer for leadership development participants?

The qualitative document review was focused on analyzing the consistency of communications and integration with the FLM. Quantitative survey data was sorted and analyzed using the tools within the Qualtrics survey software. Eight themes were identified and coded within Qualtrics software for open-ended questions on the quantitative survey.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Expectations	Feedback	Development	Time
Leader Support	Communication	Accountability	Other

Note. See pages 45-46 for an explanation of the thematic analysis and definitions.

Qualitative interviewer notes, recordings, and transcripts were coded by the same eight themes. Microsoft Excel was used for thematic coding and analysis of the qualitative interview data. Graphs were also created using Microsoft Excel.

The quantitative survey was designed to allow analysis of responses based on leadership level. This classification of leadership level was used to determine the presence of differences in leader perceptions across the three training input areas. In reality, there was no material difference (less than 10% on scored questions) across leadership levels which resulted in analyzing the data as one group of leaders.

Analysis was also focused on questions in which a large number of responses were categorized as strongly disagree, disagree, or neither agree nor disagree. Research on surveys indicates that neutral responses provide opportunities for seeking greater understanding of sentiment, as well as identifying areas of higher risk for negative progression of sentiment (Chyung, 2017; Kulas & Stachowski, 2009; Weems & Onwuegbuzie, 2001). This approach helped me to further refine the qualitative interview questions and probe deeper into the areas that were rated as neither agree nor disagree.

One of the other factors in analyzing the data was to ensure that representative sample of leader levels was achieved through the quantitative survey responses. The following information in Figure 3 provides an overview that confirms the number of leaders per level was representative of the actual distribution of leaders within Fission.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Figure 3

Quantitative Survey Response Distribution by Leader Type
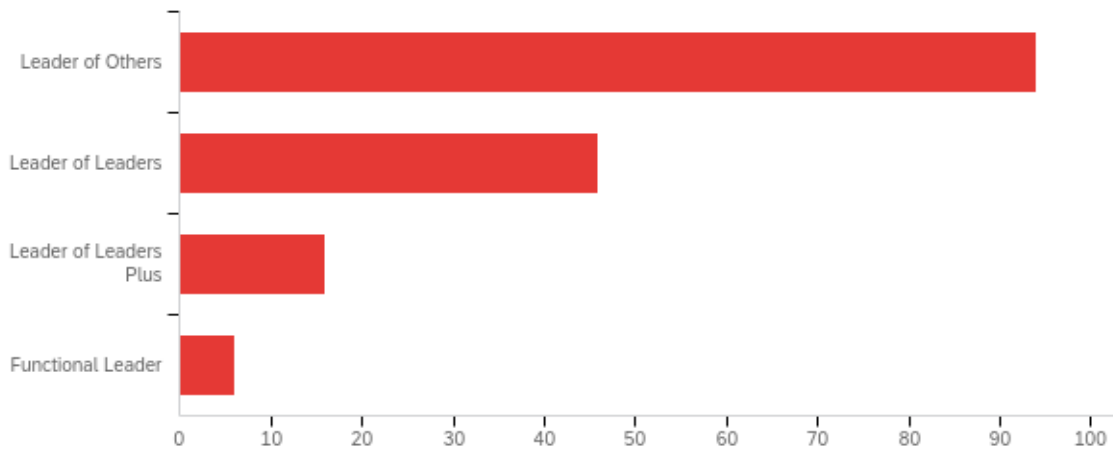
Figure 3 (continued)

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Leader of Others	58.02%	94
2	Leader of Leaders	28.40%	46
3	Leader of Leaders Plus	9.88%	16
4	Functional Leader	3.70%	6
	Total	100%	162

Data Analysis Organization

Data analysis was divided into the three training inputs of motivation to transfer, training design, and work environment. Each section brings all three data collection elements together to analyze a specific input and explores the interrelatedness between inputs.

Trainee Characteristic - Motivation to Transfer

The qualitative document review started with the primary leader communication document, the FLM. This document included the company mission, vision, a description of desired leadership behaviors, and philosophies about organizational effectiveness. The FLM

provides a comprehensive summary of leader expectations and describes how leaders fit into the strategic direction of the organization. Core competencies have been created for each level of leadership and are reflective of the different job demands for each level.

Job descriptions were also reviewed to determine if they were consistent with the FLM. Performance goals were also checked for consistency with the job description expectations for leader behaviors. In addition, performance evaluation forms were analyzed to determine if goal attainment and personal development were integrated into the documents. A sampling of other leader communications and job aides were reviewed for consistency with the FLM.

The analysis of the qualitative document review was focused on evaluating communication consistency of leader performance expectations to determine the potential impact on the trainee's motivation to transfer training. This data was combined with quantitative survey and qualitative interview questions that also focused on motivation. By triangulating the three data sources, findings were generated around factors that may be impacting trainee motivation to transfer training. Similar research studies support these findings regarding the impact on motivation related to transfer of training (Grossman & Salas, 2011; Lee, 2020; Van den Bossche et al., 2010).

Another factor that I needed to evaluate was the perception that trainees have about the company's commitment to defined leadership behaviors. The qualitative document review provided a starting point for this analysis and the survey and interviews allowed me to build on the stated objectives of the FLM to determine if senior leader communications and leader actions were consistent across the organization.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Training Design

The quantitative survey and qualitative interview questions related to training design were primarily open-ended. The one quantitative question about training design was whether training was applicable to job skills. The analysis of this question was based on determining content validity and applicability of training to job requirements. These evaluative factors can influence a trainee's motivation to transfer (Holton, 2005). Caution should be applied when analyzing the results of this question as it was very general and research indicates that individual trainee ratings have proven to be less than ideal evaluation tools (Packard & Jones, 2013). However, the question provided an entry point for follow up questions in response to interview question Q9 that asked respondents to share their ideas for improving leadership development. This combination of data collection methods helped to identify specific training elements that the trainees believed to be effective and what elements were missing from any leadership training sessions they had attended.

The open-ended questions were coded by one of eight themes (discussed on pages 45-46). However, the most insightful questions were those that asked for ideas about improving leadership development and the very broad question that asked what else would you like to share. These were somewhat hard to quantify by theme and therefore comments were also viewed from the perspective of suggestions for improvement. This approach actually reinforced findings in the thematic analysis about support efforts and how training could be designed to establish the process for providing support to trainees after training (coaching, feedback, communication, expectations, etc.). These responses also appear to support the interrelated nature of the transfer of training model (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Work Environment

The work environment component of the three training input items is very broad and required using parts of all three data collection methods. The analysis focused on determining what actions leadership was taking to support trainees and whether trainees were being given the opportunity to use the training. This required starting with the FLM and tracking the leadership philosophy across other documents, the content of the training being delivered, and supervisor actions pre- and post-training. I attempted to compare these data points with the overall communication from senior leadership to determine how that communication evolved as it flowed through the organization.

Considerable analysis and several follow up visits with Fission leadership were also required to better understand how these components were actually working in daily operations. This part of data analysis required me to make some assumptions that may need additional analysis to confirm the accuracy of findings. However, my analysis does appear to be supported by the frequency of occurrences of the themes in the qualitative information.

Thematic Definitions

Eight thematic definitions emerged from the data collected and were addressed in the findings section within the appropriate component of the transfer of training model. These themes summarized the breadth of feedback into more manageable categories to help organize findings and inform recommendations.

My focus in analyzing the data was to determine common words and meanings that could be linked to the elements of the transfer of training model and reflected in the concepts of effective training transfer identified in the literature review (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Saldana, 2013). In addition, I looked for patterns and the frequency of occurrences of terms to identify the

VANDERBILT Peabody College

themes (Saldana, 2013). Also since communication was such a broad category, I refined my analysis to include the specific communication elements of feedback and expectations. The use of the specific communication theme was reserved for the broader purpose of consistent information sharing across the organization and among leadership levels. The other category was included in development of themes to address other types of feedback that did not fit within the seven specific themes. These issues that did not fit the seven specific thematic categories still provided insight and were used to explore other concepts that may be impacting transfer of training.

Expectations - Whether or not the supervisor discussed the use of skills pre- or post-training.

Feedback – Whether or not the supervisor provided coaching about the effectiveness in using new skills.

Development – Specific responses related to training quality or future training needs.

Time – Was adequate time provided to use the new leadership skills obtained in training.

Leader Support – Actions by supervisors that either supported or detracted from transfer.

Communication – Whether or not information sharing was consistent among leadership levels.

Accountability – Trainee perception of consistency of leaders performance with training concepts.

Other – General category for items not fitting within other thematic categories.

Findings

My inquiry revealed five primary findings. Each of the findings are interrelated and appear to support the integrated nature of the transfer of training model (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

> *Finding 1*
>
> Leaders are missing opportunities to enhance motivation by failing to reinforce training expectations before and after training.

This finding primarily focused on the input of trainee characteristic of motivation to transfer training. Using the qualitative document review as a starting point, I concentrated my analysis on the FLM to determine if trainees were provided a clear understanding of the organization's philosophy toward leadership. Performance management documents were also analyzed for consistency with the FLM. This information was also used in shaping the quantitative questionnaire and qualitative interview questions to further evaluate consistency of communications and demonstration of leadership behaviors among the various levels of Fission leadership.

The FLM provides a solid foundation for communicating leadership philosophies and expectations. This document describes in detail how the organization approaches leadership, why leadership is important to organizational success, and what behaviors successful leaders will demonstrate in leading their teams. In addition, job descriptions, performance goals, and some development plans have been consistently created to support the objectives of the FLM. However, based on the feedback in the quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews the application of these important tools appears to be inconsistently applied and greatly influenced by individual leader behaviors.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

The qualitative document review revealed that Fission has created the foundational information to clearly communicate leadership philosophies and have integrated leadership behaviors into performance documents. These are very positive steps that are necessary to inform trainees of performance expectations which helps trainees focus on improving their abilities and adapt their personalities to those expectations. However, these steps may be falling short of enhancing the motivation to transfer training concepts since most trainees take their primary performance ques from their direct leader or supervisor (Lee, 2020; Van den Bossche et al., 2011).

The quantitative survey and qualitative interviews both revealed that leaders were not consistently meeting with trainees prior to or after training to establish expectations for transferring training concepts into practice. One leader suggested: "Have discussions specific to reinforcing the leadership skills that were taught during training. In other words, we should be talking about how we're implementing the training we just received." Another leader commented: "No follow through after training from leaders. No real linkage to or discussion of how training should be applied to ongoing leadership efforts." The following information further reinforces this point from the quantitative questionnaire:

Figure 4

**Q2. My leader discussed learning expectations before and after I attended training.**
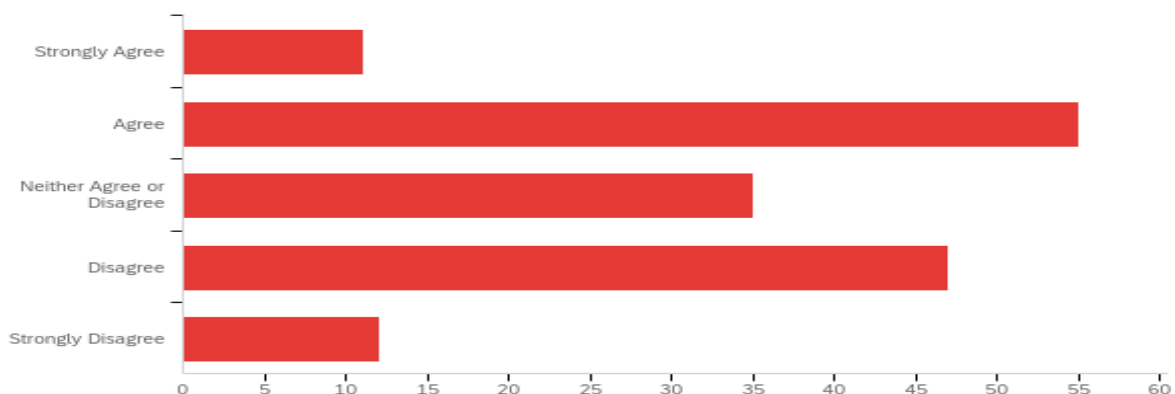
Even though the responses for strongly disagree and disagree only represent 36.88% of respondents, when you add in the neither agree nor disagree this number increases to 58.76%. Considering that a neutral response may identify an area that has the potential to further decline (Chyung, 2017; Kulas & Stachowski, 2009; Weems & Onwuegbuzie, 2001), this question identifies that nearly 60% of leaders cannot confirm that their leader discussed training expectations before and after training. This finding identifies leaders are missing opportunities to enhance motivation by failing to reinforce training expectations before and after training. Research identifies the importance of pre- and post-training conversations between the trainee and supervisor in enhancing motivation to transfer (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Day, 2000; Richman-Hirsch, 2001).

A similar challenge was identified in quantitative survey question Q6 which asked about leader discussions about development and whether the trainee has an individual development plan. Responses indicate that 41.25% disagreed or chose not to answer as agree nor disagree (Figure 5). In reviewing these results, this indicates that four in ten leaders are unable to confirm that their leaders discuss their development or they do not have a personal development plan. Research indicates that the lack of identifiable performance goals linked to personal development can impact a trainee's motivation to transfer (Grossman & Salas, 2011; Lee, 2020; Packard & Jones, 2013; Van den Bossche et al., 2010).

