

developing VUCA-ready leadership development practitioners

Recently, a lot of attention has been focused on what leaders need to be effective in the 21st Century VUCA environment and how this capacity and capability can be developed.

What are the implications of these insights for the professionals who have been tasked with designing and delivering the development activity which will shape these leaders?

If leadership development professionals are to add real value, they need to have credibility with their clients (the leaders they are responsible for developing). So what attributes might be seen as adding value in the current context? CRF's recent research '*Leadership Development – is it fit for purpose?*' provides some significant clues.

Externally referenced.

We now understand that effective leadership is context specific and leaders need to make sense of what context they are operating in and how this context is changing (see Herminia Ibarra's comment on oversight, in the previous article). L&D professionals are often in a unique position to support this by acting as the eyes and ears of the organisation, scanning the horizon to provide an external perspective across the whole organisation.

Business relevant.

A related issue is the extent to which leadership development is tightly linked to the prevailing business strategy of an organisation. CRF's previous research report – *Developing Commercial Acumen for the HR Function* – has highlighted the need for HR practice to be grounded in commercial acumen and developing leadership is no exception.

Robust foundations.

Business leaders are used to presenting strong business cases to support investment proposals. Leadership Development professionals also need to demonstrate that their request for investment is grounded in good theory and evidence (and not just the latest L&D fad). They also need to demonstrate that they are capable of measuring the impact of this investment. If they have contracted a clear purpose and objectives for their work with their business colleagues, leaders can then see

a clear link between developing themselves and adding value to the organisation.

Adult development.

Effective practitioners need to invest in their own continuous development so they can act as role models and are seen as mentors by their business colleagues. This involves a willingness to experiment and to be seen as an incubator for new practice. Sometimes this will be an uncomfortable place and will require speaking truth to power, but it will mean practicing what you preach, which is at the heart of being a role model.

Finally, it is critical that someone is taking a whole system perspective.

Too often HR is getting in its own way – Resourcing, Talent, L&D and OD risk being HR silos. For example, a recent CRF Talent breakfast identified that too few HR functions were effectively linking their talent identification (supply) to the actual work that will add future value in their organisations (demand) raising the prospect of shallow or empty leadership talent pools in the not too distant future. Business leaders want effective solutions to their business challenges and with the pace of change in the VUCA world, this requires collaboration and integration across traditional HR silos.

Leadership Development professionals have the potential to add significant value to their organisations – how fit for purpose are yours?

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