



Research Summary Number 2

Selecting Developmental Goals— Manager Priorities

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Abstract:

This study examines the developmental goals most frequently selected by managers. The study also examines the differences and similarities in the goals selected by men and women.

Selecting Developmental Goals – Manager Priorities

Question # 1: What types of developmental goals do managers most frequently select?

Results: More managers selected one or more goals from the Relationship (64%) category than any other. The second most frequently selected category was Communications (61%). The third and fourth most chosen categories were Awareness/Learning/Development and Conflict Management. Table 1 summarizes the goal categories most frequently chosen by managers in the study. This table also displays the percentage of all goals chosen from each of the top ten categories. These ten categories account for more than

71% of all goals selected by the managers in the study.

Conclusions: From the managers' perspectives, the greatest developmental challenges appear to be interpersonal issues (Relationships, Communications and Conflict Management) and intrapersonal issues (Awareness/Learning/Development and Personal Presence). Overall, interpersonal and intrapersonal goals account for almost half (42%) of all goals selected from the 25 categories. A second group ranking high among the top ten goal categories generally focused on working with peers and subordinates (i.e., Subordinate Support & Development, Teamwork and Supervision/

Administration) and accounted for 18% of all selected goals. A third group accounted for 11% of all selected goals and focused on administrative skills (Balance/Flexibility/Time Management and Decision Making/Follow Through).

The Analytical Process

The sample for this study consisted of 2,724 middle-level and higher managers attending leadership development programs through either Discovery Learning, Inc. or through the Center for Creative Leadership between 1995 and 1997. Of all participants, 28% were women and 72% were men.

The managers used a goal-setting and learning assessment tool called *Goal-Getter* to identify and to establish follow-up goals at the end of their leadership development training experience. The managers were allowed to select from over 325 goals organized into 25 categories. Each participant could select up to ten goals, but was encouraged to consider no more than five. Multiple goals could be selected from the same category.

Table 1

Goal Category (Ranked by percentage of all managers selecting one or more goals from the category)	Percentage of managers selecting one or more goals from each category	Percentage of total goals selected by category
1. Relationships	64%	11%
2. Communications	61%	9%
3. Awareness/Learning/Development	53%	8%
4. Conflict Management	47%	7%
5. Subordinate Support & Development	47%	7%
6. Teamwork	46%	6%
7. Personal Presence	46%	7%
8. Balance/Flexibility/ Time Management	45%	6%
9. Decision Making/Follow Through	37%	5%
10. Supervision/Administration	37%	5%

**Question # 2:
Do male and female managers select different developmental goals?**

Results: The top three goal categories for men and women were the same: Relationships, Communications and Awareness/Learning/Development. A slightly larger percentage of men selected both Relationships and Communications goals than did women managers. For women, these two categories ranked equally in goal importance (58% & 59%), but for men Relationships ranked slightly higher than Communications (66% vs. 62%) in terms of goal selection. Other top priorities for women, Balance/Flexibility/Time Management (51%) Personal Presence (45%) and Conflict Management (50%), were basically tied with Awareness/Learning/Development (52%) as the third priority for women. For men, the next tier of goals after Awareness/Learning/Development included Subordinate Support & Development (48%), Teamwork (47%), and Conflict Management (46%).

Conclusions: For the first three categories, men and women clearly agreed about goal priorities.

Interpersonal and intrapersonal goals were the top priorities for both. Men and women also agreed that conflict management was a top developmental priority. Women saw their greater developmental needs around issues of balancing work and personal life, managing time and creating a personal presence, while men placed higher priorities on team-related issues and working with subordinates.

That both women and men agreed on the top three developmental goals might suggest the commonality of needs regardless of gender. It might also reflect 1) the type of people selected for leadership development

training or 2) the content focus of the training. The gender differences in the categories of Relationship and Balance/Flexibility/Time Management may have cultural implications, as well. From the data, men appear to see themselves more likely to need development in interpersonal areas; Western society deems women more adept in this domain. Women see themselves more likely to need development in Balance/Flexibility/Time Management. Most single custodial parents are women and even in dual career families, responsibilities related to home and children often lie primarily with women.

Table 2

Goal Category (Ranked by percentage of all managers selecting one or more goals from the category)	Percentage of all women selecting one or more goals from each category	Percentage of all men selecting one or more goals from each category
1. Relationships	59%	66%
2. Communications	58%	62%
3. Awareness/Learning/Development	52%	53%
4. Conflict Management	50%	46%
5. Subordinate Support & Development	45%	48%
6. Teamwork	41%	47%
7. Personal Presence	48%	45%
8. Balance/Flexibility/ Time Management	51%	42%
9. Decision Making/Follow Through	35%	38%
10. Supervision/Administration	32%	39%

Questions raised by this analysis:

- Why do men or women select more of certain types of goals? Is it related to perceived developmental need, value placed on the topic or social pressure to excel in certain areas?
- Why do a larger percentage of men than women select relationship related goals? Is it because women are already more comfortable with relationship issues in the workplace?
- Why do men select teamwork-related goals more frequently than women do? Do they place greater value on teamwork?
- Why do women select work/personal balance and time management as developmental goals more frequently than men do? Do they have more family responsibilities?

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