

***Developmental
Experiences in
Managerial Work:
A Literature Review***

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Many organizations are seeking answers to a very practical question: how do we develop executive talent? These organizations are aware of the demanding nature of executive jobs and realize that managers need to continue to grow and learn over their careers if they are to be successful when they reach the executive suite. Research studies certainly indicate that the nature of managerial work changes as one moves from first-line supervisor to middle management to the executive ranks (Hemphill, 1959; Tornow & Pinto, 1976). For example, first-line supervisors are more involved with the technical aspects of the job and direct supervision of others, while mid-level managers tend to work through others and rely more on formal power of position and written communication (Nealey & Fiedler, 1968). Executives are more engaged in long-range planning and policy formulation than are managers at lower levels (Thornton & Byham, 1982). Decision making also changes as one moves up the hierarchy from more immediate short-term decisions to more long-term, high-impact decisions.

Thus, managers must grow to meet new demands as they move up the corporate hierarchy. A study at the Center for Creative Leadership comparing derailed and successful executives indicated that situational changes without changes in the manager can lead to derailment (McCall & Lombardo, 1983). For example, some of the derailed executives in the study never made the transition from doing the work to seeing that it got done. They never learned to accomplish this by delegating or building a team. Other executives were unable to correct certain flaws that became more important as they moved up the management ladder. For example, the most often-cited reason for derailment in the study was insensitivity to others, a trait that becomes more visible when the manager enters the executive suite, where getting along with others is so important. Failure to become more sensitive could do an executive in. The researchers found various other reasons for derailment; most of them were related to the fact that situations change and managers must be able to meet these changes.

Since some changes, like learning to delegate or to think more strategically, seem to be important, the question becomes what causes these high-level managers to change over their careers: how do they acquire new information, learn to behave differently, and develop new attitudes and perspectives? Studies of adult development have pointed to important life events--such as marriage, starting to work, birth or death of a loved one, or becoming independent of parents--as catalysts for change (Brim & Ryff, 1980; Knox, 1977). Levinson (1978) referred to these exper-

iences as "marker events," events that had a notable impact upon a person's life. These events are considered to lead to change because they require adaptation. The uncertainty, ambiguity, and unpredictability of these events lead to a need to learn how to cope with them. Further changes in relationships with others or in one's own personality are a part of this adaptation process.

Several studies support the usefulness of an event-based approach to understanding managerial development. In one study, each of 109 chief executive officers was asked in interviews to detail experiences in his or her background that contributed most in the development of various skills, such as negotiation or policy formation (Copeman, 1971). Many of the CEOs responded by telling about important events in their past, such as being put in charge of a division or subsidiary or becoming assistant to the president. The researchers did not analyze or categorize these events in any way, but the results suggested that mastering specific skills was clearly associated in the CEOs' minds with distinct events. Similar conclusions can be drawn from an interview study of 60 English managers (Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984). These managers were asked how they had developed in the past. Those who recalled some form of development generally reported that it occurred in conjunction with an important event, such as a major job move or a business reorganization. These developmental experiences were tied to events that required coping with a new situation, similar to Levinson's marker events.

As part of an ongoing research project on executive growth and learning, researchers at the Center for Creative Leadership interviewed successful executives about important events in their careers. These experiences were later clustered into three broad themes--job assignments the executives had had, other people they had come in contact with, and hardships which they had endured--and a miscellaneous category that included formal training. The purpose of this paper is not to provide an extensive presentation of the CCL research, but to take a look at past research studies in the context of our own research. Have other researchers found that the same types of events or experiences are developmental for managers? If so, what kinds of lessons did managers take away from the experiences?

A review of the empirical literature revealed no systematic body of research focused on what experiences or events may be important in managers' careers. Most research has focused on the end product--what a successful executive is like, not how he or she got to be that way (e.g., Bennis, 1985; Boyatzis, 1982; Steiner, 1983). In compiling present knowledge about executive development, research was reviewed that focused on what executives say have been important developmental experiences, the common past experiences of executives who have "arrived," or experiences that are related to progression up the management hierarchy. Whether

one should call the experiences in the latter two cases "developmental" is questionable, but this type of research does give insight into the categories of experiences that may be important in propelling the manager to the executive suite. Although managers and management consultants have written a great deal of advice about executive development, this work is generally excluded from the review because it often lacks a research base.

