Leader Life-Span Experience Management: A Practice-Oriented Approach

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Experiences accumulated over a life-time impact, form and shape a leader's identity. Significant people, places and events influence individual leaders' perceptions of how leaders should behave. By identifying and integrating his/her high-impact leadership relevant experiences, a leader gains a better understanding of who he/she is as a leader. This, in turn, can be used in optimizing his/her effectiveness. After reviewing some related literature, a practice-oriented framework is provided to help leaders arrive at a coherent formulation of who they are as leaders based upon relevant leadership experiences across their life span. An example application of the framework is provided. Some challenges in applying this approach are also offered.

INTRODUCTION

Experience is a key individual difference making factor in the practice and study of managerial leadership (Kerns, 2015a; Ligon, Hunter, & Mumford, 2008; Watson, 2009). Effective leaders understand and leverage relevant life experiences for high impact. Individual leaders, organizations and society benefit when experience is understood and applied to create value. A starting point is the individual leader knowing how to better understand, integrate and apply his/her experience to positively impact human capital as well as the commercial value of business organizations (Kerns, 2018).

The concept of experience is commonly associated with talent management functions, such as, recruitment, selection, and job design (Cappelli & Keller, 2014). A leader's significant life experience can also, however, be a strategic resource to be shaped and leveraged for increased impact on organizational performance and well-being (Anderson, 2010). Leaders who have an integrated understanding of significant relevant leadership life experiences will likely have increased impact when managing themselves, others and situations.

Experience has been a subject of study across a variety of fields and disciplines. It has been an integral topic in the field of differential and developmental psychology (Boyatzis & Akrivou, 2006; McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015). In particular experience, is recognized as important to business success and to acquiring expertise across diverse situational contexts (Ericsson, Prietula, & Cokely, 2007; Kerns, 2015a). The author and others have embraced the idea that experiences uniquely shape who we are and that these experiences accumulate sequentially over one's lifetime (Hibbert, Beech, & Siedlok, 2017). The work being done in the study and application of attachment theory with adults also provides an example of how formative relationships early in one's development can influence adult behavior including that of leaders (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Neuroscience also plays a role in helping to shape and sustain behavior patterns/habits across one's lifespan. It seems that neural pathways become deeper and wider over time forging strong response patterns

of reacting to situational demands in life. This area of study is in its infancy but likely holds promise for practitioners and applied researchers interested in learning how to behaviorally influence brain functions that are relevant to a leader's behavior over time (Ashkanasy, Becker, & Waldman, 2014). The field of positive psychology also connects to experience. Positivity expressed through words and physically (e.g. smiling) can change brain chemistry through the release of biochemicals such as oxytocin (Fabritius & Hagemann, 2017). When positive experiences across one's lifetime outweigh negative encounters, well-being is enhanced (Vaillant, 2012; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Fredrickson, 2001).

Increasingly the economics of well-being is being explored empirically, conceptually and in applied settings (McDaid & Cooper, 2014). Juxtaposed to the work being done in applying well-being to leadership in the workplace, it seems important and useful for leaders to find ways to integrate and leverage their experience not only to increase their effectiveness but to also enhance organizational well-being and economic gains. (Kerns, 2018). McDaid (2014) makes a strong case for connecting economics and well-being to facilitate evidence – based research that has implications for economic policy and practice.

Experience is closely connected to identity formation and development across one's lifetime (Lord & Chui, 2018; Sparrowe, 2005; Lilgendahl, 2015). In the context of leadership, it seems vital for leaders to understand and integrate experiences that have been impactful in influencing their perceptions and approaches to leadership. This realization not only helps individual leaders have a more coherent picture of who they are as a leader but also likely helps them come across to others as more authentic (Nyberg & Sveningsson, 2014).

Closely associated with the literature on identity development is the study of implicit leadership theories. This area of investigation concerns how individuals develop and formulate prototypes of leaders (Ayman & Adams, 2012; Eden & Leviatan, 1975). These prototypes that individuals carry around with them in the workplace can influence how they view themselves and others in relationship to the practice of leadership. It seems that leaders as well as followers in organizations are influenced by the prototypes that they have developed about leadership over time. Schyns, Tymon, Kiefer & Kerchreiter (2013) have investigated innovative ways to have individuals identify their implicit leadership theories or schemas.

Given the interdisciplinary study of experience, this article is intended to provide an approach for practitioners to adapt, and for applied researchers across diverse disciplines to investigate further. Leader experience management is an important topic in the field of leadership and is explored using information gleaned from the real world (Locke, 2017; Locke & Cooper. 2000).[1] The approach offered is supported by a review of relevant literature and decades of study and practice by the author and his colleagues in workplace settings. The framework more fully helps leaders understand, integrate and optimize their unique experience in a way that contributes to their development and effectiveness. This work also contributes to the paucity of extant literature relating to practice oriented evidenced-based approaches to leader experience management across one's life span.

