

WHITE PAPER



# Putting Training To Work

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## INTRODUCTION

The Western Equipment Dealers Association (WEDA) completed a Workforce Study in December 2020, which covered a myriad of workforce issues. Of particular importance to the Dealer Institute (DI) is the response showing that leadership training is needed with a focus on implementation. This white paper, *Putting Training to Work*, is in response to these results to address both the personal and corporate accountability to implement the leadership content.

The DI provides educational/consulting opportunities for every phase of dealership operations and leadership currently via three venues: onsite, public courses and virtual learning. Additionally, DI has two on-going research projects to benchmark employee engagement in our industry and to study the psychological motivators contributing to dealership loyalty. We want you to know that our vision, mission, and value proposition listed below are not just words — we live these words, and our goal is to be your trusted advisor.

- ***Our Vision:***
  - To be the trusted advisor and first choice for business strategy, leadership, and employee development in the equipment industry.
  
- ***Our Mission:***
  - To help our customers achieve operational excellence and long-term success.
  
- ***Our Value Proposition:***
  - Developing people to grow your business.

## **PUTTING LEADERSHIP TRAINING TO WORK**

We may or may not have had input into being born into this world (depending upon our religious beliefs), but we're here and the question each of us must face is, *what are we going to do with the resources that we've been given?* The prevailing thought is that none of us are born leaders and leadership is a learned skill set.

Thirty years ago, Ed Lawler, an author and management guru, pointed out that you can show twenty leaders the best practices, yet only one of them will put those best practices to work in their organization. Fast forward to today. Management gurus estimate that billions of dollars are wasted each year on training because the training is not put to work. What a shame!

Is it the training source's fault that the leadership didn't implement these best practices? Perhaps the training source didn't clearly help the leaders understand the success that can be achieved through implementing the new processes. But the leaders should not ignore their responsibility to both understand and use the content to improve the performance of their organization.

Larry asks participants in the leadership classes to point their finger at him. The point made is whenever we point our fingers at someone or something, there are three fingers pointing back at us to reveal the real root causes. First, each individual receiving training has the responsibility to do their best to put that training to work. Second, the dealership leadership must make it easy for that training to be put to work and offer a supportive and accountable workplace environment to maximize the return on the financial investment associated with the training event.

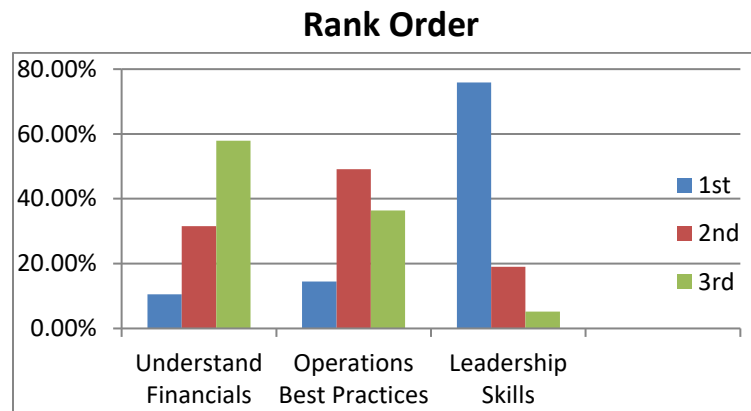
Let's understand the two broad categories of training — technical and interpersonal which embraces leadership. There is no doubt that technical training is the easier to implement of the two. Technical training usually embodies a set of operational processes that the dealership can decide to implement or not. These new processes can be implemented throughout the dealership that literally forces the employee to use them. For example, employees may be trained to use a new software program and eventually employees must comply. COVID forced DI to offer virtual learning classes which ultimately forced trainers to learn how to use Adobe Connect.

Leadership training presents an interesting set of challenges, i.e., leadership behaviors are more abstract, more difficult to measure and monitor their implementation and therefore challenges the accountability process. Consequently, forcing people to use the new leadership behaviors isn't going to just happen, but there is plenty the dealership can do to encourage the use of leadership behaviors. These are addressed in later sections of this paper.