Themes that emerged from the CCL research--assignments, other people, hardships, and training--were used to organize the reviewed material. In each section, two questions were focused on: 1) what characterizes these important categories of experience, and 2) what might a manager gain from a particular type of experience. While specific answers to the latter question were infrequent, they are included in the review whenever a study attempted to answer it.

Job Assignments

Like so many other things in life, managing seems to be learned primarily by doing. On-the-job experiences are seen by managers as some of the most valuable learning experiences (Broderick, 1983; Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984; Digman, 1978). A study of management development at Honeywell indicated that on-the-job experiences were the primary source of development of many managerial skills and competencies: decision making and problem solving, communication (both lateral and vertical), delegation, empathy, resolving conflicts, and some business knowledge (e.g., product knowledge, business trends, knowledge of costs) (Honeywell Corporate Human Resources, 1981). What types of on-the-job experiences lead to development? One answer that emerges from the research is the importance of challenging assignments.

Challenge

Successful executives see challenge as an important key in developmental jobs (Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984). Some of the strongest evidence for the positive impact of initial job challenge upon later career success comes from AT&T's Management Progress Study (Bray, Campbell, & Grant, 1974; Bray & Howard, 1983). This research effort has tracked a group of new managers from several Bell Systems operating companies for over 20 years. The study began by putting 422 managers through a 3-1/2 day assessment program which included written and projective tests, interviews, and assessment exercises. Two populations were represented in the sample: college graduates recently hired as manager trainees and non-college graduates who had risen to management

from non-management jobs. At the conclusion of the assessment center the staff made a prediction of whether the manager would reach middle management. During the next seven years, annual interviews were conducted with knowledgeable persons in the managers' organizations concerning job assignments and work environments. These interviews and interviews with the managers themselves were analyzed in order to arrive at ratings of the managers' work situation on four characteristics: job stimulation and challenge, supervisory responsibilities, degree of structure of assignments, and degree to which the boss was an achievement model. Since the latter three characteristics were seen as adding to the stimulation and challenge of the job, all four ratings were combined for an overall rating of job challenge.

Overall, there was a significant relationship between the initial predictions and subsequent management level reached. However, if the accuracy of the predictions is examined by amount of job challenge, the predictions are least accurate under two conditions: when expectations of success were low and job challenge high, and when expectations were high and job challenge low. Sixty-one percent of college recruits who were predicted to fail to reach middle management actually made it to middle management eight years later, if they had high job challenge. The corresponding figure for a comparable non-college sample was 28%. Of those who were predicted to reach middle management, but who experienced low job challenge, only 30% in the college group and 20% in the non-college group actually made it to middle management. Thus, job challenge appears to have been an important factor in these individuals reaching middle management. Similar results concerning job challenge were obtained at Exxon (Vicino & Bass, 1978).

Job challenge may be important because it stimulates a person to perform well. Also, challenging jobs can be stressful, leading to a need to learn how to cope with them. Opinions of executives reinforce the findings from the empirical studies concerning the importance of tough, challenging situations. For example, Sanford Sigloff explained how he was able to hire executives to help restore the failing Wickes Company when he couldn't promise them spectacular salaries or job security: "They're here because they know that in a troubled company they'll grow faster than they will anywhere else" (O'Toole, 1984, p. 198). Harlan Cleveland, former director of the Aspen Institute, echoes the same view about challenging jobs: "When your job no longer demands of you more than you have, go and do something else" (1975, p. 53).

Job challenge may also be important because it is linked with visibility. High-potential managers are often identified by top management early and placed in challenging jobs to maximize their exposure (Kanter, 1977). This can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies whereby "high potentials" are given challenging jobs which

will further their development and visibility, which in turn leads to more challenging jobs.

Although there is good evidence for the importance of job challenge for advancement, we need to know more about what constitutes a challenge to managers. The AT&T study suggests that the work itself as well as the contextual elements surrounding the work, such as having to deal with subordinates or having a demanding boss, can provide challenge. The following sections provide information on managerial experiences that are potentially challenging.

Specific Job Assignments

Managers hold a variety of positions on their way to the top. Having a number of different jobs is necessary to develop the broad perspective and wide business experience desired in top managers (Kanter, 1977; Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984). Job rotations to expose managers to different content areas of the business are practiced in many organizations (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, & Weick, 1970; Digman, 1978). What specific types of assignments in this string of jobs will provide the challenge needed for development? Empirical studies on the importance of specific types of jobs or assignments for development are scarce. Several studies, however, do provide some insight in this area.

