

## A Case Study on the Effective Implementation of Enterprise Leadership Development

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**Abstract:** Enterprise leadership development practice is focused on providing effective support to enterprise strategies through leadership development programs. This study proposes several theoretical hypotheses of the effective implementation of enterprise leadership development programs based on the conclusions of specific literature and verifies the hypotheses through field observation and document analysis of the evolution of a practical leadership development program. This program was organized from 2005 to 2012 by an enterprise for its entry-level R&D managers. This study puts forward the following ideas: Effective leadership development programs, with a wider purpose not limited to individual development, are organization-oriented and support the implementation of enterprise strategies. Such programs focus on the critical stages of key strategy implementation groups and comprehensively adopt a variety of methods. The mostly used methods rely heavily on direct experience and are closely related to actual work scenarios. Through these methods, leadership development programs pass on expectations and requirements for key roles and specify key capabilities required for them to implement enterprise strategies.

**Keywords:** Case study leadership development, leadership development program, strategy implementation

### INTRODUCTION

Facing the increasingly complicated and ever-changing environment, enterprises attach more importance to investments in leadership development. In addition, as a profit-pursuing organization, enterprises expect that leadership development measures can facilitate manager behavior changes conducive to the corporate strategy implementation and attainment of business goals, thus directly contributing to business performance for enterprises. Most enterprises develop leadership through carrying out programs. However, as there are numerous factors influencing enterprise performance, it is very difficult to evaluate the actual influence of such a program on enterprise performance. In theory, more and more scholars have recognized that on-the-job practice is the most effective method to develop leadership. The leadership development interventions, excluding certain developmental assignments, have very limited influence on the actual work behavior or performance improvement of participants. Therefore, how to effectively implement leadership development programs to increase their benefits is of key concern to enterprises during leadership development practices.

As such, this study streamlines the basic propositions of effective implementation of leadership development programs from the existing theoretical literature and explores the effective methods to implement leadership development programs based on a practical case of a leadership development program in a specific enterprise for its entry-level R&D managers from 2005 to 2012.

### RELATED WORK AND HYPOTHESES

A leadership development program is an important intervention to facilitate individual and organizational leadership development. Leadership development is an ongoing process requiring long-lasting efforts of individuals or organizations, while a leadership development program is a promotive event for this process (Wen, 2011). A "promotive event" is often an integration of a series of interventions. As a type of Human Resource (HR) development practice, a leadership development program includes core elements, such as goals, objects, content and methods, which answer the four core questions "why", "who", "what" and "how" respectively.

#### **Goal setting for leadership development programs:**

In respect of goal setting for leadership development activities, one theoretical perspective points to individual development. Wang (2008) put forwarded that individual development is the basic function of training and development, which should be focused on the development of capabilities, value and characteristics for individuals. However, he also said that the implementation of such activities should be closely aligned with strategies and the joint development with enterprises. Another perspective points to the whole organization's effective response to transformations. Day pointed out that leadership development is a process involving multiple levels. Among these layers, the first level locates leaders; the second involves relationship between the leader, his/her

followers, colleagues and upper-level supervisors; and the third is about organizational culture (Day and Harrison, 2007). From the perspective of "organizational leadership development", Wen Maowei divided leadership development into three levels: human capital preparation of individuals (cognition, mentality and skill development concerning leading oneself, others and the organization), social capital increase among entities (developing and expanding social connections within an organization and promoting connections among entities) and organizational capital development in an organizational context (transforming organizational cultures, improving organizational structure and processes and adjusting organizational policies and systems). He also added that a leadership development program that covers all the three levels can usually achieve greater development effects (Wen, 2011).

