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TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: CREATING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

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Once upon a time, in a land far away, there lived a wise king, who had among his subjects a village chief named Gabriel. The village chief had three sons, of whom the eldest, Roland, was the most talented. Given his son's abilities, Gabriel was ambitious for Roland to become an advisor to the king, so he sent him away to study political sciences at one of the greatest academies of learning in the land.

When he had mastered all that the academy had to offer, Roland was taken by his father into the presence of the king. "Great King," said Gabriel, "I have this youth, my eldest and most talented son, specially trained in the political sciences, so that he might obtain a worthy position at your Majesty's court, knowing how much you appreciate learning."

The King didn't even bother to look up, but only said, "Come back in one year."

Somewhat disappointed but still with high hopes, Gabriel sent Roland abroad to a famous center of learning, so that the time before returning to the king was not wasted. When, a year later, he arrived once more at court with his son, he said, "Great King, my son has just returned from a long and perilous journey to further educate himself. Please examine him, and see if he is worthy to be at your court."

Without hesitation, the King said, "Let him come back in another year."

Very upset, but not showing it, Gabriel had his son cross the oceans to Greece and Italy, to study the foundations of Western civilization, and continue onward to China and India to become familiar with their ancient cultures and religions. Once more, when he returned to the

court, Gabriel explained to the King all the wonderful things his son had done. But the King simply looked at him and said, “Maybe he should come back after another year.”

Roland was sent by his father to the Americas, travelling from the North to the South, visiting all the centers of learning on the way. But when his father took him once more to see the King, he was told, “Now find a teacher, if anyone is willing to have you, and come back in a year.”

But when that year had passed and Gabriel wanted to take his son to the court, Roland was no longer interested. He preferred to meet with his teacher and discuss philosophy and the sciences. Whatever his father did to have him visit the court was in vain. Finally, Gabriel gave up: “I am the unluckiest of fathers in the land. I have wasted all this time and money to try to get my son a position at court, and now he is no longer interested. Woe to him who has failed the tests of the King!”

Some time later, the King said to his counselors, “Let us prepare for a visit to our main center of learning, for there is someone there I need to see.”

As the King and his courtiers, in all their splendor, approached the center of learning, Roland’s teacher led him to the gate where they stood and waited. “Great King,” said the teacher, “here is the young man who was a nobody while he was a visitor of kings, but who is now himself visited by kings. Take him to be your counselor, he is ready.”

Beyond the quick fix

As this parable illustrates, leadership development is not a quick fix. Although many people (including those entering leadership development programs) are impatient for results to materialize, quick-fix solutions put unrealistic expectations on everyone. Gimmicky programs promising supposedly instant results are not what leadership development is all about. In our experience, such programs rarely produce lasting results. Like it or not, developing leaders takes time—it can’t be done overnight.

Ironically, although leadership problems may take time to emerge, when it comes to finding solutions many people in the talent development business lose patience. They prefer instant answers and want instant change. But knowing what we know about human development, we

should understand that people need time to evolve. Educating leaders is not something that can be achieved by a single event. It is a process.

Leadership development is a serious business. Investing in educational opportunities is what differentiates great businesses from the simply mediocre. Organizations that fail to heed this message do so at their peril. Senior leadership has a responsibility to recognize their people's developmental needs, to help them cultivate new skills, and provide opportunities for their professional and personal growth. Retaining talent is like encouraging a cat to stay at your house—if they don't like the place, they'll leave.

Senior management need to align the objectives of the organization with those of their people. They have the ultimate responsibility for talent management initiatives. Above all they must monitor the leadership pipeline in order to create a sustainable organization. They must make an effort to bring out the best in people, create high-performance teams and high-performance organizations. How to go about this, however, is another matter. We have learned from experience that leadership development means different things to different people.

In running executive education programs at leading business schools and in corporate settings we have discovered that a fairly common agenda is the participants' desire to make a real change in their professional and personal lives. Many executives enter the program with the aim of taking a significant next step on their career trajectory, hoping to acquire the necessary skills to make such a step successfully. Other applicants have come to the realization that they have been functioning on 'automatic pilot'; although reluctant to admit it openly, they are bored with what they are doing and hope that the program will get them out of the rut and push them to reinvent themselves. Whatever they are doing—and successful as it may seem at first glance—it has lost its meaning. For others also seeking that elusive commodity—meaning—they are looking for profit with purpose; they want to leave some kind of legacy. There are some instances where enrollment in a leadership development program is a reward for services rendered, recognition that the company appreciates the executive's efforts. In others, the reasons for participating may be much simpler: a quest for specific skills and competences that will make them more effective. In such cases, executives want to work on their emotional intelligence, their visioning ability, team-building capacity or it could be they have been told that they need to adapt their style to changing circumstances.

As our experience has shown, a busy executive entering a leadership development program, particularly an open-enrollment program (where the application process is self-initiated rather than imposed by the HR department), will be seeking support and help in making some kind of personal transformation. Similar motives can be ascribed to executives who enroll in an Executive MBA. Like the other modules, the leadership-related modules of an EMBA are viewed as a critical part of the curriculum (as we have learned from comments made during admission interviews and post-program evaluations). According to feedback received from executives, learning more about themselves, taking stock of their lives, and being able to "improve" or "reinvent" themselves are among the primary drivers. (Long, 2004; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Kets de Vries, Korotov, & Florent-Treacy, 2007; Petrigrieli & Petrigrieli, 2010; Kets de Vries, Guillen-Ramo, Korotov, & Florent-Treacy, 2010). In other words, they are seeking a transformational learning experience, a term frequently used to describe the types of programs that help executives deal with the concerns mentioned above.

