

# The Leader's Role in Learning and Development

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## Abstract

This paper explores how the changing nature of work requires new skills for senior leaders that, in turn, require a new approach to developing senior leaders. Effective leadership development means being clear about the new skills for success in this environment and identifying the experiences which have accelerated the development of these skills in the most successful leaders. Drawing on the lessons learned from four years' of operation of the Victorian Public Service's (VPS) Victorian Leadership Development Centre (VLDC), this paper explores the critical role leaders play in assessing and developing executive leadership capability, what the '70/20/10 rule of development' looks like in practice, and how to measure and evaluate leadership success.

## Executive summary

The approach to executive development taken by the Victorian Leadership Development Centre has delivered key business outcomes for the public service of Victoria. These outcomes over four complete years of operation include an overall 29.5 per cent improvement in on the job performance reported by managers of program participants; the promotion of more than 44 per cent of all program participants to more senior roles in competitive, merit-based selection processes; and an average 30 per cent improvement in skills and knowledge reported by participants themselves.

Key to these results has been the engagement of the Executive of the Victorian public service (VPS) in the development of leaders. The Executive of the VPS comprises the Heads of Victorian Government Departments, known as Secretaries, the Chief Commissioner of Police, and the Chair of the State Services Authority. This paper articulates the role the Executive have played in:

1. Governance and accountability of leadership development, with the Executive holding participants and managers accountable for the achievement of learning goals and, in turn, embracing accountability for the success of the overall program of leadership development
2. Designing and leading the development of leaders, including defining the critical capabilities required for future success, assessing leaders to identify areas for development, providing the on the job experiences needed to accelerate development, and facilitating learning sessions
3. Defining clear goals and measures for success for leadership development and regularly evaluating programs against these goals and measures.

## The leadership issue

In 2007, the Victorian Government published a report highlighting the leadership challenges for the Victorian public service including:

- Shrinking internal talent pools with more than 44 per cent of all executives planning to retire within five years
- The changing nature of work which required new and different skills for senior leaders

- Heightened competition in the external employment market - the so called 'war for talent', and
- The failure of existing leadership development efforts to deliver the new skills and more importantly the critical experiences executives needed to develop and move into more senior roles.

### The Victorian Leadership Development Centre

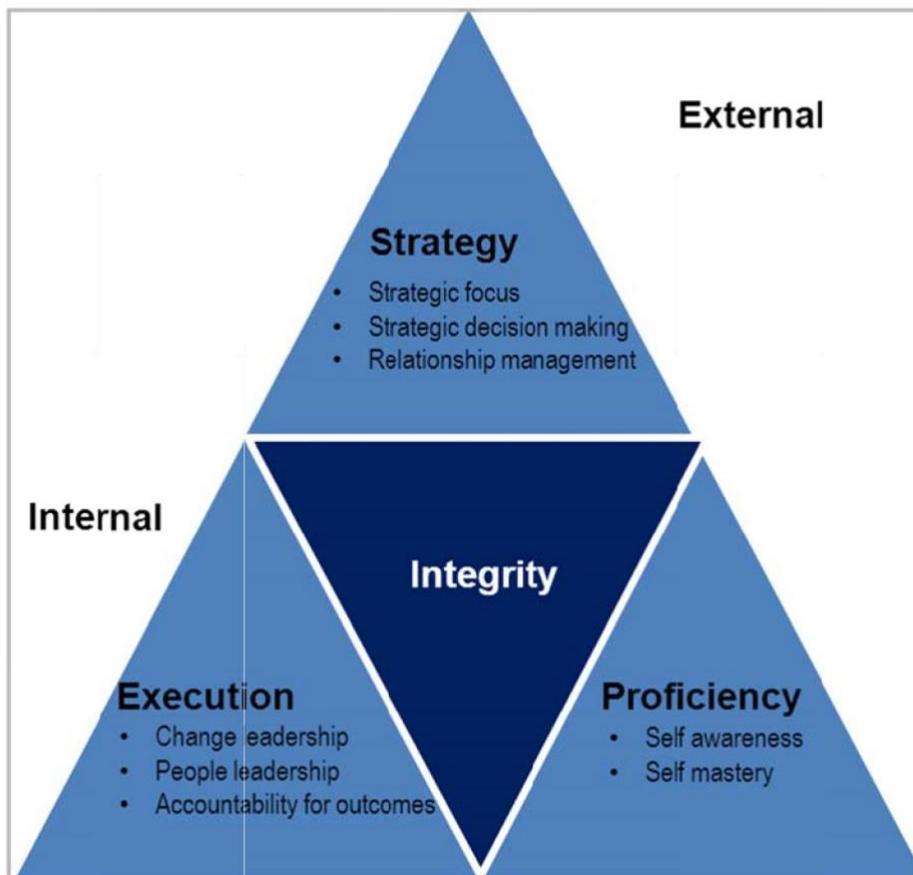
Faced with these challenges, the Executive of the VPS determined the need for a new, collective approach to leadership development for executives. They established the Victorian Leadership Development Centre, as a 'centre for excellence' in leadership to deliver a whole of Victorian public service approach to executive talent development and succession management.

### The skills required by senior leaders

The first role the Executive of the VPS undertook in the establishment of the Centre was to define the future skills executives needed to be successful in the changing environment in the VPS Leadership Framework. Figure 2 provides a summary of the elements of this framework. Their engagement in this design was critical to guide the Centre's learning and development efforts, measure its success and create buy in from these senior leaders and executives across the Victorian Public Service.