Broad responsibility assignments. A large-scale survey of over 700 CEOs conducted by Margerison and Kakabadse (1984) for the American Management Association asked several questions about career development. One of the questions concerned key influences that had helped the CEOs become successful. Two of the "key influences" ranked in the top ten have already been mentioned: width of experience and job challenge. Six others reflect personal qualities rather than experiences (i.e., a need to achieve, an ability to work easily with a wide variety of people, a willingness to take risks, a desire to seek new opportunities, an ability to develop ideas, and an ability to change managerial style to fit the occasion). The remaining "key influences" were: 1) early overall responsibility for important tasks, and 2) leadership experience early in their careers.

To these CEOs, having responsibility for important tasks often meant having profit and loss responsibility or overall accountability for running part of the business early in their management career. The CEOs felt that being in charge of a defined unit of an enterprise gave them the opportunity to set work goals, plan for how they would be carried out, and lead a group of people toward achieving the goals. As one manager said, "I had the opportunity early in my career to get my arms around

part of the business and say 'I am responsible for that' (Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984, p. 186). These "in-charge" types of assignments allowed the executives to judge their performance against observable criteria, such as profits, productivity, and outputs.

Other research studies support these findings about jobs involving broad responsibility. For British managers, one feature of developmental assignments was being given overall responsibility for a discrete area of the business (Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984). In studying the relationship between characteristics of positions held and rate of promotion in a sample of executives, Rusmore (1973) found that having assignments that allowed for the exercise of broad powers and authority was significantly related to advancement. Top management often favors assigning promising managers to positions of responsibility early in their careers (Glickman, Hahn, Fleishman, & Baxter, 1968). The risks are considered lower if mistakes are made early, and it is easier for a manager to learn how not to make the mistake again. Many of the well-run companies investigated by Peters and Waterman (1982) tended to build positions of broad responsibility into their on-the-job management training. For example, Bechtel often takes on small projects "the sole purpose [of which] is to provide practical opportunities for fast-track young managers to cut their teeth on a whole job early" (p. 265).

In addition to providing a great deal of learning about job-specific information (Gabarro, 1985), taking charge of broad responsibility jobs tends to provide opportunities for managers to learn about negotiation and planning and coordination (Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984). One reason for failure among executives is the inability to handle scale (i.e., to coordinate all elements and functions within an organization) (Bentz, 1985). Early experience with broad responsibility can help a manager, since these type of assignments provide experience in running a business operation that stands on its own (Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Early leadership experience. The AMA survey also found that CEOs considered their early leadership experience to be important in their career development. These early leadership experiences included the CEO's earliest assignments supervising and coordinating the work of others rather than being a technical expert or professional specialist. Two-thirds of the CEOs had such assignments before age 30. The CEOs felt that these early leadership experiences provided opportunities to learn how to get things done through others, how to motivate subordinates, and how to resolve conflicts between them. The AT&T study, mentioned previously, also points to the importance of having challenging assignments during the early management years.

Staff assignments. Staff jobs are another type of assignment; however, there is some disagreement over the importance of such assignments to rising managers. Staff positions are often regarded as low visibility jobs due to their lack of profit responsibilities. Rusmore (1973) found being in a staff position was negatively related to advancement; and in Cox's survey (1982), top executives felt that their organizations showed more support for promoting individuals from line positions than from staff positions. However, when the staff job is at corporate headquarters, it can become a high-visibility job (Glickman et al., 1968; Stoner, Ference, Warren, & Christensen, 1980). One of the excellent performers in Kotter's (1982) study, for example, spent the first ten years of his career in three corporate staff jobs: "During this time, he learned an enormous amount about the company and all its divisions. He developed relationships with the president and the rest of top management, and the assignments he was given constantly stretched his skills" (p. 136). Thus, staff jobs, particularly those at corporate headquarters, may be able to provide challenging opportunities in which line managers can get a broader perspective on their organizations.

Project teams and task forces. Although created for the purpose of meeting organizational needs, project teams and task forces are regarded by many companies as a developmental activity (Abdelnour & Hall, 1980). Task forces that report to a senior executive or those that involve critical or unusual projects (e.g., involving a major new client or new technology) can provide the high visibility needed to avoid plateauing at lower management levels (Stoner et al., 1980). Two managers in Davies and Easterby-Smith's (1984) study also considered serving on a project team responsible for locating sites and starting up superstores to be a developmental assignment: "not only were both of these managers able to gain a wider perspective on the business and the many factors involved in making decisions, but they also had the opportunity to meet important and influential people" (p. 178). Other managers have also cited serving on project teams as opportunities for young managers to gain a wider view of the business (Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984).