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Figure 5

Q6 - My leader discusses my development and I have a personal development plan.
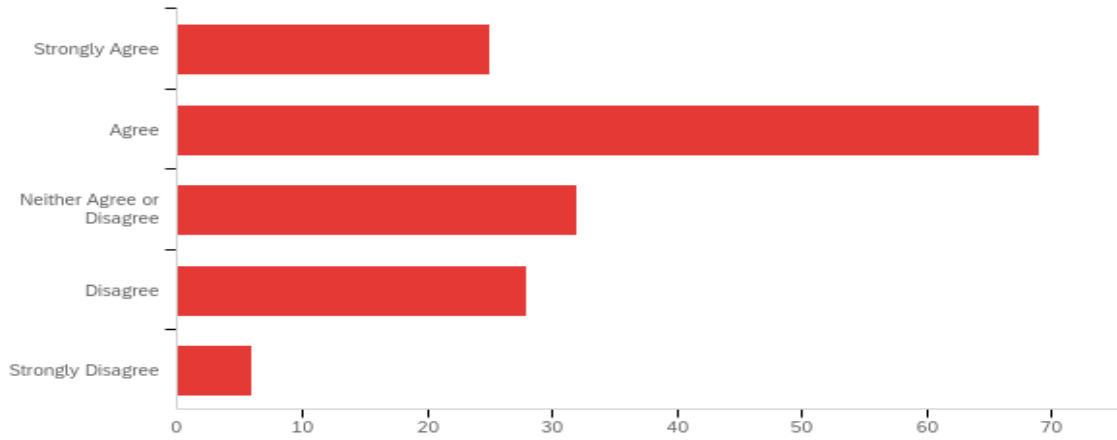
Quantitative survey question Q8 asked whether trainees receive actionable feedback from their leader on a regular basis. Figure 6 identifies that nearly 43.48% of respondents could not confirm that they are receiving actionable feedback. The responses to this question prompted me to ask more probing questions regarding feedback in the qualitative interviews. These questions sought to better understand how feedback may be impacting the motivation to transfer training as reflected in their perspective about the level of support from both the supervisor and the overall organization. Establishing development goals and supervisor feedback have been found to be critical in developing a trainee's motivation to transfer (Blume et al., 2010; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007; Packard & Jones, 2013). These research findings were also consistent with trainee input from the quantitative survey that asked about the quality and frequency of supervisor feedback.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Figure 6

Q8 - I receive actionable feedback from my leader on a regular basis.
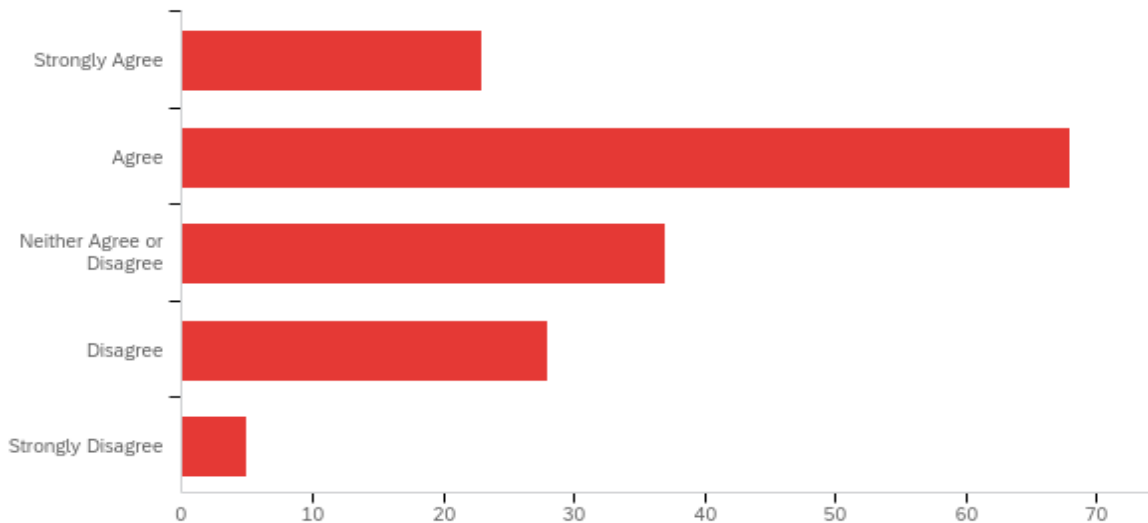
Continuing the idea of enhancing motivation to transfer, quantitative survey respondents identified supervisor feedback, leader support, and communication as the most desired actions leaders could take to support ongoing leadership development (58.47%). The unstructured responses in the quantitative survey questions Q14 and Q16 surrounding feedback included both the desire for more direct feedback about their leadership performance and specific ideas for improving their leadership effectiveness. One leader identified a desire for more: "Time management for the leader and direct reports, balancing expectations and accountability." Another mentioned: "Training on transition from one position to the next." Interpreting several of the other comments identified a desire for more frequent and more personal conversations between leaders and their supervisors (Colquitt et al., 2000; Govaerts, 2018; Packard & Jones, 2013).

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Figure 7

Q14 – What additional steps could your leader take to support your ongoing leadership development?
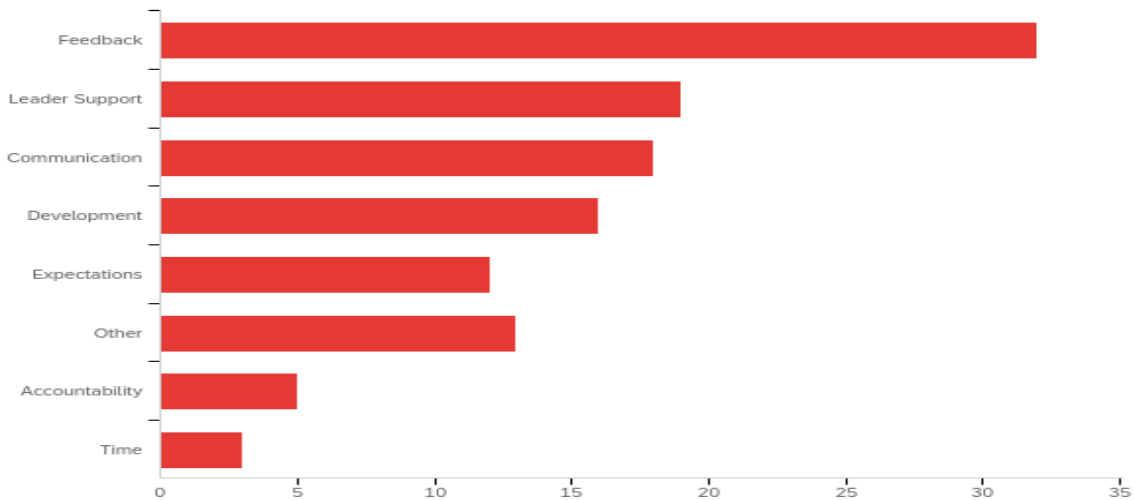
Note. Thematic analysis of question 14.

One specific comment from this question did a nice job linking the concepts of trainee expectations and supervisor feedback together: "More of an active role in discussion and actions before and after training. Right now it feels like it is done because it is a requirement and we just have to fit it in."

The qualitative interviews provided a slightly different insight into leader support. Respondents mentioned they didn't feel like they had enough time to implement new leadership skills. One commented: "I do leadership work after everything else is completed." While this comment should not be interpreted as a major finding, it was mentioned in enough of the interviews to at least consider how trainees are perceiving the amount and priority of time being allocated to transferring new leadership skills to their daily activities (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Santos & Stuart, 2003).

> *Finding 2*
>
> Leadership development training programs are not integrated or linked to specific
>
> organizational strategies.

This finding was primarily focused on the input of training design which includes the

principles of learning, sequencing, and training content. Data was gathered using specific

questions from the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews related to training design.

Overall feedback about the of applicability of training to the job was very positive with

agree and strongly agree making up 88.82% of responses:

Figure 8

Q3 – The skills discussed in training were applicable to my job.
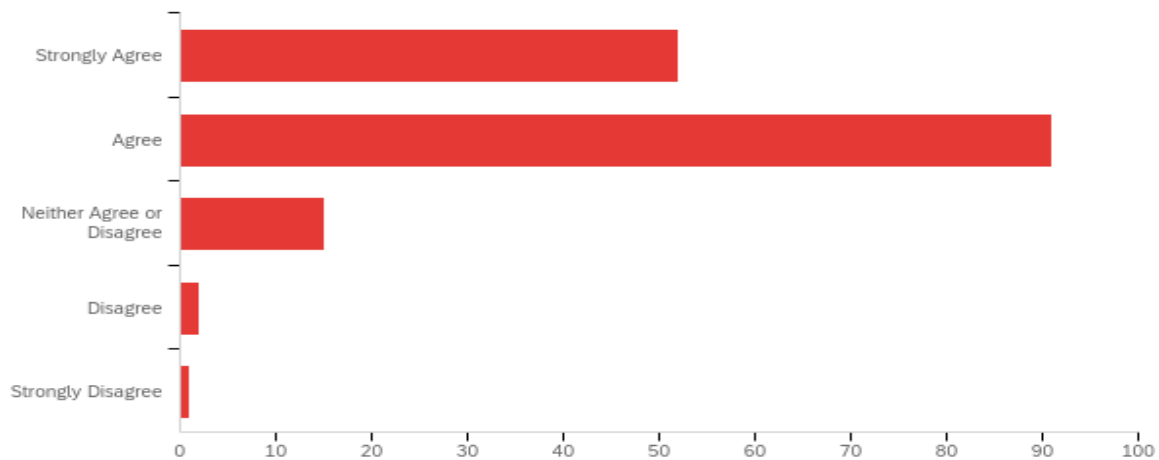
However, written responses to question Q16 in the quantitative survey and comments

from question Q9 in the qualitative interviews revealed that training was not tightly integrated

and programs appeared to be standalone versus part of an overall curriculum for leadership

development. One respondent said it this way: "We need a consistent focus to leadership training

versus a new training program from a different vendor every few months." Another commented:

"Keep it simple, need one overall leadership initiative versus the flavor of the

month – pick one and stick to it." One respondent provided insight about how training fits within the organization: "Leadership development is more than training, it must be holistic (training, development opportunities, feedback, and recognition of growth) in order to most effectively develop leaders for the future."

Another observation was that the FLM was originally developed to identify Fission's leadership philosophy and leadership expectations. My study confirmed that job descriptions and performance management systems have or are being updated to be consistent with the FLM. However, the leadership training curriculum has not been updated in a manner that integrates training concepts consistently with the FLM.

Respondent feedback also identified that sequencing of development programs appeared to be lacking as several programs have been delivered in recent years without communicating how the programs fit together within a development curriculum. This variety of training programs also appeared to create confusion among leaders as to which leadership behaviors were to be followed after attending training sessions. One leader said: "Clean up inconsistent focus and introduction of random training programs." Another leader commented: "Refine the focus of training on standardized expectations and consistent application of skills across the organization."

> *Finding 3*
>
> Trainees value interactions with cohort group members and believe those interactions are beneficial to their personal development.

Another area of inquiry regarding training design was how trainees interacted after training. One positive example identified in both survey and interview responses was the

informal cohort groups that met occasionally after management certification training. Several

respondents commented that even though it was informal, getting an opportunity to reconnect

with fellow trainees after training was beneficial to their personal development. One leader said

it this way: "I really enjoyed the informal gatherings with my teammates from management

certification training, it helped me remember what we learned and gave me a chance to discuss

our progress." Similarly, 72.96% (figure 9) of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that

participating in a formal cohort group to discuss leadership challenges after training would be

beneficial to their personal development.

Figure 9

**Q13 - Having opportunities to discuss leadership challenges with a peer group of leaders
would benefit my development.**

VANDERBILT Peabody College
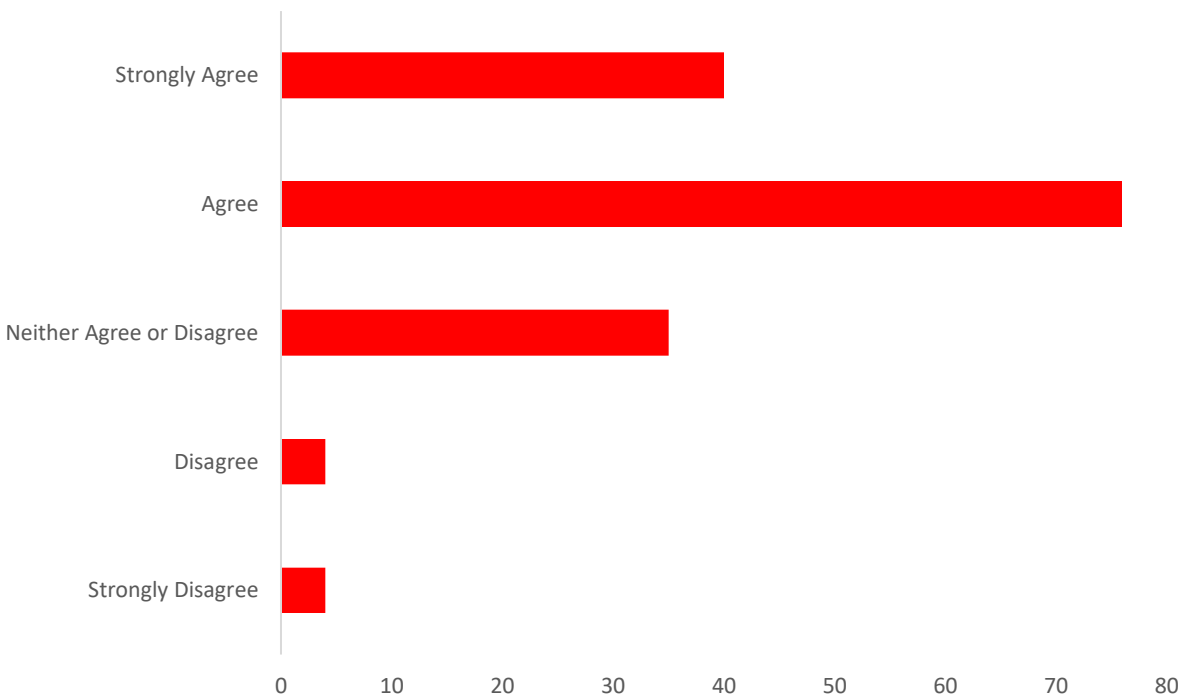
Finding 4

Leadership behaviors are being inconsistently applied across the organization.

This finding was focused on the training input of work environment which includes support and the opportunity to use training concepts. Data was gathered from both the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews.

Figure 10

Q12 – Leadership behaviors are consistently applied across the organization.
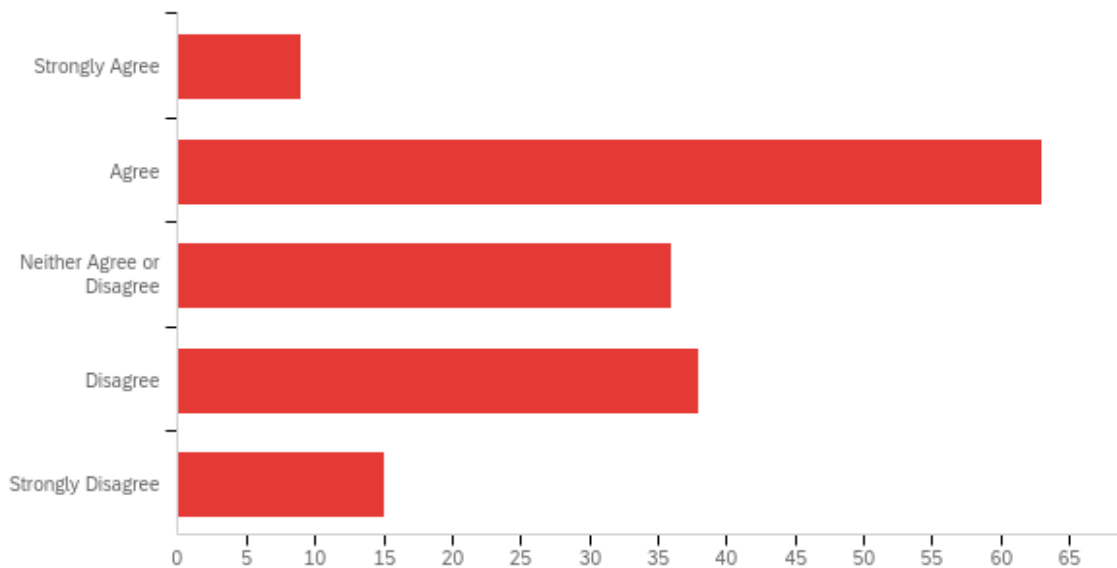
Even though 44.72% agree or strongly agree, 55.28% who either disagree or cannot positively confirm consistent application of leadership behaviors across the organization. The qualitative interview themes for expectations, leader support, and accountability were further highlighted in this finding (Figure 11). The highest number of comments from leaders pointed to inconsistencies in leadership expectations. The lack of leader support and holding leaders accountable were also consistently mentioned by leaders. These themes were revealed at different times during the interviews and the intensity of comments about accountabilities appeared to reflect strong emotions among respondents. My observation of these more emotional

VANDERBILT Peabody College

responses reinforced the comments from interviewees that leaders were not being held accountable for their actions consistently across the organization. Govaerts et al. (2017) found that leader accountability and involvement in training were two factors that can accurately predict successful training transfer.

