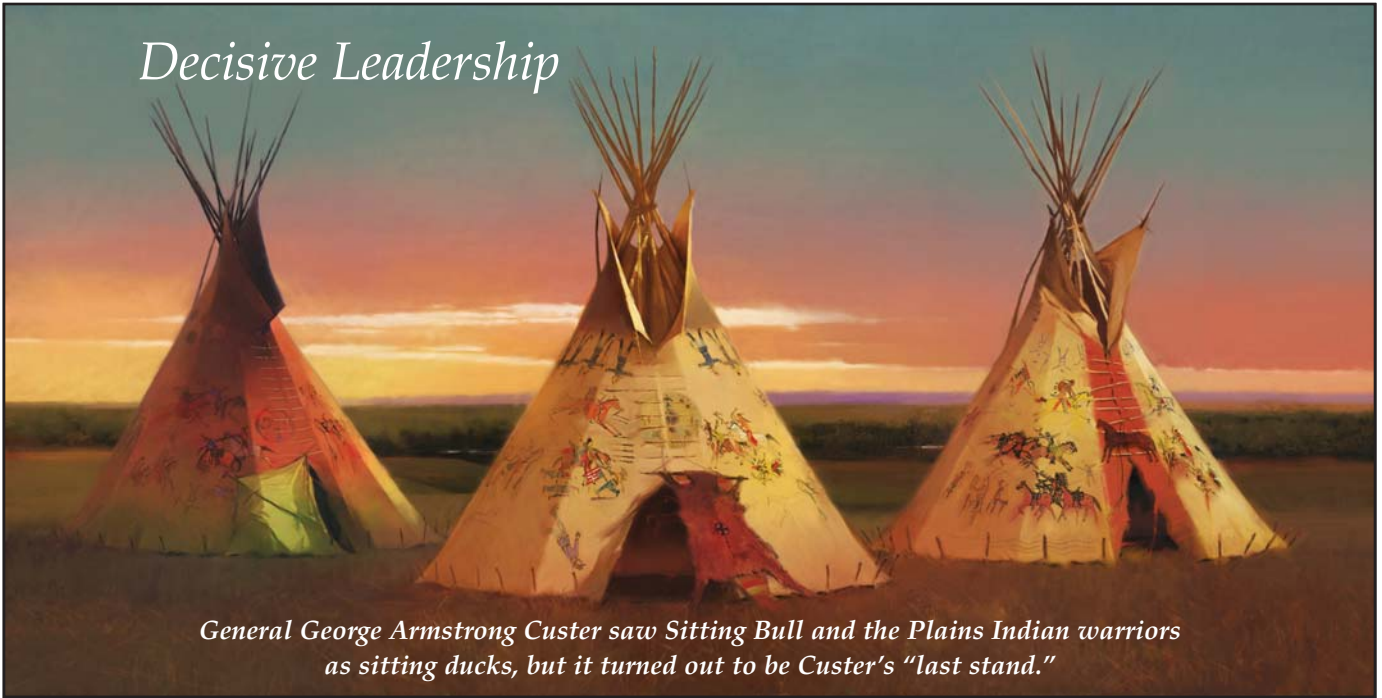


LEADERSHIP *Warren Bennis* Excellence



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Decisive Leadership



General George Armstrong Custer saw Sitting Bull and the Plains Indian warriors as sitting ducks, but it turned out to be Custer's "last stand."

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The 'L' Words

Leader, Leading, Leadership.



by Stephen L. Cohen

WE TEND TO USE THE L words—*Leader, Leading, and Leadership*—almost interchangeably, but they mean something *very different*. This has implications for *leadership theory and practice*. We're better served by their *distinction*.

Now is the time for clarity around *leader development* as we face a *leadership capacity and capability crisis*, exacerbated by the economic downturn, and created by: demographically driven scarce leadership supply; sub-optimal investment in LD; global expansion at break-neck speed; the need for a common and consistent global mindset, both culturally and operationally; a magnitude of change causing industry transformations; and extreme economic turmoil.

To resolve the leadership capacity and capability crisis, we need to address key leadership challenges in four areas:

1) *Strategic issues* around creating an *integrated and systematic process* for identifying, assessing, and developing and retaining talent for leadership roles; 2) *Alignment challenges* ensuring leadership is *in step with strategy* and that the competencies being groomed across the leadership pipeline will deliver the capabilities required and the results desired; 3) *Talent areas* involving building a steady and ready deep bench of leaders available to fill any gaps that surface; and 4) *Performance aspects* ensuring that leaders are *effectively and efficiently producing the goods and services* that meet and exceed customer needs.

How then do we address these challenges with leader development solutions and create a *results-based* focus on accelerating performance? The various drivers of leader development that ultimately yield improved performance first translate *business imperatives* into *desired business outcomes* that dictate: a) the *capabilities* needed to excel in order to achieve those outcomes, b) the *competencies* required to achieve them, and c) the *role position* the leader holds.

So what difference does it make if we use these words *Leader, Leading* and *Leadership interchangeably*? Unclear definitions result in confusion, lack of focus and misunderstanding of the complexity of effective leader develop-

ment. *Distinguishing one from another will inform our approach to developing leaders.*

Leader refers to the characteristics, role and position inherent in that person (it's *personal*); *Leading* refers to the skills and competencies required to get things done (it's *situational*); and *Leadership* refers to alignment of the vision, values, strategy and desired capabilities through the portrayal of sustainable best practices (it's *systematic*).

Integrated Leadership Theory

Based on these definitions, we can form an *integrated leadership theory* that delivers greater value to developing leaders. In an ILT, all three elements must be intertwined to achieve leader effectiveness and improved performance. In the context of a leadership theory, then, what is different about *Leader, Leading* and *Leadership*?

Leader: It is a *concept* represented by the various personal and positions for which people direct and manage others to achieve outcomes; *Leading*: It is a *construct* represented by a set of observable, quantifiable and measurable practices and behaviors that deliver results, translating to competencies. And *Leadership*: It is a *context* represented by processes and procedures manifested in organizational behavior.

Leader effectiveness can be improved by providing *relevant and meaningful learning experiences* that integrate elements of *Leader, Leading* and *Leadership* to achieve business outcomes. By *organization capabilities* we mean the *procedures and processes organizations want to consistently demonstrate and be known for by their customers*. It's their *value proposition* they are promising to deliver to their customers, and likely manifested in the way their leaders perform. This is what *Leadership* is all about—the *bridge between what an organization promises to deliver to its customers and the processes and procedures followed to repeatedly do so*. Leaders must act accordingly, but they can't perform without the *competencies*—the *knowledge, skills and attitudes* required to *think, act and interact* accordingly. Their behaviors and practices are what define *Leading*. Depending on their role as a *Leader*, the way they represent their organization and themselves will vary.

Clarifying *Leader, Leading, Leadership* helps you create an *optimally effective leader development agenda* and link this element of *talent management* to *achieving better business results*. LE

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ACTION: Practice integrated leader development.