Other assignments. Two additional types of experiences cited as possible developmental opportunities for managers are working in a newly-created department and trouble-shooting assignments (Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984). Managers working in a new department found themselves in situations where there were no clearly established rules and procedures. Several of them learned to design systems and procedures to cope with the new business pressures. In trouble-shooting roles, managers had to solve a problem by taking specific action. The successful outcome of such assignments increased the manager's confidence in dealing with new situations. A survey of human resource specialists also found

trouble-shooting assignments highly rated as a means of providing job challenge (Abdelnour & Hall, 1980).

Functional experience prior to management. Many managers have job assignments as technical experts or professionals before moving into the management ranks. Are certain functional experiences better for producing high-level executives? Although several large-scale surveys (Bonfield, 1980; Cox, 1982; Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984; Piercy & Forbes, 1981) indicated that a large percentage of top management has functional backgrounds in marketing, finance, and engineering, such cross-company surveys can mask organizational differences in paths to the top. The important functional area in an organization depends on the specific technology or business it is in. Those who stay close to these mainline functions have a greater chance of making it to top positions (Glickman et al., 1968; Kotter, 1982). As Peters and Waterman (1982) discovered: "You almost have to be an electrical engineer to make it at HP; or a mechanical engineer to succeed at Fluor or Bechtel; an aeronautical engineer to move up at Boeing; an ex-product manager at Procter & Gamble; or an ex-salesman at IBM" (pp. 299-300). The underlying assumption is that a certain functional background is necessary to have learned the heart of the business and that this knowledge is essential for making executive-level decisions.

Learning From On-the-Job Experiences

Assignments are clearly a strong source of learning for managers. Early leadership experiences, broad responsibility jobs, staff assignments, and task forces make different demands on managers and force managers to learn new skills in order to succeed. Some logical patterns of learning from these experiences emerge from the few studies reviewed above. For example, the heart of the business might be learned in a technical or professional assignment before entering management. Then a broader perspective on the business can be gained when a manager is placed in assignments, such as staff jobs or project teams, that bring him or her in contact with people in different parts of the organization. In early leadership jobs managers are concerned with learning how to deal with subordinates. In assignments with broad responsibility managers often have control over more diversity than before; therefore, they must learn how to negotiate, coordinate, and plan.

However, based on current research, it would be difficult to design a formal program of job assignments for developing managers. First, development per se is seldom the primary objective of placing a manager in a particular job. Rather, development is an added benefit derived from tackling the tasks at

hand. The immediate needs of the business often come before the developmental needs of the manager. Even if development was the primary objective of an assignment, the current research will not support specific recommendations. The studies relied most heavily upon in the preceding discussion of specific job assignments were either small sample exploratory studies (e.g., Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984; Glickman et al., 1968), had poor response rates (e.g., Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984), or did not have management development as their primary concern (e.g., Peters & Waterman, 1982; Rusmore, 1973). Although it is evident that managers need assignments that will challenge them and give them a broader perspective, the research reveals little about what could be learned by managers from specific types of assignments.

A final issue is how long a manager needs to stay in an assignment to learn from the experience. Glickman et al. (1968) found top management concerned about managers spending too little time in a particular job. Recent research by Gabarro (1985) on the process of taking charge in a high-level management position also suggests that brief assignments do not help a manager or the organization. If an assignment is not long enough, the manager does not have time to learn about and act on underlying problems that may exist, or to get feedback about how successful his or her actions were. Thus, there seems to be a need to balance job changes that expose a manager to new demands with enough time in the job to fully explore and master the new elements in the situation.

Other People

Individuals are embedded in an interpersonal network, and social psychologists have emphasized the importance of these relationships for learning and development (Storr, 1963). Other people can serve as learning models (Bandura, 1977) and as sources of reinforcement and support. Relationships are particularly relevant to managers since they spend a large part of their time in contact with other people (Sayles, 1979).