Figure 11
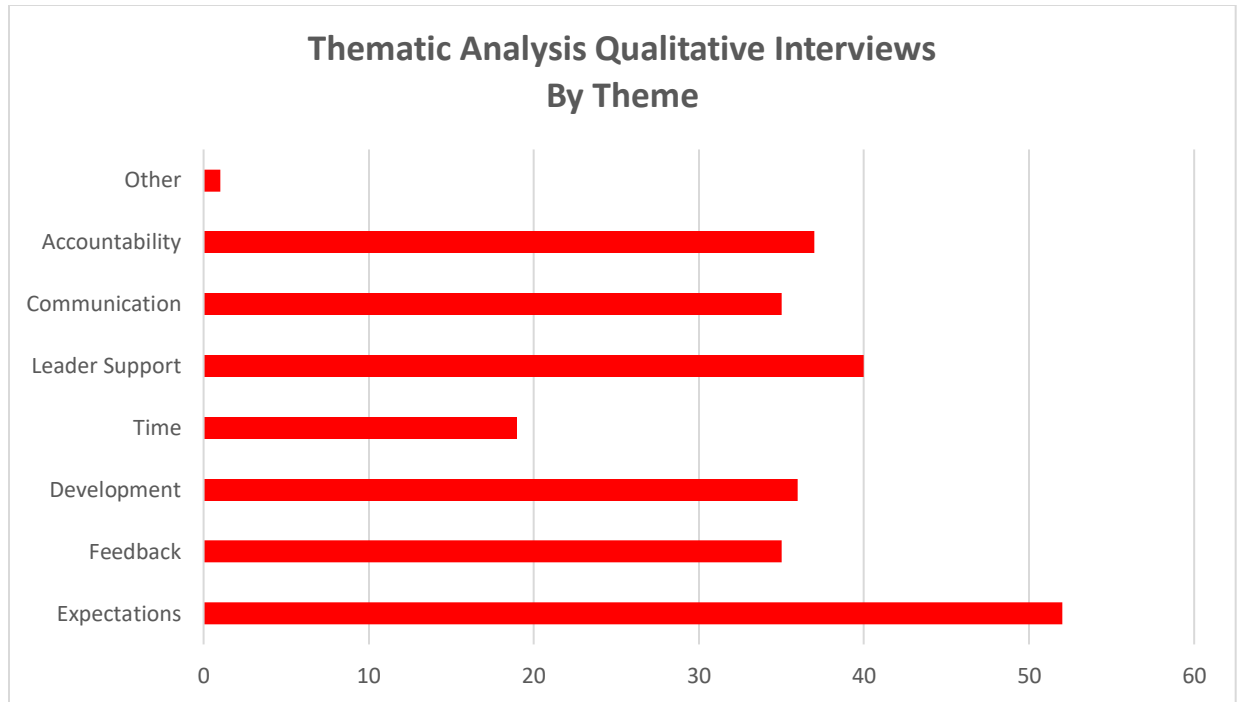
Note. The thematic analysis identified the frequency of comments related to each theme across all questions from the qualitative interviews.

Comments from the surveys and discussions during the interviews highlighted the concerns about how leader expectations are established and how those leaders were being held accountable for the leadership behaviors described in the FLM (Ford et al., 2008; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005). One comment said it this way: "Leaders of leaders need to be educated and they need to reinforce leadership development through accountability or cancel the training." Another leader referred to the need for accountability: "Leader development without

VANDERBILT Peabody College

accountability is only as beneficial as the leader in training wants it to be, which can be little to not at all."

Question Q9 from the qualitative interviews asked for ideas to improve leadership development. Expectations and accountability were the two dominant themes expressed across the interview responses.

Figure 12

Q9. Share your thoughts about improving leadership development within the organization.
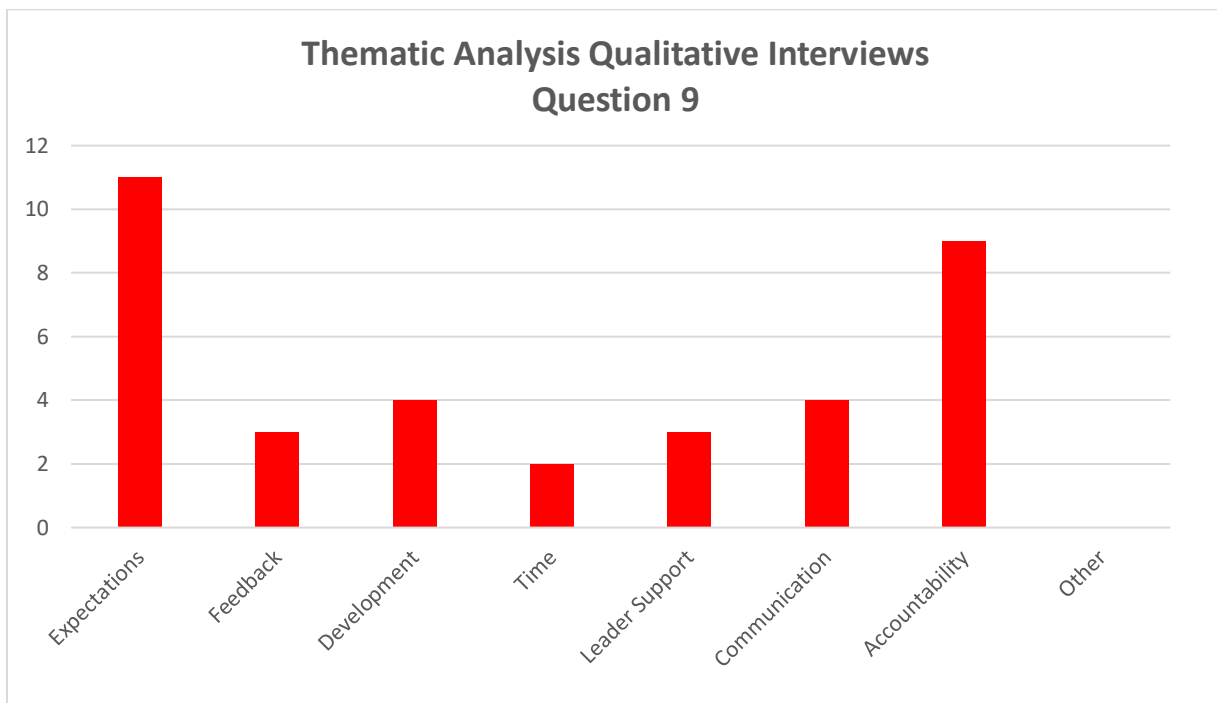
One leader commented: "It is difficult to work for a leader that does not apply the skills from leadership development courses." Another expressed their concerns about expectations and accountability: "It is increasingly difficult to have new or growing leaders stay or want to be successful when leaders do not use the training or believe it is worth using." Another leader described their concerns: "Support for leadership seems present at senior levels but varies

dramatically among middle managers." These comments reflect Fission's current challenge of implementing change consistent with the expectations in the FLM.

Finding 5

Desired leadership behaviors appear to be less valued than operating results.

This finding was also focused on the overall work environment which includes support and ability to use the training concepts. It was developed based on themes that developed through the open-ended questions in the quantitative survey and discussions in the qualitative interviews.

The phrase "getting the work done" was mentioned many times by leaders. The organization is operationally very sound and with its involvement in an industry that requires a heavy focus on safety, it is understandable that an operational focus would be expected. With that said, the value placed on "getting the work done" versus *how* the work is done, as it relates to leadership behaviors, can create confusion and potentially decrease motivation to transfer especially among less experienced leaders. Valuing the desired leadership behaviors requires consistent performance expectations at all levels of leadership (Richman-Hirsch, 2001; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005).

Several examples of leader perceptions about how leadership work is valued came out in the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews. One respondent commented on the overriding focus on achieving short-term organizational goals versus long-term development of team members and leaders. A leader shared: "Leaders are focused on technical skills versus leading, get the work done first." Another spoke about leaders being heavily involved in operational decisions versus developing team members and empowering them to make those decisions. Still

others commented about the disconnect between senior leaders and middle management as it relates to leadership expectations. A comment that reinforced this point: "Leadership behaviors get talked about in training, but middle managers have little support for it in the real world of the plant." Another said: "What is taught in leadership development is not what is evaluated."

As previously identified, leaders have expressed concern about the lack of accountability for leaders to implement the skills from leadership development training. From a sensemaking perspective, frontline leaders look to senior leaders to make sense of what is said and what actual results are valued (Foldy et al., 2008). Fission senior leadership has completed the foundational steps regarding a philosophy of leadership through the FLM, but that philosophy is being compromised by the lack of accountabilty for implementing leadership behaviors across the organization (Ford et al., 2009; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005).

There may also be gaps in how senior leaders communicate and how communications change as they pass through the various levels of leadership. Middle management appears to be keenly focused on achieving both financial and operational results which may motivate them to adapt senior leader messages to meet their own individual goals (Ford et al., 2008). Research supports that these actions may continue to challenge the motivation of frontline leaders to transfer training concepts as they hear different messages from the various levels of leadership (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Ford et al., 2008).

The qualitative interviews also revealed a strong desire on the part of leaders to improve their leadership skills and achieve operating results. Leaders shared that they desire more frequent feedback from their direct supervisor and believe it could help them navigate the ongoing challenges of leadership. This type of feedback has shown to strengthen a trainee's motivation to transfer training by clarifying performance expectations and making the

VANDERBILT Peabody College

connection to desired leadership behaviors (Colquitt et al., 2000; Packard & Jones, 2013). However, without an organization-wide effort to place value on the work of leadership, Fission senior leadership will be hard pressed to enhance transfer of the training concepts of leadership development into the daily practices of its leaders (Hawley & Barnard, 2005).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to address the primary purpose of the study – to identify how additional support initiatives will enhance training transfer and positively impact leadership effectiveness. The recommendations build on the study's findings and are also informed by the conceptual framework of transfer of training theory and its evolution over time. The recommendations are linked to the primary research question and the interrelated nature of training inputs, training outputs, and conditions of transfer (Baldwin & Ford, 1988), and should be viewed in the context of an integrated approach to leadership development training that incorporates a variety of programs to enhance the overall training transfer environment.

To add clarity, a Findings and Recommendations Matrix (Figure 13) was developed to help summarize the information and make a connection to the primary research question.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Figure 13

Findings and Recommendation Matrix

Research Question	Findings	Recommendations
1. What conditions support learning transfer for leadership training participants?	1. Leaders are missing opportunities to enhance motivation by reinforcing training expectations before and after training.	1. Encourage leaders to play an active role in leadership development by establishing a formal process for pre- and post-training coaching conversations with required progress reporting.
	2. Leadership development training programs are not integrated or linked to specific organizational strategies. 3. Trainees value interactions with cohort group members and believe those interactions are beneficial to their personal development.	2. Redesign training to reflect a holistic approach to leadership development that integrates with performance management and rewards systems.
	4. Leadership behaviors are being inconsistently applied across the organization. 5. Desired leadership behaviors appear to be less valued than operating results.	3. Reset leader expectations for active participation in training and use of defined leadership behaviors at a refresher course starting with the senior leader team and cascading to all leaders across the organization.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Recommendation 1

Encourage leaders to play an active role in leadership development by establishing a formal

process for pre- and post-training coaching conversations with required progress reporting.

Finding #1 provided insight into this recommendation by identifying the need for leaders

to meet with trainees prior to and after training to establish clear expectations for transferring the

new knowledge gained in training into actual leadership behaviors (Day, 2000; Richman-Hirsch,

2001). Formalizing this process for leaders will provide a structure to provide feedback through

coaching conversations. The process of documenting those conversations will provide other

levels of leadership with the ability to monitor progress and hold leaders accountable for

preparing trainees for training and transfer (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Govaerts et al., 2018;

Ready & Conger, 2003). Research supports that trainees will also benefit from these

conversations by increasing their implementation intention for using the new skills (Govaerts et

al., 2018; Vandergoot et al., 2020). Motivation and self-efficacy will be strengthened through

supervisor support and clarification of performance expectations for leadership behaviors

consistent with the FLM (Colquitt et al., 2000; Govaerts et al., 2018; Packard & Jones, 2013).

Another method to reinforce trainee expectations for transferring training knowledge into

practice is the use of 360-degree feedback (Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Van den Bossche et al.,

2010; Waldman et al., 1998). These studies each reinforce the benefit and need for frequent and

sustained feedback from multiple sources. Using a 360-degree feedback tool that includes the

trainee's direct reports, supervisor, and peers prior to training and at 6-month intervals for at

least one year, will establish the expectation that the training is important, provide the trainee

with constructive feedback, and help the supervisor provide ongoing coaching regarding progress

VANDERBILT Peabody College

in demonstrating the desired leadership behaviors (Van den Bossche et al., 2010; Lee, 2020). The organization will also benefit from collecting and analyzing the information to help evaluate leadership development progress across leadership levels and identify where additional changes may be required (Tafvelin et al., 2021).

One additional benefit from the 360-degree evaluation is the process of self-reflection by the trainee. By having the trainee complete a 360-degree evaluation on themselves, they are provided an opportunity to stimulate identity development and promote discussion with their supervisor which in turn could impact their self-efficacy and motivation to transfer (Colquitt et al., 2000). These coaching conversations can be informed by the 360-degree survey responses and the supervisor can help the trainee reflect on their behaviors and how their behaviors impact others (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010). Another benefit would be providing space for additional conversations with trainees from underrepresented groups who may be impacted by bias or stereotype threat (Fritz & Van Knippenberg, 2017; Grossman & Salas, 2011; Hoyt & Murphy, 2016). This would also provide another opportunity for the supervisor to discuss the trainee's personal development and career aspirations (Seyler et al., 1998).

Recommendation 2

Redesign training to reflect a holistic approach to leadership development that integrates performance management and rewards system.