### The leader's role in learning and development

Figure 2: VPS Leadership framework



Research by Deloitte identifies six best practices against which organisations should benchmark their leadership development efforts. These include engaging senior leaders in program

development and in defining the critical capabilities required for leaders within the organisation (O'Leonard and Loew, 2012).

In 2013, given the changing nature of work and the different skills required by senior leaders in this context, the Executive of the VPS updated the original framework which was created in 2008 to further hone the Centre's development efforts.

### **Targeting development for high impact**

This framework was used as the starting point to assess leadership capability and to target the Centre's development efforts. All participants nominated for the Centre's programs commence the program by attending an upfront assessment centre.

Assessment centres provide a standardised method for evaluating behaviours and comprise interactions that are observed by a number of trained assessors (Joiner, 2000; Thornton and Rupp, 2006). They typically comprise a variety of assessment activities that are combined to assess performance in typical scenarios that are based on a targeted job (Dayan, Fox and Kasten, 2002; Woodruffe, 1990).

These assessment centres use real life scenarios the Executive of the VPS found challenging when they were promoted to their roles. The simulated activities test the leadership readiness of participants at the next level, and identify their strengths and areas for development. Many research studies have shown that assessment centres are the single best aid for making promotion decisions (Byham, 2006) because they are able to assess performance not at current level but at a level more senior.

The Executive of the VPS played a key role in the design of the assessment centres. They worked with the Centre to create:

- A 'two days in the life of a Secretary' assessment centre for high potential CEO and Deputy Secretaries, and
- A 'one day in the life of a Deputy Secretary' assessment centre for high potential Executive Directors and Directors.

These complex simulations require participants to develop individual agency strategies and whole of Government strategies to address challenging issues, present to Cabinet, and meet with a variety of stakeholders including the Auditor-General, direct reports, business stakeholders and Government Ministers.

In addition to their role in the design of the assessment centre, the Executive of the VPS play a key role in the assessment of participants. They work with skilled observers to co-assess all of the assessment centre activities and provide their observations and insights into what participants need to develop to prepare for the next level of leadership.

This information is used to create a detailed development report against the leadership framework highlighting strengths and areas for development. From this report participants create an individual development plan, which forms the basis of their program participation and is used to measure progress and success.

Feedback from more than 100 participants of the program indicates that the creation of an individual development plan was a very useful and valuable experience which assisted them to focus on and prioritise their development given their busy workloads (VLDC End-point evaluation reports, 2010, 2012, 2013). This is evident in participant feedback such as "the most important

part for me was having a plan based on assessed areas for development. This enabled my development activities to continue through a fairly tumultuous time in my areas of work" (2009 executive leadership program participant).

These plans are used by the Centre to create highly tailored programs to meet the specific development needs of the assessed participants. Creating a focused program of delivery is another of the six best practices against which Deloitte suggests organisations should benchmark their leadership development efforts (O'Leonard and Loew, 2012).

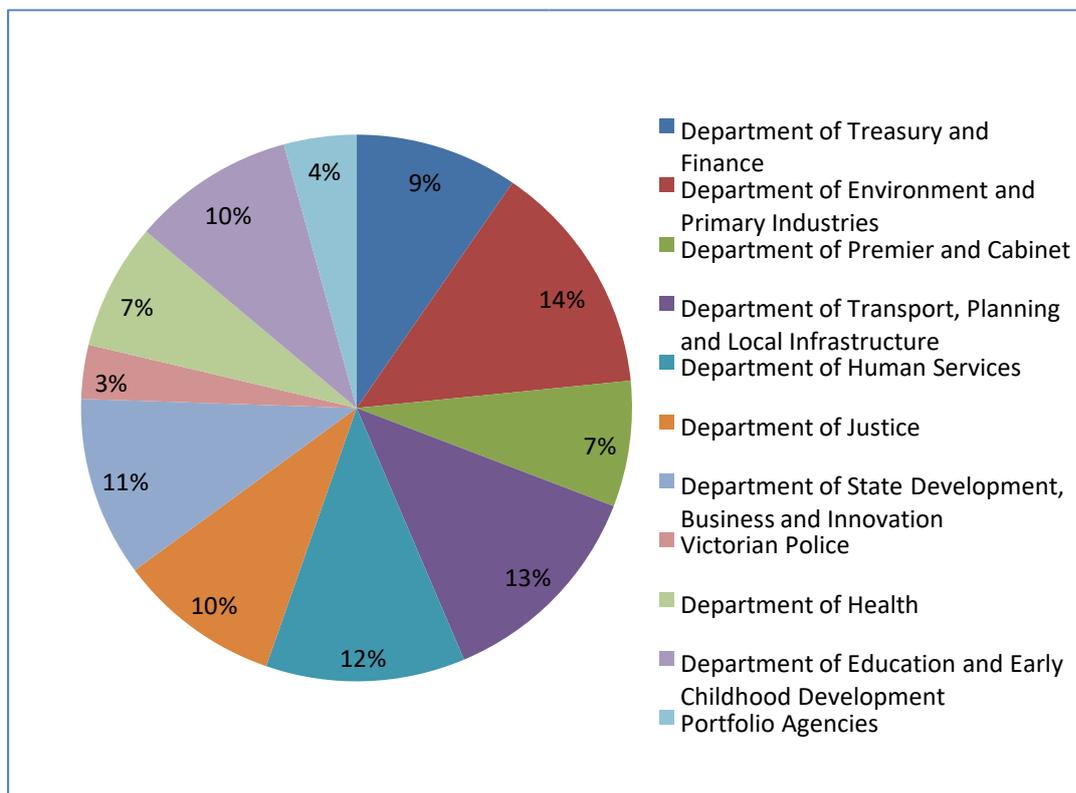
## Research methodology

The findings in this paper are the result of four years' of action research into the assessment and development of more than 100 executive officers from across the Victorian Public Service. The paper also incorporates the completed evaluation surveys, conducted at three points during the program, of participants and their managers, and the report of an external review into the Centre's operations. The paper explores the efficacy of the leadership development initiatives utilised by the Centre and the outcomes achieved at an individual participant and organisational level.