Mentors

In the work setting, the mentor-protégé relationship is often regarded as having developmental potential. Mentorship is generally used to describe "informal, intense, personal relationships where senior persons have important career molding influence on younger people in the early phases of their adult professional careers" (Klauss, 1981, p. 489). Although there is an overwhelming amount of attention paid to the topic of mentoring in the popular literature, there is less empirical research on mentors. One problem that has plagued the comparative analysis of this

research is an unclear definition of mentor. Definitions vary from the intense relationships described above by Klauss to sponsorships in which a senior manager provides guidance to a younger manager in whose career he or she has an interest. Clawson (1980) has suggested reserving the term "mentorships" to those relationships in which the extent of influence that each person has on the other's personal and professional life is high. Clawson prefers to use "coaching relationships" and "role models" to describe relationships in which the comprehensiveness of the influence and the mutuality of the relationship is less. Others use "sponsors" to describe these relationships (e.g., Jennings, 1971). Such distinctions, however, have not been observed in the research literature.

Most of the empirical research seems to focus on the role of the less intense sponsorship or coaching relationships. Some of this research indicates that many executives have had sponsors, individuals who have taken an interest in their career and have provided guidance and counsel (Jennings, 1971; Kanter, 1977; Roche, 1979). In Roche's study, 60% of the 1,250 executives reported having had such a sponsor. The executives who had sponsors earned more money at a younger age and were more likely to follow a career path than executives who did not have sponsors. This study is often cited as evidence that sponsors make a difference. The problem with this interpretation is that those with sponsors were also better educated, which could account for the salary differences. Also, an older executive may be more inclined to sponsor a high-potential new manager, who is more likely to move up quickly and earn higher salaries earlier in his or her career. Interestingly, the respondents in Roche's study did not consider having a sponsor an important ingredient in their own success. CEOs in Margerison and Kakabadse's survey (1984) also did not think role models were important in their development.

Fewer researchers have examined the more intense mentor relationship. Nearly two-thirds of executives surveyed by Cox (1982) felt having a mentor would have a positive impact on their careers, but these executives were not asked if they had experienced a mentoring relationship. In his intensive study of the lives of 40 men, Levinson (1978) concluded that intense mentoring relationships are very important in adult development, but rarely occur in the workplace. Given how quickly managers change jobs and move about within an organization, it is not surprising that such intense relationships would be difficult to establish. It is, thus, still unclear how important mentors or sponsors are or if everyone needs one. A mentor may actually have a negative impact on a manager's career if the mentor falls from favor in the organization, or if the manager becomes overdependent on the mentor to the degree that he or she cannot make independent decisions (McCall & Lombardo, 1983).

Mentorship programs, however, are being used as training and development tools for upward progression in some organizations (Hunt & Michael, 1983). These programs attempt to use the knowledge, skills, and insights that experienced executives can pass on to younger managers. Jewel Tea Company assigns each incoming MBA trainee to a senior official who acts as the trainee's sponsor during his or her initial training period (Collins & Scott, 1978). Bosses at Merrill Lynch nominate junior managers who are then assigned to seniors who act as mentors (Phillips-Jones, 1982). Honeywell is initiating a mentor program into their overall strategy of management development (Broderick, 1983). There is little systematic evaluation of these programs. However, an investigation of three formal mentoring programs in government agencies revealed a wide variety in the quality and intensity of such "forced" relationships (Klauss, 1981). At one extreme were very intense, close relationships, which the researchers noted had generally begun informally before the program had started. At the other extreme were very low involvement relationships in which the participants generally had some reservations about the program. A large majority of the participants, however, found the experience to be worthwhile. The younger managers viewed the relationships as opportunities to obtain career guidance and organizational support.

Whether a mentoring system is formal or informal, what might a person learn from a mentor or sponsor? The younger managers in Klauss's study broadened their perspectives on executive life and took a closer look at their career options as a result of the mentoring program. Through interviewing 18 pairs of managers who were currently in mentor-protégé relationships, Kram (1983, 1985) found that the relationships helped the younger managers learn new technical skills, the ropes of organizational life, and how to advance in a career. The mentor also helped the protégé "in developing a sense of competence, confidence, and effectiveness in a managerial role" (1983, p. 614). Levinson (1978) found that intense mentoring relationships provided young men the opportunity to increase their intellectual skills and to learn about the social organization, its values, customs, and people. At Honeywell, managers felt that coaching and mentoring relationships were valuable for learning skills such as listening effectively, motivating subordinates, utilizing subordinates' talents, perceiving and analyzing problems, and knowing when to act on problems (Honeywell Corporate Human Resources, 1981).