## WEDA Workforce Development Survey

The results of the survey presented an interesting dilemma that will be evident as you read the following results and comments.

The participants were asked to rank order the need of their management team to understand financials, learn operations best practices or learn leadership skills. As illustrated in the following chart, 75.9% rated leadership development as the highest need for their entire management team.



The respondents provided additional results supporting the need to develop leaders.

- Only 46% were confident they had the necessary bench strength to advance staff to mid-level or senior positions.
- 55.6% reported not doing enough to develop people to step into mid-level or senior positions and 19% were not sure.

In spite of the fact these data strongly point out the need for leadership development, a major stumbling block is implementation of that training as expressed in the following participant comments:

- Our concern is how effective the training is and whether our managers are implementing what they have learned. Implementation is likely the bigger concern.
- Owners and managers need better tools and procedures for training employees and future managers.
- Accountability is a big challenge.
- Too many old managers stuck in the old way of doing business.

Several stories could be told about dealerships spending several thousands of dollars completing leadership training (including the staff time) with absolutely no follow-up. The general consensuses of these stories are:

1. *We hope that several employees gained “something” from the training event, but we simply didn’t devote the time to follow-up.*
2. *It’s difficult to continue leadership development during the busy times.*

In an effort to facilitate implementation, the Dealer Institute even asks the participants to complete a Personal Improvement Plan (PIP) listing what the participant needs to implement subsequent to attending the class. Depending upon the length of the class, each participant will list 10+ strategies to improve their leadership effectiveness. You will read about this process on pages six through nine.

The dichotomy of expressing a need for leadership training but not following-up to ensure the training is used brings us to this white paper. There are two sets of responsibilities to put the training to work. First is the participant’s responsibility. Larry encourages class participants to take control of their destiny rather than depending upon the dealership to provide all of the learning opportunities. There are multiple learning events available to employees even during a complete absence of opportunities provided by the dealership. Second, is the dealership’s responsibility to implement a corporate accountability process. Remember training is like any other tool in your toolbox; you’ve got to pick up your responsibility to put it to work.

### **Continuing the Participant’s Learning Curve**

First and foremost, employees need to consider working at the dealership as a university to learn the technical and interpersonal skills to maximize their success. Yes, every day is an opportunity to practice both sets of skills. Geoff Calvin states in his book, ***Talent is Overrated***, that 10,000 hours of focused practice are required to become a world-class performer. World-class performers complete daily focused practice sessions for a period of 4–6 hours. Using the 2,080 hour work year as our reference point, employees can become world-class performers in five years! But, employees don’t spend every hour of every day practicing to become a world-class leader so it may take a little longer. We encourage you to stay persistent because the challenge is to be better today than you were yesterday.

Another critical point is the employee who is committed to maximize their success should do so independently of the dealership. The sad fact is many dealerships do not provide their employees the opportunity to participate in educational opportunities to learn leadership skills. The sink or swim theory of learning seems to be the rule. Thus, employees should embark upon their own leadership development journey. In reality, there is more reading material

available that can advance one’s learning curve than there is time to read it. Larry recommends that every aspiring leader subscribe to the Harvard Business Review. We’ve also included a list of recommended readings with this paper.

When an employee is given the opportunity to participate in a training opportunity he/she should enthusiastically express appreciation for the chance to continue their personal/professional development. The dealership is encouraging the employee to become too valuable to be lost. And, that is a good thing.

Another interesting point about continuing your personal/professional learning curve — it is permanent. You will always have what you’ve learned and no one can take it away!

**Employee’s Personal Accountability Model**

We’re offering the following assessment in an effort to aid both the employee participating in leadership development as well as the dealership to maximize the return on their investment. Both the participant and their immediate supervisor should view these characteristics as highly desirable for the journey to become an elite leader.

**Instructions:** Using the 7-point scale ranging from 1 (Not Characteristic) to 7 (Very Characteristic) provide a rating that is most characteristic of the person being considered for participation in the educational event.

