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Leading to grow and growing to lead:

Leadership development lessons from positive organizational studies

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What is more vital to an organization's long-term success than its ability to cultivate leaders? In an era in which the demand for high quality leadership exceeds the supply, exemplary organizations are those that grow leaders at all levels of the organization by developing their leadership pipelines. Leaders, through a process of social influence, guide and inspire followers toward desired outcomes. Organizations, such as General Electric Co. and Unilever PLC are envied for their success in growing leaders. How do they do it?

Scholars affiliated with the Center for Creative Leadership, such as Morgan McCall, Cynthia McCauley and Lynn Van Velsor, suggest that developing leaders calls for (1) assessing leadership competencies based on observable indicators of success to identify strengths and performance gaps, (2) offering developmental challenges to

close the gaps, and (3) providing support to nurture leaders to grow. This three-part approach has worked successfully in leadership development for several decades. In recent years, these three elements have increasingly been interpreted and implemented along the following lines: (1) in the *assessment* of leadership competencies, most energy is focused on identifying performance gaps, (2) the *challenge* focuses on creating discomfort and hardship to break people out of their comfort zones – i.e., no pain, no gain, and (3) the organization is charged with creating the right institutional *support* mechanisms, such as providing formal mentors and training for skill development.

Although these implementation trends have often been associated with successful leadership development, we suggest that they reflect an incomplete picture of effective leadership development. They assume a def-

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icit approach to human development; that is, gaps on predetermined areas of generic competence need to be closed, pain is necessary to prompt leaders to break out of comfort zones, and the organization knows how to best support leaders' growth.

In this paper, we highlight a complementary perspective on growing leaders. What if, beyond focusing on performance gaps, we focus on leveraging strengths in assessment? What if, beyond creating discomforting challenges that potentially paralyze leaders, we offer positive jolts that energize growth? What if, beyond charging the organization with providing the right support to facilitate growth, we encourage leaders and employees to co-create their own durable resources that provide support?

Of course, we are not suggesting that the more traditional framework of leadership development does not add value. Rather, it is likely that the most impactful leadership development will contain elements of the traditional and complementary frameworks. Akin to Jim Collins' notion of moving organizations from good to great, it may be that a combination of the traditional and complementary frameworks can ratchet leadership development systems up a level – from developing good leaders to developing truly great leaders. However, while the traditional framework is well developed, we know much less about this complementary approach. Therefore, in this paper, we explore a complementary approach to leadership development through the application of a Positive Organizational Studies (POS) lens. Toward this end, we first introduce the essence of POS and illustrate how the application of a POS lens may bring new insights to conventional wisdom on leadership development. In particular, we draw on recent theory on authentic leadership, the reflected best self, and thriving at work to better understand how to grow leaders at all levels of an organization. We then discuss the contributions, as well as the challenges, of leveraging strengths, providing positive jolts, and co-creating a supportive context. The challenges we identify provide guidance

on an agenda for future research on leadership development.

AN INTRODUCTION TO POS

POS, drawing on the fields of organizational behavior, psychology, and sociology, focuses on the generative dynamics in organizations that promote human strength, resiliency, healing, and restoration. A POS perspective assumes that understanding how to enable human excellence in organizations will unlock potential, reveal possibilities, and move us along a more positive course of human and organizational functioning. POS draws from a full spectrum of organizational theories to understand, explain, and predict the occurrence, causes, and consequences of positive phenomena. POS views states, such as confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience as key to high performance. At its core, POS investigates "positive deviance," or the ways in which organizations and their members flourish and prosper in extraordinary ways.

We draw from several streams of POS research to offer new insights on growing leaders, including authentic leadership (to understand how self-awareness and identity can enable growth), the reflected best self (to understand how positive jolts can stimulate growth), and thriving at work (to understand processes of individual growth in organizations).

