In addition, the source may not be viewed as being credible or caring, the communication may be seen as not being current, the sender may be viewed as being incompetent because of weak communication skills, or there is a lack of follow-through because people who should be communicating with each other to resolve problems are failing to do so. In each of these cases, the author fleshes out the problem, provides examples of how these problems manifest themselves, and discusses possible causes and corrective steps. For example, when addressing the issue of skepticism and mistrust, the author places the blame on the prevalence of spin in today's society, politics, and the media. She briefly discusses several manifestations of spin, clichés, and euphemisms that skirt the truth. For instance, even a stated policy of "pay for performance" will engender cynicism when employees perceive that poor performers and star performers are rewarded equally, and they will logically conclude that this policy has no basis in reality. She also highlights the damage that is done to trust even when someone does not lie to you, but you see that person lie to someone else. Booher colorfully refers to this as "off-stage lying." The author's correctives include admitting mistakes rather than trying to cover them up and holding others accountable for their responsibilities. When discussing concerns about getting incomplete information, Booher reviews various reasons "why people skimp on the details" including the existence of a paternalistic organizational culture characterized by a "leave-the-thinking-to-us mentality," the feeling of power that people get by being the only one who has all the facts, and the fear of giving people bad news and of having to handle their negative reactions. Some of the corrective measures recommended here include the importance of explaining one's reasoning for a decision and one's plans for implementing goals, being explicit about the metrics that will be used to track performance, designating a go-to person for follow-up details or questions, speaking to people directly instead of hiding behind technology, and getting bad news out promptly.

Robert M. Fulmer and Jared L. Bleak. **The Leadership Advantage: How The Best Companies Are Developing Their Talent to Pave the Way for Future Success.** New York: AMACOM Books, 2008, 272 pages, $27.95 hardcover.

Reviewed by *Lee J. Konczak,* Director, Executive Development & Succession Planning, Anheuser–Busch Companies and Practitioner Faculty, School of Business and Technology, Webster University, St. Louis, MO.

Rapid changes in the business environment—as evidenced by the recent subprime mortgage crisis and the demise of Bear Stearns—globalization of markets, continuous technological advances, and the

impending labor shortage make the topic of developing leadership talent a key priority for line executives and human resource professionals. The surge in baby-boomer retirements expected in just the next 3 years is anticipated to result in a labor shortage of 10 million workers by 2010 (Dychtwald, Erickson, & Morison, 2006). If we assumed that only 10% of that shortage involved leadership roles, that would translate into a shortage of one million leaders. Research by The Conference Board suggests that a majority of organizations are concerned about their ability to identify and develop the leadership talent they will need to successfully meet future business challenges (Barrett & Beeson, 2002). This book offers a snapshot of best practices that have been adopted by top-notch companies to address the leadership development issue. There are some key messages throughout the book that are noteworthy and instructive in describing practices that companies need to consider to ensure their leadership investment truly supports business needs and objectives.

This book is based upon a collaborative study conducted in 2006 by the American Productivity and Quality Center (APQC), the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), and Duke Corporate Education (Duke CE). The aim of the study was threefold:

(1) To gain a better understanding of how to increase the leverage of leadership development efforts as it relates to the execution of business strategy versus a "nice-to-have for developing individuals";
(2) To learn how a strategy for developing leaders and an integrated leadership development architecture can contribute to business success; and
(3) To gain insights into the best approaches for evaluating leadership development approaches.

The APQC study team selected best practices partners based on a history of excellence and success in linking leadership development practices to business strategy and objectives. The organizations profiled in detail in the book include Caterpillar, Cisco Systems, PepsiCo, Pricewaterhouse Coopers, and Washington Group International. Data from these companies and others in the sample were collected through surveys and in-depth interviews conducted during on-site visits.

The book consists of two major sections. Part I contains seven chapters and summarizes key areas of the research findings: linking leadership development to business strategy, building an organizational infrastructure to ensure alignment with the business, driving consistent implementation of leadership development initiatives, leveraging leadership development with high potential populations, and evaluating the impact of leadership development efforts. The authors organize the study results around 17 "Key Findings" in the seven chapters that comprise Part I of the book. As

an example, in Chapter 2, entitled, "Making Leadership Development a Strategic Lever," Key Finding 1 states, "Organizations experience major change events leading to profound teachable moments." Essentially, the finding suggests that in many of the organizations studied, the importance of leadership development was realized because of some significant business shift or change such as a decision to adopt a new business strategy. This finding certainly rings true in terms of real-world experience, as it seems that major change often occurs in response to some sort of "burning platform." It also suggests that leadership development experts within organizations must be sensitive to shifts and be somewhat opportunistic when it comes to positioning and selling-in the value of leadership development at the right "teachable moments" as the authors suggest.