THE LEADER EXPERIENCE LIFE SPAN MANAGEMENT CYCLE

As discussed in this article, experience management seeks to help leaders effectively leverage and manage their experiences to optimize their performance. The Leader Experience Life Span Management Cycle found in Figure 1 helps "operationalize" a leader's experience and the related process in a general way. This framework reflects a review of relevant literature, applied research and practice by the author and his colleagues. These efforts have produced the following observations that serve to support the framework offered in this article.
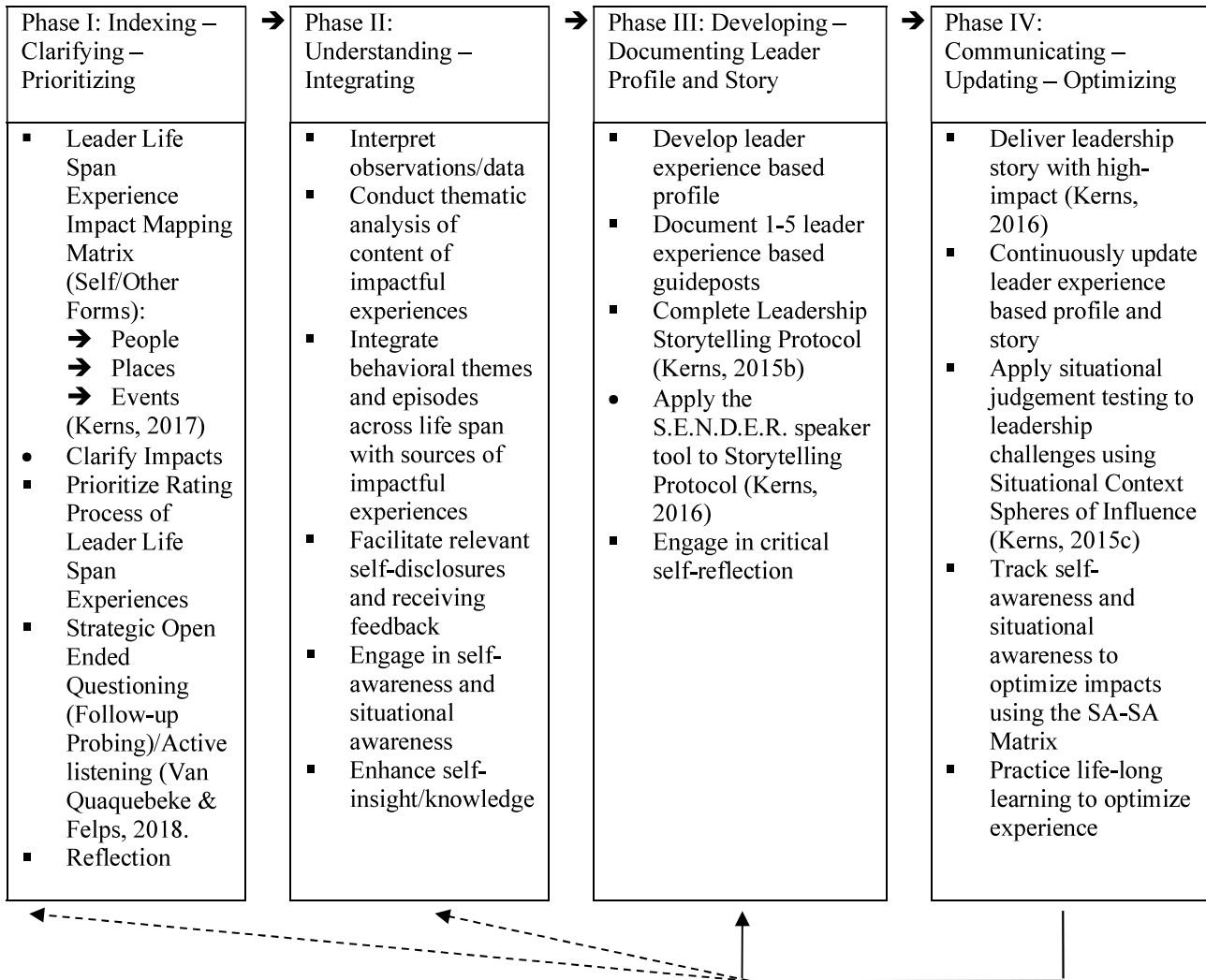
- Experience is part of the process that helps form a leader and provides opportunities for ongoing leadership education and development (Hibbert, Beech, & Siedlok, 2017; Ligon, Hunter, & Mumford, 2008).
- Crucibles or transformative experiences influence and shape a leader's sense of identity (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Bryne, Crossan, & Seijts, 2018).