HOW POS MAY OFFER INSIGHTS FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

In terms of *assessment*, POS suggests the importance of leveraging strengths rather than focusing acutely on performance gaps. Leveraging strengths involves identifying what one does best and then finding ways to organize one's work and life around those skills, unique gifts, and passions. A strengths approach has been a core of the Gallup Organization from its earliest days. Leveraging strengths builds competence so that

individuals can perform tasks well, explore to learn new things, and heedfully relate with others to create collective attunement. Specifically, leveraging strengths enhances awareness of people's best selves. In these ways, employees grow to understand and build on their unique areas of contribution.

Second, without challenges, it is easy for people to stay in their comfort zones – they have no reason to try something new or change. Whereas traditional leadership development accentuates the ways in which leaders learn from difficult experiences or hardships, a POS lens suggests the importance of positive jolts as a stimulus for learning. Jolts are triggers that stimulate growth. They are personal experiences that cause people to pause and think about the meaning or implication of a given event in relation to themselves. They are jarring (but not necessarily negative) because they are as Laura Morgan Roberts and colleagues report in their research on a strengths-based approach, outside the range of typical experience. A personal example of a positive jolt might be the birth of baby – changing one's perspective on what is important. Professional examples might include a profound compliment from an influential supervisor who changes one's career aspirations, an early and unexpected promotion, or an opportunity to participate in a special development program. Positive jolts stretch and energize people to take risks and try new things in order to grow and develop as human beings. Although people can and do learn from hardships, they often feel paralyzed in the face of threat and miss opportunities for personal growth. Whereas people remember criticism, they try harder with praise. Positive jolts provide opportunities for growth because they stimulate positive emotions, which psychologist Barbara Fredrickson's research has shown open people up to learning and broaden their perspectives.

Third, in terms of *support*, where traditional leadership development places responsibility for leadership development largely on the organization, a POS lens encourages individuals to co-create support through the

building of durable resources. The assumption here is that individuals are not only affected by their environment, but that they can also, through agentic working behaviors, mold their work environment to build contexts that elicit their best selves. If the organization takes responsibility for creating the environment for leadership development that it thinks is best, chances are that the organization will fail to tap into the specific elements that energize and enable many employees. Individual employees are often uniquely aware of the appropriate contexts that matter for developing their potential. For example, some people may learn best from on-the-job experiences that involve learning in context, but others may be overwhelmed with the complexity of learning in context and thus feel best supported by having some classroom training to teach basic skills in a specific area of development. Still others might grow most dramatically with the close guidance of a mentor. In ways that are not always obvious to others, individuals have a sense for the contexts that help them feel safe and enable them to learn and grow.

In the sections that follow, we further develop these three POS insights for growing leaders.

LEVERAGING STRENGTHS: LEADERS BUILDING POSSIBILITIES FOR GREATNESS

“A good leader inspires others with confidence in him (sic); a great leader inspires them with confidence in themselves.” – Unknown

In general, we tend to put significant focus on identifying and correcting weaknesses to develop leaders and improve performance. This approach can be helpful, but it has limitations. To generate the energy to address one's limitations or even make them irrelevant, we suggest that organizations must help leaders identify, develop, and leverage their unique strengths and talents.

A strengths perspective *questions* a pervasive assumption in leadership development: focusing on a person's areas of weakness provides the greatest opportunity for growth. Instead, the assumption underlying a strengths-based approach is that improving areas of weakness will bring individuals to average, not excellent, performance. The assumption of the strengths-based perspective is that in order to achieve greatness, people must find their own paths to excellence through leveraging their unique strengths and talents. This deep kind of self-awareness is essential to develop their authenticity as a leader.

As an example, consider the case of Southwest Airlines Co. chairman and former chief executive officer (CEO) Herb Kelleher, who is known for his charismatic, and sometimes eccentric, leadership style. Rather than being isolated in corporate headquarters, he frequently flew on his planes just to get to know his employees and customers. When visiting a maintenance hanger, he dressed in a woman's evening gown to get a laugh and build connections. On many levels, he sounds like a disaster waiting to happen. The reality is that he was highly successful as a leader. He developed close relationships with his employees, who often went above and beyond the call of duty for him. They came up with creative ideas to better serve customers, turn planes around quickly, and cut costs. This helped Southwest to become what *Fortune* calls the most successful airline in the industry.