Finding #2 identified that leadership development programs were not integrated or linked to specific organizational strategies. Research identifies that in order to enhance training transfer it is important for development efforts to be integrated with organizational goals, use consistent

VANDERBILT Peabody College

language, be consistent with performance management and rewards systems, and be fully supported at all levels of leadership (Gilpin-Jackson & Bushe, 2007; Ready & Conger, 2003; Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Vardiman et al., 2006).

Fission has already developed the FLM that clearly describes the organization's philosophy and expectations for leadership development. Individual training programs are generally well received, but an overall curriculum for leadership development is needed. This curriculum needs to clearly align with the FLM. The curriculum also needs to identify an orderly series of training sessions with additional active learning opportunities to help leaders and trainees understand how each session integrates with leadership behavior expectations and organizational priorities (Stillman et al., 2018). Sequencing of sessions and incorporating sound learning principles that activate meaningful learning will also be essential in training design (Karpicke, 2009; Pashler et al., 2007). Meaningful learning provides trainees with tools to organize content into mental models so they can apply knowledge across different contexts (Mahan, 2014; Karpicke, 2009). Sequencing training sessions can also enhance learning by interleaving content from one session to the next so trainees can retrieve content from previous sessions and provide context to future leadership challenges (Carpenter et al., 2012). Expanding on the concept of meaningful learning, integrating skills training with practical application of those skills in actual work situations will further stimulate learning and retention (Blume et al., 2009; Blume et al., 2019; Ford & Blume, 2017;).

Another way to integrate training sessions with real world work experiences is creating cross-functional learning groups of five to eight individuals (Greeno & Gresalfi, 2008; Hand & Gresalfi, 2015; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010; Peters & Smith, 1998). These groups would meet on a monthly basis to discuss current leadership challenges and work together to develop

VANDERBILT Peabody College

actionable solutions. Learning groups have the potential to promote divergent thinking and stimulate innovative solutions to complex problems, while building relationships across functional areas (Blume et al., 2010). Peer support is another element of learning groups and is believed to enhance motivation to transfer (Hawley & Barnard, 2005). Finding #3 identified that trainees value spending time together and believe those interactions enhance their personal development. Cohort groups provide this interaction in a structured manner to develop common knowledge, shared practices, and consistent approaches as they gain an understanding of current challenges and each other (Wenger et al., 2000). Similarly, the desire for spending time with fellow trainees was identified in over 50 percent of surveys and was mentioned in several of the qualitative interviews with Fission leaders.

Learning groups also provide senior executives with access to developing leaders so they can share experiences and reinforce the importance of leadership development by modeling the desired leadership behaviors (Moldoveanu & Narayandas, 2019; Peters & Smith, 1998). A different senior leader could lead the training group discussion each month and be supported by one of the training team members for added consistency. These actions would also help to support the objectives of recommendation three.

Recommendation 3
Reset leader expectations for active participation in training and use of defined leadership behaviors at a refresher course starting with the senior leader team and cascading to all leaders across the organization.

Finding #4 identified that leadership behaviors were being inconsistently applied across the organization. Finding #5 revealed that desired leadership behaviors appear to be less valued

VANDERBILT Peabody College

than operating results. Both findings highlight the current challenges Fission leadership is facing with regards to embracing the tenets outlined in the FLM. This situation should not come as a surprise from a change management perspective and many organizations face similar challenges as they implement leadership development programs (Conger & Toegel, 2002). What sets successful organizations apart is a focus on all of the elements of training inputs that facilitate leader development while building a culture that supports leaders at every level of the organization (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Semeijin et al., 2014; Vardiman et al., 2006). These elements are believed to be essential in developing positive conditions for transfer and work together to determine an organization's success in generalizing and maintaining learning (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

By resetting expectations for leadership development, Fission has the opportunity to begin the process of building a culture that supports leadership development at all levels (Vardiman et al., 2006). Having senior leaders champion this change effort is critical to build credibility and signal the value of consistently demonstrating the desired leadership behaviors (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Ford et al., 2008; Reichard & Johnson, 2011; Vardiman et al., 2006). Also holding all levels of leadership accountable to consistent leadership expectations and rewarding or disciplining leaders for how they lead will be essential to reset organizational direction (Ford et al., 2008; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005).

Building on the theme of senior leader responsibilities, effective leadership includes mastering the skills needed to perform the ongoing administrative tasks of managing the organization and the leadership skills required to provide direction to the organization (Fiedler, 1996; Ready & Conger, 2003). It also involves establishing an organizational culture that values leadership development in the same manner as achieving performance results (Vardiman et al.,

VANDERBILT Peabody College

2006). Senior leaders must demonstrate, through their actions, that they believe that the manner in which results are achieved is as important as the actual results being achieved (Charan et al., 2011; Foldy et al., 2008; Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005).

One additional way senior leadership can demonstrate their support for valuing the work of leadership is to directly engage in setting direction for leader training and establishing development goals as part of each leader's performance expectations (Reichard & Johnson, 2011). One specific study of another nuclear power generating organization identified the challenge that mixed messages was presenting to frontline leaders when senior leaders were not actively involved in development efforts (Hawley & Barnard, 2005). Additional research has also identified how the trainee's direct supervisor and inconsistencies in communication between senior leaders and middle management, significantly reduced motivation to apply the behaviors learned in training (Blume et al., 2010; Hawley & Barnard, 2005; Lee, 2020; Seyler et al., 1998).

Trainees also look to their supervisors to demonstrate the behaviors that are most important to the organization. The trainee's perceptions about the importance of leadership training are influenced by their direct supervisors and the values those supervisors place on leadership training. Research suggests that supervisor behaviors and the value they place on using the training concepts can influence the trainee's motivation to transfer (Baldwin & Magjuka, 1991; Santos & Stuart, 2003; Sitzmann & Weinhardt, 2019).

Even though the three recommendations could be implemented independently, it would likely result in less-than-optimal results. The information gathered through the literature review, data collection and analysis, in addition to the many conversations with Fission leaders points to the need for an integrated approach to leadership development training. Without the integration

VANDERBILT Peabody College

of training and consistent accountability for leadership behaviors, leadership training transfer will continue to provide limited impact on leadership effectiveness.

Discussion

The recommendations developed through this capstone project were designed to help Fission leadership enhance leadership development at all levels within the organization. The recommendations build on one another to create a holistic approach to leadership development training. However, implementing each recommendation will be increasingly more difficult. Recommendation one and two could be implemented without recommendation three but based on the research collected through the literature review and the feedback received in the surveys and interviews, transfer of leadership development training would likely only marginally improve.

The core organizational leadership challenge resides within recommendation #3 that calls for culture change. Other organizations have jumped directly into training before addressing how leadership is valued and without making changes to performance management and reward systems. Fission has a unique advantage of having created the FLM that describes its strategic objectives and defines the role leadership must play in achieving those objectives.

Creating the FLM and budgeting for development efforts are positive first steps in building a culture that embraces the value of leadership. However, to create sustainable change, senior leadership will need to determine if it truly believes in the tenets of the FLM and then actively engage in the planning and delivery of leadership development training. These actions will be foundational to creating a work environment that enhances conditions for transfer. In the end, the actions taken by senior leaders will be the actions that team members will model across the organization.

Limitations

As this research project began the world changed as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. The project design shifted to online surveys and conducting qualitative interviews online through Webex. The qualitative interview observations were likely impacted by not being able to physically be present with the interviewees. Additionally, not being able to tour the facility and get close to the work of the organization required me to use my intuition and ask more follow-up questions to test my assumptions and clarify what was being shared. However, it should be noted that participants of the survey and in the interviews were incredibly open and constructive in their comments.

Obtaining a 54% response rate for the survey did require several follow up requests but each generated a few more responses that helped to inform the qualitative interviews. The interviews were kept within a short timeframe to attempt to lessen external factors or unforeseen internal influences or challenges. With that said, being able to interact over a longer duration and in person would have likely enhanced my understanding of Fission operations, their training delivery, specific leadership practices, and the broader culture.

Another factor when considering generalization of the research findings, is the small number of qualitative interviews (12). Also, the original design had identified completing interviews evenly across the four levels of leadership. Based on survey results and initial interviews, these plans shifted to focus more heavily on leader of leaders (frontline leaders). This change provided greater insight into training transfer challenges since these leaders receive communications that have the greatest opportunity to be impacted by culture. Additional research would be needed to confirm this assumption and validate findings.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Conclusion

This capstone project was completed to identify how additional support initiatives will enhance training transfer and positively impact leadership development. Fission has invested in several leadership development training programs, but it is not realizing the desired level of success in transferring training concepts into desired leadership behaviors.

The project was designed to analyze the approach being used for leadership development and identify recommendations for enhancing leadership effectiveness using transfer of training theory (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). After an extensive literature review and preliminary discussions with Fission leadership, three preliminary research questions were consolidated into one primary research question. Training inputs of trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment were used to organize the research and data collection efforts. The project used a mixed methods approach and included a qualitative document review, a quantitative survey, and qualitative interviews.

Five distinct findings were identified and used to inform the three primary recommendations. The recommendations were designed as standalone activities but each builds on the progress made in implementing the previous recommendations.

Fission appears to be at an inflexion point with its leadership development programs. The organization has invested significant effort in developing a FLM and integrating leadership expectations into its performance management systems. However, changing the culture of "getting the work done" to a culture that places the value of the work of leadership on an equal footing with achieving operational results will require a significant reset of expectations across the entire leadership structure.

References

Avolio, B. J., Avey, J. B., & Quisenberry, D. (2010). Estimating return on leadership development investment, *The Leadership Quarterly, (21),* 633-644. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.11.002

Babbie, E. R, (2017). *The basics of social research. Seventh edition*. Cengage Learning.

Baldwin, T. & Ford, J. (1988). Transfer of training: A review and directions for future research. *Personnel Psychology; 41(1).* 63-105. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1988.tb00632.x

Baldwin, T. T. & Magjuka, R. J. (1991). Organizational training and signals of importance: Linking pretraining perceptions to intentions to transfer. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 2(1)*, 25-36. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.3920020106

Baldwin, T. T., Ford, K. J., & Blume, B. D. (2017). The state of transfer of training research: Moving toward a more consumer-centric inquiry. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 28(1),* 17-28. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.21278

Beer, M., Finnstrom, M., & Schrader, D. (2016). Why leadership training fails – and what to do about it. *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved From: https://hbr.org/2016/10/why-leadership-training-fails-and-what-to-do-about-it

Besharov, M. & Khurana, R. (2015). Leading amidst institutional demands: Revisiting Selznick's conception of leadership. *Research in the Society of Organizations, 44*, 53-88. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/S0733-558X20150000044004

Blume, B. D., Ford, K. J., Baldwin, T. T., & Huang, J. L. (2010). Transfer of training: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Management, 36(4),* 1065-1105.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206309352880

Blume, B. D., Ford, K. J., Surface, E. A., & Olenick, J. (2019). A dynamic model of training

transfer. *Human Resource Management Review, 29*, 270-283.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.11.004

Burke, L. A. & Hutchins, H. M. (2007). Training transfer: An integrative approach. *Human*

Resource Development Review, 6(3), 263-296.https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484307303035

Cacioppe, R. (1998). An integrated model and approach for the design of effective leadership

development programs. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal, 19(1),*

44-53. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437739810368820

Carpenter, S. K., Cepada, N. J., Rohrer-Scan, D., Kang, H. K., & Pashier, H. (2012). Using

spacing to enhance diverse forms of learning: Review of recent research and

implications. *Educational Psychological Review, 24*, 369-378.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-012-9205-z

Charan, R., Drotter, S. J., & Noel, J. L. (2011). *The Leadership Pipeline: How to build the*

leadership powered company. Jossey-Bass.

Chyung, S. Y., Roberts, K., Swanson, L., & Hankinson, A (2017). Evidence-based survey

design: The use of midpoint on the Likert scale. *Performance Improvement, 56(10),*

15-23. https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.21727

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Colquitt, J. A., LePine, J. A., & Noe, R. A. (2000). Toward an integrative theory of training

motivation: A meta-analytic path analysis of 20 years of research. *Journal of Applied*

Psychology, 85(5), 678-707. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.85.5.678

Conger, J. & Toegel, G. (2002). Action learning and multi-rater feedback as leadership

development interventions: Popular but poorly deployed. *Journal of Change*

Management, 3(4), 332-348. https://doi.org/10.1080/714023841

Cunliffe, A. L. & Eriksen, M. (2011). Relational leadership. *Human Relations, 64,* 1425-1449.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726711418388

Day, D. V. (2000). Leadership development: A review in context. *Leadership Quarterly, 11(4),*

581-613. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(00)00061-8

Fiedler, F. E. (1996). Research on leadership selection and training: One view of the future.

Administrative Science Quarterly, 41, 241-250. https://doi.org/10.2307/2393716

Foldy, E. g., Goldman, L., & Ospina, S. (2008). Sensegiving and the role of cognitive shifts in

the work of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 19*, 514-529.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.07.004

Ford, J. D., Ford, L. W., & D'Amelio, A. (2008). Resistance to change: The rest of the story.

Academy of Management Review, 33(2), 363-377.

https://doi.org/10.5465/AMR.2008.31193235

Fritz, C., & Van Kippenberg, D. (2017). Gender and leadership aspirations: The impact of

organizational identification. *Leadership and Organizational Journal, 38(8)*, 1018-1037.

https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-05-2016-0120

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Garcia, G. L. & Stevahn, L. (2020). Situational awareness and interpersonal competence as

    evaluator competencies. *American Journal of Evaluation, 41(1),* 107-124.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214018814941

Gilpin-Jackson, Y. & Bushe, G. R. (2007). Leadership development training transfer: A case

    study of post-training determinants. *Journal of Management Development, 26(10),*

    980-1004. https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710710833423

Govaerts, N., Kyndt, E. & Dochy, F. (2018). The influence of specific supervisor support types

    on transfer of training: Examining the mediating effect of training retention. *Vocations*

    and Learning, 11, 265-288. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12186-017-9190-y

Greeno, J. G. & Gresalfi, M. S. (2008). *Opportunities to learn in practice and identity*.

    Cambridge University Press.

Grossman, R. & Salas, E. (2011). The transfer of training: What really matters. *International*

    Journal of Training and Development, 15(2), 103-120.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2419.2011.00373.x

Harvard Business Publishing, State of Leadership Development Survey. (July 2016).

    Retrieved From:

    https://www.harvardbusiness.org/news/only-7-of-organizations-believe-their-

    leadership-development-programs-are-best-in-class-according-to-harvard-business-

    publishing-state-of-leadership-development-survey/

Hand, V. & Gresalfi, M. S. (2015). The joint accomplishment of identity. *Educational*

    Psychologist, 50(3), 190-203. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2015.1075401

Hawley, J. D. & Barnard, J. K. (2005). Work environment characteristics and implications for

    training transfer: A case study of the nuclear power industry. *Human Resources*

    Development International, 8(1), 65-80. https://doi.org/10.1080/1367886042000338308

Holton, E. F. III (2005). Holton's evaluation model: New evidence and construct elaborations.