The survey made by Conger on multiple American companies indicates that most of leadership development practices aim to assimilate corporate philosophies and speed up important strategic transformations, while leadership development activities with a single purpose of improving managers' leadership capabilities are on the decline (Conger and Benjamin, 1999). When summarizing the statistics of the Center for Creative Leadership, Martin pointed out that the nature of leadership is shifting from individual-oriented towards cooperation-oriented (Ellen *et al.*, 2010). While handling complicated challenges, organizations depend less on the individual leaders who take leading positions and more on the shared, collective and joint leadership. In addition, staff skill is the only one element among all the seven elements of the strategy implementation 7S model. Concerning the factors that influence individual performance, organizational cultures, processes and policies are more influential than individual skills. Individual leadership development that focuses on personal capability development of individuals at leader positions and aim to make them competent at their positions has limited influence to the enterprise strategy implementation. Of course, individuals are directly influenced by organizational leadership development, so most leadership development programs are inevitably organized for individual leaders. However, an effective leadership development program should also develop leadership among entities and in groups while ensuring alignment with enterprise strategies.

Based on the analysis above, this study proposes the following hypotheses based on the goal setting of leadership development programs:

**Hypothesis 1:** An effective leadership development program focuses on and plays a role in such three aspects as human capital preparation of individuals, social capital increase among entities and organizational capital development in organizational context.

**Hypothesis 2:** An effective leadership development program supports organizational development as well as effective strategy implementation

**Target selection for leadership development programs:** Wen and Ruan (2008) summarized the theoretical research and practice on the leadership development in Europe and the United States and indicated that leadership development programs should be organized across the whole organization and involve most members of the organization instead of a few officially appointed leaders. Zhao (2004) considered that organizational leadership development is a systematic project, which is related to all members of an organization and all employees should get involved in leadership development. These viewpoints tend to incorporate more groups of an organization into the scope of leadership development.

Research indicates that leadership improvement is a process with long-term practices as the basis, but leadership development programs can only be deemed as a developmental experience that has limited promotive influence on leadership development. As McCauley and Van Velsor (2004) stated, leadership development is an ongoing process. This process takes root in the accumulated learning practices as time goes by. Some purposeful interventions can facilitate this process. Ronald and Donald (2001) pointed out that leadership development is achieved in daily work and is neither responsibilities of only a handful of people nor an accidental event or an event only happens once in a lifetime. Research by John (1986) also indicates that successful professional managers grow by accumulating lifetime experience, i.e., experience during their childhood, education and early career.

To wrap up, during the implementation of leadership development programs, involving a greater scope of people will no doubt enhance the results. However, leadership is developed mainly in practice, so the effects of a leadership development program are limited. Taking into account the Return On Investment (ROI), an enterprise inevitably invests prudently in leadership development programs. As such, this study presents the following hypotheses concerning the object selection of leadership development programs:

**Hypothesis 3:** An effective leadership development focuses on the key groups in charge of strategy implementation and supports them at their critical stages.

**Content selection for leadership development programs:** In respect of content selection for leadership development, most of the existing research falls on the leadership competency model, for example, Ren (2004) proposed that leadership development

should rely on the constant enhancement of the predefined leadership competency model; Wen (2009) indicated that leadership model lays the foundation for an enterprise to implement leadership programs; Wen (2008) mentioned that there is a clear and behavioral characteristic-based leadership competency model for almost all leadership development programs, which is also the core and focus of such programs.

A leadership competency model is often a synthesis of the behaviors of the successful managers within an organization. The content of the model is always based on the common behaviors of leaders and incorporates the elements of the corporate cultures and management philosophies. Therefore, the content selection for leadership development programs on the basis of a leadership competency model can duplicate successful practices and reach a consistent understanding and consolidate connections among different Business Units (BUs) and manager groups at all levels (Ellen *et al.*, 2010). However, the effectiveness of leadership development programs is often reflected in the strong support for the implementation of organizational strategies. Managers in different BUs or at different levels play different roles during different procedures of the enterprise process, so the strategy implementation requirements for them vary one from another. Therefore, the universal leadership competency model can be only taken as one of the references instead of the core of the content of a leadership development program. In other words, an effective leadership development program should be tailored to suit the features of corresponding BUs and organizational levels.