If we were to apply the lessons from conventional leadership development to Herb Kelleher at an early stage of his career, the following chain of events might have occurred. As a low level manager, Kelleher's performance review would have focused on the specific gaps in his competencies as a leader. He would have been instructed to attend training courses to tone down his eccentricity and fit the appropriate image of a corporate manager. The likely result would have been some toning down, but also considerable frustration and demotivation. Clearly, a key factor in his success has been

leveraging his unique strengths. The traditional approach to leadership development would likely have turned Herb Kelleher into a mediocre leader. He became a great leader because he leveraged his strengths while compensating for, but not focusing on, his weaknesses.

Why is leveraging strengths so important for leadership development? Leveraging strengths creates more vivid and elaborate possible selves for individuals. That is, when individuals become aware of their strengths, they recognize more of their full potential. As Roberts and her colleagues demonstrate, a better sense of their full potential can then enable individuals to successfully construct and project images of competence and credibility to key constituents, such as colleagues and clients. Crafting a viable professional image through understanding one's strengths can become critical for eventual career success. In short, when leaders help others to identify and nurture their strengths, they build awareness of possibilities, generate hope about the future, and encourage others to take courageous action to become their hoped-for possible selves. Through an awareness of his strengths, Herb Kelleher had the courage to act in unconventional ways that allowed him to bond with his employees.

CHALLENGES IN LEVERAGING STRENGTHS

Leveraging strengths does not mean ignoring weaknesses. People are often required to operate with a basic level of competence in their areas of weakness. Therefore, leaders must learn to manage around weaknesses. This may mean finding someone else to do the tasks one does poorly. Herb Kelleher compensated for his weaknesses (little attention to details, lack of operational focus, poor organization) by hiring people with complementary strengths. For example, the long-time president of Southwest, Colleen Barrett, was as conventional as he was eccentric. She managed the details of running

the airline so that Kelleher could think strategically about a vision and develop and nurture the culture that energized Southwest's success as an airline. At other times, compensating for weaknesses may mean putting in enough effort to develop one's areas of weaknesses to acceptable levels of performance. For example, a software development manager with a gruff demeanor may never become charismatic, but she can learn strategies to soften her gruffness and become more approachable.

In addition, leveraging strengths does not mean becoming arrogant. Psychologist Jennifer Crocker has shown that an excessive focus on self-esteem has significant costs for individuals; overconfidence can impede learning and lead individuals to focus on validating their abilities, rather than carrying out their tasks. In order to avoid these costs, leveraging strengths must be in the service of a goal other than feeding one's ego. It is important to reiterate that leveraging strengths still involves managing around weaknesses. And this often implies dependencies on others whose strengths are another's weaknesses. Thus, a strengths focus may require humility in order to remain in a learning mode and to develop interdependent relationships with others who have complementary strengths. It also means creating an environment of transparency to allow for exchanges that are based on authentic recognition of one's strengths and weaknesses.

POSITIVE JOLTS: LEADERS STRETCHING PEOPLE THROUGH APPRECIATION

The second insight that POS can offer pertains to the kind of challenges that can nurture leadership development. People feel challenged when they encounter situations that require skills and abilities beyond their current competencies. Typical challenges include setting difficult goals, carrying out tough job assignments, managing destructive conflict, or dealing with losses, failures, or disappointments. The rationale for these

challenges is akin to "no pain, no gain." All of these challenges connote a type of negative jolt that moves people out of their comfort zones and disrupts their normal routines. Although people can grow in significant ways in the face of hardship, they often respond to threats with paralysis or rigidity. In the face of adversity, threat rigidity research finds that individuals close down and regress to past learned behaviors, rather than seeking out learning and growth.