    Advances in Developing Human Resources, 7, 37-54.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422304272080

Hoyt, C.L., & Murphy, S.E. (2016). Managing to clear the air: Stereotype threat, women, and

    leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly, 27*, 387-399.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2015.11.002

Huang, J. L., Ford, J. K., & Ryan, A. M. (2017). Ignored no more; Within-person variability

    enables better understanding of training transfer. *Personnel Psychology, 70*, 557-596.

    https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12155

Karpicke, J. (2012). Retrieval-based learning: Active retrieval promotes meaningful learning.

    Current Directions in Psychological Science, 21(3), 157-163.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721412443552

Kets de Vries, M. & Korotov, K. (2010). Transformational leadership development programs:

    Creating long-term sustainable change. *Social Science Research Network*. Retrieved

    From http://ssrn.com/abstract=1680753.

Kulas, J. T. & Stachowski, A. A. (2009). Middle category endorsement in odd-numbered Likert

    scales: Associated item characteristics, cognitive demands, and preferred meanings.

    Journal of Research in Personality, 43, 489-493.

    https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2008.12.005

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Lave, J. & Wagner, E. (1991). *Situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge University Press.

Lee, L. M. (2020). How supportive behaviors of instructors and supervisors influence trainee self-efficacy and motivation. *Performance Improvement Quarterly, 33(3),* 349-370. https://doi.org/10.1002/piq.21330

Mahan, J. D. & Stein, D. S. (2014). Teaching adults – best practices that leverage the emerging understanding of neurobiology of learning. *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Care*, July 2014. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cppeds.2014.01.003

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J. & Liljedahl, M. (2019). Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher, 41(9),* 1002-1006. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149

Moldoveanu, M. & Narayandas, D. (2019). The future of leadership development. *Harvard Business Review, March-April,* 40-48. https://hbr.org/2019/03/the-future-of-leadership-development

Packard, T. & Jones, L. (2013). An outcomes evaluation of leadership development initiative. *The Journal of Management Development, 34(2),* 153-168. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-05-2013-0063

Pashler, H., Rohrer, D., Cepeda, N. J. & Carpenter, S. K. (2007). Enhancing learning and retarding forgetting: Choices and consequences. *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review, 14(2),* 187-193. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03194050

Peters, J. & Smith, A. C. (1998). Action learning and the leadership development challenge. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 10(6/7),* 284-291. https://doi.org/10.1108/13665629810236192

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Ready, D. A. & Conger, J. A. (2003). Why leadership development efforts fail. *Center for Effective Organizations,* 44(3), 83-88. Retrieved from: https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/why-leadershipdevelopment-efforts-fail/

Reichard, R. J. & Johnson, S. K. (2011). Leader self-development as organizational strategy. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22,* 33-42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2010.12.005

Richman-Hirsch, W. L. (2001). Posttraining interventions to enhance transfer: The moderating effects of work environments. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 12(2),* 105-120. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrdq.2.abs

Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding model for qualitative researchers (2nd ed.)*. Sage Publications.

Santos, A. & Stuart, M. (2003). Employee perceptions and their influence on training effectiveness. *Human Resource Management Journal, 13(1),* 27-45. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2003.tb00082.x

Semeijn, J. H., Van Der Heijen, B. I., & Van Der Lee, A. (2014). Multisource ratings of managerial competencies and their predictive value for managerial and organizational effectiveness. *Human Resources Management, 53(5),* 773-794. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21592

Seyler, D. L., Holton III, E. F., Bates, R. A. Burnett, M. F., & Carvalho, M. A. (1998). Factors affecting motivation to transfer training. *International Journal of Training and Development, 2(1),* 16. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2419.00031

Sitzmann, T. & Weinhardt, J. M. (2018). Training engagement theory: A multilevel perspective on the effectiveness of work-related training. *Journal of Management, 44(2),* 732-756. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206315574596

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Sitzmann, T. & Weinhardt, J. M. (2019). Approaching evaluation from a multilevel perspective:

    A comprehensive analysis of the indicators of training effectiveness. *Human Resource*

    Management Review, 29, 253-269. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.04.001

Stillman, P., Freedman, J., & Procicchiani, T. (2018). Engaging for performance: Measuring

    change in a multi-dimensional leadership development program. *Journal of Experimental*

    Psychotherapy, 21(1), 34-45.

    https://jep.ro/images/pdf/cuprins_reviste/81_art_4_color.pdf

Tafvelin, S., Hasson, H., Nelson, K., & Von Thiele Schwarz, U. (2021). Integrating a transfer

    perspective into evaluations of leadership training. *Leadership and Organization*

    Development Journal, 42(6), https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-11-2019-0492

Van den Bossche, P., Segers, M., & Jansen, N. (2010). Transfer of training: The role of feedback

    in supportive social networks. *International Journal of Training and Development, 14(2),*

    81-94. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2419.2010.00343.x

Vandergoot, S., Sarris, A. & Kirby, N. (2019). Factors that influence the transfer generalization

    and maintenance of managerial-leadership skills: A retrospective study. *Performance*

    Improvement Quarterly, 32(3), 237-263. https://doi.org/10.1002/piq.21297

Vardiman, P. D., Houghton, J.D., & Jinkerson, D. L. (2006). Environmental leadership

    development: Toward a contextual model of leadership selection and effectiveness.

    Leadership and Organizational Development Journal, 27(2), 93-105.

    https://doi.org/10.1108/01437730610646606

Waldman, D. A., Atwater, L. E., & Antonioni, D. (1998). Has 360-degree feedback gone amok?

    The Academy of Management Executive, 12(2), 86-94. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4165460

Weems, G. H. & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2001). The impact of midpoint responses and reverse

coding on survey data. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development,*

34(3), 166-176. https://doi.org/10.1080/07481756.2002.12069033

Wenger, E. M., McDermott, R. & Snyder, W. M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice*.

Harvard University Press.

Yukl, G. (2008). How leaders influence organizational effectiveness. *Leadership Quarterly, 19*,

708-722. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2008.09.008

Yukl, G. & Lepsinger, R. (2005). Why integrating the leading and managing roles is essential

for organizational effectiveness. *Organization Dynamics, 34*, 361-375.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2005.08.004

Appendix A

Research Design/Interview Protocol

<u>Research Question:</u>
What conditions support learning transfer for leadership training participants.

<u>Theoretical Framework:</u>
Baldwin and Ford (1988) training transfer model that uses a framework of trainee characteristics, training design, and work environment.

<u>Trainee Characteristic of Motivation:</u>
A thorough document review serves as the data collection for determining how Fission defines characteristics and expectations for leaders. This includes a Leadership Model, job descriptions, performance goals, performance review processes, and background information about the firm as it relates to leadership and development. Human resource staff provided additional information about how programs are delivered and changes that have occurred in recent years. The trainee characteristic of motivation to transfer was explored through the following questions.

Quantitative survey questions linked to trainee the characteristic of motivation:

Q3.   The skills were applicable to my job.
Q15.   What additional leadership training skills would you like to see included in future training (open ended question designed to capture comments).

Qualitative interview questions linked to the trainee characteristic of motivation:

Q5.   Identify challenges you faced putting the skills presented in leadership training into practice.
Q6.   Tell me about your personal leadership development goals.
Q7.   Describe a recent leadership challenge and where you turned for ideas.

<u>Training Design:</u>
Conversations with human resource staff/trainers and the document review provided the basis to evaluate training design. These conversations and documents also helped guide the creation of a quantitative survey to explore how leadership training was designed and implemented and how that design supports training transfer (see survey attached). This survey also included questions that focused on the support leaders received before and after their training to help with design of interview questions related to work environment.

Quantitative survey questions linked to training design:

Q3.   The skills were applicable to my job.
Q15.   What additional leadership training skills would you like to see included in future training (open ended question designed to capture comments).

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Qualitative interview questions linked to training design:

Q8.   Provide an example of a leadership skill that your peers would like additional training.
Q9.   Share your thoughts about improving leadership development within the organization
       (this question provides insight about both training design and work environment).

<u>Work Environment:</u>
The early conversations with human resource staff and trainers along with several questions in the quantitative survey, were used to create the qualitative interview questions related to the work environment (see attached). The primary focus of this phase is designed to evaluate how the work environment supports training transfer (or not) and its impact on Fission's leaders.

Interviews are structured as a conversation and designed to last no more than 60 minutes. Early questions are focused on building rapport and to better understand the interviewee's role within the organization. The conversation begins by me thanking them for their participation and reinforcing that their responses will be kept anonymous. I ask their permission to record the interview so that I can concentrate on listening versus taking detailed notes. I also reinforce that I may still jot down some notes to help prompt additional follow up questions. Also, I tell them they can skip any questions they are uncomfortable answering and that my overall goal is to identify how Fission can improve the effectiveness of their leadership development programs.

Quantitative survey questions focused on work environment:

Q5.   My performance is based on department results and leadership behaviors.
Q6.   My leader discusses my development and I have a personal development plan.
Q7.   Leadership skills are considered a key requirement of career advancement.
Q8.   I receive actionable feedback from my leader on a regular basis.
Q9.   I am provided opportunities to participate in projects with other departments.
Q10.   Senior leaders communicate leadership expectations on a regular basis.
Q11.   I am comfortable asking other leaders for advice when facing a leadership challenge.
Q12.   Leadership behaviors are consistently applied across the organization.
Q13.   Having opportunities to discuss leadership challenges with a peer group of leaders.
       would benefit my development.
Q16.   What other suggestions do you have about leadership development (open ended
       question to capture comments).

Qualitative interview questions focused on work environment:

Q9.   Share your thoughts about improving leadership development within the organization
       (this question provides insight about both training design and work environment).
Q10.   Is there anything else you would like to share (this question provides insight about both
       training design and work environment, as well as providing the interviewee with the
       chance to disclose any other issues related to
       training transfer).

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Appendix B

Quantitative Survey Invitation Letter

Dear (Name):

You are invited to participate in a capstone project about how employees are supported after participating in an organization-based leadership development program. This online survey should take about 5-10 minutes to complete and ask that it be completed by _____.

Participation is voluntary, and responses will be kept anonymous to the degree permitted by the technology being used. You have the option not to respond to any questions that you choose. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with the Fission Generating Station. Submission of the survey will be interpreted as your informed consent and that you affirm that you are at least 18 years of age.

If you have any questions about the research, please contact Bill Johnson William.l.johnson@vanderbilt.edu or Dr. Eve Rifkin at eve.r.rifkin@vanderbilt.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (615) 322-2918.

Please print a copy of this page for your records.

The survey can be accessed at:

https://peabody.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1GkLS8Ql6WNyLit

Thanks for your assistance in helping to improve leadership development.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Appendix C

Quantitative Survey - Follow up Message

Thank you leaders who have already responded to the Leadership Development Questionnaire.

For those of you who have not yet had a chance to complete the questionnaire, you have until _____ to complete. You can access the anonymous survey at the following link:

https://peabody.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1GkLS8Ql6WNyLit

We appreciate you willingness to help in this capstone project with Vanderbilt University.

Appendix D

Qualitative Interview Recruitment Letter

Dear [Name],

As a doctoral student in the Leadership and Learning in Organizations program at Vanderbilt University, I am inviting you to participate in my capstone project about how employees are supported after participating in an organization-based leadership development program.

Your participation in this study is extremely important to me and to the Fission Generating Station. Should you agree to participate, I will contact you to set up an online interview at a time of your convenience. The interview should take 30-45 minutes. Participation is voluntary and your response will be kept anonymous. You will have the option not to respond to any question that you choose. Participation or nonparticipation will not impact your relationship with the Fission Generating Station. Agreement to participate will be interpreted as your consent to participate and that you are at least 18 years of age.

If you have any questions about the project, please contact Dr. Eve Rifkin at eve.r.rifkin@vanderbilt.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact the Vanderbilt Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (615) 322-2918. Please print or save a copy of this page for your records.

Sincerely,
William L. Johnson
Vanderbilt University; Peabody College
Leadership and Learning in Organizations

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Appendix E

Fission Final Summary
Leadership Development Quantitative Questionnaire

Q1 - Please identify your level of leadership.
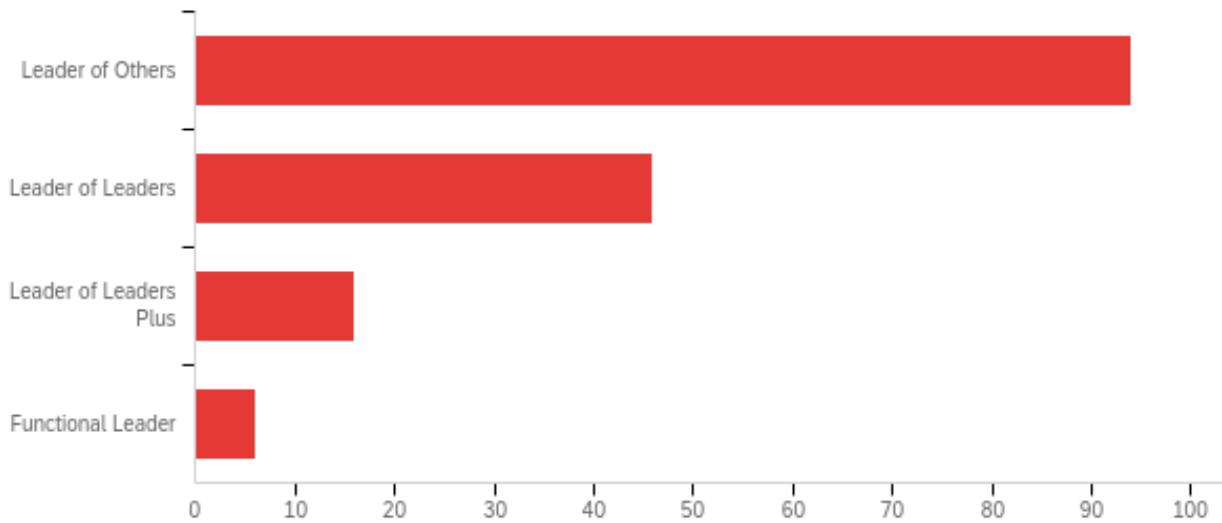
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Please identify your level of leadership.	1.00	4.00	1.59	0.81	0.66	162

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Leader of Others	58.02%	94
2	Leader of Leaders	28.40%	46
3	Leader of Leaders Plus	9.88%	16
4	Functional Leader	3.70%	6
	Total	100%	162