We define transformational leadership development programs as learning experiences that use specific methodologies to create a transitional, intermediate space for experiencing inner and outer worlds that enables executives to "play" fantasy games. These transitional phenomena belong to the realm of illusion, which is at the basis of the initiation of experience (Winnicott, 1951). Such make-believe games give them the freedom to identify and practice the desired behavioral changes—they are powerful activities that create tipping points (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007). To set such a transformational process in motion, however, the pedagogy used must conform to the expectations of executives: the aim is to increase self-awareness, to overcome personal blockages, and acquire a more sophisticated repertoire of behaviors.

It is a truism among students of leadership that to succeed in a leadership role requires the leader's capacity to reflect on his or her behavior, to understand the effect that such behavior has on followers, and to find congruence between observable behavior and the deeply-held beliefs, drives, motivators, and other elements of their 'inner theater'. But the ability to use oneself as an instrument, the capacity to reflect and (when necessary) to go deep into oneself and explore the effect of our inner world on our behavior and that of others is not something that comes automatically. Indeed, the capacity for reflection-in-action runs contrary to the currently popular view of the contemporary leader as solely interested in action. For the leaders of today, action clearly takes precedence over reflection; to think deeply about our

own leadership style and its connection to the success of the organization within the context of our personal satisfaction and happiness is regarded as an unaffordable luxury.

Despite the prevailing culture of action, ways need to be found to help busy executives reflect on their leadership styles. If the setting is right, an open-enrollment leadership development program will be perceived as a precious opportunity to deal with the knotty issues that have been piling up over the years (in the form of hopes, fantasies, fears, anxieties, opportunities and dangers), but have not had a fair chance of being processed. To make time for reflection and create a discipline of reflection can have a transformational effect on the executive concerned. It may become part and parcel of the overall change executives want to make for themselves in order to function at their best.

In responding to these needs we aim to design activities of a transformational nature. We go to great lengths to create a space where executives will be encouraged to engage in reflection, exploration and experimentation. This process—fueled by various forms of personal feedback—increases the likelihood that participants will embrace personal change. As a result of such personal change efforts, we expect them to become more effective in leading others, more effective in leading organizational change efforts and creating high-performance teams and organizations. We also hope their subjective well-being or happiness will improve, and that they may attain a better work-life balance.

Our leadership development programs tend to attract individuals who possess considerable organizational leadership experience. Although it is stimulating to work with experienced executives, it can be both a blessing and a curse. On the one hand, there is no need to “preach to the converted” about the importance of leadership in organizations, leaders as role models, or the effects leaders can have on their subordinates; on the other hand, to do things differently—to have a real impact on these individuals—can be quite a challenge.

After presenting an overview of what could be categorized as more traditional leadership teaching (definitions, models, and theories)—much of which our participants are already familiar with—in our programs we move on to what could be described as more serious psychological work, exposing them to such themes as resistance to change, the leader’s ‘shadow side’, social defenses, group dynamics, the consequences of transference, interpersonal conflicts, authenticity in leadership, social responsibility, and the quest for

meaning. To make these themes comprehensible and alive, they are introduced in non-traditional ways. We put participants in front of a metaphorical mirror to make them realize that there is more to organizational life that meets the eye, and that their current way of doing things may no longer be effective.

To have them look into this mirror is not always easy. They may not like what they see, nor take the information lying down. While they acknowledge that something is not working, many are convinced that they are doing the right things, or that nothing better or different can be done. But while in business the client is always right, in the case of leadership development programs the client is often wrong—because the client doesn't want to see. We have to make participants understand that whatever has worked in the past may no longer be an adequate response to the leadership challenges of the present and the future. This is no easy task. As the philosopher Seneca once said, "The mind is slow in unlearning what it has been long in learning."

The clinical paradigm

To deal with the challenge of helping experienced and (seemingly) successful but somewhat 'stuck' leaders, our interventions and program design are based on the clinical paradigm (Kets de Vries, 2006a, 2006b, 2011). The latter derives from the following premises:

- *Rationality is an illusion*

Irrationality is grounded in rationality. "Irrational" behavior is a common pattern in our lives, although in fact there will always be a "rationale", or meaning to it. Nothing we do is random. Elements of psychic determinism are a fact of life. To understand this rationale will be critical in making sense of our own and other people's inner theater—the core themes that affect personality and leadership style.

- *What you see isn't necessarily what you get*

Much of what happens to us is beyond our conscious awareness. Most of our behavior tends to be unconscious. To gain a better understanding of unconscious patterns we need to explore our own and other people's inner desires, wishes and fantasies; we need to pay attention to the repetitive themes and patterns in our lives, and the lives of others.

- *The past is the lens through which we can understand the present and shape the future*

All of us are products of our past. Like it or not, there's a continuity between past and present. We are inclined to view the present through the microscope of past experiences. As the saying goes, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." Our personality is formed by the developmental outcome of our early environment, modified by our genetic endowment. To make sense of our behavior we must explore our interpersonal "history," including our original attachment relationships.