Unlike threatening challenges that imply real potential for failure or harm, positive jolts imply the possibility of gains, and thus energize individuals. One type of positive jolt is appreciation. For example, when a valued colleague leaves an organization to take a different job, people often share their appreciation for all the person has contributed at a formal goodbye gathering. The appreciation induces positive emotions, which facilitate a person's ability to see the self differently. Like gratitude, appreciation stimulates reflection and action because it disrupts expectations for the future and helps individuals move toward more positive self-images. Below, we provide another example of a positive jolt we have found to be quite powerful in leadership development.

THE REFLECTED BEST SELF ASSESSMENT

One example of a positive jolt that is increasingly used in the service of leadership development is an assessment called the Reflected Best Self (RBS). The RBS, developed by scholars at Harvard University and the University of Michigan, is an exercise in enhancing self-knowledge as a pathway to increasing authenticity as a person. We all have blind spots that make it difficult for us to see our full spectrum of strengths and contributions. The RBS asks participants to obtain short descriptions of who they are and what they do when they are at their very best from a diverse array of significant people in their lives (friends, family, co-workers, bosses, subordinates, customers, etc.). With their

stories in hand, they identify commonalities across the different sources of feedback and compose a portrait of their “best self” that captures the insights in the data. This type of positive jolt often deeply moves participants because the descriptions are a form of appreciation. Some of the stories describe events that they do not even remember. People comment that they never realized that their actions had made such a difference for others. This type of narrative feedback is rarely given, especially in organizational contexts. Research by Roberts and colleagues has found that the RBS stimulates growth because it builds positive emotions, relationships, and agency that enable people to break out of their comfort zones.

First, the RBS evokes positive emotions. In her path-breaking research on positive emotions, psychologist Barbara Fredrickson demonstrated that positive emotions broaden individuals’ thought-action repertoires and build their capacities to act. Hence, positive emotions help build leadership capability by enabling people to pursue new opportunities for personal growth and agency. This broadened perspective is critical for developing leadership potential because it is important for leaders to be able to see the big picture and how different pieces fit together.

Second, the RBS strengthens individuals’ relationships with those providing feedback, producing relational resources that can be drawn on during times of difficulty. These relationships can be a form of social support that provides security and safety for individuals. These relationships are critical for leadership development because they build social capital, which may be the lifeblood of leadership effectiveness both inside and outside of organizations. Social capital ensures that leaders are better informed, more creative, more efficient, and better problem solvers. With the right networks, leaders save time because they know where to get the information they need. With the right networks, they foster cooperation and collaboration and work smarter.

Third, the RBS process produces a heightened sense of agency and efficacy to help

people move forward, embrace challenges, and grow. This is critical for leadership development because leaders must take initiative in order to make things happen in organizations. Leaders must be active initiators, not passive participants, in organizational systems. In this way, the RBS process is similar to what Bruce Avolio calls a “booster” that focuses attention and reinforces learning in leadership development.

In short, all three forces generated by the RBS help people to grow into leaders. Positive emotions help people to see their leader potential through broadening and building; positive relationships build social capital; and agency facilitates initiative-taking. We have now used the RBS assessment with thousands of undergraduate, M.B.A., and executive students. Many call the exercise “life transforming.” They see the glimpses of greatness in themselves. Most recently, we are using the exercise in business organizations to transform the culture of the organization from good to great. In a European bank, the 800 most senior managers have taken the RBS assessment. They see this new knowledge on individual strengths as playing a key role in the bank’s 20 percent increase in profits and substantial customer growth in 2005. In a global financial services firm, the top 25 leaders have used the RBS assessment to build themselves into a nimble, high performing team. And each team member is driving POS practices throughout their divisions to make POS a source of their competitive advantage against industry leaders, such as Vanguard Group, Inc. and Fidelity.