The Public Services of the States and Territories in Australia employ approximately 70 per cent of all public sector employees, with approximately 20 per cent of public servants employed by the Federal Public Service, and the remaining 10 per cent employed at the Local Government level. The States manage most service delivery responsibilities including schools, hospitals, public transport and police. The State of Victoria is Australia's second largest state.

The Victorian Public Service comprises more than 260,000 staff across 10 public sector departments, 17 agencies and more than 3,700 public entities. The Centre works predominantly with the 27 public sector departments and agencies who employ more than 38,000 employees. In this workforce the executive population totals 547, so the sample size considered in this study represents 18 per cent of the executive population. Figure 1 shows the spread of the sample across all 10 Victorian Government Departments and portfolio agencies.

Figure 1: Breakdown of participants by department



## Findings

Over four full years' of program delivery, the Victorian Leadership Development Centre has identified five practices that have the greatest impact on the success of leadership development efforts. The leader's role in learning and development is critical to success, and in the Centre's case the role the most senior leaders – the Executive – have played in the assessment and development of high potential leaders across the Victorian Public Service.

### 1. Governance and accountability

The Executive of the VPS established themselves as the Board of the Victorian Leadership Development Centre. In this capacity they play a key role in governance of the leadership development efforts of the Centre. They review and contribute to the individual development plans of all program participants, help to identify relevant and useful development activities and review reports of participant progress and program evaluation.

This oversight helps participants prioritise their development goals and ensures accountability for the application of learning. Many research studies (Bersin and Associates, 2009; AON Hewitt, 2009; DDI, 2011) suggest best practice leadership development programs incorporate mechanisms to drive accountability for learning outcomes.

In addition to creating process tension for participants, it also creates greater ownership of the development programs and outcomes by the Executive of the VPS. AON Hewitt's 'Top companies for leaders' research explores the talent management practices of 500 companies from around the world to identify the top 20 companies. This research found that these top 20 companies held leaders accountable for:

- The success or failure of leadership programs
- Their own development
- The development of others (AON Hewitt, 2009).

This accountability is built into the design of the Centre, with the Executive of the VPS sitting on the Board, and into all elements of the design of the program.

### 2. The 70/20/10 principle

The 70-20-10 principle of development was created following 30 years of research by the Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL). This model suggests effective leadership development efforts focus 70 per cent of development activities on challenging assignments, 20 per cent on relationships and 10 per cent on coursework and training.

The CCL 'Lessons from experience research' identifies five key experiences that deliver valuable leadership learning - experiences which involve bosses and superiors, working on business turnarounds, increases in scope, horizontal moves and new initiatives (Wilson et al., 2011).

#### 70 per cent – learning from experience

Following the creation of the VPS leadership framework, the Executive of the VPS defined the on the job experiences they would accelerate the development of each of the capabilities in framework. These experiences are articulated in the VPS Skill and Experience Map (2009). For example, navigating and providing leadership within the political context is a key capability required of senior executives in the VPS. Some of the experiences that have been identified which accelerate the development of these skills include:

- Delivery of a highly visible service which requires effective crisis and media management while maintaining service continuity
- Presenting papers, commenting on issues and providing advice to Ministers and VPS committees/forums
- Being the lead advisor to the Minister on behalf of the organisation on operational and service issues, policy areas or critical government initiatives
- Having experience in a breadth of organisational leadership roles with a range of external and internal stakeholders (e.g. policy, service delivery, corporate service roles)
- Leading a multiple-agency or multiple-portfolio initiative or project
- Working as a senior advisor within a Minister's office, and
- Working at a senior executive level within a central VPS agency.

In addition to defining these experiences, the Executive of the VPS articulated the factors which increased the complexity of the experience, including:

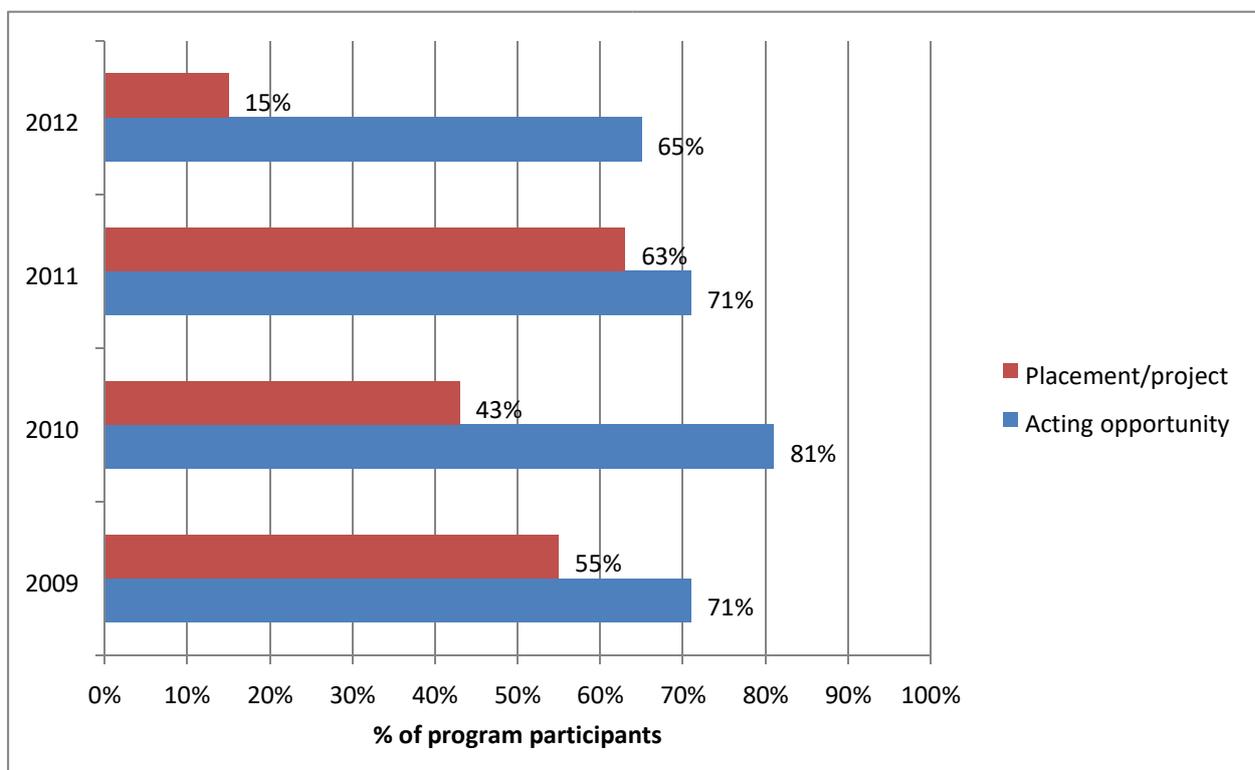
- The issues or areas represented are politically contentious
- Significant changes in the policy position of the current Government or a change of Government
- The issue is subject to high media attention or generates strong public reaction
- A change of Minister
- Multiple Ministers and stakeholders with varying perspectives in the portfolio
- The issues sit across a range of departments, portfolios and stakeholders, and
- Service delivery is the subject of frequent negative public comment and undertaken in difficult/high risk circumstances.

Research from the University of North Carolina Kenan-Flagler Business School (Dean and Shanley, 2006) suggests executives who learn key lessons from their experience develop at a significantly faster rate and attain higher levels of leadership than those with lower learning agility.

The opportunity to operate in a more senior role or undertake a placement or project to gain the requisite experience is a key program component for many of the Centre's participants. The experiences articulated by the Executive of the VPS are used to target the placements, projects, on the job experiences and opportunities to act in more senior roles that participants undertake to build their skills and experience.

Figure 3 demonstrates that nearly three quarters of all program participants completed an acting stint in a more senior role as part of their program participation, and more than half of the 2009, 2010 and 2011 program participants increased their breadth of experience by undertaking a project or placement. At the midpoint of their program participation 15 per cent of the 2011 program participants had undertaken a placement or project. A number of departmental mergers and structural changes have meant many 2011 participants have experienced a role change during the program so a placement or project was no longer required, as represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: On the job experience



In their feedback, participants highlighted that these opportunities provide a challenge and accelerate the development of their skills. This is supported by evaluation feedback such as “On the job learning, particularly acting in more senior roles with a broader scope of responsibilities, has required me to be more adaptable as a leader, consciously thinking about what I want to achieve and the approach I want to take to achieve it – in particular how I engage and motivate staff and then respond to the situation as it evolves (at both a tactical and strategic level)” (2011 program participant).

#### 20 per cent – relationship learning

The Centre for Creative Leadership 70-20-10 model suggests effective leadership development programs focus 20 per cent of learning efforts on relationship or network learning. The whole of Government relationships and networks built by program participants, combined with the

opportunity for network learning, are seen as key benefits of the programs (VLDC End-point evaluation reports, 2009, 2010). In 2012 an external review of the Centre was undertaken to determine if it were delivering against its original objectives. This review interviewed 25 per cent of program participants, participant managers and the Centre's Board. Participants reported that the following aspects of the program were most valuable in developing their skills:

- Creation of strong networks across the VPS
- Engagement with the Executive of the VPS
- Placements
- Coaching
- Readings
- Seminars, workshops, peer learning sessions

The top three most valued learning experiences highlighted in the review correlate with the 7020 component of the Centre for Creative Leadership's model. The 'creation of a cohort network across the VPS' emerged from the review as the most highly valued aspect of the program (Review of the Victorian Leadership Development Centre, 2013).

The Centre encourages the development of these networks through informal buddying and mentoring and a program of peer learning. All program participants facilitate a peer learning session for their colleagues as part of their program participation. These sessions assist in building the coaching and teaching skills of participants, whilst encouraging participants to share their knowledge and expertise with their colleagues.

Feedback from the sessions gathered at evaluation points highlights the value participants place on the sessions "the peer learning sessions have provided a collegiate learning environment where I have gained a greater insight into the policy and strategy issues faced by my peers, discussed and reflected on options and ideas in a constructive and positive environment, built network relationships and practiced my own presentation and strategic thinking skills" (2011 program participant).

This approach also reinforces the participant's role as a leader in the development of their peers.