- *The significance of transference and counter-transference relationships*

Because of the heavy imprinting that takes place in the early stages of life, we tend to adopt certain behavior patterns. To make sense of what makes us behave the way we do, we need to explore our interpersonal relationships. Adaptive and non-adaptive aspects of our operational mode will be affected by how our original attachments have evolved—the relationships with our first caregivers. Just as there are repetitive themes in our own past, such themes will be activated in the relationships we have with the people we deal with in the present. To understand our and others' behavior we need to identify these recurrent themes and patterns. Problematic relationship patterns (which are technically described as transference and counter-transference reactions) provide a great opportunity to explore and work through difficult issues in the here-and-now. To explore the relationships between past and present can be illuminating as it enables us to be liberated from stereotypical, ingrained behavior.

- *Nothing is more central to who we are than the way we express and regulate our emotions*.

Intellectual insight is not the same as emotional insight, which touches us at a much deeper level. Emotions play a vital role in shaping who we are and what we do. In understanding ourselves and other people, we need to heed our emotions first and to explore the full range of emotions experienced. Emotions determine many of our actions and emotional intelligence plays a vital role in who we are and what we do.

- *We all have blind spots*

There are many things we don't want to know about ourselves. We all have our shadow side. We use our defensive mechanisms and resistances to avoid aspects of experience that are problematic. Many people derail due to blind spots in their personality. But exploring this avoidance of distressing thoughts and feelings provides another snapshot of our own

personality and that of others. We need to realize that this resistance comes to the fore due to conflicts within ourselves, and to accept that inner dissonance is part of the human condition. We also need to recognize that most psychological difficulties were, at one point in time, adaptive solutions to the problems of existence.

- *Motivational need systems determine our personality.*

These motivational need systems that represent the interface between nature and nurture create the tightly interlocked triangle of our mental life (the three points being cognition, affect, and behavior). There are five basic motivational need systems. Three of these impact the workplace only indirectly. The first encompasses a person's physiological requirements, such as food, drink, elimination of waste, sleep, and breathing; the second encompasses a person's need for sensual enjoyment and (later) sexual excitement; the third encompasses a person's need to respond aversively to certain situations through antagonism and withdrawal. Two systems impact the workplace directly and powerfully: the need for attachment/affiliation and the need for exploration/assertion. Humankind's essential humanity lies in its need for attachment/affiliation—in seeking relationships with other people, in striving to be part of something larger. The *need for attachment* drives the process of engagement with another human being; it is the universal experience of wanting to be close to another, to have the pleasure of sharing and affirmation. When this need for intimate engagement is extrapolated to groups, the desire for intimacy can be described as a *need for affiliation*. Both attachment and affiliation serve an emotional balancing role by confirming the individual's self-worth and contributing to his or her sense of self-esteem. The other motivational need system that is crucial for the workplace—the need for exploration/assertion—involves the ability to play, think, learn and work. Like the need for attachment/affiliation, these needs begin early in life. Playful exploration and manipulation of the environment in response to exploratory-assertive motivation produces a sense of effectiveness, competency, autonomy, initiative, and industry.

By applying the clinical paradigm we aim to help executives in our programs to revisit past experiences and expand their freedom of choice to explore new challenges in life, and to become more aware of their choices in the here-and-now. It is essential for healthy functioning that we do not remain strangers to ourselves. We need to free ourselves from the bonds of past experience to be able to explore new challenges in life. The clinical paradigm offers participants in a transformational program a lens through which they can explore the

script of their behavior—the "play" that can be found in their inner theater (McDougal, 1985). The key actors on the stage are the people and relationships that have played an important role in the executive's past, and that, through unconscious associations, continue to influence the person's emotions, behavior and style, and, through the latter, even the type of organizational culture they perpetrate (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984). We believe that with the help of the clinical paradigm, executives, if they really want to, can achieve a transformational change, they can take the next step in their development as leaders, overcome the internal barriers to effectiveness and happiness, and construct more productive relationships with key constituencies in their organizations.

Bringing this paradigm into our leadership education efforts means that we as educators have to create, on the one hand, a hunger for psychological inquisitiveness among participants, and on the other, foster courage and trust to engage participants as both the subject and object of research and investigation. We have noticed, however, that the executives who enter our programs are themselves often initiators of change or change agents in their organizations, i.e., they are trying to *change others.* Our challenge is to help them *change themselves*, so that they eventually become more effective in helping others change (Korotov & Kets de Vries, 2010).

The "life" case study

To set the process of transformation in motion, from the start of the program we encourage participants to use their own work and life as major sources of analysis and learning. For these often somewhat narcissistic executives this is an attractive proposition. Although we do use case studies and stories about other people (the standard set of activities in leadership education), the main focus of our work is the life case study approach. Nothing has a more powerful effect than giving our participants the opportunity to talk about themselves, their hopes, fears, and the challenges they have to deal with.

In line with the tenets of the clinical paradigm, we create experiences that help participants discover the power of the unconscious, their shadow side, the irrational aspects of organizational life, the interlocking system of cognitions, emotions and behaviors, and last but certainly not least, the role of the past in affecting today's behavior. This observation becomes an important issue in our transformational work: time and time again we go to great lengths to

show participants that what was once an appropriate response at one point in their life's journey may be inappropriate in their present situation.

Pre-seminar mental work

We believe that for the kind of audience we have in mind—executives looking for transformational opportunities—the learning process needs to start before they even set foot in our classrooms. An important part of the learning process for us and for participants is the application process and personal interviews with the candidates. Before they are accepted on the program, we ask them to engage in reflective essay writing. In addition, we interview them in person or over the phone. Doing so helps us to learn more about the participants and gives us the opportunity to assess the fit between the individual and the program. The main idea is to give them a sense of the type of educational and psychological work they will be expected to engage in once admitted. These initial activities serve to set their expectations, increase their curiosity, and start the learning process—or so participants have reported at a later stage in the learning cycle. Thus, when they first come to the classroom, the program has already been underway for quite some time (Korotov, 2005, 2006).