CHALLENGES IN THE USE OF POSITIVE JOLTS

Of course, not all positive jolts help people grow. Sometimes, individuals relish the positive feelings engendered by a positive jolt but fail to take action in any significant way. What characteristics of positive jolts engage individuals to grow? At a basic level, the positive jolt must be seen as authentic. Otherwise, people may not experience the positive

jolt as valid. For example, imagine a newly promoted manager who wanted people to feel appreciated, and chose to end every interaction with his subordinates with, "Keep up the good job! You are doing great!" The first time the manager uttered these words, subordinates felt elevated and experienced gratitude for the warm words about their performance. But soon, they found that this positive feedback came every day, and even worse, the manager uttered these words to everyone without distinction. The positive feedback quickly lost its meaning to subordinates and became more dysfunctional than motivating.

In addition, positive jolts are more likely to facilitate growth if they come from multiple, trusted sources. For example, if multiple sources give specific positive feedback independently, the jolt will be felt more strongly. For example, consider a successful biochemistry professor who had no aspirations to go into administration. She was told by a number of different colleagues who did not know each other that she had the potential to be an outstanding administrator due to her calm demeanor, leadership skills, and organization. Because the positive feedback came independently from multiple respected sources in a short window of time, she perceived it as a positive jolt, much more so than if it had come from a single source. As a result, she accepted an offer to become the director of a new cancer center – a position that she had not previously considered. This is one reason why the RBS feedback, in drawing on people from different walks of life, is so potent.

Finally, positive jolts are likely to engender growth to the extent that they come at opportune times. For example, positive jolts that come just before, or at the time of, a critical transition are more likely to motivate personal change than the same jolt offered at the wrong time. A transition is a time when people are in flux. A manager working as part of a team to complete a major project before a deadline may not be open to a positive jolt without the time or energy to process it. On the other hand, the same man-

ager who is between projects or considering a career change will likely be much more receptive to a positive jolt.

CO-CREATING SUPPORT: LEADERS STIMULATING THE BUILDING OF RESOURCES

Traditional organizational theory and research emphasizes the role of the leader in defining the context, culture, and norms. Although leaders often do play a vital role in designing the organizational context, here we focus our attention on the leader's capability to shape the context in collaboration with employees – that is, to co-create a context for maximal support. To paraphrase Lao Tzu, "The wicked leader is he whom the people despise. The good leader is he whom the people revere. But the great leader is he of whom the people say, 'We did it together.'" Co-creation is the process of leaders and employees working together to build a supportive environment.

Leaders build a supportive context conducive to growing leaders by encouraging employees to develop the kinds of resources that matter to them within the organization. Specifically, in the process of thriving articulated by Spreitzer and her colleagues, employees create and draw on four durable resources produced in the doing of work: shared knowledge, positive meaning, positive emotions, and positive connections. The leader's role is to stimulate and nurture these four resources in order to facilitate employee growth.

SHARED KNOWLEDGE

Leaders can create a common knowledge base so that individuals know about how things work and how different pieces fit together into the integrated system. With common knowledge, individuals can quickly uncover problems and issues as they arise. A common knowledge base also helps people to integrate and coordinate actions across a

diverse array of tasks and participants. When people share common knowledge, they are in a position to grow because they can act without waiting for approval from others, as relevant information is shared. Armed with broader information and the “big picture,” individuals can focus on larger organizational contributions as well as on narrower tasks.

Leaders can also create shared knowledge by making information widely available about individual skills and expertise. For example, leaders can foster knowledge sharing directly by cataloging and publicizing information about employee expertise across the organization. A broadly accessible database of each employee’s work experience, background, and skills may allow employees to seek each other out when they need information. Why is this important? Intrapersonal functional diversity, or the extent to which team members have broad experiences in different areas, facilitates information sharing and performance in management teams. Equipped with common knowledge, employees are able to build relationships in which valuable information is shared.

POSITIVE MEANING

Positive meaning is about having a sense of purpose through one’s work. We articulate two pathways for leaders to stimulate the experience of positive meaning. First, it is well understood that a superordinate vision or purpose facilitates goal alignment, cooperation, and communication. Leaders can emphasize the meaning and purpose of employees’ roles and jobs, as well as the meaning and purpose of their projects and groups. In this way, leaders give employees multiple lenses for finding positive meaning. Employees will engage their relationships in efforts to draw on each of these frames as they search for positive meaning.