### **3. Leader led learning**

Leader led learning is a key focus of the Centre in the development of program participants. This approach to learning is recognised as a key differentiator by program participants, and 85 per cent of participants in the 2012 program rated leader led development a key contributor to the achievement of their development goals. Research by Hageman and Chartrand (2010) suggests the use of leaders as teachers has become a best practice that is growing in popularity and that this practice allows senior leaders to engage in and endorse the learning and development of the up-and-coming leadership group. This approach is also reinforced by the Centre for Creative Leadership's longitudinal research study that identified learning from bosses and superiors was one of the key experiences which contribute the most to learning and growth (Wilson et al., 2011).

The Centre facilitates four types of leader led development – peer learning sessions (discussed in the previous section of this paper), leadership conversations, secretary roundtables and shadowing and mentoring.

#### Leadership conversations

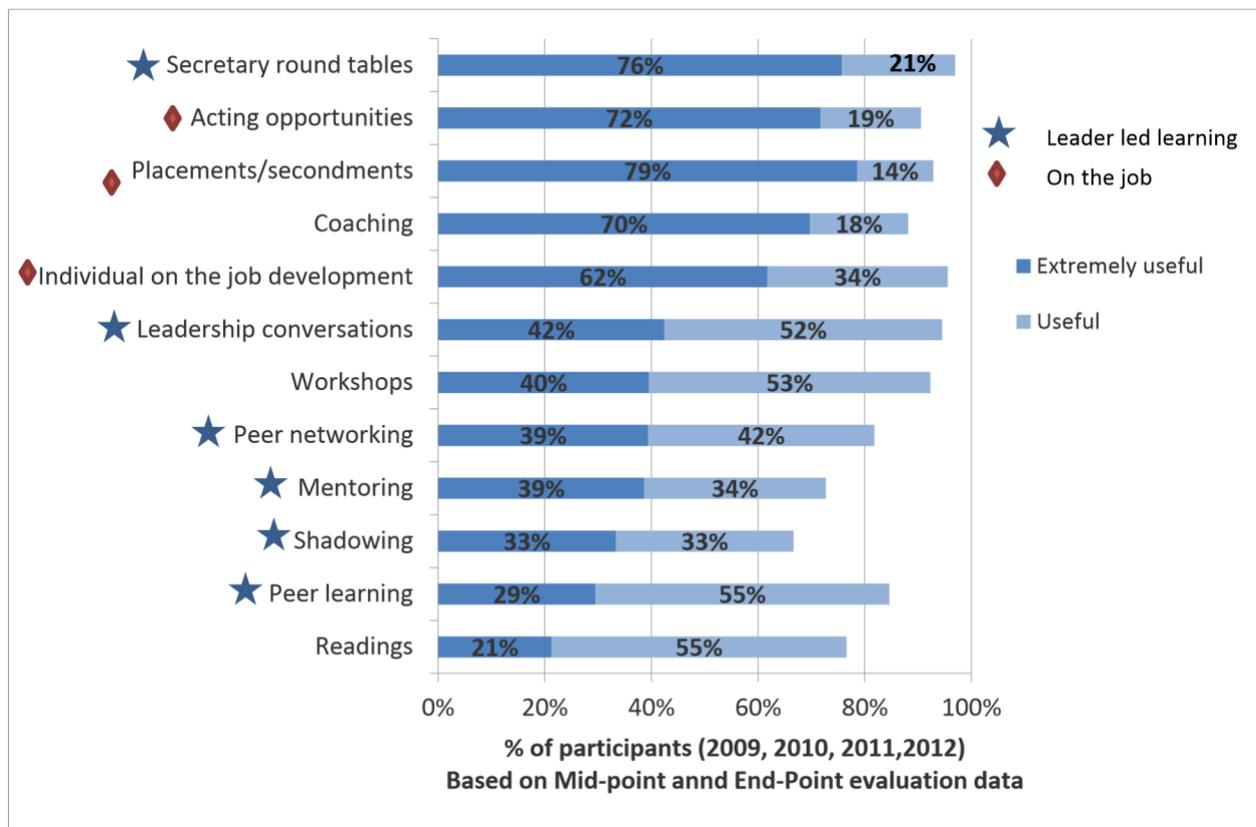
Leadership conversations are formal, topic based sessions facilitated by the Executive of the VPS and other senior leaders. Hagemann and Chartrand (2010) identify that this practice enables senior leaders to pass on their critical experiences and organisational knowledge and that the teaching exchange fosters organisational culture building.

Participants have consistently rated the involvement of the Executive of the VPS in their learning as one of the most powerful program components in assisting them to achieve their development goals. Additionally, in their program evaluations participants have indicated that the commitment and generosity of Executive of the VPS and former Executive members, who play a role mentoring program participants, in sharing both their time and their expertise is a highlight of the program for them and delivers a powerful message about the importance of learning.

#### Secretary roundtables

Based on this feedback the Executive of the VPS were keen to explore additional avenues for supporting the development of program participants. This gave rise to the design of 'Secretary roundtables'. These small group, informal discussions allow participants and the Executive of the VPS to explore current issues in an unstructured learning environment. These learning sessions have been rated by participants as the most useful off the job development activity in assisting them to achieve their development goals. Figure 4 sets out the top 12 most useful development activities as rated by program participants from 2009 - 2012.

Figure 4: Top 12 most useful development activities



The Executive of the VPS have also found them to be a source of learning, describing them as "very rewarding – I am learning a lot from the participants" and "a great way to keep in touch and learn".

From a practical point of view, the advantage of this type of learning is that it is not expensive to implement, yet the Centre has shown it has a significant impact on development outcomes. In fact, with the exception of coaching, the top six development activities identified by participants incur only catering, time and opportunity costs.