On the subject of strategy implementation, Liu (2011) said that strategy implementation requires two core capabilities (strategic competency and strategic resilience) and covers two core processes (strategic recognition and strategic collaboration). Among these four factors, strategic competency combines a series of individual competencies surrounding strategic goals, while strategic recognition can be formed through three stages, i.e., strategic communication, strategic expression and clarification and strategic promotion (Liu, 2011). Wei (2005) suggested that the successful implementation of enterprise strategies must be set about from three aspects: consensus, coordination and control. As indicated by Xing *et al.* (2001), strategy publicity, system assurance and resource assurance are the most critical factors that influence the effective implementation of strategies. All the research mentioned above points out the importance of effective communication and consistent understanding to strategy implementation. If the enterprise leadership development activities can pass on the expectations and

requirements for key roles to implement strategies and facilitate these roles to shoulder all of their responsibilities, the activities can effectively support strategies.

Based on the above analysis, this study draws the conclusion below concerning the content selection for leadership development programs:

**Hypothesis 4:** An effective leadership development program focuses its content on expectations and requirements for key roles to implement strategies, as well as key capabilities necessary for role fulfilment

**The methods of leadership development programs:**

McCauley summarized various leadership development methods: formal training, 360 degree feedback, individual development program, executive coaching, mentoring, work assignments, building interpersonal network and action learning (McCauley and Van Velsor, 2004). Some relevant research pointed out the deficiency of formal training and recommended methods that are better integrated with work, e.g. action learning and work assignment. For example, Weng (2007) put forward that enterprises in Europe and the United States attach more importance to effective practical experience and experiential training. Effective methods of education and training for leaders include case study, storytelling and coaching. Another example is that Wen (2009) indicated that the leadership development practices of leading enterprises such as GE and IBM mostly depend on action learning. Wen (2008) made a summary of organizational leadership development practices in Western countries, which concluded that leadership development methods are diversified and the enterprises focus more on on-the-job learning methods such as action learning and coaching. Ren and Yang (2009) set forth that regarding class training as the shortcut for leadership development is a trap in leadership development in China. Learning by doing rather than developing leadership in class is a more practical, cost-effective and down-to-earth method.

In addition, according to Dale's "Cone of Experience" (Edgar, 1969), experience comes from direct and indirect sources. Experience goes through three stages from direct experience to indirect experience: doing, observation and abstract experience. Education and teaching should be set about from specific experience and gradually upgraded to abstract experience. This theory provides a theoretical basis to explain the effectiveness of leadership development methods.

Based on the above literature analysis, we can find that leadership development methods can be classified

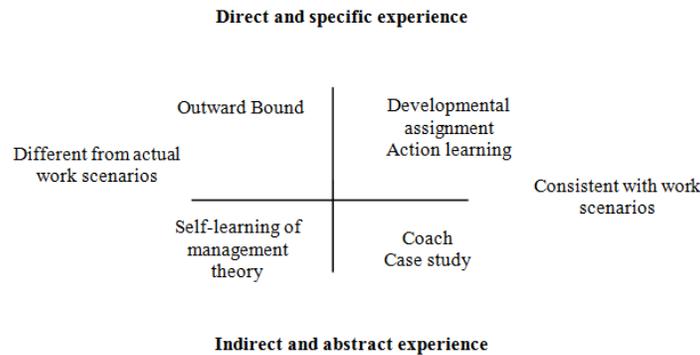


Fig. 1: Framework of leadership development methods

Table 1: Elements of an effective leadership development program

Element	Assumption	Remarks
Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To cover three aspects: human capital preparation of individuals, social capital increase among entities, and organizational capital development in an organizational context</li> <li>To be organization-oriented and effectively support strategy implementation.</li> </ul>	Less focus on individual development.
Object	Focuses on the key groups in charge of strategy implementation and provides support for them during their critical phases.	Prudent investment due to consideration over the ROI.
Content	The expectations and requirements for key roles to implement strategies and the key capabilities required for role fulfillment	
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Orients towards acquiring direct experience and relate the program more closely to actual work scenarios.</li> <li>Adopts multiple development methods comprehensively.</li> </ul>	

from two dimensions: experience acquisition; and consistency between experience and actual work scenarios. Figure 1 for details. Most of the development methods recommended by the studies fall into the "direct and specific experience" and "consistent with work scenarios" quadrant. Obviously, if an enterprise adopts a method within this quadrant to develop its leadership, it will undoubtedly achieve favorable effects.