Two of these studies also suggested that mentor relationships could also hold developmental opportunities for the mentor. The mentors in the formal programs Klauss studied noted gaining an understanding of the perspectives of lower organizational levels, and getting a better feel for the developmental needs of the younger managers and how their talents might best be used. The senior managers in the pairs Kram studied also learned about

effectively developing talent and experienced a great deal of personal satisfaction from helping their younger colleagues.

Bosses

Even if a manager's boss does not act as a mentor, the manager's relationship with his or her boss can be important in career advancement and development. In Cox's (1982) survey, top executives felt that liking your boss, supporting your boss, and making your boss look good to his superiors would all have positive effects on a manager's career. Working for a successful boss also can provide visibility to top management (Glickman et al., 1968), particularly if the boss has a reputation for developing people (Stoner et al., 1980). Recall, also, that the measure of job challenge in AT&T's Management Progress Study included the degree to which the supervisor was an achievement model (Bray et al., 1974). Thus, the boss may influence a manager's career advancement by representing the manager upward in the organization and by providing challenge for the manager.

Even when the development of the manager is not a major objective, the manager can still learn from his or her boss. MacGregor (1960) has noted that:

When a boss gives an order, asks for a job to be done, reprimands, praises, conducts an appraisal interview, deals with a mistake, holds a staff meeting, works with his subordinates in solving a problem, gives a salary increase, discusses a possible promotion, or takes any other action with subordinates, he is teaching them something. The attitudes, the habits, the expectations of the subordinate will be either reinforced or modified to some degree as a result of every encounter with the boss. (p.200)

Thus, the boss can be a valuable source of learning because he or she serves as a model and a source of feedback.

Bosses in particular can have a modeling influence on an individual's managerial style (Marshall & Stewart, 1981). In interviewing managers about factors influencing their working strategies, Marshall and Stewart found that bosses were often models for how to treat subordinates. Some were actually negative models, guides to what not to do. Several of the managers who reported negative models had moved into their bosses' positions and started by deliberately acting differently from their predecessor.

Some bosses are better teachers than others (Clawson, 1980). Clawson studied 38 subordinate-boss relationships involving

managers. A measure of the developmental effectiveness of these relationships consisted of an overall index composed of five elements: the superior's perceptions of the subordinate's technical and organizational learning, and the subordinate's perceptions of his or her own technical, organizational, and career-related learnings. The effective developmental relationships had several discriminating characteristics: the individuals in the relationships had high levels of trust and respect for each other; the superiors tended to be consistent in their behavior, were informal in their interactions, were willing to share information, interacted frequently with subordinates, and set high standards; and the superiors felt they should be teachers while the subordinates felt they should be learners. Thus, the most learning occurred when bosses were available to subordinates, when they challenged the subordinates by setting high standards, and when both parties viewed the situation as a learning experience for the subordinate.

Peers

Managers are also involved in relationships with their peers. The importance of these relationships has been stressed in the popular literature to the extent that "networking" is now a cliché. A network is a system of contacts inside and outside the organization. This network may extend horizontally or vertically, but it is the lateral relationships that have generated the most interest (Kaplan & Mazique, 1983). Empirical studies have found that non-plateaued managers report higher usage of networking than plateaued managers (Gould & Penley, 1984), and that higher performers integrate themselves into information networks more than lower performers (Roberts & O'Reilly, 1979). Kotter's (1982) general managers all had extensive networks of relationships.

The emphasis in looking at peer relationships has been on how they help the managers get their jobs done through exchange of services and information (e.g., Kanter, 1977; Kaplan & Mazique, 1983; Strauss, 1962), not how the relationships may be learning experiences. An exception to this trend is a study in which Kram and Isabella (1985) interviewed managers in one corporation, asking them to identify relationships with peers that they felt supported their career development. Twenty-five of the relationship pairs were studied in more depth. The results of the study indicated that peer relationships can be developmental through: (1) information sharing, which gives individuals technical knowledge and organizational perspective; (2) career strategy sharing, which helps individuals learn about career options; and, (3) feedback, which helps them learn about their strengths and weaknesses.

Learning From Other People

In studying developmental relationships on the job, researchers have focused more on special relationships, such as mentor or sponsor relationships. Although intense mentoring relationships are potentially developmental, the possibility of their occurring on the job is questionable. Less intense coaching or sponsor relationships are more probable. Research into the importance of these relationships can be difficult because the effects of the relationship are hard to separate from other related effects (e.g., senior managers choosing only the "best and brightest" to sponsor, and the tendency for individuals to take credit for their own success rather than attribute the success to the help of others). Perhaps the most promising line of research in this area is the in-depth study of existing relationships over time (e.g., Kram, 1983).