1. Committed to maximize personal and professional potential to be an elite leader.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Willing to be comfortable being uncomfortable to constantly push the comfort zone.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Exhibit the self-discipline to proactively do what is necessary to excel, e.g., reading journals, books, etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Proactively be willing to accept new, challenging responsibilities in an effort to further self-development.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Eager to learn about their strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. Seek feedback from every source to improve personal and professional performance.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Exhibit personal accountability to monitor daily progress, e.g., <i>Did I do my best today to... ?</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Exercise focused practice to use every day for personal and professional improvement.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

WEDA trainers may have somewhat different methodologies for the participants to develop their PIP during the course of a class, so we're using Larry's PIP as the model for this white paper. See examples on pages twelve and thirteen.

Subsequent to participating in a class, the employee should immediately review the content taught in the course (and notes) and meet with their supervisor to begin this accountability process.

1. A PIP will contain at least 10 ideas and there is a need to focus on 1–3 of these proposed improvement strategies. These can be finalized during the discussion with their supervisor.
2. The employee needs to review their PIP and the selected behaviors with their direct reports. It's possible that direct reports could also offer input into the leadership behaviors that need improvement. Direct reports know their supervisor's strengths and weaknesses better than anyone in the dealership and the leader should take advantage of this knowledge.
3. Ask the direct reports to hold them accountable on a daily basis to use the selected behaviors.
4. The serious leader will create a daily routine, for example:
  - Review of their leadership vision and mission.
  - Think about delivering the 1–3 behaviors during the course of the day, thereby using every day as a focused practice session.
  - Begin the day thinking about something positive and expecting to have a great day.
  - Evaluate themselves at the end of the day, *Did I do my best today to ... ?*
5. Within the next month, review their self-assessed progress with their supervisor and direct reports. The leader striving to be elite will also ask their supervisor and direct reports to also participate in the measuring of progress to take advantage of the principle that we may see ourselves differently than others do. Actually, there is a phenomenon known as positive bias which states — the leader sees themselves as performing at a higher level than their actual performance. Interesting to note, that research shows that 90% of the managers rate themselves as being in the top 10% of leadership effectiveness. Now think about that — statistically that is not possible.
6. The leader striving to be elite will make the previous six steps an on-going routine for their personal/professional development.

The overriding point made during this discussion is encouraging the leader to proactively take control of their personal/leadership development and express their

enthusiasm for learning to both their supervisor and direct reports. Using this personal accountability model is providing an excellent positive experience of leading by example.

### **Immediate Supervisor Accountability**

The immediate supervisor's accountability begins when their direct report is scheduled to participate in a training event. That is, the supervisor should know the content of the course to effectively continue their direct report's learning curve.

The immediate supervisor's accountability is made easier when employees participating in a leadership training event complete the steps listed on pages six through eight. Doing so requires the immediate supervisor's time to work with their direct reports who attended the educational event and requires a commitment to spend that valuable limited resource developing talent. Assuming that the direct report doesn't initiate these steps — then their immediate supervisor needs to do so. Additionally, the immediate supervisor can initiate a few events that will further the implementation of the leadership content.

First, ask those attending the course to discuss the content and their personal development plan at the next staff meeting. Providing this summary ensures that the participant has again reviewed the content, their notes and personal development plan.

Second, teaching is the best way to learn. The employee may not jump up and down with excitement to teach but work with them to prepare a brief training on one of the subjects discussed. The 7-step change process is an excellent topic since most people don't know the energy systems inherent in the change process. You could schedule on-going training sessions at least quarterly.

Third, encourage reading articles and books and discuss the content in a staff meeting.

### **Corporate Accountability: Structure**

Larry has had several Presidents/CEOs ask about the best practice to ensure that the training is implemented upon returning to the dealership. The fix for this question is easy, but it needs *implementing!* Here's the fix.

1. Corporate leaders place training implementation (people analytics) on their staff meeting agenda on a scheduled basis, e.g., quarterly, in a manner similar to reviewing other performance metrics.
2. Down-line supervisors report the progress being made by their people up through the line of authority.
3. Corporate leaders provide down-line feedback that the progress was reviewed and offer sincere compliments/recognition for the progress.