In addition, Wen (2011) proposed that a successful leadership development program is usually a synthesis and systematic rearrangement of multiple methods, which would consolidate and complement each other. David *et al.* (2000) also indicated that the leadership development programs they studied all adopted systematic methods instead of providing training only.

As analyzed above, concerning the methods of leadership development programs, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 5:** Effective leadership development programs tend to adopt methods that leverage direct and specific experience and are consistent with actual work scenarios

**Hypothesis 6:** Effective leadership development programs comprehensively adopt multiple methods

**Summary:** Based on the existing literature analysis, the research outlines the framework of an effective leadership development program (Table 1). The

following will try to verify this framework through a case study

## RESEARCH METHOD

**Case selection:** To conduct more thorough surveys and analysis, these study only studies on one case, which is a program carried out by an enterprise to develop the leadership of its entry-level R&D managers. Entry-level managers are a main group to implement enterprise strategies and transforming from an independent contributor to a manager is the first and difficult transition for them, so most enterprises pay much attention to their development. What's more, with the rapid business development of the enterprise from 2005 to 2012, the number of entry-level R&D managers increased year by year. Each year, a great amount of persons are promoted from key technical positions to entry-level managerial positions. The development programs specific to this group was continuously optimized, but the group's responsibilities almost remained the same during the eight years, so are the characteristics of the group. We have summarized the law of effective leadership development for an enterprise by analyzing the evolution of development program of the enterprise for the eight years.

**Data source:** The authors collected both first- and second-hand information. The latter includes the enterprise's plans, reports and questionnaire survey related to leadership development for entry-level R&D

managers from 2005 to 2012. As for the primary information, the author acquired it in two ways. On one hand, one of the authors participated in the major leadership development activities as one of the primary owners from November 2007 to December 2012, engaged in developing, delivering and evaluating the program. On the other hand, the authors discussed with major stakeholders of this research for many times to keep abreast of the understanding of all stakeholders and acquire related information.

**Data analysis:** The authors used content analysis method to code the data from different sources for this study. First of all, code the categories of data according to the theoretical framework, which includes the goals, object, content selection and development methods of leadership development programs. Then code the sub-category of the above four elements based on the previous research on leadership development.

To handle inconsistent information from different sources, the author confirmed and improved such information through communication with the interviewees by phone or via email. Most of the information from different resources is highly consistent. Following the recommendations of Yin (2003), this case study adopts the following work division method to code: Three researchers (including the author) independently coded the information in compliance with the specified coding method and compared the coded information with each other to check and modify it as necessary.

To ensure the authenticity of the information and research and avoid misunderstanding, the author sent the research information and primary conclusions to the departments involved in leadership development and received confirmation.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

**Basic information:** The enterprise is an IT equipment provider that has welcomed rapid business development

since its establishment in 1980s. To meet its business growth, more R&D employees are recruited year by year. As a result, many employees of its R&D system are promoted from a key technical position to an entry-level managerial position, at which they lead approximately eight team members. Transforming from independent contributors to team managers, they are incapable in team management. However, the teams they lead are the entry-level units for organizational strategy implementation and their performance directly influences the implementation. Therefore, the development of these managers is always a concern of enterprise executives. From 2005 to 2012, the enterprise has implemented constant leadership development programs for the new entry-level managers of the R&D system to help them improve their capabilities to be competent in shouldering their responsibilities.

With the business growth between 2005 and 2012, the management of the enterprise grew increasingly mature and its understanding of leadership development was increasingly thorough. Therefore, the leadership development program for its entry-level R&D managers was continuously improved (Table 2).