- Experience plays a key role in helping individuals strive to become their personal best (Roberts, Dutton, Spreitzer, Heaphy, & Quinn, 2005; Peters, Flink, Boersma, & Linton, 2010),
- Experience along with coaching contribute to successful work performance (Conger, 2004; McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988; McCall, 2010).
- Evidence suggests that individual differences are subject to personal change (Elfenbein, 2015; Fleeson, 2007).
- Situational judgement testing (SJT) can help assess situational challenges that leaders face as well as evaluate individual differences among leaders (Oostrom, Born, Serlie, & van der Molen, 2012; Whetzel, & McDaniel, 2009).
- Prior influence experiences, drawn from life history data, can help predict leader effectiveness (Atwater, Shelley, Dionne, Avolio, Comobreco, & Lau, 1999).
- Developmental experiences involving obstacles and challenges serve as antecedents to leadership formation (Howard & Irving, 2014; Ligon, Hunter & Mumford, 2008).
- Practicing managerial leadership while striving to become a better leader is a dynamic interdependent process which is context dependent and helps address the question, "Who am I as a leader?" (Andersson, 2010; Watson, 2009).
- Self-assessment/self-knowledge and situational awareness are integral to understanding, integrating and leveraging one's experience (Kerns, 2015c; Carver, 2012; Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2012; Funder, 2008).
- Implicit leadership theories develop over time and are important considerations in leadership development (Eden & Leviatan, 1975; Schyns, Tymon, Kiefer, & Kerschreiter, 2012).
- Storytelling can be an effective method to communicate impactful leadership experiences across the course of one's life (Aaker & Aaker, 2016; Auvinen, Aaltio, & Blomqvist, 2013; Boal & Schultz, 2007).
- Identity development is a dynamic process which evolves across one's lifespan and is associated with developmental processes such as the formation of attachment patterns/styles of leaders (McAdams & Sapata-Gietl, 2015; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016; Haslan, Reicher, & Platow, 2015).
- Organizational neuroscience applied to examining leadership experience in applied settings holds significant potential for advancing research and practice especially related to more fully understanding the establishment and reinforcement of habitual behavior patterns across one's life span (Ashkanasy, Becker, Waldman, 2014; Dimitriadis & Psychogios, 2016; Duhigg, 2013).
- The emerging work on the economic impacts of well-being on public policy and the interaction of well-being with leadership performance highlights the importance for leaders to consider their own and others well-being as a developmental goal (Kerns, 2018; McDaid & Cooper, 2014).

Based on the above observations and study of the topic of managing experiences and leadership, with the perspectives of a managerial leadership consultant, industrial-organizational psychologist, business professor/scholar and executive, over the years the author has developed an integrated framework to help emerging and seasoned managerial leaders enhance their competence at managing experience across their life-span. This framework, depicted below in Figure 1, has been applied in many settings including work organizations, executive education classrooms and applied research projects. The model is practitioner friendly and conceptually linked to relevant literature relating to the study of leadership and experience.

The framework presented in Figure 1 addresses the need for a holistic, integrated, practical approach to effectively managing experience. This proven framework integrates four key components of managing experience to more fully examine the dynamics relating to this process. Managing experience cannot be effective if the managerial leader focuses on fewer than all of the components in his or her efforts to better understand and leverage experience; the components need to be integrated into one coherent framework.

FIGURE 1
LEADER EXPERIENCE LIFE SPAN MANAGEMENT CYCLE ©

Phase I: Indexing – Clarifying – Prioritizing	Phase II: Understanding – Integrating	Phase III: Developing – Documenting Leader Profile and Story	Phase IV: Communicating – Updating – Optimizing
- Leader Life Span Experience Impact Mapping Matrix (Self/Other Forms): ➔ People ➔ Places ➔ Events (Kerns, 2017) - Clarify Impacts - Prioritize Rating Process of Leader Life Span Experiences - Strategic Open Ended Questioning (Follow-up Probing)/Active listening (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018. - Reflection	- Interpret observations/data - Conduct thematic analysis of content of impactful experiences - Integrate behavioral themes and episodes across life span with sources of impactful experiences - Facilitate relevant self-disclosures and receiving feedback - Engage in self-awareness and situational awareness - Enhance self-insight/knowledge	- Develop leader experience based profile - Document 1-5 leader experience based guideposts - Complete Leadership Storytelling Protocol (Kerns, 2015b) - Apply the S.E.N.D.E.R. speaker tool to Storytelling Protocol (Kerns, 2016) - Engage in critical self-reflection	- Deliver leadership story with high-impact (Kerns, 2016) - Continuously update leader experience based profile and story - Apply situational judgement testing to leadership challenges using Situational Context Spheres of Influence (Kerns, 2015c) - Track self-awareness and situational awareness to optimize impacts using the SA-SA Matrix - Practice life-long learning to optimize experience

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In the framework, the four components are presented in chronological order of the most basic provisions for managing experience. However, the components are inter-related and in practice are dynamic and interactive. The discussion below describes the components and the interplay among them.