Did we say this process has to occur on a regular scheduled basis like clockwork? All employees need to know the seriousness that is dedicated to implementing the content learned from the course.

### **Corporate Staff Knowledge**

Up-line supervisors need to know the content being taught in the course to effectively continue their direct report's learning curve. Whenever Larry teaches an onsite course, he encourages up-line supervisors to attend. Doing so sends a powerful message that the training event is important.

Public courses are more of a challenge. Larry is implementing an accountability procedure for this white paper to be sent to all Presidents/CEO's who send employees to a public course. Additionally, this accountability content becomes an integral part of every course that Larry teaches.

Our closing points are: (1) we want every dealership to obtain a return on their investment when their employees participate in a Dealer Institute class, and (2) the 2020 *WEDA Workforce Survey* results told DI there is a tremendous need to develop leaders and we want to be your training source of choice.

## SUGGESTED READING

Reading is the quickest, cheapest and easiest way to learn. I recommend all leaders to subscribe to the **Harvard Business Review**.

Angela Duckworth, **Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance**, 2016. Discussing the positive impact of perseverance and how passion contributes to resiliency.

Teresa Amabile & Steven Kramer. **The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work**, 2011. These authors show that celebrating small wins are more motivational than a BIG win. Of course, there are more opportunities to celebrate small wins!

David Brook, **The Road to Character**, 2016. Focuses on character attributes e.g., humility, integrity, etc.

Carol Dweck, **Mindset: The New Psychology of Success**, 2007. Great discussion contrasting the “fixed” vs. “growth” mindset. Her work is getting a lot of press today.

Christine Porath, **Managing Civility: A Manifesto for the Workplace**, 2016. The impact of incivility is often overlooked. This is a continuation of her work, **The Cost of Bad Behavior: How Incivility is Damaging Your Business and What to do About it**, 2009.

James Kouzes & Barry Posner, **The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations**, 2017. Anything you read by these authors is great.

Jack Zenger & Joseph Folkman, **The Extraordinary Leader: Turning Good Managers into Great Leaders**, 2009. An excellent read.

Jack Zenger, Joseph Folkman, and Scott Edinger, **The Inspiring Leader: Unlocking the Secrets of how Extraordinary Leaders Motivate**, 2009. Everything I’ve read by Zenger has been excellent.

Jocko Willink and Leif Babin, **Extreme Ownership**, 2015. A must read. The authors applied Navy Seal leadership principles to the business world. I didn’t get as much out of their second book, **The Dichotomy of Leadership**.

John Maxwell, **Leadershift**, 2019. This is an excellent read for new supervisors.

Paul Marciano, **Carrots and Sticks Don’t Work**, 2010. This author is a proponent of the intrinsic motivational variable.

Sydney Finkelstein, **Superbosses**, 2016. This author speaks to the importance of supervisors developing talent and provides excellent characteristics for such supervisors

## PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN SAMPLE OF TOPICS

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Use the following Likert Scale to quantify the progress we've achieved through implementing your personal improvement strategies.

1 = I've not done anything

2 = I've got started

3 = I'm making some progress

4 = I'm making considerable progress

5 = I'm proud of the progress made

Strategy	Progress
Self-Aware	1 2 3 4 5
Self-Discipline	1 2 3 4 5
Working Differently with Different People	1 2 3 4 5
Leadership Impact	1 2 3 4 5
Managing Change	1 2 3 4 5
Empowerment	1 2 3 4 5
Accountability	1 2 3 4 5
Feedback is a Gift	1 2 3 4 5
Open-Minded	1 2 3 4 5
Employee Engagement	1 2 3 4 5

## PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN SMART GOALS

S = Specific  
M = Measurable  
A = Achievable  
R = Realistic  
T = Timeline

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Use the following Likert Scale to quantify the progress we've achieved through implementing your personal improvement strategies.