In May 2009, the third stage of the leadership development program had been implemented for a year when the enterprise organized a level-3 evaluation for this program to measure its influence to the behavioral changes of the trainees in their on-the-job practice. The evaluation results indicated that the third stage of the program was positively correlated with the expected behavior of entry-level R&D managers. During the interviews, all interviewees provided favorable comments on this program.

**Changing goals of the leadership development program:** To implement a leadership development program, we should first specify program goals. In this research, we collected information on program goals

Table 2: Basic information of the enterprise's leadership development program for its entry-level R&D managers

Stage	Duration	Brief introduction	Approximate number of participants
First stage	August 2005-April 2006	Two days of formal training that provided four curriculums: team building, effective motivation, performance management and effective communication.	1700
Second stage	May 2006-November 2007	Two sessions of formal training: The first two-day session provided four curriculums: team building, effective motivation, performance management, and effective communication. The second two-day-and-one-night session provided curriculums such as core corporate values, R&D project management, and ways to act as a qualified manager.	3500
Third stage	April 2008-December 2012	The third stage was divided into three sessions: Session 1: A two-day-and-one-night formal workshop covered role perception, team development, providing and receiving feedback, and organizing team meetings. Session 2: A practice and self-learning phase for trainees to put what they've learned in Session 1 into practice and study curriculums such as Performance Management Become a Manager, and Core Corporate Culture online. Session 3: A two-day-and-one-night formal workshop included a discussion about performance management practice, employee care and effective motivation, sharing lessons learned from practice, and interpreting HR management policies.	7500

Table 3: Understanding of leadership development program goals

Stage	Human capital preparation of individuals	Social capital increase among entities	Organizational capital development in an organizational context	Effective support for strategy implementation
First Stage	Item: 9 Quote example: Understand the basic definition of team and the four development stages of the team.	Item: 2 Quote example: Set up the team across product lines to facilitate communication among entry-level managers from different product lines and help them establish common ground.	Item: 1 Quote example: Understand the company's performance appraisal rules.	Item: 1 Quote example: Understand a manager's roles in performance management.
Second Stage	Item: 14 Quote example: Understand the definition of team and the four development stages of the team.	Item: 2 Quote example: Set up the team across product lines to facilitate communication among entry-level managers from different product lines and help them establish common ground.	Item: 2 Quote example: Effectively pass on the core corporate values through the program.	Item: 3 Quote example: Understand the responsibilities and competency required for the position.
Third Stage	Item: 13 Quote example: Understand the key factors to the team's success and key points in team building.	Item: 2 Quote example: Build relationships among the trainees of the same session.	Item: 4 Quote example: Communicate the R&D system's current HR management policies.	Item: 6 Quote example: Understand the responsibilities and competencies required for the position.

The above item numbers refer to goal description data of each program module. During the analysis, we deleted four invalid figures and consolidated the same figures to ensure that goal description data of the same stage is independent and not overlapped among different items.

Table 4: Goal-related quotes about "organizational capital development in an organizational context" and "effective support for strategy implementation" at the third stage

Goal	Quotes
Organizational capital development in an organizational context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate the R&amp;D system's current HR management policies (HR Management Policy Interpretation Module).</li> <li>• Understand the HR Management FAQ of Concern to Employees (HR Management Policy Interpretation Module).</li> <li>• Pass on the company's core values (Online Learning Module for Corporate Vision, Missions, and Core Values).</li> <li>• Understand the company's performance appraisal standards and orientation (Performance Management Module).</li> </ul>
Organization orientation and effective support for strategy implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand responsibilities and competencies required for the position (Role Perception Module).</li> <li>• Define each position's main goals, key business activities, and common problems (Role Perception Module).</li> <li>• Understand the transition from an individual contributor to a manager in terms of work values, time application, and skills (Role Perception Module).</li> <li>• Identify the problems of your team and determine measures to be taken (Team Building Module).</li> <li>• Be able to appropriately care for and motivate employees based on specific scenarios (Employee Care and Effective Motivation Module).</li> <li>• Understand reasons why performance management is necessary (Performance Management Module).</li> </ul>

and analyzed the information based on the above four elements, including human capital preparation of individuals, social capital increase among entities, organizational capital development in an organizational context and effective support for strategy implementation (Table 3).