We like to reiterate (as the opening parable shows) our belief in multi-modular designs for executive education, or leadership development via longer programs with certification, rather than in short-term, one-off events. The multi-modular design allows participants to take some of their learning points from the classroom back to real life, practice what they have learned, obtain feedback, and then bring these experiences back into the safety of the classroom for further reflection and analysis. The multi-modular format is also more conducive to the evaluation of the changes that take place within the individual. By reporting to the whole class, within small working groups, to the coaches, or to the faculty, we are better able to evaluate the progress made, as seen by themselves, fellow participants, and by the program staff. We have learned from experience that change is unlikely to occur after a single event.

The feedback process

Effective leadership development programs start with feedback. To see ourselves as others see us is a great driver of change. This is the reason that multi-modular programs are so much more effective; longer term programs allow for the use of reflective methods—instruments designed to help executives see where they stand, and how they are viewed by others. We offer participants a number of 360-degree assessments. The repertoire of tools we work with

includes: The Global Executive Leadership Inventory (GELI), The Personality Audit (PA), The Leadership Archetype Questionnaire (LAQ), the Internal Theatre Inventory (ITI), and The Organizational Culture Audit (OCA) developed at the INSEAD Global Leadership Center (Kets de Vries, Vrignaud, & Florent-Treacy, 2004; Kets de Vries, 2005; Kets de Vries, Vrignaud, Korotov, & Florent-Treacy, 2006).

As a caveat, we should add that before admission many participants have been exposed (perhaps even overexposed) to various 360-degree assessments as part of an organizational educational effort implemented by HR or related departments. That's fine, but what concerns us is that an increasing number of companies have adopted multi-party assessment techniques without taking the debriefing process seriously—with considerable negative consequences. To avoid falling into the trap of using these instruments in a ritualistic manner, we pay special attention to how these instruments are introduced, and how they are linked to the overall objectives of the program. We also go to great lengths to present participants with the best possible data (which, in our opinion, should include rich verbal commentary rather than be limited to numerical answers) from their various respondents (Korotov, 2008a; Korotov, 2010b).

Processing the feedback from one or more of the named instruments involves an effort by the faculty and the participating leadership coaches to help executives make sense of the reported findings. To thoroughly deconstruct the material we subject he participants to individual and clinical group coaching interventions (Kets de Vries, 2011). We have found that the most effective form of debriefing is the group coaching method which allows the members of a group to practice peer coaching. It is designed in such a way that each participant of the group (usually five to six people) will have a stake in the action plans of all the other members (Kets de Vries, Korotov, & Florent-Treacy, 2007; Kets de Vries, Guillen-Ramo, Korotov, & Florent-Treacy, 2010; Korotov, 2010a).

In our leadership developmental work on feedback tools and the debriefing process we also stress that participants should go back to their respondents and debrief their feedback with them (especially with their superior). By encouraging participants to respond to the feedback in such a way we hope to cement their commitment to change even further. To enlist others in helping them set the change process in motion is essential, particular if these people are encountered on a regular basis.

One of the outcomes of the above-mentioned coaching intervention is the formulation of an action plan in which participants distill two or three areas in which they would like to make a change. We encourage the participants to share their action plan with a peer coach—another program participant whose task is to stay in touch with the coachee between the program modules and/or after the program. The peer coach plays the role of a monitor, sounding board, and sparring partner. Peer coaches will remind the executive about the commitments he or she has made during the program (Kets de Vries, 2006a; Korotov, 2008b). The coaching, action planning, and subsequent follow-up with a peer coach ensure that participants continue the learning process and do not fall back into previous behavior patterns. Interpersonal learning, support, self-revelation, and insight, play a critical role to create the desired transformational experiences. Given the multi-modular nature of our programs, there will be ample opportunities for participants to practice new behaviors in their daily life, and then come back to the program and report to the group, the peer coach, and to the faculty their experiences in a context of mutual reflection. Thus a virtuous cycle of action and reflection is created and practiced.

The narrative

As mentioned, in our programs the life case study takes a central position. All participants are invited to engage in "story telling." One after the other, participants take the so-called "hot seat"—volunteering to tell their stories to the rest of the class, engage the class in a free-flowing attention and association mood, and then listen to the fantasies, feelings, associations, metaphors, and resonance reactions from the audience. The idea is to provide each participant with the opportunity to use narrative as a learning tool (Spence, 1982; McAdams, 1993; Rennie, 1994; McLeod, 1997). Not only can the telling of one's own story provide much insight and be cathartic, listening to other people's stories can enable vicarious learning, using projection, transference, and identification as tools for better understanding themselves (Balint, 1957; Balint, Ornstein, & Balint, 1972; Etchegoyen, 1991; Kets de Vries, 2007).

Examples of transformational programs

In Appendix 1 we describe "The Challenge of Leadership," an INSEAD Global Leadership Center program that is based on clinical/ systemic paradigm principles and is positioned as a transformational opportunity for senior executives. This program (which has a history of over 20 years) has been (semi-jokingly) referred to by the participants and faculty as the "CEO

recycling seminar." Many aspects of its structure, process and content have been transferred to other leadership transformational programs aimed at helping executives to have a significant emotional experience. (For an example of how the principles and methods developed through "The Challenge of Leadership Program" have been transferred to the leadership development component of an Executive MBA program at the European School of Management and Technology, see Appendix 2.)