### Shadowing and mentoring

The final leader led learning element of the program is shadowing and mentoring support. As an alternative to placement opportunities which are generally longer and more challenging to arrange, the Executive of the VPS support participants by providing shadowing opportunities. These provide a short, sharp developmental experience where the participant observes the Executive member demonstrating skills they need to further develop or in an environment in which they require further exposure.

The most successful shadowing experiences are those where the participant is very clear on the task or behaviour they wish to observe. They work with individual VPS Executive members to identify appropriate opportunities to meet this need, and the Executive member debriefs the interaction with the participant following the shadowing experience.

In addition to shadowing, the Centre has a panel of former VPS Executive members who provide mentoring services to participants. These sessions have helped participants to further develop their ability to navigate the political context, build their broader understanding of Government, and further develop their influencing and networking skills.

#### **4. Making the connection between classroom and on the job**

Formal training is a small component of the leadership development activities facilitated by the Centre. The Centre has, however, ensured the application of learning on the job by building opportunities for practice and follow up into workshop designs, incorporating coaching into the program and working with managers to ensure that they help participants to apply their new skills on the job.

##### 10 per cent - workshop design

The Centre for Creative Leadership 70-20-10 research suggests well-designed coursework and training can have an amplifier effect on leader development (Wilson et al., 2011). In addition to coaching to assist participants to apply what they have learned, the Centre ensures that 'on the job' examples and challenges are integrated into the classroom, and involves senior leaders in the facilitation of training. It also ensures participants practice the skills during the training and receive feedback, and incorporates post program practice and follow up to ensure the transferability of new skills to the job.

##### Coaching

Given the focus on learning from others and learning on the job, coaching has been key in assisting program participants to make the critical connections between theory and skill application. All program participants access a coach as part of the program and the coaching is directed by the clear development goals set at the onset of the program. Coaching has been rated as the third most useful development activity in assisting participants to achieve their development goals, after leader led learning and on the job experiences.

In their evaluations, participants consistently report that they use their coaching sessions to operationalise their formal learning from other sessions. The ongoing nature of the coaching relationship ensures support during challenging times including role changes, as well as a setting to reflect on their individual effectiveness. This is supported by participant evaluations across the programs: "coaching provided me with customised, just in time development support that was particularly valuable as I moved into my new role" (2010 participant) and "coaching is extremely useful because it can be tailored to context, while also providing a mechanism to put into practice a range of the ideas arising from the program" (2012 participant).

The Centre has also sought to build the coaching skills of program participants through both their coaching experience, and participation in the 'Leader as coach' workshop. The Centre for Creative Leadership suggests that direct reports learn from their leaders in four positive ways –

as teachers, positive role models, catalysts, and mentors (Wilson et al., 2011) and this approach helps reinforce the importance of this role for participants as leaders.

### The role of managers

Not surprisingly, the Centre has found that the managers of participants are critical to the success of leadership development efforts. Managers are engaged in the development of their program participants from the onset of the program. The views of managers are reflected in the development report participants receive following assessment at the centre and they play a key role in assisting their participant to achieve their development goals and in reporting on progress and on the job impacts of the program.

In addition to managers evaluating their program participants, participants are asked to evaluate the level of support provided by key stakeholders including their Secretary and their manager and this is provided at the three program evaluation points to the Executive of the VPS.

### **5. Setting clear development goals and measuring success**

Haemann and Mattone in their 2012 benchmark report on executive development found that the majority of organisations used the Kirkpatrick model, described below, for evaluating the outcomes of their learning and development efforts. Haemann and Mattone's study (2012) reviewed the practices of eighty-one organisations and while they found most organisations assessed participant reaction (91 per cent) and learning (68 per cent), less than half of the surveyed organisations measured results – the degree to which targeted outcomes occurred as a consequence of the training.

The Kirkpatrick model suggests learning and development efforts should be evaluated at four levels: reaction, learning, behaviour and results (Kirkpatrick D.L. and Kirkpatrick J.D., 2006) described in Table 1.

Table 1: Kirkpatrick model of evaluation

Level 1 - Reaction	Measures participant response to the learning process
Level 2 - Learning	Measures the extent to which participants gain knowledge and skills
Level 3 - Behaviour	Measures the application of the new skills and behaviours on the job
Level 4 - Results	Measures the on the job improvements following learning

The '2011 Top Companies for leadership' research shows the top 20 companies establish practical measurements to analyse the effectiveness of their programs and what they achieve. They suggest the best companies embody a 'measurement mind-set' (AON Hewitt, 2011).

The Executive of the VPS, in their role as Board members governing the Centre's operations, require regular reports to show the effectiveness of the Centre's programs from level 1 learning to level 4 results.

The executive leadership program is formally evaluated at three key points – three months after commencement when participants complete an online 'pulse survey' to highlight what is working and not working for new program participants; a qualitative 'mid-point evaluation' that is completed nine months into the eighteen month program by participants and their managers; and an 'end point evaluation' that is completed online by the program participants and their managers at the completion of the program. The results of this rigorous evaluation at level 3 and level 4 are discussed below. Level 1 and 2 evaluation results at a reaction and learning level are discussed further in the paper.