The information shows that in this case study, the leadership development program for entry-level managers focused on individuals, entities and the organizational context and strategy implementation support. As the program progressed from the first stage to the third stage, "organizational capital development in an organizational context" and "effective support for strategy implementation" gradually carried more weight. This case study effectively verified Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2.

The concept of "organizational leadership development" has broadened the horizon for leadership development (Wen, 2011). From this perspective, the boundary between organizational leadership development and organizational development is blurred. These two concepts become inherently consistent (Hughes, 2002) and leadership development turns out to be a huge project. In a specific leadership development program, realizing "social capital increase among entities" and "organizational capital development in an organizational context" has become a new challenge. In this case study, "organizational capital development in an organizational context" was

realized through formal workshops where corporate cultures, policies and systems were communicated (Table 4). Based on interviews with executives and trainees and training satisfaction survey results, we found that this practice was widely recognized. This practice enriched the organizational leadership development theory.

**Target selection for the leadership development program:**

Document analysis shows that this enterprise has 12 managerial roles in its R&D system. For eight years, this enterprise had developed and implemented a leadership development program for four of these roles and this program was the only one that received huge resource input and continuous optimization efforts between 2005 and 2012. This was explained in relevant documentation and interviews. Two reasons were found: First, teams led by these roles were "organizational units at the core of the R&D system". These roles were "leading core operating units" and "laid a cornerstone for all the other tasks". Second, this group transformed themselves from key technical employees to managers for the first time. This transition was very difficult and even the most challenging in a manager's all growth stages.

In view of the excellent performance of the third-stage solution delivered since April 2008, the applicable department initiated the development of an advanced program at the end of 2011. Its positioning and content

Table 5: Goals and content of the advanced development program

Element	Advanced program
Target	Entry-level R&D managers who have served for one year or above
Goals	After reviewing their actual confusions generated after on-boarding and organizational expectations, the trainees would have in-depth discussions about practical cases to explore ways to better fulfill their roles. They would also be taught some practical methods and work skills to accelerate their transition from a qualified to an excellent entry-level manager.
Content	From qualified to excellent (role clarification and sharing of excellent practices), leveraging individual strengths, efficient time management, and task assignment and monitoring
Form	Two days of formal workshop (four curriculums, each took half a day.)

Data source: Reorganized information from relevant documentation and interviews

Table 6: Leadership development content for entry-level R&D managers

Stage	Leadership Development Content	Content Combination and Presentation
First stage	Team building, effective motivation, performance management and effective communication	Four independent curriculums
Second stage	Team building, effective motivation, performance management, effective communication, core corporate values, R&D project management, and ways to act as a qualified manager	Seven independent curriculums
Third stage	Role perception, team development, providing and accepting feedback, organizing team meetings, performance management, employee care and effective motivation, transition from a key technical employee to a manager, corporate culture, and interpretation of HR management policies	First clarify role responsibilities to understand "what" and "why", and then specify "how" by specifying the key skills and successful practice required for role fulfillment.

Reorganized information from relevant documentation and interviews; during interviews, we found that responsibilities of this role and requirements for employees in this role changed very slightly between 2005 and 2012; therefore, the content selection at the three stages is comparable to some extent

are introduced in Table 5. This program also targeted entry-level R&D managers and adopted the original methods. However, in addition to the original solution, this program included an advanced solution, helping qualified entry-level R&D managers who have served for one year become excellent. The development of this advanced program was completed in June 2012 and the pilot delivery was highly recognized by participants. Nevertheless, its deployment met with difficulties in 2012 H2. Departments involved did not show the same passion as that for the third-stage solution described in Table 2. As a result, after half a year, the advanced program was not fully implemented yet.