Program Effectiveness

A question that frequently comes up in discussion about transformational programs is how to assess whether a leadership development program has had a significant effect on the participants. Like all designers of leadership programs, we face methodological challenges in so doing (Yorks, Beechler, & Ciproen, 2007). If we had the luxury of a laboratory setting, we could add a control group of almost identical executives who are facing similar types of issues, but who are not attending this specific transformational program. Moreover, for reasons of consistency, we should use the same instruments for whatever measures of leadership we want to use, have the same observers, and take account of all possible biases that may interfere with such a process. Also, from a methodological point of view we would need to isolate the effects of the program from all other possible influencing factors.

While such a design sounds good in theory, to make it happen in practice is another matter altogether. Researchers should not forget that people may (and do) learn, change, and grow outside business schools and without specific leadership interventions. Creating controlled conditions is made more complicated by the fact that we need to be able to take longitudinal measures in order to see whether programs truly have a long-term effect. Such a research design is far from realistic or possible when it comes to *real* leaders in *real* organizations, due to natural design constraints. To constitute a control group to measure personal transformation among a group of senior executives with the types of the issues worked on can be a real nightmare.

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Hence, to make some kind of assessment of change, we have chosen an approach that is both pragmatic in design and educational for the participants: an ongoing evaluation of personal progress made over the course of the program (as opposed to an end-of-program evaluation), in combination with continuous feedback from fellow participants, faculty and coaches. It is not a simple process of input-transformation-output that we are dealing with, but rather an

iterative process whereby the participants not only begin to view the world they work in, and themselves, differently, they also internalize ways of continuing this developmental journey (Korotov, 2005, 2006; Kets de Vries, Korotov, & Florent-Treacy, 2007; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Florent-Treacy, 2009). In other words, the evaluation of the progress made is part of the transformation process that participants go through as part of their program work.

In response to the need to evaluate the longer-term effectiveness of our programs, we conducted an exploratory study with graduates of the 2005 Challenge of Leadership Program at INSEAD (Kets de Vries, Hellwig, Guillen-Ramo, Florent-Treacy, & Korotov, 2009), which was designed to see whether participants had changed, and whether these changes could be viewed as an outcome of the program. About half of the class graduates (N = 11) agreed to participate in our research. While we realize that the sample was very small, given the senior positions of the participants, we considered it a success that so many agreed to participate. The study combined quantitative data from the 360-degree feedback taken and retaken by the program graduates and qualitative data from their semi-structured post-program interviews.

Prior to the retake of the Global Executive Leadership Inventory by the graduates of 2005, the two faculty members that run the program were asked to make predictions about the magnitude of transformation concerning each of these executives. They based their predictions on the notes taken at the admittance interview, the results of the various questionnaires, and the interface with the participants during the program. The participants that volunteered were interviewed before they received the results of their retake of the 360-degree feedback. The analysis of the interview transcripts found the following repeated regularities in the participant's accounts of what had actually changed in them as a result of the program:

- An increase in self-awareness due to in-depth self-analysis, contributing to the discovery of the forces hindering their personal development; obtaining a clearer understanding of what made them tick, and a clearer view of their desires and goals in their career and life in general.
- A change in behavior patterns, contributing to better listening skills, team-building skills, becoming better at performance management, giving feedback, and other people-oriented behaviors.

When asked what contributed to these changes in behavior and leadership style, the participants attributed the changes to the following elements of the program:

- Group coaching appeared to be a major vehicle to increase self-awareness and building commitment among the members of the group to execute their self-development goals;
- Action plans helped provide focus on what needed to be done; they served as a commitment-enhancement mechanism;
- Experimentation with new behaviors between the modules was seen as an important way to continue learn and to use feedback for self-improvement;
- Staying in contact with the learning community (made up of the members of the program) was viewed as a foundation for current and possible future personal transformations.

These more structured findings validated what we had observed in the leadership development programs. Clearly, the multi-modular format was helpful in monitoring change among the participants and following their development through the program. Important when monitoring their progress was the 'hot seat' experience and the content of the reflection papers. These papers, written up after each module, served as a proxy for the developmental efforts taking place (Florent-Treacy, 2009). Other progress measures included regular conference calls and post-program interviews with the participants (Korotov, 2005, 2006), as well as discussions with the coaches and faculty as part of the program analysis and feedback work (as described in Appendix 2).

The change trajectory

Obviously, change doesn't happen merely in the classroom. Much of the transformation work is done outside. Given the immersion that takes place inside and outside our programs, they nurture elements of what have been called 'therapeutic communities'—miniature societies whereby fellow participants, coaches and faculty all fulfill the role of helping each participant change (DeLeon, 2001). In such a community, confronted by others about possible dysfunctional behavior patterns, it is hard for participants to resist the need for change. Pushed by others, each participant begins to see a connection between what needs to be stopped or started, and what would be a desirable future state. Through this process they are able to identify possible ways of starting a process of change. They learn to watch out for

barriers to change and, no less importantly, identify who needs to be involved in their transformational efforts (boss, subordinates, colleagues, professional community, family members, therapist, coach, etc.). Given the design of the program, parallels with making (then breaking) New Year's resolutions cannot be drawn. Encouraged by their colleagues, group coaches and faculty, the process of change becomes a reality. During the leadership development program they have acquired a number of 'tools' to monitor their progress and get feedback and support along the way. And what further accelerates the process is that they have internalized a way of looking at things—they have acquired a new lens—that will be helpful for processing current and future changes. For example, they will be able to use the self as a reflective tool, they will have fostered their emotional intelligence, and they will have become insightful as 'psychological detective'.