### Level 3 – behaviour evaluation

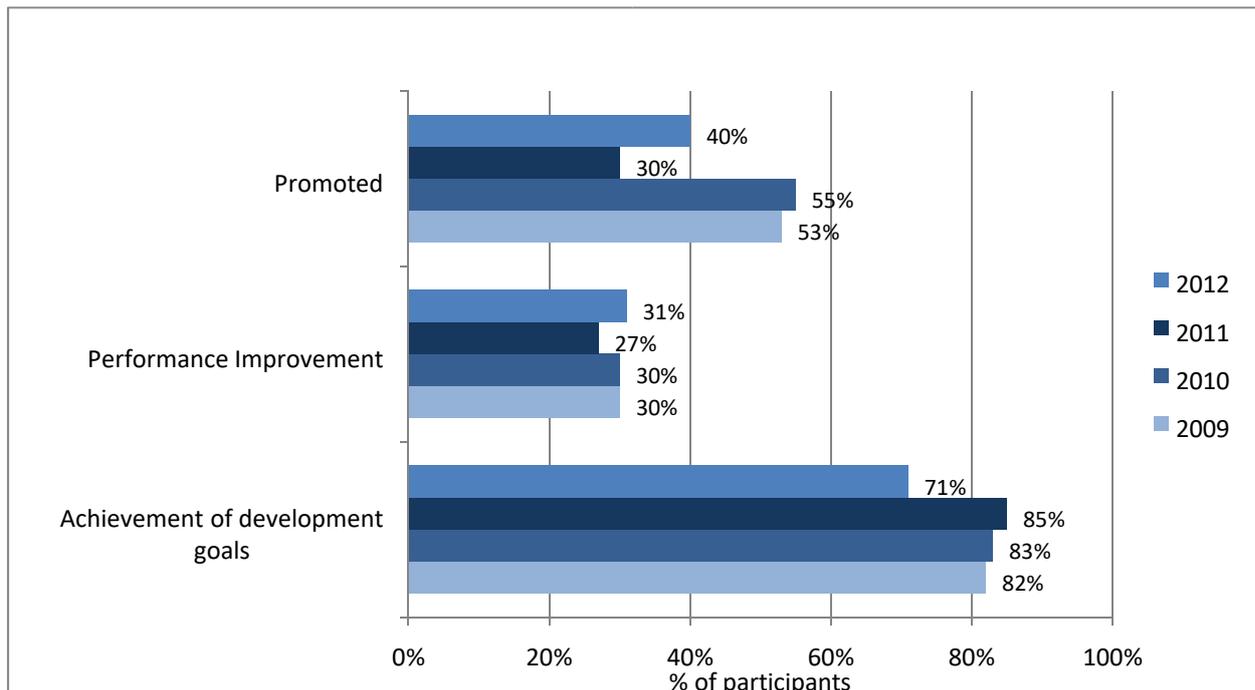
In the midpoint and end point evaluations, participants and their managers are asked to evaluate the progress towards the clear development goals that were established at the onset of the program. These goals clearly articulate the skill or behaviour the participant is seeking to develop and how they will measure the application of this new behaviour on the job. At the completion of the program, participants and their managers from the 2009, 2010 and 2011 programs reported the achievement of more than 82 per cent of the development goals. At the mid-point evaluation, participants and their managers in the 2012 program reported they had achieved 71 per cent of their development goals.

### Level 4 - results evaluation

Managers are asked to assess the participant's overall performance improvement attributable to the program from no change to 40 per cent improvement. The 40 per cent maximum reflects research showing the standard deviation in performance improvement following interventions such as training varied from between 40 to 60 per cent, with the Centre using the more conservative 40 per cent (Schmidt and Hunter 1983). Managers are also asked to provide examples of business results to substantiate their assessment. Since 2009, managers have reported an average 29.5 per cent improvement in on the job performance that they directly attribute to the program.

Given the Centre was initially established to address shrinking internal talent pools, a key measure of the enhanced bench strength is the number of participants receiving a promotion following the program. More than half of the 2009 and 2010 cohorts have been successful when competing with internal and external candidates for promotions, with 30 per cent of the 2011 and 40 per cent of the 2012 cohort successfully achieving promotion. Figure 5 shows the outcomes the programs have achieved in building the bench strength of the VPS.

Figure 5: Program outcomes



The Executive of the VPS also commissioned an independent review of the Centre to determine whether the Centre was meeting its strategic goals to strengthen the capability of VPS leaders.

The overall finding of the review was that the Centre had made significant progress since inception in developing and fostering senior executive leaders to strengthen VPS capability, that the Centre had established an important and highly valued platform for senior leadership development in the VPS, made solid progress against its objectives, provided challenging and valuable development experiences for over 100 executives, and given Board members a different perspective on leadership in the VPS (Review of the VLDC, 2013).

In addition to these formal evaluations, all peer learning sessions, leadership conversations and workshops are evaluated at level 1 – reaction, and level 2 – learning.

#### Level 1 – reaction evaluation

Evaluations from over 230 peer learning sessions and workshops show that:

- 99 per cent of participants strongly agree or agree that the facilitator added value and was responsive to their needs
- 97 per cent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that there was an appropriate balance between information and discussion
- 98 per cent of participants strongly agreed or agreed that their learning expectations were met.

Figure 6 shows the reaction evaluation results for 230 events conducted since 2009.