During the designing and development of the advanced program, the project team conducted thorough surveys by distributing questionnaires to 111 persons and interviewing 27 persons. They also meticulously designed the content and workshops, all of which contributed to the overall satisfaction degree of 97% among participants in the pilot delivery. Later in the deployment phase, departments involved were reluctant to implement the program, because they thought the delivery costs outweighed the actual benefits. During interviews, we were told their concerns. To deliver the two-day formal workshop, they need to train the facilitators and invite mid-level directors to facilitate the workshop (to make higher-level managers help lower-level ones to develop, facilitators of such formal workshops must be mid-level directors). Besides, the workshop trainees have to leave their busy work to attend the workshop for whole two days. As such, the delivery costs are too high for the departments involved.

In this case the persistent efforts and continuous improvements of the leadership development program during the early days after on-boarding, plus the negative attitude towards the deployment of the advanced program, verified the above Hypothesis 3.

As a profit-pursuing organization, enterprises are interest-oriented when carrying out leadership

development activities. Their main purpose for such activities is to ensure strategy implementation. Under most circumstances, "developing individuals" is a second goal or even neglected. As a result, enterprises only organize leadership development activities to a certain extent they think appropriate. Confined by development and implementation cost limitations, enterprises are prudent to invest in leadership development. They only focus on key groups in charge strategy implementation and necessarily intervene in their critical working stages.

**Content selection for leadership development programs:**

Content selection for the leadership development program in this case study is illustrated in Table 6. The standpoint explained in the literature that leadership development is centered on the leadership competency model is not verified in this case study. The company built a leadership competency model before, which has been used for manager selection but has not been widely used in leadership development activities. Instead, when selecting content for the leadership development activities targeting entry-level R&D managers and other manager groups, the company usually adopted the method used in the third stage as described in Table 3. Centered on the managerial role, this method clarifies requirements (including responsibilities and key activities for responsibility fulfillment) for the role to implement organizational strategies and passes on the key skills and successful practice experience necessary for role fulfillment. This practice in the case study verified the above Hypothesis 4: An effective leadership development program focuses its content on expectations and requirements for key roles to implement strategies, as well as key capabilities necessary for role fulfillment.

In this case study, the content changed as the stage moved on. The changes are reflected in two areas: First,

Table 7: Methods used in the leadership development program for entry-level R&D managers

Stage	Method
First stage	Formal training
Second stage	Formal training and coaching
Third stage	Formal training, coaching, work assignment, and self-learning of online curriculums, practical work guides, and case studies

Reorganized information from relevant documentation and interviews; "Work assignment" mentioned in the above figure refers to specific tasks assigned to trainees after the formal training. "Work assignment" requires trainees to use the key skills learned in the formal training and must be completed within a certain period. Trainees should not only complete the tasks, but also reflect on what they have learned and then share their experience in the subsequent formal training

Table 8: Different leadership development methods at the three stages

Type	First-stage Solution	Second-stage Solution	Third-stage Solution
Direct and specific experience; consistent with actual work scenarios	/	/	Work assignment
Direct and specific experience; inconsistent with actual work scenarios	/	/	/
Indirect and abstract experience; consistent with actual work scenarios	Excellent practice introduction during the formal workshop	Coaching, excellent practice introduction during the formal workshop and case workshops based on actual work scenarios	Coaching, excellent practice introduction during the formal workshop, case study based on actual work scenarios and self-learning of practical work guides and case studies
Indirect and abstract experience; inconsistent with actual work scenarios	Introduction of common management skills during the formal workshop	Introduction of universal management skills during the formal workshop	Introduction of common management skills during the formal workshop and online self-learning

attention paid to corporate cultures and management policies were intensified (the "core corporate values" in the second stage and the "interpretation of corporate HR management policies" in the third stage); second, the program's focus was shifted from common management skills to requirements for the role to implement organizational strategies ("role perception" and "core corporate values" were added in the second stage and the third stage advanced with a focus on role perception). These two changes verified Conger's conclusion of the leadership development practices in multiple enterprises (Conger and Benjamin, 1999). That is, most of leadership development practices aim to assimilate corporate philosophies and speed up important strategic transformations, while leadership development activities with a single purpose of improving managers' leadership capabilities are on the decline. In a word, the content of any effective leadership development practice is closely related to an enterprise's strategy implementation requirements and focuses on such requirements for target groups. These requirements include responsibilities, key activities for responsibility fulfillment and skills, successful cases and corporate cultures required to carry out the key activities.