During these transformational journeys a number of variables come into play:

- Crystallization of the need for change: Seeing the connection between the need for change and the desirable 'after-change' state for the individual.
- Ability to make a connection between the past and the present and future states: Identifying entrenched behaviors, based on past experiences that require change.
- Accepting personal responsibility for the current status and the expected outcome of the change effort: Developing self-efficacy in relationship to the change effort.
- Drawing up an action plan that includes a timeline, and various forms of behavioral experimentations outside and inside the classroom.
- Ability to reflect on their own experimentation: Reaching out for feedback about their progress, and engaging with critical social support mechanisms for making experiments for change long-lasting.
- Learning how to engage other people in the personal change process: For example, working with a coach, engaging in peer coaching activities, using feedback productively.
- Accepting that personal change is not be a one-off event but rather a continuously evolving process.

The fact that our programs are not band-aids gives us great satisfaction. To help people develop for the better touches the altruistic motive inside us. To continue helping them on their life journey we make an effort to stay in touch with our former participants – and alumni

events also help in monitoring their progress. Personal development doesn't end with the termination of the program.

We acknowledge that some participants are not always 100 percent successful in whatever change efforts they undertake. We accept that our programs can have side effects. As a result of the intense, personal journey the participants undertake, they may come to the realization that there is some kind of mismatch between the way they see themselves and the expectations of the organizations they work for. Such cognitive dissonance may lead to their departure.

Not for the faint of heart

Designing, marketing and delivering transformational leadership programs is not for the faint-hearted. Creating transformational programs founded on the clinical paradigm requires knowledge, skills and attitudes that are not typically found in a traditional business school academic. Faculty members wishing to help individuals change need to be well-versed in the principles of human functioning, group dynamics, short-term dynamic psychotherapy, techniques such as motivational interviewing and paradoxical intervention, and other methodologies (Kets de Vries, 2011). They also need a deep understanding of what management is all about.

In such programs, educators are seen not just as repositories of knowledge about particular subjects but rather as sparring partners, guides, confidants, and even transferential "father/ mother-figures"—a role that is not for everyone (Korotov, 2005, 2006; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007). Faculty will inevitably spend an enormous amount of emotional energy engaging with participants and challenging them, while simultaneously showing empathy and care. The time commitment required from faculty is much greater than for more traditional programs. Undoubtedly, this 'Socratic' role goes far beyond the traditional demands made of faculty involved in executive education.

Furthermore, and ideally, faculty and program directors involved in clinically-oriented leadership development programs should themselves undertake a process of personal self-exploration, experimentation and change before they try to help others. They may need regular supervision to be able to recognize irrational behaviors in themselves that may lead to negative reactions from the people around them. (Levinson, 2007).

But the clinical approach to leadership development can generate remarkable progress in helping program participants bring the learning from the classroom to their organizations, their careers and their personal lives. Obviously, incorporating such an approach into program design is quite different from, say, selecting a case study or a set of power point slides. The rewards, however, of working in a clinically-oriented program can be very high, particularly when program participants show signs of liberation, enthusiasm, and self-efficacy at the end of such a program, and especially when participants get in touch with faculty members months or years after the program.

Running such programs is a tough experience that requires the faculty to constantly look at themselves, their own inner scripts, and they way they react to participants and their challenges. They may even find the program transformational in the sense that they may realize they need to transform something in themselves in order to help others in their transformational efforts. To quote Plato, “We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark. The real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light.”

Appendix 1

The Challenge of Leadership at INSEAD – An Example of a Transformational Leadership Program

Once a year the INSEAD Global Leadership Center runs *The Challenge of Leadership*, an open-enrollment leadership development program that is aimed at the creation of reflective leaders who are capable of reinventing themselves and their organizations. About twenty very senior executives are selected to participate from a large number of applicants from all over the world. The underlying guiding motivation for the applications from apparently successful executives is often seemingly insoluble dilemmas. At times it is centered around negative feelings about the self, or on perceptions of the world and others that make fulfillment of personal aspirations seem impossible. Usually, however, this central challenge is not clearly articulated in the application or even in the applicant's mind when he or she applies to the program.

The program consists of three 5-day workshops held at two months intervals, plus a final 4-day module six months later. The program helps participants learn more about themselves during each on-site week. It is also expected that on the basis of that knowledge, participants will agree on a 'contract' of personal transformation that determines what they should work on at work and at home during their time away from the workshop. Because small group leadership coaching and subsequent peer coaching is part of the design of the program, 'homework' assignments are monitored among the participants. Although the basic material of the workshop is the life case study of each participant, the first week also contains a number of interactive sessions on high-performance organizations, organizational culture, the impact of mergers and acquisitions, effective and dysfunctional leadership, the career life-cycle, cross-cultural management, and organizational stress.