Phase I: Indexing – Clarifying – Prioritizing

Structured interviewing conducted by an executive coach using the Leader Life Span Experience Impact Mapping Matrix (Kerns, 2017) is a practical method for gathering and indexing a leader's experience across his/her life span. This process involves having a leader divide his/her life stages, typically into thirds, and share his/her experiences with people, places and events that have impacted his/her perceptions and approach to leadership. Once this information is collected, individuals are facilitated in clarifying each experience for relative impact. With these experiences clarified, the coach facilitates the coachee in prioritizing his/her experiences relating to leadership using a paired comparison process. The indexing, clarifying and prioritizing process requires a facilitator or coach to ask strategic open ended questions, actively listen and help the individual or coachee reflect upon his/her responses (Van Quaquebeke & Felps, 2018).

Phase II: Understanding – Integrating

Once one's experiences have been indexed, clarified, and prioritized, it is important that these experiences be understood and integrated. This process of understanding and integrating involves interpreting the observations and information gleaned in Phase I. Key themes across an individual's life span that relate to his/her perceptions and approaches to leadership are identified. These behavioral themes and episodes are integrated to help form a coherent picture of the sources of impactful experiences. During this process of pulling together key impactful experiences, individuals are facilitated and encouraged to offer relevant self – disclosures and to be open to feedback from others. Engaging in self awareness and providing relevant self disclosures are enhanced when individual efforts are considered within specific situational contexts. Phase II offers individuals the opportunity to gain additional insight/ knowledge into how their life experiences are connected to their current perceptions and approaches to leadership. As with Phase I, this phase is advanced by facilitators who possess effective interpersonal influence skills including high-impact communication (Kerns, 2016).

**Phase III: Developing – Documenting Leader Profile and Story**

Utilizing the information gleaned in the previous two phases, this component in the cycle develops and documents a leader's profile based on his or her experience. The profile is a way for an individual to organize the most impactful content taken from Phase I and II. Emerging from this phase is a concise statement that helps answer to the question, "Who am I as a leader?" based on the individual leader's experience. It also helps the individual document his/her one to five experience based guideposts. **(Guideposts are key beliefs that a leader holds about the practice of leadership based on his or her unique set of experiences over his or her lifetime.)** This profile and the guideposts become key points of emphasis in a leader's story. As part of this phase, individuals are facilitated to develop and organize the content of his/her experience based leadership story using a proven structured approach to high-impact communicating (Kerns, 2016). This phase helps individuals organize and document the key content areas for their concisely written experience based profile and leadership story.

Phase IV: Communicating – Updating – Optimizing

Communicating, updating and optimizing one's experience can help a leader enhance performance and well-being. During this phase individuals practice and/or deliver their leadership story to select target audiences for high impact. Individuals continuously update their leader experience based profile and story. They are also challenged to apply situational judgment testing to new developmental challenges that they face in their careers and current roles. These challenges are considered across various spheres of influence ranging from matches between an individual's leadership identity and that of an organization, to more transactional spheres such as interacting with customers and key stakeholders (Kerns, 2015c). Throughout this phase the importance of maintaining a lifelong learning mind set is stressed as a way to optimize and leverage one's experience. Learning, optimizing and leveraging one's experience is an ongoing process that spans a leader's lifetime. This process, to be fully successful, requires an individual to monitor his/her self awareness in relationship to situations so that he/she can respond optimally to situational demands. (See Figure 2).

Self and situational awareness are required to optimize performance and well-being. A leader needs to both understand the situation being faced and who he/she is in relationship to the circumstances at hand. The matrix depicted below in Figure 2 is used to help a leader assess where he/she is in relationship to self and situational awareness regarding specific topics/situations. Figure 2 offers a useful way of describing the permutations of the dimensions of self-awareness and situational awareness. The author regularly uses this matrix with leaders to review their perceptions regarding their levels of self and situation awareness relating to specific circumstances (References in this article to the various quadrants are used for thought and discussion purposes only.) Having a leader regularly track his/her self-awareness and situational awareness will likely help optimize and leverage his/her experiences acquired across his/her lifetime.