Second, employees derive their identities at work – and thus positive meaning – from their work roles and their memberships. Leaders can promote the discovery of positive

meaning simply by explicitly supporting the development of support networks. Because it constitutes an individual’s informal group of contacts and colleagues at work, a support network is a harbor of psychological safety for employees. Even if job-prescribed roles and projects are not flexible, employees can craft their jobs in new ways or adopt personal projects. For example, when an altruistic management consultant encourages his co-workers to volunteer at a homeless shelter over the weekend, he is able to lead his support network in a value-congruent project. Because individuals experience value-congruent roles and activities as meaningful, it is likely that individuals will find positive meaning through their support networks. In this way, the leader’s active encouragement of support networks with flexible roles and projects may inspire employees to generate positive meaning and take on leadership roles.

POSITIVE EMOTIONS

Leaders can encourage thriving to develop leaders by espousing the expression of positive emotions as they experience them. Individuals who express intense emotions often have powerful effects on others’ moods. Because individuals tend to weigh negative cues more heavily than positive, leaders must encourage the expression of positive emotions as they are experienced so that negative emotions do not dominate the organization. When leaders encourage the authentic expression of positive emotions, mood contagion may ensue across relationships in the organization, thereby creating opportunities for growth. For example, at a weekly departmental seminar series at the University of Michigan Business School, we begin the meeting by having people share good news to the group. A health care organization uses the same practices at its weekly staff meetings and reports that its meetings are more fun and productive than they have ever been. Similarly, at a leading financial services company, the CEO leads a monthly “shout out,” where employees can reveal

stories about employees who went beyond the call of duty to help each other or customers. This practice creates the space for the authentic expression of positive emotions.

POSITIVE CONNECTIONS

Finally, in order to enable thriving, leaders are also charged with cultivating positive connections at work. Expressing and encouraging positive emotions can lead to the development of positive connections. For example, compassion, trust, respect, and gratitude facilitate positive connections in organizations. When leaders share information about themselves and create opportunities for people to interact in informal, social events like lunches or hallway conversations, they will be increasingly likely to discover common interests. Therefore, leader actions may help enable positive connections in the thriving process.

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CO-CREATION

It is important to note that the leader's role is not only to *stimulate* these durable resources, but also to *regulate* the level of these resources. More specifically, in the next sections, I articulate the ways in which excessively high levels of shared knowledge, positive meaning, positive emotions, and positive connections may be detrimental to thriving.

Regulating Shared Knowledge

It is important for leaders to regulate the sharing of knowledge in an organization for at least two reasons. First, as human beings, we are limited in our capacities to process information, and too much information can lead to cognitive overload and reduced knowledge. Indeed, when faced with too many choices, individuals tend to disengage or experience regret for forgone opportunities. These findings indicate that excessive

information can be deleterious to thriving, both by hampering vitality and by limiting an employee's ability to deal with complexity. A learning orientation is adaptive up to a particular point. Teams that overemphasize learning may be trapped in experimentation at the expense of carrying out the work. Thus, both the cognitive overload and excessive experimentation lenses suggest that it is important for leaders to regulate the amount of knowledge sharing that occurs in units.

Regulating Positive Meaning

Leaders must also regulate the amount of positive meaning that employees experience. Extremely high levels of positive meaning may lead an employee to feel a tremendous sense of pressure. For example, the ostensibly positive meaning of "saving the organization" may, in actuality, be a burden that leaves the weight of the world on an employee's shoulders. Meaningful activities are not necessarily those that are manageable. When demands surpass abilities and challenges surpass skills, employees experience anxiety, strain, and sometimes burnout. Vitality, a critical component of thriving, will suffer as a result. In sum, because extraordinarily high degrees of positive meaning may entail positive illusions and/or pressure, it is prudent for leaders to ensure that positive meaning is both grounded in reality and manageable.