With that foundation, participants can then move on to the workshop's central model of psychological activity and organization: the personal case history (Spence, 1982; McAdams, 1993; Rennie, 1994; McLeod, 1997). Each participant in the workshop takes a turn to sit in the 'hot seat' once during the program, offering his or her case for reflection and analysis by the group and self. This experience constitutes a positive step toward self-discovery in that experience and actions become sequentially organized as a person tells his or her story. It also serves an educational purpose for the other group members, who gain an additional understanding of their own opportunities and challenges as they hear about the parallel issues

or problems of others. They realize that most issues are universal; they are not alone in their confusion. During each case presentation the other participants are asked to listen carefully with a 'free-flowing attention span,' and not to interrupt. When a presenter is finished, clarifying questions can be asked for the purpose of understanding the narrative better. Once the narrative has been clarified, it is the turn of the presenter to be silent and listen to the associations, interpretations, and recommendations of the other members of the group. A considerable amount of time is devoted to the associations (fantasies, feelings, and thoughts) that the presentation arouses in its listeners. Participants are taught about the use of transference and counter-transference observations as an essential tool to understand the salient themes in the presenter's life (Balint, 1957; Balint, Ornstein, & Balint, 1972; Etchegoyen, 1991; Kets de Vries, 2007). A special effort is made to prevent quick recommendations and premature closure. Once the feedback from the class is over, the presenter is given the last word, commenting on the various observations and airing any additional thoughts. The executive in the 'hot seat' concludes by presenting a proposed 'contract for change,' outlining the things that he or she will work on in the interim period.

During the second workshop some time is devoted to the processing of a number of the feedback instruments mentioned in this Chapter. The coaching sessions use this information as the basis for a more refined action plan in the time period between the second and third modules of the course. The main focus of the third workshop is the consolidation of acquired insights and the internalization of change. The 'hot-seat' presentations continue, and become increasingly multilayered and rich as the workshop progresses. The last workshop session, held at a six month interval, furthers the internalization process and allows for some kind of a conclusion with regard to the effectiveness of the transformation effort.

In addition to the plenary sessions, participants spend a lot of time in small groups in and outside the class. The interactions within these groups helps to consolidate newly acquired attitudes and behavior patterns. Whether in subgroups or in the plenary, the twenty participants form an intense learning community—an identity laboratory (Korotov, 2005). Whenever a group member backslides into a behavior pattern that he or she is trying to unlearn, the other participants offer constructive feedback. By the third week, many participants say that they feel they know each other better than members of their own family. With that increasing intimacy, the interchange in the plenary sessions becomes extremely free-flowing. The group, exhibiting considerably more emotional intelligence with each new

session, turns into a self-analyzing community, so that much less intervention is needed by faculty. The follow-up session after six months is there to see how well the action plans have been dealt with. In many instances, follow-up sessions (or smaller ones), at participants' initiative, are held year after year—offering participants and faculty alike an opportunity to assess the degree to which certain new behavior patterns have become truly internalized.

Being a fly on the wall

The start-of-program get-together for drinks has the artificial quality common to similar occasions. There is the usual nervous laughter, the noise of glasses. People mill around, making an effort to meet others, trying to initiate conversation. Quite a few of the people present seem ill at ease. There is a certain charge in the air. What to talk about? How to relate to each other? The topics range from recent political events, to travel, to cross-cultural anecdotes. Is this just another random encounter of a group of executives? Not really. In spite of appearances, the cocktail party is carefully choreographed. There is a purpose behind the ritual. It is an awkward but necessary step to get the leadership workshop underway.

Participants have come here from all over the globe. Now, they are trying to feel their way around. Specialists in group behavior would say that this way of acting is part of the 'being polite' group phase. The members of the group struggle with questions of inclusion and exclusion. The participants are trying to find out about the other members. Who has been selected into the program? What are the other participants like? What countries do they come from? Their behavior demonstrates excitement mixed with a certain degree of anxiety. A spectator from Mars, however, would be amused to see this gathering where so many captains of industry look like fish out of water. For once, they aren't in control. For once, they don't really know what to expect. For once, they aren't masters of the universe; other people seem to be pulling the strings. There is nobody to push around. Instead, they are anxiously putting out feelers. They introduce themselves to each other. They engage in small talk. Some feel awkward and don't quite know how to position themselves. Consequently, some of them talk too much, their way of coping with an uncomfortable situation. Others try to numb their anxiety by drinking too much. At a subliminal level, however, they are aware that, in contrast to the role they play in the office, it will be harder keep their mask on. They are caught up in a totally unknown situation with its specific fantasies and defensive reactions. Many thoughts race through their mind: Why didn't I stay at the office? Why did I leave familiar ground?

There must be a better way to spend my time. What am I going to get out of all this? Isn't this all a waste of time? What am I doing here? What am I doing to myself?

Although, over the years, word-of-mouth has been the most powerful driver for applications to the program, for a number of executives the process started when their VP human resources or another colleague gave them the brochure about the program. It sounded quite interesting. The design aroused their curiosity and stimulated their fantasy. Some saw the workshop as an opportunity to do something different—to take a break from the routine of office life and do something for themselves. It looked as though the program might provide answers to some of the questions they had been asking themselves. Lately, life had lost much of its novelty. Work didn't feel the same any more. The original sense of excitement was gone and work had become too much of a routine. They were stuck in a rut and were doing nothing new. What had happened to their original sense of discovery? Their creativity? When was the last time they experienced that feeling of total involvement? They were no longer losing themselves in their activities. Instead, all they seemed to be doing was more of the same. The original rush of having reached the top of the pyramid had faded away.

Completing the complex admission form was a total drag. The form asked too many personal questions and it was a real pain having to respond to them all. Such forms were OK for MBA students, but at their level? Some of the questions still puzzled them—they weren't the sort of questions they usually got from journalists or investment analysts. Who wants to write about the things they aren't good at? How do you respond when asked about the risky things you've done in your life? Whatever irritation they had, the type of questions asked on the admissions form indicated that this was not going to be a traditional executive program. But then, they didn't really want another traditional executive program. They had tried them all—been there, done that.