The opportunities for managerial learning from less intense day-to-day interactions with bosses and peers has not been investigated in depth. As with assignments, development has not been seen as the primary purpose of these relationships, so they have typically not been studied in the context of development. The research that is available suggests that various relationships with other people in the workplace can provide managers with learning opportunities when the other person shares information, acts as a model of what to do or not to do, or provides feedback to the manager.

What may be learned from other people? Through shared information the manager may learn business and organizational knowledge and career strategies. By watching role models, the manager may learn the "do's and don'ts" of interacting with others. Finally, as a source of feedback, other people can provide a manager with insight into his or her strengths and weaknesses and can bolster the manager's self-confidence.

Hardships

Not all key events in a manager's career are positive. Managers experience business failures and mistakes, dismissals and demotions, subordinate performance problems, and career ruts. Such a crisis event can provoke a great deal of soul-searching by an executive which can then lead to an effort to change (Kaplan, Drath, & Kofodimos, 1985). The research literature revealed very little about the developmental potential of such experiences. Hardship events are primarily viewed as stressful (Holmes & Rahe, 1967), and although the possibility of growing and learning from them are sometimes mentioned (Gaylord & Symons, 1984; Zaleznik, 1971), most of the empirical research has dealt with the negative

physical and psychological consequences of experiencing them. There is, however, some mention of the possible positive outcomes of failures and of demotions in several of the management development studies reviewed.

Glickman's (1968) study of top management and succession did indicate that a mistake or failure may actually be a beneficial experience for a manager. Managers who are always successful become too sure of themselves; they might lack humility. Facing a situation in which they "had their teeth kicked in" could force a manager to learn how to handle losing. Kotter (1982) also recognized an "I can do anything" syndrome among general managers who had track records of win after win, resulting in an inability to assess their own strengths and weaknesses. Experiencing a failure could force a manager to recognize his or her limitations, thus making him or her more immune to the syndrome.

Demotions were mentioned as a developmental activity by over half of the organizations studied by Abdelnour and Hall (1980). However, these downward moves were not considered to be a very effective method of development in these organizations. Stoner et al. (1980) found that demotion can improve performance of plateaued managers by returning them to a job more consistent with their competence and by serving as a warning that drastic action could be taken if satisfactory performance on the new job is not achieved. A very important factor in an effective demotion was placing the demoted manager in a visible, challenging situation which might enable him or her to become promotable again.

As can be seen from this handful of studies, there has been little investigation of the developmental benefits of the negative events in a manager's career. By looking only at the stressful nature of these events, we overlook the potential learning involved when a manager is forced to face a difficult situation and his or her own weaknesses. As with assignments and other people, learning is never guaranteed. For example, executives do not learn from setbacks if they don't take responsibility for them (Kaplan et al., 1985). Research needs to focus not just on how managers survive hardship situations but on what is necessary to actually profit from them (e.g., ability to be introspective, organizational support).

Training

Managerial training is specifically designed to be a learning experience. Training programs have been designed to teach a variety of topics: factual information, problem-solving and decision-making skills, new attitudes, interpersonal skills, and self-insight (Campbell, et al., 1970). Studies evaluating the

effects of management training have been summarized elsewhere (Campbell et al., 1970; Goldstein, 1980; Wexley, 1984). These reviews indicate that learning often does take place in training programs but they also point to the disappointingly few studies focused on whether any of this learning gets transferred to on-the-job changes. The transfer process seems to be influenced by factors such as the perceived need for the training, the design of the training program, and the follow-up support for what was learned in the program (Van Velsor, 1984), making general statements about the learning potential of training programs problematic.

Top-level executives, however, do not tend to place high value on formal education and training. The CEOs in Margerison and Kakabadse's survey (1984) did not consider "off-the-job" management training as an important influence on career development. When these executives were asked why they were able to make it to the top, they ranked training thirteenth out of fourteen possible reasons. Top-level executives rarely mention formal education and training as having a significant impact on the way they perform their jobs (Glickman et al., 1968). Marshall and Stewart (1981) have found similar results with middle managers. Although executives indicate that formal training has not had a strong influence on their own careers, they still see managers in their organizations as needing classroom exposure to certain topics. This inconsistency may be partially due to the tendency for individuals, when explaining their own success, to play down the importance of events in which they were not a significant actor.