**Method adoption for leadership development programs:** The leadership development methods selected in this case study is illustrated in Table 7. Formal workshop was a common method used in all the three stages and leadership development in the third stage was supported with a number of other methods. The results showed that the development solution of the third stage was quite fruitful and received a wide acclaim among the organization. The expanded development content and the diversified development methods both contributed to the satisfactory results. As such, this case study verified the above Hypothesis 6 to a certain extent: Effective leadership development programs comprehensively adopt multiple methods.

Formal training was still the principal method used for leadership development in this case study. Some

leading enterprises also select formal training as their main method in leadership development practices. Among the 11 best practices on enterprise leadership development described by Giber, 10 practices have adopted formal training as the main method (David *et al.*, 2000). Formal training is conducive to rapidly duplicating and systematically delivering massive information. If formal training is fully aligned with enterprise strategies, well positioned to communicate the strategy implementation requirements for a certain manager group and effectively supports strategy implementation instead of focusing on individual capability development of managers, it will gain sufficient attention and input from enterprises. It is foreseeable that formal training will be used as a main leadership development method in future programs.

In the third stage, "workshops based on actual work scenarios" was a basic principle adopted in the solution. During the two-day-and-one-night workshop, trainees had massive discussions and role plays based on actual work scenarios. Interview and questionnaire survey results showed that "cases from actual work" were widely recognized. This workshop method served as one of the main reasons for the success of the solution in the third stage. In addition, the new method of "work assignment" also proved effective, which to some extent verified Hypothesis 5: Effective leadership development programs tend to adopt methods that leverage direct and specific experience and are consistent with actual work scenarios (Table 8).

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

**Conclusion:** Facing the increasingly fierce competition, enterprises focus more on the effectiveness of leadership development. They require that leadership development can effectively support their business and facilitate manager behaviour changes conducive to the corporate strategy implementation and attainment of business goals, thus directly contributing to business performance improvement for enterprises. First of all,

an effective leadership development program should set global goals, including not only human capital preparation of individuals, but also social capital increase among entities and organizational capital development in an organizational context. In doing so, a program can develop individual capabilities while focusing more on organizations to support enterprise strategy implementation. To achieve organizational capital development in an organizational context, formal training may be arranged during a leadership development program to pass on corporate cultures, policies and systems. Secondly, to maximize leadership development effects with limited input, enterprises usually prudently invests in leadership development programs. They only focus on the key groups in charge of strategy implementation and supports them at their critical stages. As for content selection, leadership development programs should focus on expectations and requirements for key roles to implement strategies, as well as key capabilities necessary for role fulfillment. Last but not least, effective leadership development programs should comprehensively adopt multiple methods which are closely related to actual work scenarios and give participants as much as direct experience. Formal training will be used as a major leadership development method in future programs.

**Limitations of the research:** In the research, we had conducted observations for five years and obtained data from first- and second-hand documentation for analysis. However, this research was theoretically framed through theoretical conclusions in advance. By doing so, we collected and analyzed information with intended purposes, which may cause us to neglect some important information. Additionally, this research relies on a single case study. Despite its long time span and representativeness, it failed to provide comparison, so it only provides limited proof for the assumptions. When it comes to effective methods of leadership development programs, we only targeted enter-level managers whose development is just a small part in leadership development of an enterprise. Mid- and high-level managers responsible for enterprise business goals and other manager groups are different from entry-level managers. Therefore, the conclusions of the leadership development for entry-level managers have limited applicability. To explore effective methods for leadership development programs, we need case studies with more samples and further theoretical analysis.

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