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q2 - My leader discussed learning expectations before and after I attended training.
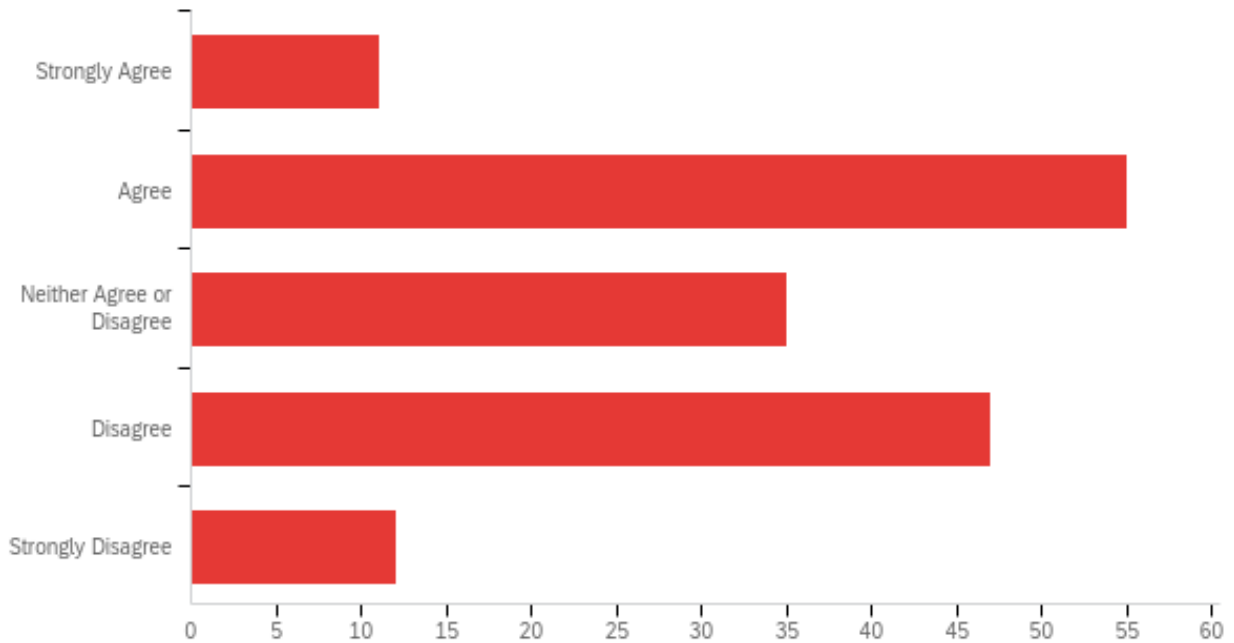
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	My leader discussed learning expectations before and after I attended training.	1.00	5.00	2.96	1.10	1.21	160

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	6.88%	11
2	Agree	34.38%	55
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	21.88%	35
4	Disagree	29.38%	47
5	Strongly Disagree	7.50%	12
	Total	100%	160

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q3 - The skills discussed in training were applicable to my job.
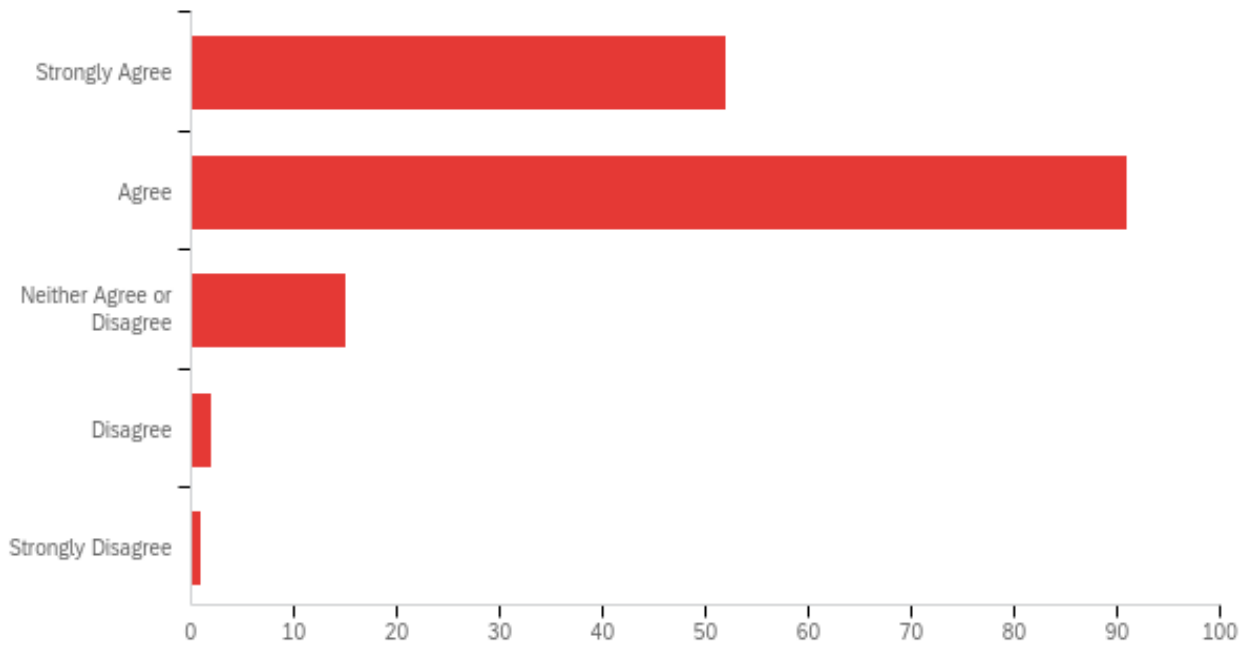
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	The skills discussed in training were applicable to my job.	1.00	5.00	1.81	0.70	0.49	161

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	32.30%	52
2	Agree	56.52%	91
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	9.32%	15
4	Disagree	1.24%	2
5	Strongly Disagree	0.62%	1
	Total	100%	161

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q4 - Leadership performance expectations are consistent with training received.
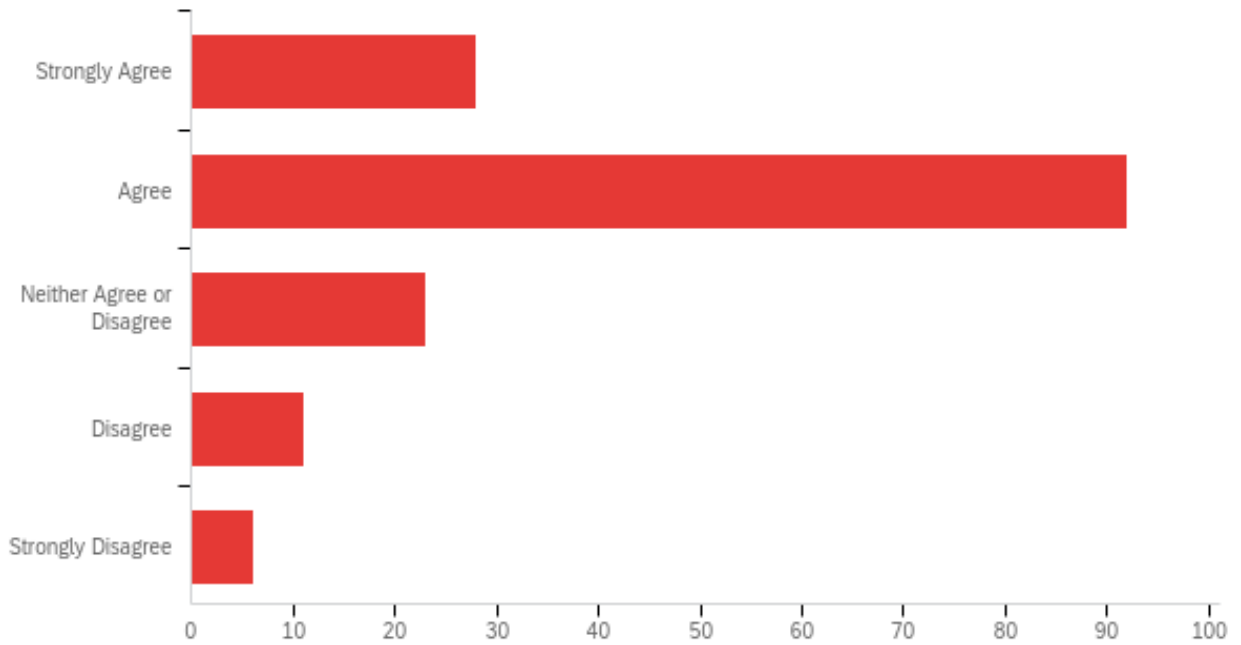
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Leadership performance expectations are consistent with training received.	1.00	5.00	2.22	0.94	0.88	160

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	17.50%	28
2	Agree	57.50%	92
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	14.37%	23
4	Disagree	6.88%	11
5	Strongly Disagree	3.75%	6
	Total	100%	160

VANDERBILT ♥ Peabody College

Q5 - My performance is evaluated based on department results and leadership behaviors.
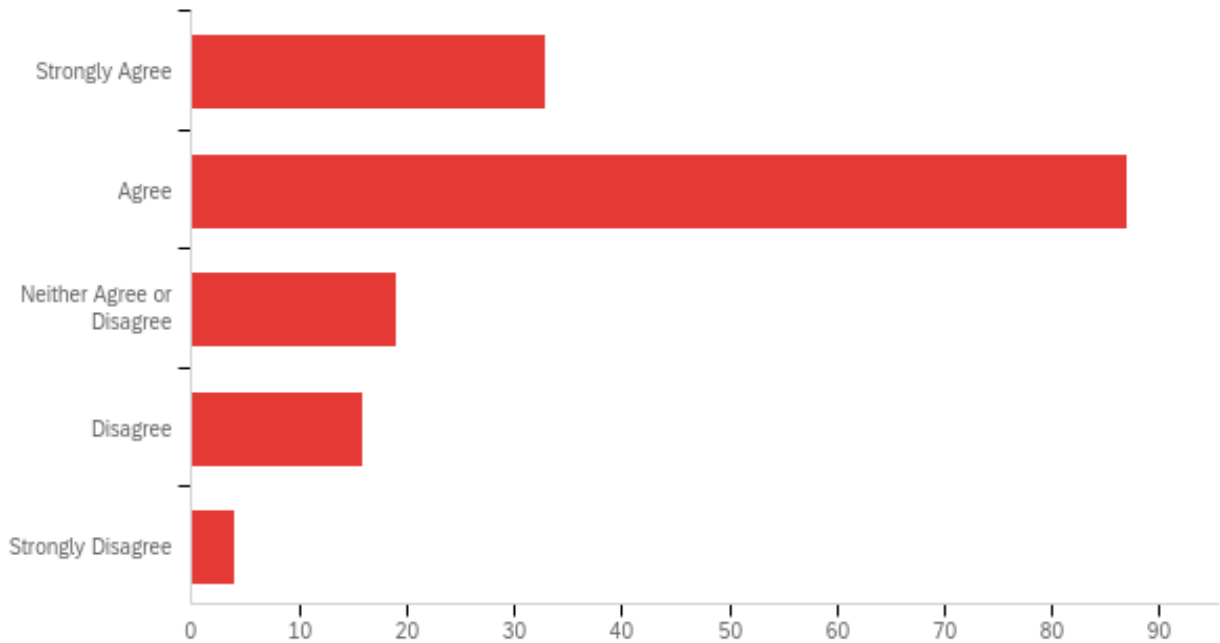
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	My performance is evaluated based on department results and leadership behaviors.	1.00	5.00	2.19	0.96	0.92	159

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	20.75%	33
2	Agree	54.72%	87
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	11.95%	19
4	Disagree	10.06%	16
5	Strongly Disagree	2.52%	4
	Total	100%	159

VANDERBILT V Peabody College

Q6 - My leader discusses my development and I have a personal development plan.
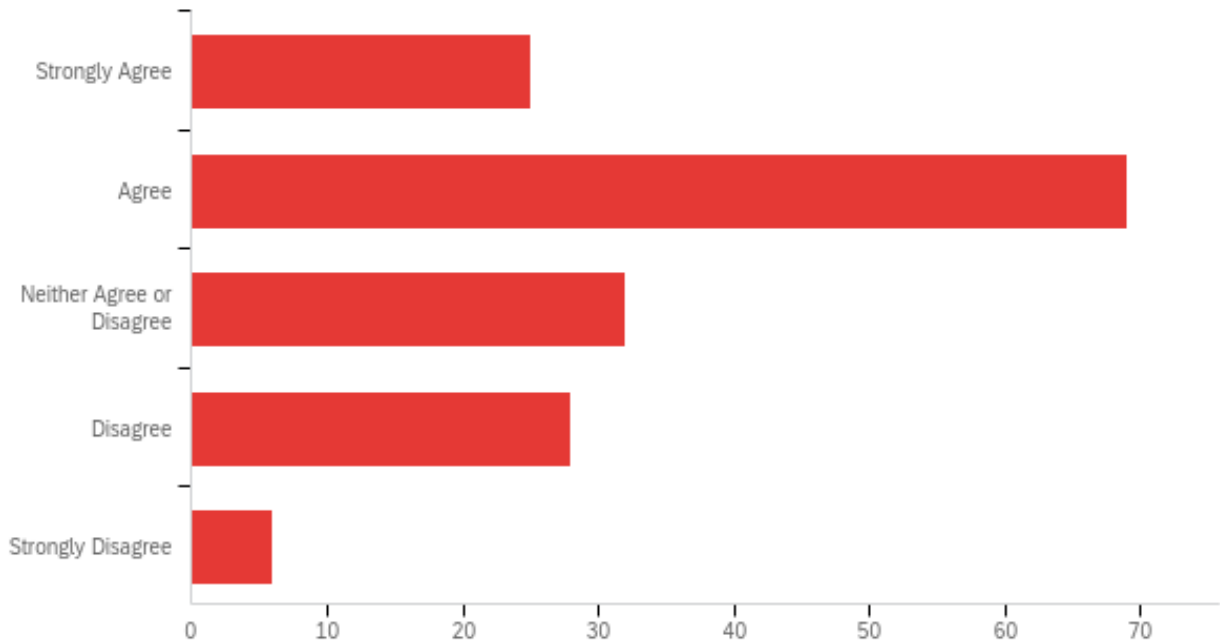
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	My leader discusses my development and I have a personal development plan.	1.00	5.00	2.51	1.07	1.14	160

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	15.63%	25
2	Agree	43.13%	69
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	20.00%	32
4	Disagree	17.50%	28
5	Strongly Disagree	3.75%	6
	Total	100%	160