FIGURE 2
SELF AWARENESS – SITUATIONAL AWARENESS MATRIX ©
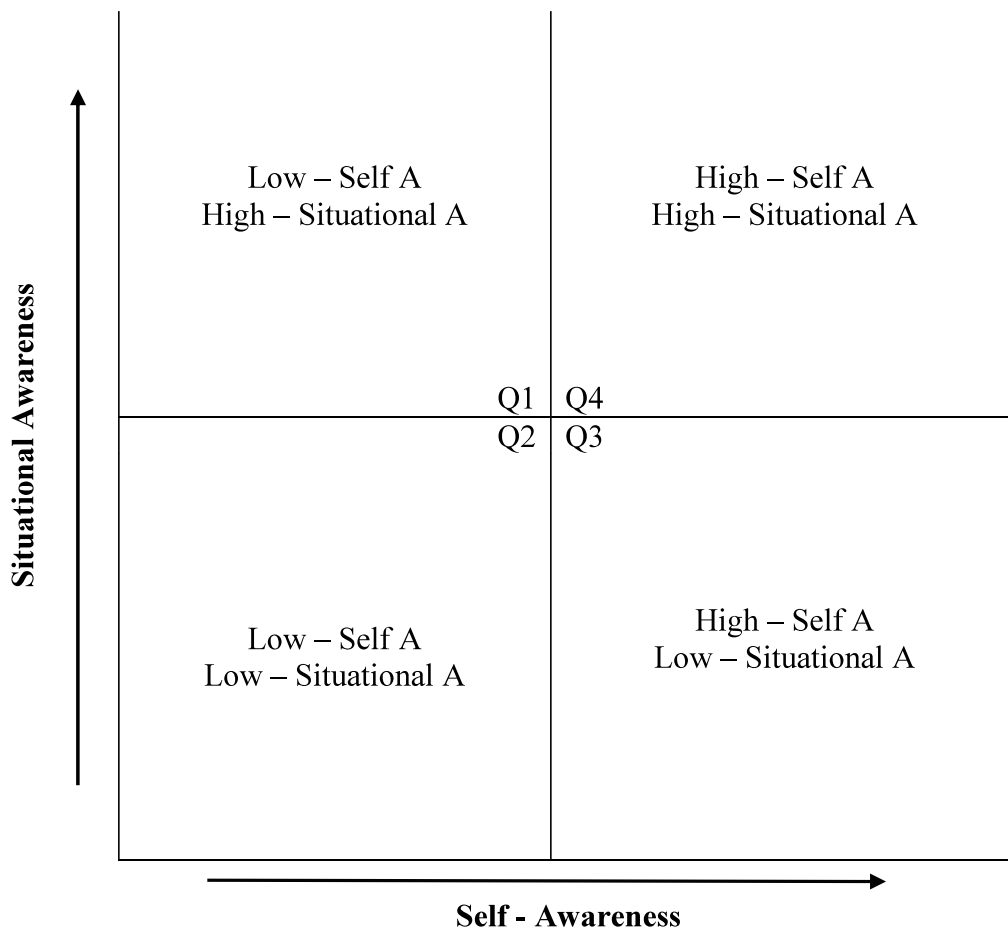
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A leader possessing high self-awareness and high situational awareness (Q4) is more likely to understand situational demands and how to best respond. At the other extreme is the leader who does not understand him or herself (low self-awareness) nor have a grasp of the situation i.e. low situational awareness (Q1). Having leaders more fully understand and integrate their life experiences relating to becoming a leader likely helps them more effectively manage themselves and situations.

A SEVEN STEP APPROACH

To put further practical utility to the concept relating to experience management across one's lifespan offered in this article, the following seven step approach is offered as a specific adaptation of the Leader – Experience Life Span Management Cycle above. This experience management process was developed in the context of executive coaching to help leaders focus on their experience, and provides one avenue by which organizational leaders may become and/or may lead people to become higher performers with higher well-being (Kerns, 2018).

Step 1: Positioning Experience Management
   The first step in the seven step process is intended to serve as the motivating preamble to initiating a Leader Life Span Management Program. The coach should review some of the benefits of this approach, orient the client to this systematic and interactive process, and seek to gain commitment for using the approach from the participant being coached.

Step 2: Indexing, Clarifying and Prioritizing Experience
   Using the "Leader Life Span Experience Impact Mapping Matrix" (Kerns, 2017) and the "Prioritizing Rating Process of Leader Life Span Experiences," the coachee is facilitated in indexing, clarifying and prioritizing experiences relating to his/her perspectives and approach to leadership. It is important to utilize strategic open-ended questioning, probing, active listening and reflection during this step in the process

Step 3: Understanding and Integrating
   Once step 2 is complete, a deeper understanding and integration of a leader's experiences is sought. This is achieved by looking at the observations/data identified in step 2 for further insights and themes across the coachee's life span of experiences. Using the previously noted assessment methods as a reference point, topics are addressed to help the coachee better understand and integrate his/her experiences. Through this process an increased level of self-awareness and situational awareness is typically achieved. The coachee becomes more aware of how his/her experiences impact his/her views and approaches to leadership. He/she also comes to see more clearly how current situational judgments can be influenced by past relevant and impactful leadership experiences. These self insights prepare the coachee to develop and document the content areas for his/her concisely written leader profile and story.