Figure 6: Reaction evaluation

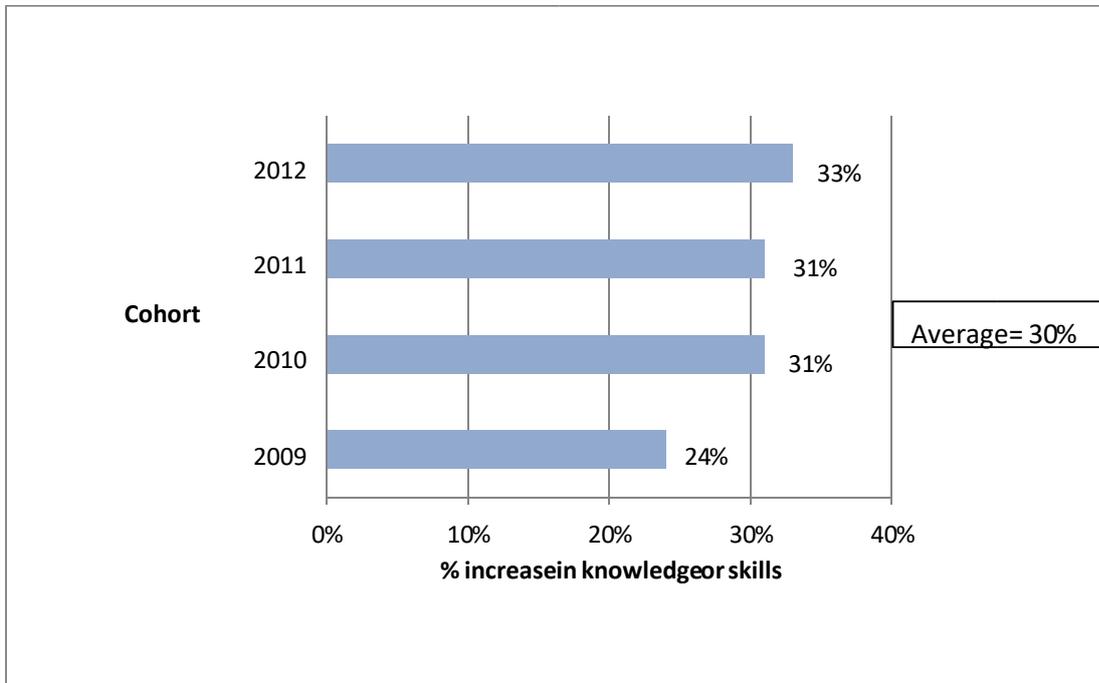


#### Level 2 - learning evaluation

The workshop evaluations ask participants to contrast their pre and post workshop knowledge and skills against the key workshop goals, and rate it from no change through to a maximum 40 per cent increase.

As the Centre has experimented with different modes of delivery and workshop design to determine the most effective elements, reported improvements in knowledge and skills have increased from 24% reported by participants in the 2009 program to 33% reported by participants in the 2012 program. Figure 7: Learning evaluation shows the increase in knowledge and skills for all workshops conducted since 2009.

Figure 7: Learning evaluation



Beyond these quantitative results are the cultural impacts that have been reported by program participants and their managers including:

- Cascading learning to teams: participants reflect on significant changes to their own approach to staff development as a result of the program, with many now embedding learning opportunities for their staff in day to day work challenges. Similarly the value of learning has 'cascaded up', with the Centre taking an increasing role in development of the Executive of the VPS from assessment for development to the learning series for this group on Asia.
- Creating a culture of mindful and legitimate learning: participants have consistently referenced their ongoing learning journey beyond the formal program, and their willingness to accept and embed learning as a legitimate workplace practice. They report that they will sustain and diversify the learning culture built within the program through sharing, developing and embedding learning into their own leadership practices on a day to day basis.
- Pay it forward: participants report a desire to 'pay the investment forward' following participation in the Centre's programs, and the Executive of the VPS expect and demand evidence of this. The majority of program alumni have volunteered to undertake roles as mentors to new executives or graduates, as examples of this practice.
- Retention and attraction: the investment in the development of participants has also resulted in increased retention in an increasingly competitive market with many participants citing their nomination for the program as key to their decision to remain

within the Victorian Public Service. The programs offered have also been positioned to attract new hires from interstate and overseas to the Victorian Public Service.

## **Conclusion**

The impact of the leader's role on the effectiveness of learning and development from the Victorian Leadership Development Centre's experience is clear. Effective leadership development design should engage the most senior leaders of the organisation in defining the critical capabilities required for future success. Leadership development efforts should be guided by an up-front diagnostic, or training needs analysis, to identify the skills required and targeted to reflect individual needs. Assessment centres provide strong evidence of future performance to highlight development areas in a more senior role. An effective assessment centre design will incorporate the critical experiences that determine success in more senior roles and the most senior leaders should have a key role in assessment to focus development efforts.

Leaders play a key role in governance and accountability for leadership development efforts. Participants and their managers should be held accountable for achievement of learning goals, and these should be reported to the executive of the organisation, who in turn should be held accountable for the success of the development efforts of their staff, their own development, and the development of others.

Learning from experience has long been recognised as a critical component of leadership development efforts. This learning, however, needs to be carefully crafted to ensure it includes on the job experiences that will accelerate development of the targeted skills. Senior leaders have a role in clearly defining the range of these experiences, and then identifying on the job opportunities including placements and projects that will deliver them. Short, sharp shadowing and mentoring experiences provided by senior leaders can also help build skills where placements or projects are not feasible or to supplement these experiences.

Learning from more senior leaders has been identified as one of the key experiences that contributes the most to learning and growth. Leadership development design should reinforce the role of the leader in the development of others.

Well-designed classroom training has an 'amplifier' effect on the development of leaders. It should incorporate on the job examples and challenges, involve senior leaders in the facilitation, allow for practice and feedback, and incorporate post program follow up to ensure the transferability of new skills. Coaching and manager support can further enhance on the job application.

Finally, effective leadership development efforts have clearly defined goals and measures for success that are regularly reported to the organisation's most senior leaders with other key business metrics.

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