

## The 70-20-10 Model

Business concepts go in and out of fashion with bewildering speed. But one concept that has stood the test of time is the 70-20-10 leadership development model. Pioneered by the Center for Creative Leadership and based on 30 years of study of how executives learn to lead, it rests on the belief that leadership is learned through doing. There's plenty of evidence to support that belief, including a study by the Corporate Leadership Council that concluded that on-the-job learning has three times more impact on employee performance than formal training.<sup>1</sup>

As the 70-20-10 name implies, the learning model calls for 70 percent of development to consist of on-the-job learning, supported by 20 percent coaching and mentoring, and 10 percent classroom training. The model has spread widely in the corporate and nonprofit worlds, with various organizations putting their own imprint on it.

The 70-20-10 model's three components reinforce one another, adding up to a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts. The model builds on research showing that human beings retain information most effectively when they gain it in a practical context. Learning is even more powerful when the lessons of experience are reinforced through informal discussion with people who have performed similar work. These veterans can point out common pitfalls, offer practical advice, and help steer the learner away from bad habits. To emphasize the value of experience, however, is not to slight the importance of formal learning. But formal learning is most valuable when it supplies technical skills, theories, and explanations that apply directly to what is learned through experience – and when it is both valued and quickly integrated within the work environment. In studying their own leadership development programs, for example, American Express found that the effect of formal training increased significantly when the participants' manager engaged with them on the training both before and after the training session.<sup>2</sup> Training was most effective when:

- The learner had one-on-one meetings with his or her immediate manager to discuss how to apply the training in his or her specific role.
- The learner perceived his or her manager endorsed and supported this specific training.
- The learner expected to be recognized or rewarded for the training-related behavior change.

The lesson for nonprofits is clear: Leadership development programs are only as good as the managers who implement them.

<sup>1</sup> The Corporate Leadership Council Human Resources. [www.clc.executiveboard.com](http://www.clc.executiveboard.com).

<sup>2</sup> American Express Corp., "The Real ROI of Leadership Development: Comparing Classroom vs. Online vs. Blended Delivery."

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