Step 4: Developing and Documenting Leader Profile
   The executive coach next facilitates the coachee to address and answer the following questions:
   1. What makes the coachee unique as a leader (what is the coachee's unique personal resource pool)?
   2. Across the coachee's life span, what experiences have had the most impact on his/her approach and/or perspective on leadership?
   3. Based on the coachee's response to question two above, what 1 – 5 guideposts (whether explicit or implicit) influence the coachee's approach and beliefs about leadership?
   The goal in this step is to have the client reflect and disclose what they see as his/her uniqueness, share his/her most impactful leadership relevant experiences and document his/her one to five leader guideposts.

Step 5: Formulating an Integrated Leadership Story
   The formulation of the coachee's leadership story draws upon information gleaned from steps 2 through 4, as needed and appropriate. The integrated story has two key content requirements which are as follows:
   1. The coachee's one to five guideposts which were documented during step 4.
   2. The coachee's current response to a "What, Why, How" exercise which sequentially asks the coachee to answer the following three questions as it relates to his/her leadership.
        1) What do I do?
        2) Why do I do it?
        3) How do I do it?
   After the above content areas are addressed, the coachee is facilitated in completing a structured process to organize and prepare for verbally presenting his/her leadership story. The communication preparation process and related tool is called S.E.N.D.E.R. (Kerns, 2016).

Step 6: Communicating High – Impact Leadership Story
   It takes practice to effectively communicate the content of one's experience based leadership story. During this step the coachee is facilitated in practicing how to deliver his/her leadership narrative in an impactful way. Step 5 focused on **what** the coachee will say and this step targets **how** to say it best. The

process involves first identifying potential target audiences to deliver the leadership story for optimal impact. Receiver orienting the message is an important consideration. Second, the coachee reviews the S.E.N.D.E.R. tool with the coach in preparation for practicing delivering his/her narrative. Third, coaching practice sessions with the coachee using the S.E.N.D.E.R. tool are facilitated by the coach. These sessions offer real-time feedback centering around the concept of using your "communication equipment" effectively for high impact. One's "communication equipment" includes voice, word usage, and gesturing, etc. This step helps one prepare and practice his/her leadership story to selected target audiences to ensure optimum impact.

Step 7: Optimizing and Updating Leadership Experience Impacts

The final step in the process involves revisiting Step 1 with the coachee to remind him/her of the benefits of leveraging and integrating experience across his/her life span. The Leader Experience Life Span Management Cycle is reviewed. The coachee is challenged and encouraged to continuously update his/her experience based profile and leadership story as part of being a lifelong learner (Denning, 2006). Coachees are asked to plot their position on the self-awareness and situational awareness matrix (See Figure 2) in the relationship to specific topics/situations that are currently the most challenging for them to navigate. (Before plotting their respective SA levels, the coachee is asked to describe the specific topic and/or situation for which their SA – SA is being assessed and plotted on the matrix.)

APPLYING THE SEVEN STEP APPROACH – AN EXAMPLE

To illustrate and assist in putting the Seven Step Approach into use, the following example is offered. Tom is the President of a division in a large international business organization. He has seven key reports and he reports to the CEO for Global Operations. In the context of executive coaching, what follows is the adaptation/customization of the Seven Step Approach to Life Span Experience Management to Tom's life and current role as division President. This program was part of a larger strategic direction setting and performance management consulting assignment within Tom's organization.

Step 1: Positioning Experience Management

The executive coach oriented Tom to the overall Seven Step Approach and highlighted a number of benefits that this approach offered him. Benefits that were reviewed included:

- Tom would have a more focused way to understand and leverage his relevant leadership related experiences across his life span for more impact.
- Tom would be able to identify his high impact experiences, and have a systematic way to address and manage his experiences across his lifespan for greater impact.
- This evidence based approach underscores the benefits of understanding and integrating one's relevant leadership experiences into the practice of leadership. With coaching, Tom could learn to apply this approach with his seven key reports.
- This approach would help directly drive his key result of increasing the number of people displaying high performance with high well-being in his organization, starting with himself.

After reviewing each of the program steps, Tom was probed for his level of commitment to completing this program. His commitment level was very high and he was especially interested in exploring how some of his earlier life experiences helped shape his current leadership approach and identifying his guideposts.

Step 2: Indexing, Clarifying, and Prioritizing Experiences

Using the Leader Life Span Experience Impact Mapping Matrix (2017) and the Paired Comparison Prioritizing Process of Leader Life Span Experiences, Tom was facilitated in indexing, clarifying and prioritizing his experiences relating to his perspectives and approach to leadership. During this process he was asked various open ended questions in response to the answers he provided when reviewing his life

span experiences with the help of the two assessment tools noted above. Three of the most impactful life experiences relating to his current perspectives and approach to leadership were:

- Working with his father for several summers during his high school years.
- Having a very negative experience in his early career working for a "bad" boss.
- Experiencing the sudden death and loss of a close lifelong friend.

These three high impact experiences were the focus of attention during Step 3 in the process.