Then there was the telephone interview. Out of the blue, there was this person—apparently one of the seminar leaders—at the other end of the line asking bizarre questions. Why should he give you a place in the program? What would you contribute? What complaints does your spouse make about you? What kinds of thing make you angry? Why does he want to know about your wild fantasies? What has all this got to do with becoming more effective as a leader? Strangely enough, when asked—at the end of the interview—if they still wanted a

place in the program, they had all said yes. Of course, without their realizing it, the workshop had already begun.

A short introduction followed the first get-together, describing the daily workshop schedule, followed by a tour of the campus, and dinner. That took care of the initial formalities. There was a last chance for polite dinner conversation, but by now they knew that was the calm before the storm.

The next day the seminar started in earnest. At the opening session anxiety seemed high; people appeared apprehensive, and looked expectantly at the workshop leader, who gave a short lecture on emotional intelligence, effective and dysfunctional leadership, and irrational behavior in organizations. Subsequently, he reiterated the basic premise of the workshop—the 'life' case study. Case presentations would be the main learning tool. Each life case study would present a unique situation that would contribute to the learning process. He explained that there could be 'no interpretation without association': participants would get as much out of the workshop as they put into it. The workshop leader made it clear that he had spoken to all participants, that all had accepted the ground rules to work on a number of significant problems—professional or private—that needed resolution.

From then on the workshop was on its way. How the various participants would handle the emerging anxiety would depend on their personality structure, their historic defense mechanisms, and the specific dynamics that evolved within the group. The immediate behavioral data that would emerge in the group would be used as data to explore conscious and unconscious material, and defensive operations. And with that, the first life case study began.

Appendix 2

Individual Leadership Development Itinerary in the ESMT EMBA Program: An Example of On-Going Process of Evaluation of Personal Transformational Efforts

The ESMT Executive MBA program includes a leadership development component called the Individual Leadership Development Itinerary (ILDI). This is a structured element of the EMBA curriculum spanning the overall 19-month course. The idea behind that module is to help participants identify areas of personal change that they would like to work on during the program, provide them with the supporting mechanisms for such a transformation, and encourage active exchange with fellow participants. The ILDI is introduced to the participants during the very first module of the program. Participants get acquainted with the approach, learn about the 360-degree process and the instruments used for it (e.g. The Global Executive Leadership Inventory mentioned above), and get an initial introduction to the topics of personal development. There is also a day of team-building spent in the forest. In one of the subsequent modules, participants get the results of their 360-degree feedback and participate in a full day of small group coaching. An action plan is developed at the end of the group coaching process, and participants form peer-coaching dyads. Peer coaches get familiarized with the action plans of their colleagues and agree on a periodic follow-up.

In the modules that follow, the program dedicates a special session to the peer-coaching meetings (Korotov, 2008b). During those meetings participants discuss with their peer coach the progress towards the goal established, barriers and difficulties encountered and possible alterations in their course of action. Peer coaches support one another and offer a sounding board for testing ideas and assumptions. There is a structural element in the process: a peer coaching written summary of the progress made by their peer coachee. Each participant is expected to summarize the main points of the discussion with their fellow participant and provide the latter with a copy of it. Such a document helps the participants see how their progress is viewed by a colleague, and enhances responsibility for their own success. It also helps the participants acting as peer coaches pay attention to the content of their peer coaching discussions and feel responsibility for helping the coachee in his or her progress.

Approximately one year after the first 360-degree assessment, the participants go through another round of the Global Executive Leadership Inventory and meet again for one day with the same coaching group, the discussion being facilitated by the same professional coach who did it twelve months earlier. This session is dedicated to the evaluation of the progress made,

discussion of the necessary changes, given the results of the experimentation or the current reality of the participants, and of the learning outcomes of the process of personal transformation.

The ILDI activities also include skills-building workshops on negotiations, leadership styles, management of necessary evils, dealing with resistance to change, etc. The ILDI curriculum is coordinated with a number of required courses such as Organizational Behavior, Managing People, and Consulting for Change, as well as various electives. The latter include a number of reflective activities that often end up being related to the personal change agenda of the participants. For example, as part of the post-course assignment in the Managing People course, participants have to complete a 'Personal Career Workout for Executives' (Korotov, 2009)—a structured exercise involving reflection on one's career and planned career progression, as well as discussions with superiors, colleagues, subordinates, and family members about the meaning of career success, current performance, and expected changes, if the individual want to progress further. Participants receive written commentaries from the faculty, and are offered an opportunity of an individual consultation that brings together their personal change efforts and the career issues.

About two months before the end of the program, participants take part in an international field seminar (for example, in Russia, Turkey, Brazil, Argentina, etc.) where special attention is paid to the leadership styles and practices in the visited country. In addition, during the field seminar (despite a very heavy schedule), the participants are provided with one more coaching opportunity—this time individual—with a leadership faculty member trained in the clinical-paradigm oriented coaching methodology (Kets de Vries, Guillen-Ramo, Korotov, & Florent-Treacy, 2010) to discuss the results of their learning during the program and planned post-graduation development work.

The last two sessions of the EMBA program are dedicated to the issues of continuous growth and development for leaders. These sessions are open not only to the participants, but also their family members who get engaged in a discussion of the costs of leading and learning to lead.

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