- |                            |                                      |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 = I've not done anything | 3 = I'm making some progress         |
| 2 = I've got started       | 4 = I'm making considerable progress |
|                            | 5 = I'm proud of the progress made   |

Strategy	Progress
<b>Keep People Informed</b>	1 2 3 4 5
Starting _____ ensure that colleagues have 100% of the needed information. They will quantify my commitment ____ (date).	
<b>Listening</b>	1 2 3 4 5
Starting _____ to actively listen to understand without interrupting. Achieve a self-rating of 4, 3 out of 5 days.	
<b>Engagement</b>	1 2 3 4 5
Starting _____ to seek input from those impacted by decisions. Achieve a self-rating of 4, 3 out of 5 days. Or, others can measure, e.g., the first example.	

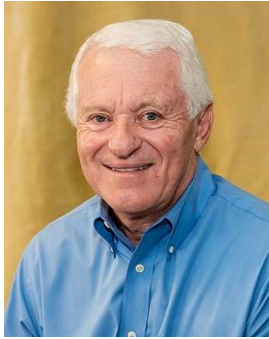
**Note:** This example shows three methodologies to quantify performance progress.

## **PUTTING YOUR LEADERSHIP IMPROVEMENT PLAN TO WORK ONE BITE AT A TIME**



1. Select one to three improvement strategies that you want to begin with and report these to your supervisor and your direct reports or others with whom you work.
2. Use every day as a practice day. That means begin each day thinking about using these strategies. Spend a little time visualizing being the leader you want to be today.
3. Publicly display reminders to use your selected strategies.
4. Use the strategies as frequently as possible throughout the day.
5. Ask your people to hold you accountable to use your selected strategies.
6. Evaluate your day's progress at the end of each day by answering the question, "Did I do my best to ....?" Place a grade on the calendar so you can monitor success. For example, E = Excellence, G = Good, N = Did not practice. Or, whatever grading system that you prefer to use.
7. Within the 30 days, prepare a form like the one included in the preceding page to rate the progress you are making. You would be showing a very positive example if you would have your direct reports or others with whom you work to rate you and ask your supervisor to do the same.
8. Discuss the ratings/progress with your direct reports/others with whom you work and your supervisor.
9. After you've made progress, return to your Personal Improvement Plan and pick one to three additional behaviors and then repeat this sequence.

## About the Authors



**Larry Cole** has a Ph.D. in psychology and successfully integrates the psychology of human behavior with courses he offers through the Dealership Institute. Larry has worked in the agriculture industry for over 20 years and 15 + years with implement dealerships. He has developed and delivers a range of courses in leadership and organizational development, the psychology of selling and transformational customer service.

As an author, he has published ten books and numerous articles in professional and trade publications. As a researcher he is currently working with the Dealer Institute regarding the motivational basis of company loyalty and employee engagement.



**Michael Piercy** is the Vice President of Dealer Development for the Western Equipment Dealers Association, with almost 20 years' experience in organizational, leadership training and development and succession planning. He's worked exclusively with the agricultural and construction equipment industry for the last 10 years, designing and developing strategic initiatives and helping dealers develop their people and grow their business. His current role, Leading WEDA's Dealer

Institute, allows him to guide dealer organizations through training and consultative initiatives, as well as, merger, acquisition, and succession planning.

## About Dealer Institute



*The Dealer Institute is an all-inclusive integrated approach to training, development, and consulting designed to help our customers achieve operational excellence and long-term success. Our goal is to be your trusted advisor and first choice for business strategy, leadership, and employee development in the equipment industry. We are your one-stop shop with a wide array of training and development courses ranging from our Online Campus, to One-Day Event Style Courses, and next level Module-based Courses specifically designed to meet your unique business challenges and needs. Our consulting approach will help you identify "root causes" and provide high impact solutions to help move your organization forward on a pathway to success. We are committed to helping you develop your people to grow your business.*

## Developing People to Grow Your Business

Contact the Dealer Institute if you are interested in onsite training or consulting.

U.S. 800-762-5616 | Canada 800-661-2452 | [dealerinstitute.org](http://dealerinstitute.org)