Step 3: Understanding and Integrating

Upon completing the previous step, Tom was convinced that he had identified and prioritized his most impactful leadership related experience over his life span. Tom obtained a deeper understanding and integration of these experiences by looking more closely at these situations with the help of his executive coach. The experience of working with his father for several summers during high school taught him the importance of working hard, developing good work habits and resilience. Through this experience he came to believe that drive, conscientiousness and perseverance pays off. When reflecting on his experience with a very bad boss, he recounted how emotionally draining it was to work for someone who was unreliable, abrasive and self-centered. Tom explained how this experience with this boss taught him the power of negative role models at work. He came to understand that bosses need to be positive role models and that they have an enormous influence on the well-being and performance of others. Tom's experience of losing a very close lifelong friend who happened to be an "unhappy workaholic" gave him pause to more fully consider the value of work life balance. Taken together, the following themes emerged from Tom more deeply considering and reflecting on his life experiences that connected to his current leadership approach:

- The power of positive performance leader role models and the behaviors they display.
- The power of negative performance leader role models and the behaviors they project.
- The competing forces between drive/upward mobility and work life balance.
- The importance of considering well-being and performance in organizational life.

These themes formed the basis for developing and documenting Tom's leader profile.

Step 4: Developing and Documenting Leader Profile

Tom was facilitated by his coach to address his unique personal resource pool as a leader in his current role and how some or all of these attributes may be connected to his previous high impact leadership experiences. Five behavioral attributes emerged: working hard, conscientiousness, persistence, consideration of others, and work life balance. Through further discussion and reflection the following five leadership guideposts were documented:

- Always strive to be a positive role model for your people in all that you do.
- Stay the course but know when to call it quits before too much damage is done.
- Extend courtesy and consideration to others even when it is challenging for you to do – it's the right thing to do!
- Don't tolerate unreliable people; put more weight in people's actions than their promises.
- Balance drive and hard work with off task time to recharge.

Step 5: Formulating an Integrated Leadership Story

Drawing upon the information obtained during steps 2 – 4, Tom was facilitated in preparing the content areas for his experience based leadership story. His five guideposts delineated in step 4 were included as key content areas. Also, he was asked to respond to the following questions with regard to what his experience over his life span has taught him in regard to leadership:

Q1: <u>What</u> do I do?
Q2: <u>Why</u> do I do it?
Q3: <u>How</u> do I do it?

His associated comments to the above questions revealed that he strives to be an effective leader and positive performance role model for others in all that he does (What do I do) because it is the right thing to

do (Why I do it). He also goes about executing his leadership role by being reliable, considerate, and hard working with a sense of the importance of work life balance to ensure well-being and sustain performance (How I do it).

Step 6: Communicating High – Impact Leadership Story

Through conversations with his coach, Tom selected his executive committee as his target audience which consisted of his seven reports. He selected this group because he wanted to present his story to them and he wanted them to develop and deliver their own stories to the executive group. He felt that with practice he could be a positive role model for presenting an experience based leadership story.

Tom's coach prepared him to practice his story delivery by using a proven presentation tool called S.E.N.D.E.R. (Kerns, 2016). The components of this tool are as follows:

S = Set the scene – provide the purpose, topic, time

E = Eliminate the unnecessary

N = Notify the audience of key points by using your communication equipment or voice, words and gestures.

D = Demand/encourage feedback

E = Enunciate clearly

R = Receiver/Listener – Orient the message to help the target audience more clearly hear the intended message.

During a series of practice sessions Tom was provided real time feedback with a particular focus on helping him vary his voice volume as well as tone, and use more demonstrative gesturing to highlight key points. The key points to emphasize were his five leadership guideposts that were documented during Step 4 in the process.

Step 7: Communicating – Updating – Optimizing

Tom set a date for presenting his experience base leadership story and subsequently successfully delivered it to his executive team. He was also reminded of the benefits of leveraging and integrating his relevant leadership experiences across his life span and encouraged to think of ways to communicate his experiences beyond story telling. He was further challenged to continuously update his experience based leader profile and leadership story as part of being a lifelong learner. He also plotted his level of self-awareness and situational awareness using the matrix (See Figure 2) in relationship to some impending situations he would be encountering in his current role. For example, he applied the matrix tool to an impending strategic negotiation which helped him realize that he needed more situational understanding when dealing with a particular international partner. He was encouraged to use this matrix, at least informally, to help optimize his self-awareness and situational awareness when dealing with new and challenging situations. He agreed to do this, recognizing that he needed to be especially aware of what he did not know but needed to learn more about challenging and demanding situations.

This Seven Step Approach is practical, practitioner-oriented, and offers a systematic approach to enhancing an individual's management of relevant leadership experiences over one's life span. It is also emerging from work in the field that this process can be facilitated using a "coach the coach" approach. This method holds promise that leaders can more directly impact their people's leadership development relating to them better understanding and leveraging their relevant leadership experiences across their life span.