91

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q7 - Leadership skills are considered a key requirement for career advancement.
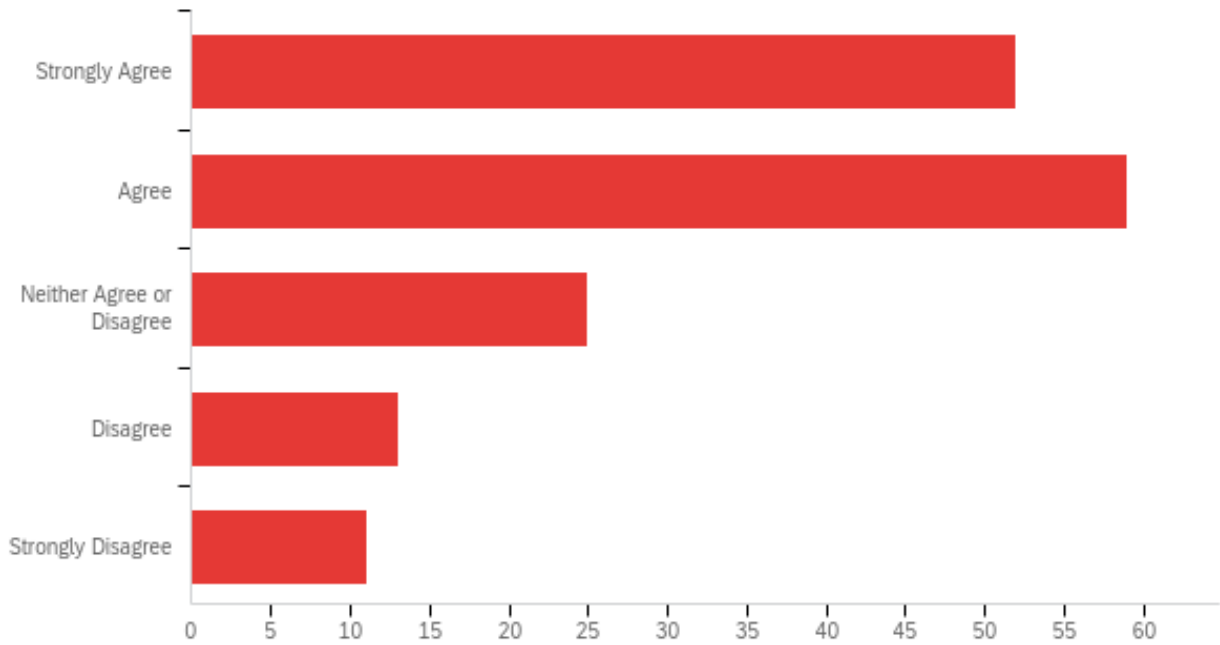
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Leadership skills are considered a key requirement for career advancement.	1.00	5.00	2.20	1.18	1.39	160

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	32.50%	52
2	Agree	36.88%	59
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	15.63%	25
4	Disagree	8.13%	13
5	Strongly Disagree	6.88%	11
	Total	100%	160

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q8 - I receive actionable feedback from my leader on a regular basis.
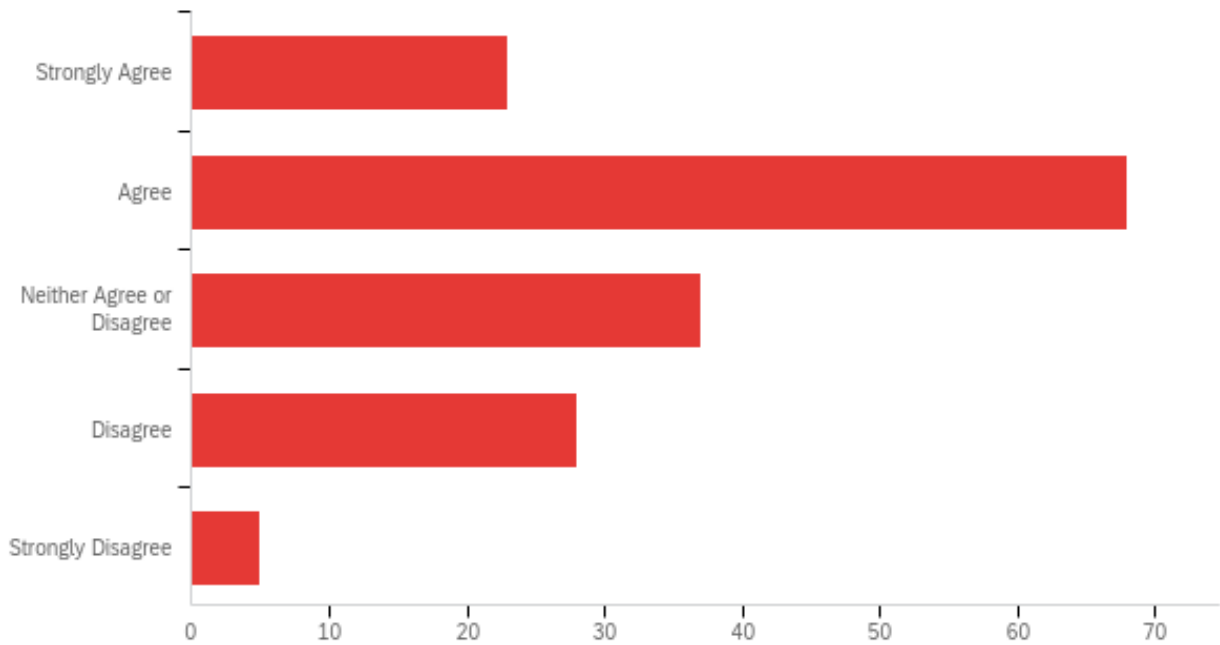
#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I receive actionable feedback from my leader on a regular basis.	1.00	5.00	2.53	1.03	1.07	161

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	14.29%	23
2	Agree	42.24%	68
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	22.98%	37
4	Disagree	17.39%	28
5	Strongly Disagree	3.11%	5
	Total	100%	161

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q9 - I am provided opportunities to participate in projects with other departments.
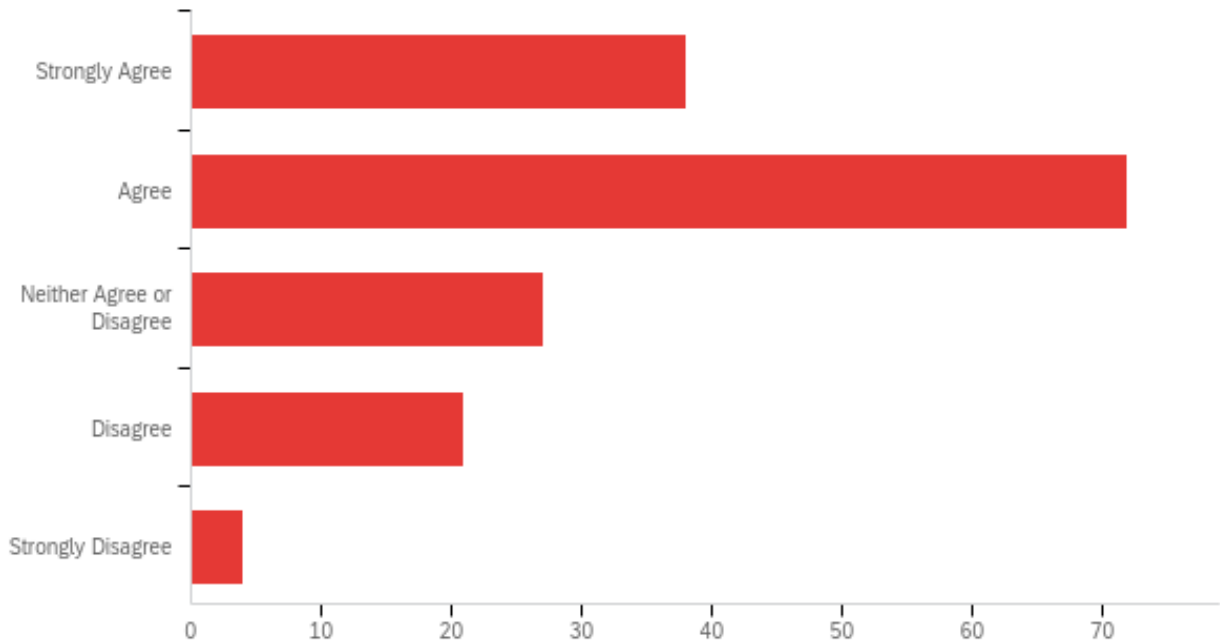
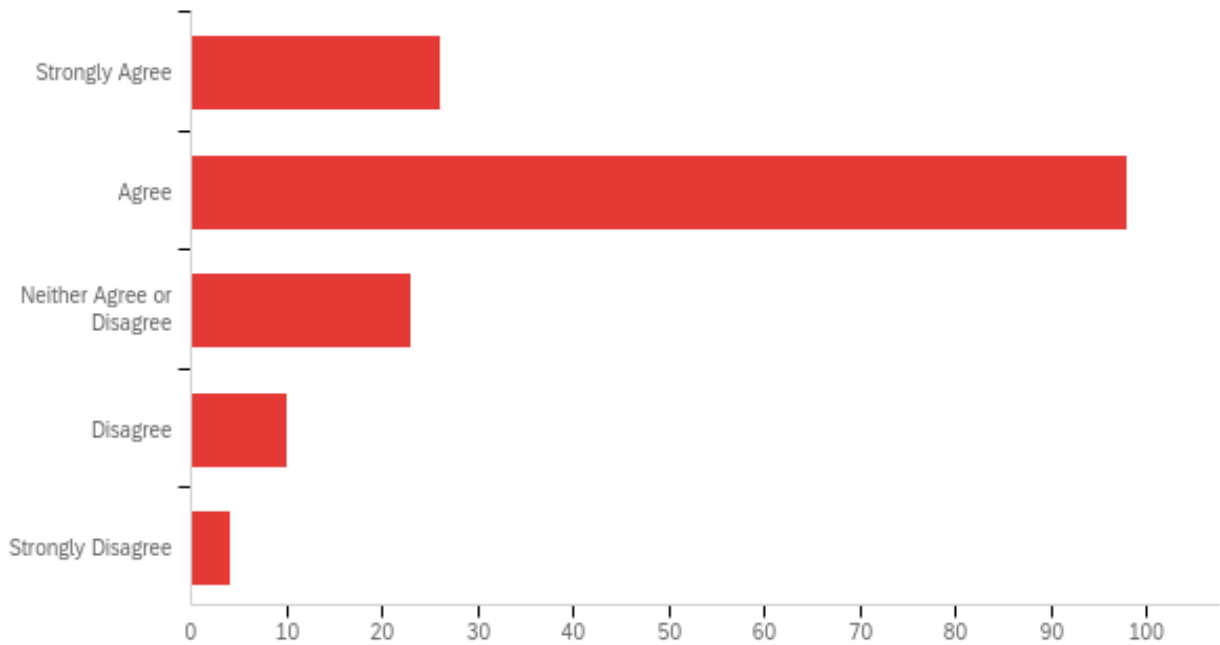| #	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I am provided opportunities to participate in projects with other departments.	1.00	5.00	2.27	1.04	1.07	162

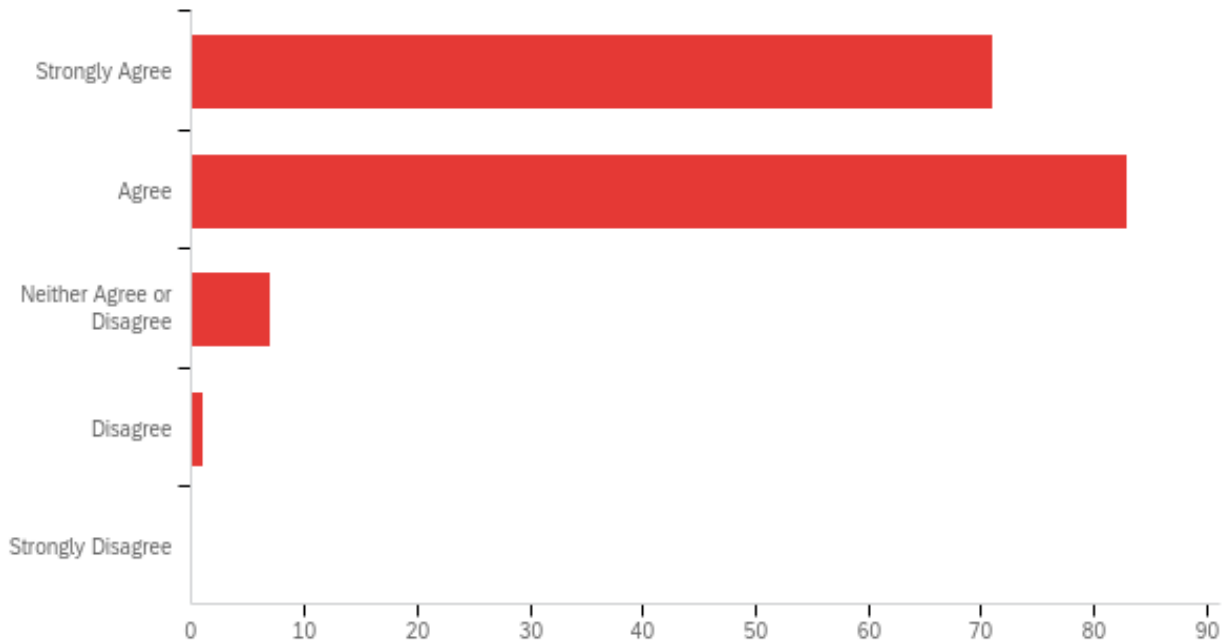| #	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	23.46%	38
2	Agree	44.44%	72
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	16.67%	27
4	Disagree	12.96%	21
5	Strongly Disagree	2.47%	4
	Total	100%	162

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q10 - Senior leaders communicate leadership expectations on a regular basis.

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Senior leaders communicate leadership expectations on a regular basis.	1.00	5.00	2.18	0.86	0.74	161

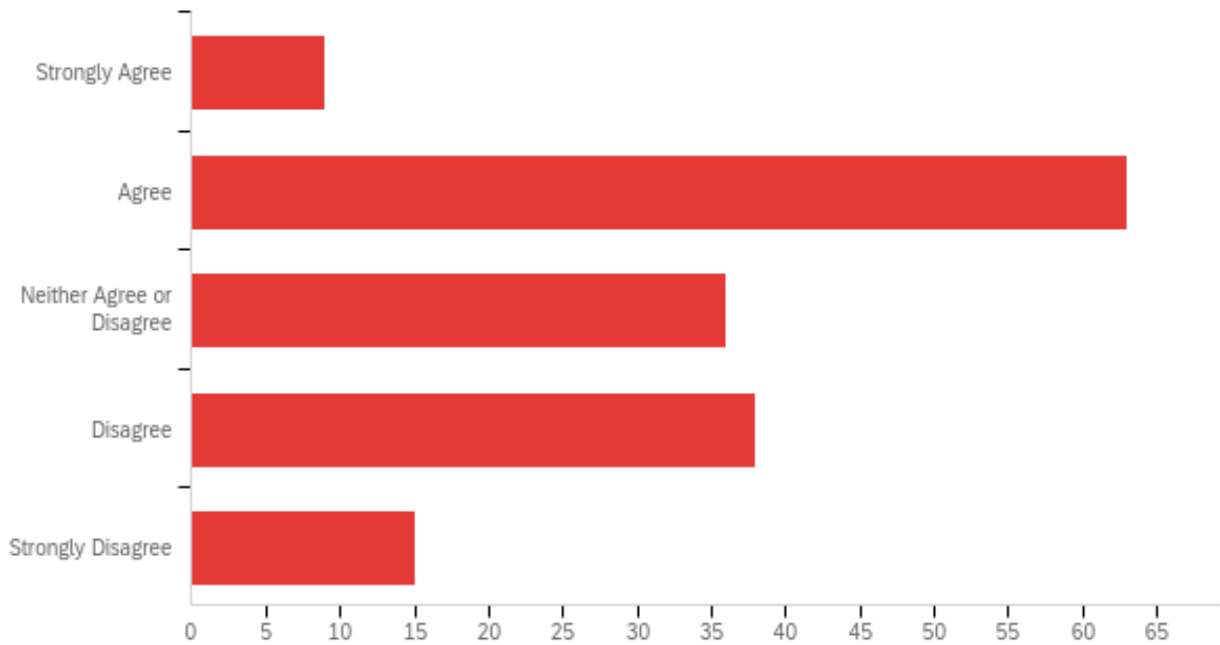| #	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	16.15%	26
2	Agree	60.87%	98
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	14.29%	23
4	Disagree	6.21%	10
5	Strongly Disagree	2.48%	4
	Total	100%	161

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q11 - I am comfortable asking other leaders for advice when facing a leadership challenge.