The authors also make some interesting and somewhat controversial observations in Part I of the book. As an example, Key Finding 4 states, "Lean competency models and values are the foundation of strategic leadership development." They elaborate by stating that none of the best practice partners in the study had a scientifically valid competency model. Rather, most of the companies studied had created their own model or adapted a set of competencies from an outside organization. Although the intent of the authors' discussion along these lines was to stress the importance of simple and concise competency models to drive leadership development, the discussion gave me pause. Although simplicity and brevity are important to line executives and managers, the reliability, validity, and legal defensibility of competency models must always be considered, especially if "leadership development" includes decision making concerned with assessing potential to advance, transfers, and promotions.

The authors also suggest that "management development is dead among leading firms" (page 29). This statement is qualified subsequently by stating that, to add value, individual development must be connected to the development of the organization as a whole to increase overall organizational capability, an observation that makes good business sense. Given the costs associated with high-quality leadership development programs, development must be linked to the business, or it faces a tenuous existence in these periods of economic uncertainty and cost-containment initiatives. The observation is also very compelling with respect to how leadership programs are delivered. It suggests that internally or externally delivered programs that are not closely linked to a business strategy or initiative and that are implemented in a haphazard, unsystematic way (e.g., open enrollment vs. intact team or work group) may have little business impact and hence be difficult to justify to senior executives.

In summing up some key take-aways from their research in Part I of the book, the authors identify five guiding principles that, if followed, can

improve the results of leadership development efforts in organizations. These principles include:

1) Start at the top. (CEO involvement is key.)
2) Link leadership development directly to the business and deliver results.
3) Build an integrated leadership strategy.
4) Drive consistency in the execution of leadership programs and practices.
5) Hold leaders and the organization accountable for results, both developmental and business.

Part II of the book includes case studies of the best practice companies including an organization overview and detailed descriptions of leadership processes and programs, competency models, and numerous graphical illustrations portraying frameworks and models for building solid leadership development programs. This section of the book is very practical and provides good insights into the practices of some well known and well respected companies. For example, given a major thrust of the book—linking leadership development to the business—the case study that profiles PepsiCo includes a graphic depiction of how leadership development is integrated with the annual business planning process. The Caterpillar case study is very comprehensive and describes numerous facets of leadership development including linkage to the business, the Caterpillar Leadership Framework, core leadership programs, the succession planning process, and a brief description of evaluation strategies. The other case study descriptions highlight the approaches used by PricewaterhouseCoopers, Cisco, and Washington Group International in similar fashion. The book concludes with a list of chapter notes and references that can serve as a resource for the reader later on.

Overall, I liked the book. In some ways, there are no new insights presented here—how many more times do we have to be told that good leadership development follows strong commitment by senior management, particularly the CEO? However, I think leaders can pick up a few new ideas here on *how* to go about getting senior management commitment and *ways* to ensure linkage to the business. I believe that those charged with creating leadership development strategies will find this book of interest *and* of help. I picked up some good ideas that, with modification, might be beneficial in my own leadership development work.

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Authors' Response to Brumback's Review of **Making the Impossible Possible**

by *Marc Lavine*, Instructor and Doctoral Candidate, Carroll School of Management, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA and *Kim Cameron*, Professor of Management and Organization, Ross School of Business, and Professor of Higher Education, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

In the Spring, 2008 issue of this publication, Gary Brumback offered a highly critical review of our book *Making the Impossible Possible*. Although his review is rife with cosmetic and factual errors, such as the consistent misspelling of one of the authors' names and implying analogies between concepts that we did not equate as analogous, we could overlook these minor inaccuracies. Yet, we believe that Brumback's review fundamentally misleads readers by intimating that we misuse research methods and that the organizational performance we document is unremarkable. We therefore feel obligated to respond to the misconceptions created by his review.

Brumback states that we engage in theory testing when we make no such claim. As should be expected from an analysis based on one extensive case study, we focused entirely on theory development. Simply put, we asked how an organization could dramatically exceed the expectations of knowledgeable observers, over a sustained period of time, doing work of extreme difficulty and complexity. We provided in-depth description and interpretation of how extraordinary performance was achieved, based on interview data and analyses conducted over a 4-year period as the project unfolded.

Brumback faults us for extensively including the actual words of our interview subjects whereas we see this as one of the great strengths of the book, and one we think is all too rare in scientific reporting. Our purpose in giving readers the voices of the actual actors was to reduce the filter between the writer and the reader. Although Brumback is insistent that we used a particular methodology—content analysis—to present our findings, our orientation is rooted in the tradition of testimonial narrative, which does less speaking for the actors in a story and allows readers to see the raw data themselves so as to gauge the adequacy of authorial interpretation. Although our approach was not to Brumback's liking, other authors would seem to agree with us, such as George Huber at the University of Texas, who called the approach "a richly described examination" and "an exemplary analysis" in his endorsement of our work.

Our book chronicled how the largest nuclear weapons clean-up in world history was achieved 80% ahead of schedule, more than 80%