SOME CHALLENGING ISSUES

Operationalizing leader experience in ways that help leaders more fully understand themselves for increased effectiveness in business presents a number of challenges. There is a need to help managerial leaders develop a proactive open mind set about learning from experience to leverage and optimize their current leadership effectiveness. Leaders who see lifelong learning as important to success will likely be able to more fully optimize their learning from experiences across their life span (Passarelli & Kolb, 2011;

Fabritius & Hagemann, 2017). Learning needs to be bolstered by deliberate practice over time and enhanced through coaching and mentoring (Ericsson, Prietula, & Cokely, 2007),

Identifying experience across one's life span will require additional assessment tools, methods and processes to help index and measure impacts of these experiences. It will be important to reliably and validly collect information from individuals but equally valuable to be able to practically measure the impacts of these experiences on individual leaders and others within their spheres of influence. Accurately indexing and prioritizing relevant leader experiences across a lifetime will be challenging but likely be useful in advancing the practice of leader experience management. It is likely that technology assisted data collection devices, especially relating to neuroscience, will be useful in these efforts (Ashkanasy, Becker, & Waldman, 2014).

Getting business leaders to understand and appreciate the value in explicitly managing experience as an individual difference may represent another challenge. Meeting this challenge will require increasing the awareness of how softer processes can be operationalized to help influence bottom line business results. Field work as well as more empirically minded efforts have shown how "soft" business practices can drive more traditional business results (Wiley, 2010).

Another challenge is to further explore ways to help leaders best communicate their high impact relevant leadership experience to target audiences. These efforts should likely include looking at how a leader's personality matches with modes of communication. It may be that, for example, storytelling as used in this article is not appropriate for certain leaders. This challenge points out how more generally leader individual differences such as experience and personality do interact. Each leader has a unique personality profile as well as a unique set of experiences that influenced his/her path to leadership. Assessing and optimizing a leader's relevant leadership experiences will likely need to consider other individual differences such as personality, values and strengths.

Helping managerial leaders apply a balanced time perspective when managing their experience offers another challenge. Kerns (2012) provides a time perspective framework that may be useful to managerial leaders in managing and leveraging their experience as an individual difference making factor. Considering experience using a balanced time perspective of the past, present and future would seem to be valuable in achieving a more complete understanding of leadership relevant experiences across a life span. Currently, the focus has been mostly on the past and present as it relates to managing experience. There are likely opportunities to further explore how the future can be more extensively considered and leveraged by leaders seeking to more fully understand and manage their experience. The recent conceptual and empirical work being done concerning prospection (mental representations of a future event) including its connection to neuroscience holds promise (Vaillant, 2017; Seligman, Railton, Baumeister & Sripada, 2013; Gilbert & Wilson, 2007).

Connecting leadership experience to situational context provides a challenging opportunity for practitioners, applied researchers and teachers of leadership to advance our understanding of these two areas. In particular, using the methodology of situational judgement testing (Whetzel & McDaniel, 2009) seems fruitful to more closely examine a leader's level of self-awareness in relationship to specific situational contexts. In practice, the author's work and that of others has shown that the relationship between leadership self-awareness and situational awareness is important in determining how well a leader can read people and situations and respond competently in these circumstances. (Kerns, 2015a; Showers & Zeigler-Hill, 2012; Carver, 2012; Silvia & Gendolla, 2001).

Finally, to address the paucity of evidence-based frameworks for practitioners to review and utilize when addressing leadership experience, it would be useful and beneficial to challenge practice minded applied researchers to explore additional approaches to help leaders effectively manage experience. In addition to the current framework and stepwise process presented here, applied researchers and/or evidenced-based oriented practitioners are challenged to develop additional programs to help managerial leaders understand, manage and leverage experience as an individual difference making factor.

SUMMARY STATEMENT

Organizational leaders can benefit by having practical approaches that help them index, understand and optimize their relevant leadership experiences across their life span. Effectively managing experience contributes to enhancing managerial leaders' personal effectiveness and positive impact in organizational settings. There is a need for applied researchers and practitioners to advance their efforts to help leaders leverage and effectively manage their relevant leadership experiences at work. Going forward, there will be a need to encourage leaders to develop a lifelong learning mindset, have useful assessment methods, generate ways to best communicate their experience based leadership stories and consider using a more balanced time perspective. It would also be valuable to connect experience with situational contexts more explicitly as well as provide practitioners with additional frameworks/approaches to manage relevant leadership experiences.

ENDNOTES

1. This methodology is in keeping with Locke (2007) and Locke and Cooper's (2000) assertion that qualitative data obtained from a variety of available sources, including interviews with structured questioning, field observations, and other less quantitative methods of inquiry can legitimize an approach that is based on the integration of real-world facts.

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