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	I am comfortable asking other leaders for advice when facing a leadership challenge.	1.00	4.00	1.62	0.60	0.36	162

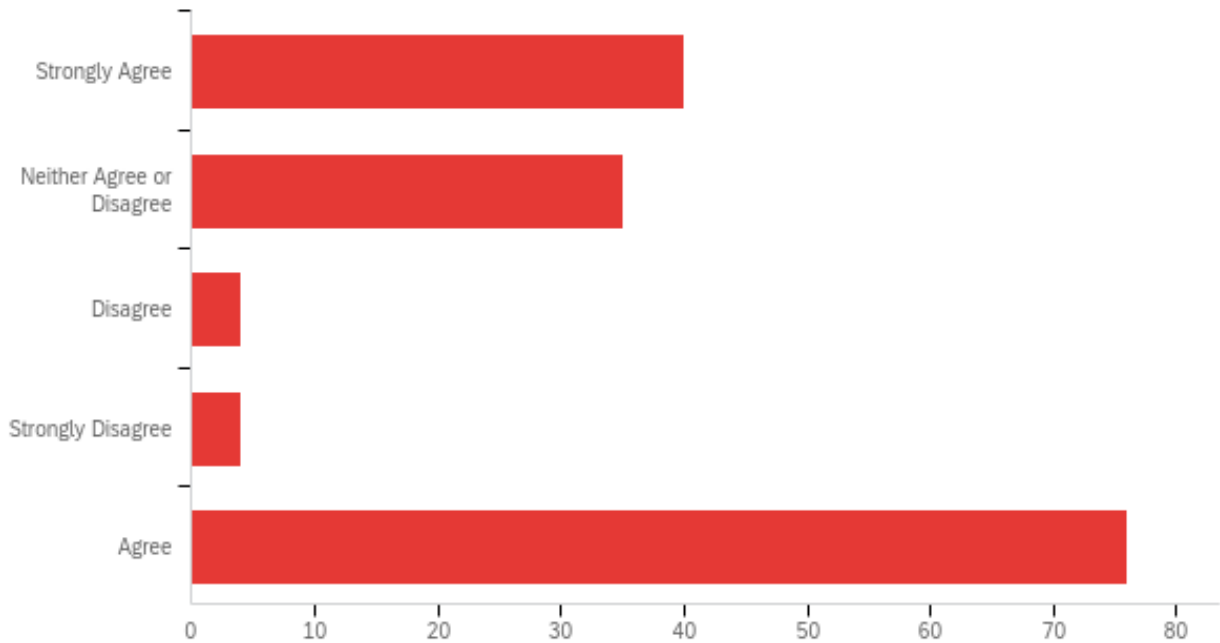| #	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	43.83%	71
2	Agree	51.23%	83
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	4.32%	7
4	Disagree	0.62%	1
5	Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
	Total	100%	162

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q12 - Leadership behaviors are consistently applied across the organization.

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Leadership behaviors are consistently applied across the organization.	1.00	5.00	2.92	1.10	1.22	161

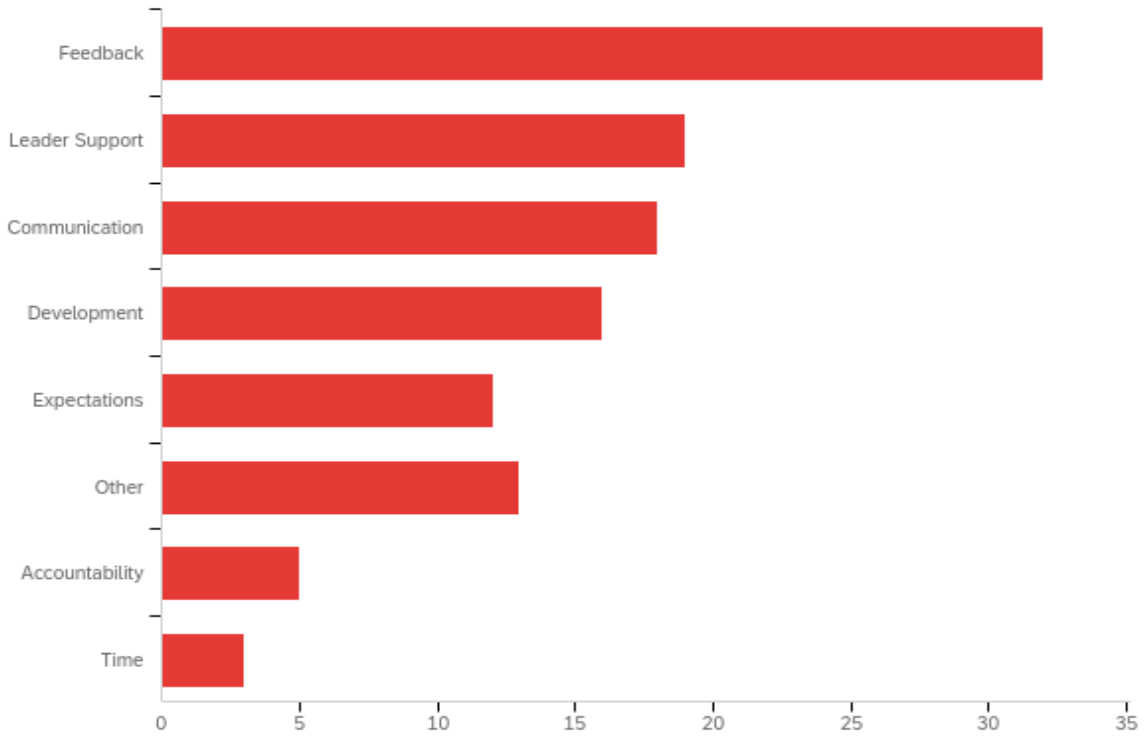| #	Answer	%	Count
1	Strongly Agree	5.59%	9
2	Agree	39.13%	63
3	Neither Agree or Disagree	22.36%	36
4	Disagree	23.60%	38
5	Strongly Disagree	9.32%	15
	Total	100%	161

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q13 - Having opportunities to discuss leadership challenges with a peer group of leaders would benefit my development.

#	Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
1	Having opportunities to discuss leadership challenges with a peer group of leaders would benefit my development.	4.00	9.00	6.74	2.24	5.01	159

#	Answer	%	Count
4	Strongly Agree	25.16%	40
5	Neither Agree or Disagree	22.01%	35
6	Disagree	2.52%	4
7	Strongly Disagree	2.52%	4
9	Agree	47.80%	76
	Total	100%	159

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q14 – Thematic Analysis

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Feedback	27.12%	32
2	Leader Support	16.10%	19
3	Communication	15.25%	18
4	Development	13.56%	16
5	Other	11.02%	13
6	Expectations	10.17%	12
7	Accountability	4.24%	5
8	Time	2.54%	3
	Total	100%	118

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q15 – Thematic Analysis
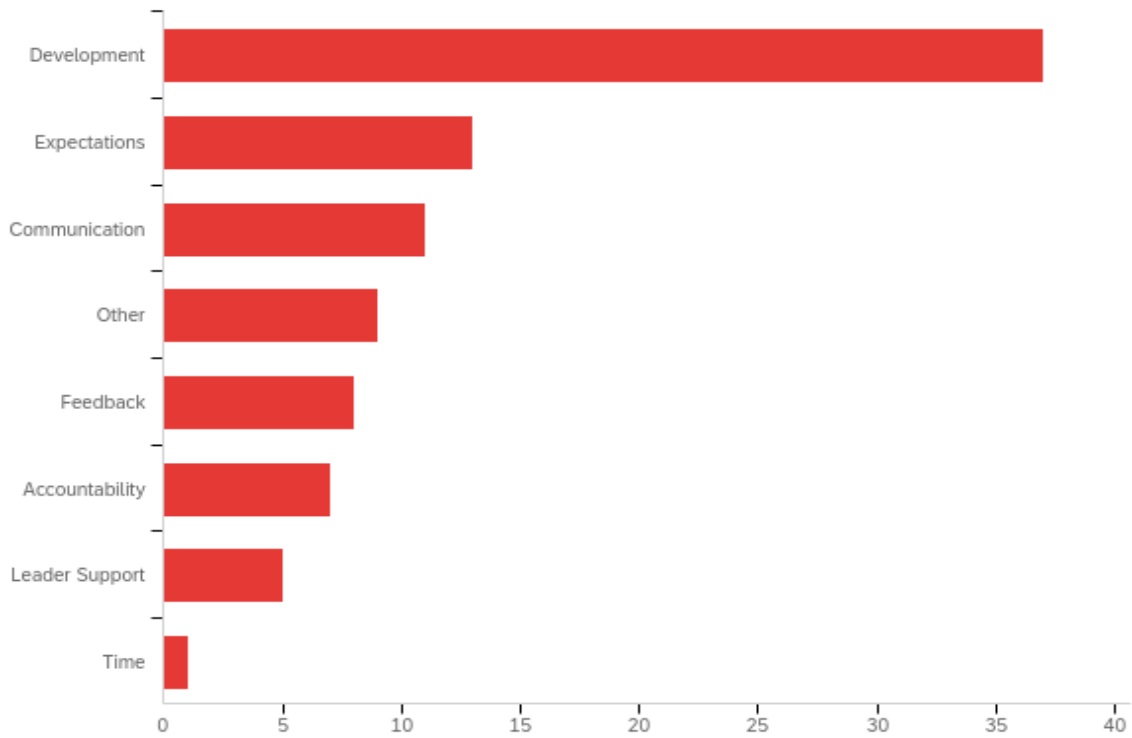
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Development	40.66%	37
2	Expectations	14.29%	13
3	Communication	12.09%	11
4	Other	9.89%	9
5	Feedback	8.79%	8
6	Accountability	7.69%	7
7	Leader Support	5.49%	5
8	Time	1.10%	1
	Total	100%	91

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Q16 – Thematic Analysis
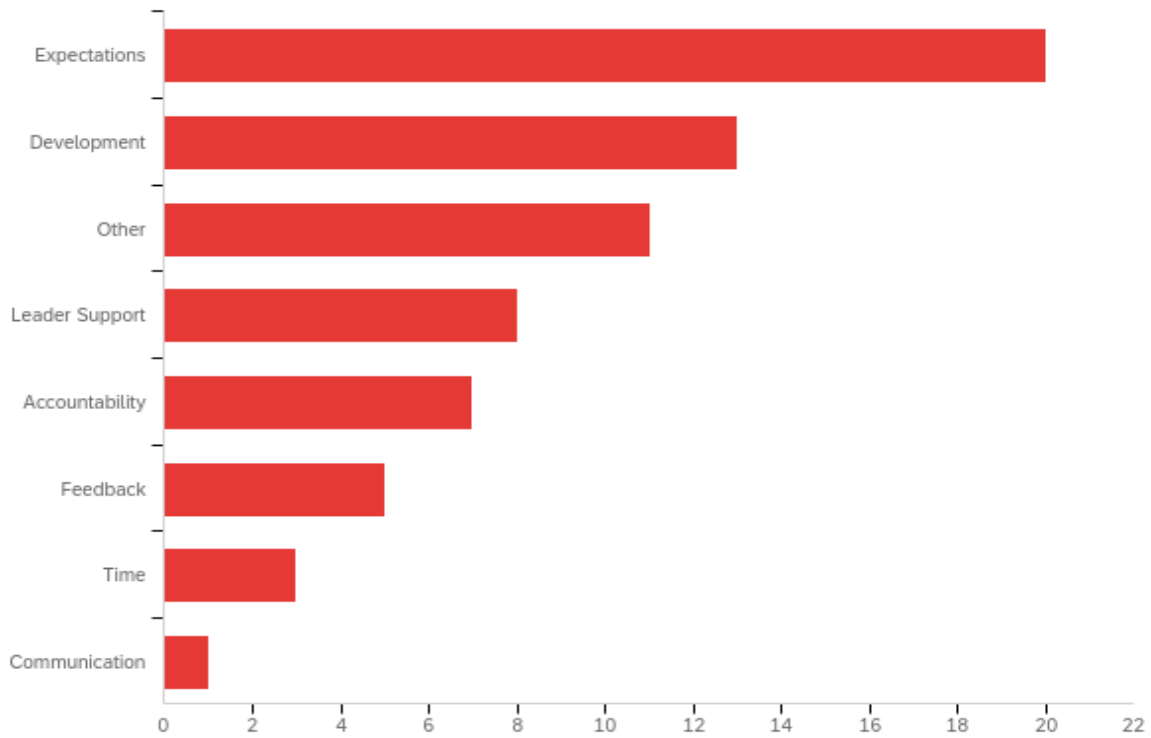
#	Answer	%	Count
1	Expectations	29.41%	20
2	Development	19.12%	13
3	Other	16.18%	11
4	Leader Support	11.76%	8
5	Accountability	10.29%	7
6	Feedback	7.35%	5
7	Time	4.41%	3
8	Communication	1.47%	1
	Total	100%	68

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Appendix F

Leadership Development Qualitative Interview Questions

1. Tell me a little about your leadership role and primary responsibilities.

2. Share how you approach leadership of your team.

3. Describe how your performance objectives are linked to leadership behaviors.

4. Explain how you are evaluated and rewarded as a leader.

5. Identify challenges you faced putting the skills presented in leadership training into practice.

6. Tell me about your personal leadership development goals.

7. Describe a recent leadership challenge and where you turned for ideas.

8. Provide an example of a leadership skill that your peers would like additional training.

9. Share your thoughts about improving leadership development within the organization.

10. Is there anything else you would like to share.

VANDERBILT Peabody College

Appendix G

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Interviews

**Thematic Analysis Qualitative Interviews
By Question**

Legend: Expectations, Feedback, Development, Time, Leader Support, Communication, Accountability, Other

VANDERBILT Peabody College