Regulating Positive Emotions

Like shared knowledge and positive meaning, positive emotions, too, can exist in surplus. Negative emotions can be valuable. For example, negative emotions of guilt and embarrassment can actually motivate the repair of relationships at work. Moreover, the positive emotion of contentment can impede creativity because people are less likely to take risks. Barbara Fredrickson has found that a ratio of about three positive emotions to one negative emotion is optimal for human flourishing. Too many positive emotions without a corresponding negative

emotion can lead to positive illusions or the denial of reality. Interestingly, marriage researcher John Gottman has found the same positive to negative ratio (about five positive interactions for every negative interaction) for successful long-term marriages.

Regulating Positive Connections

It may also be necessary for leaders to regulate positive connections in order to enable thriving. When an individual has many connections with others, he or she may spend time socializing rather than completing tasks. In turn, task focus may decline. Although vitality may be present, such distractions may impede the increases in complexity that are central to thriving. Leaders may therefore find it advantageous to ensure that positive connections are not impeding work processes.

COMPENSATORY RESOURCES

In addition to the challenge of regulating these resources, leaders may also find that the four resources may be compensatory. In order to grow, leaders may not need all four resources. Indeed, a leader who is low in dispositional positive affect may not benefit from expressing positive emotions. The intrapersonal consequences of generating positive resources may include burnout and poor performance. For a leader who is introverted, the interpersonal consequences of building relational resources may involve being perceived by others as inauthentic. Such a leader may be better suited to focus on stimulating and regulating shared knowledge and positive meaning. In short, we believe that the most productive steps for leaders to take toward promoting leader growth are those that are consistent with their strengths.

CONCLUSION

Ralph Nadar once said, "I start with the premise that the function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers." I agree with Nadar, and go one step further in focusing on developing the leadership potential in all employees. By creating a thriving workplace, organizations facilitate employee learning and development. In this paper, I offered some lessons for leadership development from the blossoming theoretical perspective of POS through the lenses of authentic leadership, the reflected best self, and thriving. Because a POS approach energizes people to develop their leadership potential, I believe that developing leaders through this approach will reduce the potential for burnout and depletion. In contrast to traditional leadership development approaches that use up resources, as individuals struggle to improve their weaknesses and deal with hardships, a POS approach generates emotional, relational, and agentic resources. In addition, given the focus on leveraging strengths, leaders are developing their authentic selves. This increases the probability of sustained growth over time and reduces the probability of leader derailment. Moreover, the critical focus on co-creating means that leaders have resources they can build *and* draw upon to sustain their growth. At the same time, it is important to note that a POS approach is not a panacea – as we noted above, it comes with its own set of challenges. However, a thriving approach to growing leaders is best implemented as a complement to the more traditional approach to growing leaders. By fleshing out alternatives, such as our POS approach, I hope to identify more pathways for growing leaders.



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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

To learn more about the blossoming field of Positive Organizational Studies, see the edited book by Kim Cameron, Jane Dutton, and Robert Quinn, *Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline* (San Francisco: Berrett Koehler Publishers, 2003). Fred Luthans' 2002 article in the *Academy of Management Executive* entitled "Positive Organizational Behavior: Developing and Managing Psychological Strengths" provides a nice introduction to Positive Organizational Behavior. Laura Morgan Roberts' recent piece in the *Academy of Management Review* entitled "Shifting the Lens On Organizational Life: The Added Value of Positive Scholarship" shows how POS fits into the larger literature on organizational studies.

Specific POS pieces mentioned in the article include the process model of thriving described in Gretchen Spreitzer, Kathleen Sutcliffe, Jane Dutton, Scott Sonenshein, and Adam Grant's 2005 *Organization Science* piece. To learn more about Barbara Fredrickson's work on the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions and the optimal positive-to-negative ratio, see her article with Marcial Losada in their 2005 *American Psychologist* article.

