



Developing Leaders in Silicon Valley:

7 BEST PRACTICES

By Nick Petrie

“Quality of leadership matters, but it is covered up by success. You don’t realize how much leadership matters until things go bad. And things will go bad.”

- Ben Horowitz, Co-founder of VC Firm Andreessen Horowitz

The Research

Center for Creative Leadership’s (CCL®) one-year project involving partners from: Google, LinkedIn, Facebook, Microsoft, Workday, Airbnb, Genentech and Pinterest. Phil Willburn was Lead Researcher.



Center for Creative Leadership®

The Goal

Discover the best leadership development methods being used in Silicon Valley. From this, create best practices for tech companies to rapidly accelerate the development of their leaders. **Read the full report and recommendations here – <http://bit.ly/2xuYyM3>**

Next Steps

While this research focused on current best practices, in round two, we want to partner with a small group of organizations to innovate and build the best practices for the future. If you work for an organization that loves to invent and wants to partner with others to shape the future of our field, we’d love to hear from you. Let’s build!

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Basic

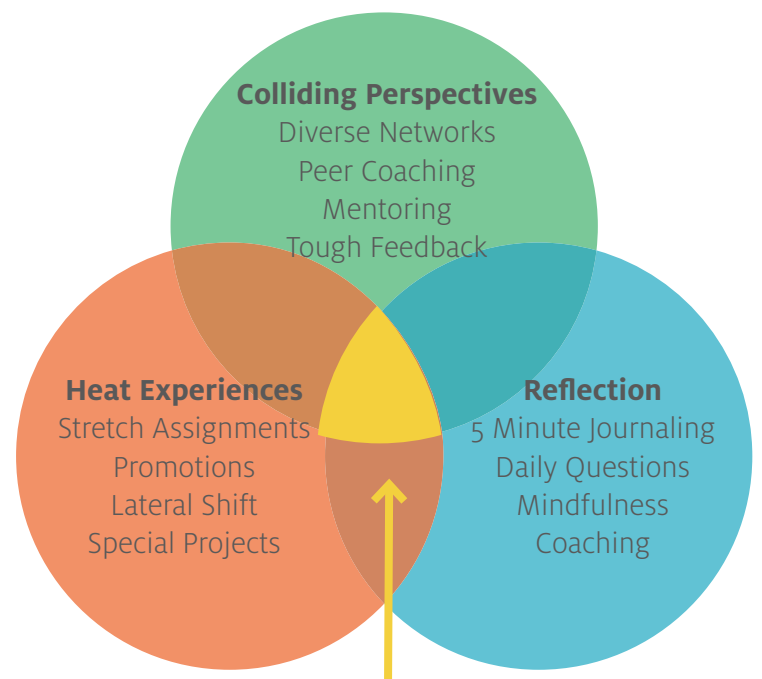
1



AIM FOR ACCELERATED CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

Tech leaders need to develop faster than in other industries because they reach senior roles at younger ages. This requires Accelerated Continuous Development (ACD). This kind of development demands three conditions: **Heat Experiences** (you are given high importance assignments that you are not ready for), **Colliding Perspectives** (you are bombarded with points of view that are different from your own) and **Reflection** (you integrate these experiences and perspectives to advance your thinking). Most tech leaders get too much heat, moderate perspectives and not enough reflection. This leads to problems later on.

Accelerated Continuous Development



This is where ACD happens.

2



DESIGN FOR TIME POOR LEADERS (BITE SIZE + ATTRACTIVE)

Tech leaders are time poor but fast learners. Don’t waste time with long trainings. For anything skills-based, create ‘snackable’ content that can be consumed via short videos. If practice is needed, deliver bite size (2 hours or less) face-to-face modules delivered on-site.

Example: [LinkedIn’s Conscious Business Academy Videos](http://bit.ly/2nnkl5R) – <http://bit.ly/2nnkl5R>

Intermediate

3



SNACKABLE VS. DEEP DIVE DEVELOPMENT

Despite the above, watch out for the trap of thinking that all development should be ‘snackable’. While skills training for new managers can be delivered in short videos, the organizational dilemmas that senior leaders wrestle with cannot be solved by a TED Talk. Senior leaders need deep dive development spread over long periods of time with peers, mentors and targeted experts/experiences.

4



COMPANY DATA + YOUR CULTURE = LEADERSHIP HACKS

Each tech company has a unique culture and leadership solutions need to be tailored to fit that culture. Top organizations used company data such as: performance reviews, 360-degree assessments and interviews to identify 5-8 management behaviors that made the biggest difference in their culture. They then taught those to all leaders as a guide in ‘how to succeed in our culture’.

Example: [Google’s Project Oxygen](http://bit.ly/2mULREN) – <http://bit.ly/2mULREN>

Advanced

5



PROTECT YOUR ASSET: BUILD A LOW STRESS, HIGH ENERGY CULTURE

Tech companies often promote young leaders into high-pressure roles before they’ve developed coping mechanisms to deal with the stress that these new positions bring. To combat this, leading organizations are teaching leaders how to handle pressure (external demand) without turning it into stress (rumination about events). These companies are finding that their people can now keep stress levels low even as the pressure increases.

Example: [High pressure, low stress case study](#) – link not yet live

6



BUILD ECOSYSTEMS OF PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING

Tech leaders love to learn from peers who are facing similar challenges to them. One way to do this is to bring leaders together who are going through the same transition at the same time e.g. managing managers for the first time. Another is to give employees permission, tools and resources to run internal workshops for their peers on topics they have expertise in.

Example: [Googler to Googler](http://bit.ly/2cTy94y) – <http://bit.ly/2cTy94y>

7



BECOME THE WORLD’S BEST PLUMBERS

Many organizations focus so much on face-to-face training that they neglect all the other factors that ensure the learning transfer back at work. Great organizations decide on the leadership behaviors they want and connect all the plumbing (training, incentives, evaluations, feedback, hiring, firing, promotions, etc.) to ensure that their leaders really change. **Learn more about developing your leaders by reading the white paper – <http://bit.ly/2xuYyM3>**