To learn more about contemporary leadership development, see Morgan McCall's classic book entitled *The Lessons of Experience:*

How Successful Executives Develop on the Job, (The Free Press, 1988). Cynthia McCauley and Ellen Van Velsor's recent in-depth tome, *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development* (Jossey-Bass, 2003), provides a contemporary overview of leadership development, as does Bruce Avolio's book entitled *Leadership Development in Balance: Made/Born* (Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005). And to learn more about authentic leadership development see Bruce Avolio, and Bill Gardner's 2005 *Leadership Quarterly* article entitled "Authentic Leadership Development: Getting to the Root of Positive Forms of Leadership."

To learn more about a strengths perspective on leadership development, see the Reflected Best Self Lab's (Brianna Barker, Jane Dutton, Emily Heaphy, Laura Morgan Roberts, Robert Quinn, and Gretchen Spreitzer's research in *Harvard Business Review* (2005) and *Academy of Management Review* (2005). If you are interested in using the Reflected Best Self Assessment, please the website: <http://www.bus.umich.edu/Positive/POS-Teaching-and-Learning/POS-Tools.htm>. Markus Buckingham and Donald Clifton's bestseller *Now Discover Your Strengths* (Free Press, 2001) provides a practitioner introduction to a strengths-based approach.

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Positive Leadership, The Game. Positive Organization Learning Map. Task Enabling Exercise. Job Crafting Exercise. Positive organizational scholarship and agents of change. The money or the morals? When moral language is more effective for selling social issues. Leaders matter morally: The role of ethical leadership in shaping employee moral cognition and misconduct. Positive leadership and adding value - a lifelong journey. Related Videos. Related Books. A Life-Stories Approach to Authentic Leadership Development', Leadership Quarterly, 16 (3), June, Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries and Konstantin Korotov (2007), 'Creating Transformational Executive Education Programs', Academy of Management Learning and Education, 6 (3), Gretchen M. Spreitzer (2006), 'Leading to Grow and Growing to Lead: Leadership Development Lessons from. Positive Organizational Studies', Organizational Dynamics, 35 (4), Philip Mirvis (2008) Wilfred R. Bion (1952), 'Group Dynamics: A Re-View', International Journal of Psycho-analysis, XXXIII, Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries (1999), 'High-Performance Teams: Lessons from the Pygmies', Organizational Dynamics, 27 (3), Winter, 4 24. Request PDF | On Dec 31, 2006, GRETCHEN M. SPREITZER published Leading to grow and growing to lead | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate. Through this trusting behavior, the leader empowers others and provides hope for the future, leading to lasting positive changes for the organization and creating a culture of trust. View. Show abstract. Spreitzer (2006) suggests that leadership development programs have historically been designed to identify and improve upon areas of weakness, rather than to build on individuals' strengths. The present study examined the relationship between the shared authentic leadership behavior of new venture top management teams (TMTs) and the performance of their firms. the reflected best self. Leading to Grow and Growing to Lead: Some Lessons from Positive Organizational Scholarship. The purpose of this paper is to use the lens of Positive Organizational Scholarship. (POS) to offer new insights to how to grow leaders. We reframe the "Assess/Challenge/Support" model of leadership development created by the Center for organizational studies, psychology, and sociology which focuses on the generative. dynamics in organizations that promote human strength, resiliency, healing, and. restoration (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2003; Luthans, 2002a). to learn and grow and having those opportunities to grow. Both of these employees describe thriving as a sense of heightened capacity and growth. According to Spreitzer et al. Leadership development training can help manage stress, develop the ability to manage multiple roles while leading across the organizational or geographical boundaries, and also build a network of leaders, across the globe, who are supportive and helpful in the continuous development of the organization. It begins by taking responsibility for own tasks and finishing them on priority. Every leadership training program should aim to provide post-training feedback which helps the leaders assess their skills, change their behaviors related to their influencing and negotiating skills, communicate better, work towards more self-awareness for continuous development. Feel free to visit for more information: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/4821209/admin>.