What skills are taught via formal training? In well managed organizations, management training was geared toward the specific skills required at different management levels (Digman, 1978). In these organizations, supervisory training focuses on personnel practices, effective communication, and leadership style; while middle managers learn more about topics such as performance evaluation and coaching, group dynamics, and time management. At the executive level, training programs tend to fall into the categories of dealing with external environments, development of strategies and policies, and handling executive stress. Organizations also use training programs for upper management as broadening experiences to increase the managers' awareness of factors external to their own specialties (Glickman et al., 1968).

At Honeywell, managers felt that certain management techniques were learned primarily in the classroom (Broderick, 1983); these competencies include administrative skills (e.g., planning, setting objectives, and time management), interacting with groups outside of the organization (e.g., unions, government agencies), effective presentation skills, personnel activities (e.g., recruiting, selection, performance appraisal), and some business

and technical knowledge (Honeywell Corporate Human Resource, 1981). Finally, a sometimes overlooked personal outcome of training is self-confidence (Glickman et al., 1968). Interacting with other managers who are in similar situations can lead to the realization that one's own problems are not unique and, therefore, not due to personal inadequacies.

Thus, most organizations would agree that formal management training has value. Training programs can be used to expose managers to new topics and to help them practice new skills. Whether a training program becomes a significant learning event for an individual depends on a number of factors, including timing and design of the program, motivation of the individual, and opportunities to apply new knowledge and skills back on the job. Research in this area needs to focus more on how training programs and on-the-job experience can better complement each other in the development process.

Conclusions

This review has organized the empirical research on what experiences seem to be important in a manager's growth and what might be learned from these experiences using a framework developed from research at CCL. Important experiences were clustered around assignments, relationships with others, hardships, and formal training. The empirical research to date certainly supports the major categories of experience presented here as potentially important in the development of an executive's skills, with assignments viewed by managers as providing the most opportunities for learning.

Because of the scarcity of research in this area, only tentative conclusions about what might be learned from assignments, relationships, hardships, and training can be made. These experiences should be viewed as providing a good opportunity to learn certain managerial skills and strategies. Individual managers need to bring both the motivation to learn and learning skills to these experiences. Table 1 summarizes the research in this area, indicating what opportunities each major type of experience might provide. The summary table also hints that different types of experiences provide opportunities for learning different types of lessons. For example, both negotiation and delegation skills appeared under assignments. Career options and strategies may be learned more frequently from other people, while how to handle losing may only be learned from a hardship situation. Other lessons, such as business knowledge and self-confidence, are mentioned with several of the experience categories.

Table 1
Summary of Research Findings

<u>Experience</u>	<u>Opportunity to Learn:</u>	<u>Research Support</u>
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a broad view of the organization ● how to cope with new demands ● planning and coordinating ● negotiation ● problem solving and decision making ● how to motivate employees ● delegation ● how to resolve conflicts ● self-confidence ● business knowledge 	<p>Kanter, 1977; Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984; Peters & Waterman, 1982 Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984 Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984 Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984 Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984; Honeywell, 1981 Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984 Honeywell, 1981 Honeywell, 1981; Margerison & Kakabadse, 1984 Davies & Easterby-Smith, 1984; Kotter, 1982 Gabarro, 1985; Honeywell, 1981</p>
Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● what executive life is like ● career options and strategies ● technical skills ● knowledge of organizational life ● listening skills ● how to motivate employees ● how to treat subordinates ● problem solving ● self-confidence ● self-insight 	<p>Klauss, 1981 Clawson, 1980; Kram, 1985; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Klauss, 1981 Clawson, 1980; Kram, 1985; Kram & Isabella, 1985 Clawson, 1980; Kram, 1985; Levinson, 1978 Honeywell, 1981 Honeywell, 1981 Marshall & Stewart, 1981 Honeywell, 1981 Kram, 1983 Kram & Isabella, 1985</p>
Hardships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● how to handle losing ● self-insight 	<p>Glickman et al., 1968 Kaplan et al., 1985</p>

Table 1 (continued)

<u>Experience</u>	<u>Opportunity to Learn:</u>	<u>Research Support</u>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● business and technical knowledge ● administrative skills ● presentation skills ● problem solving and decision making ● stress management ● how to deal with external groups ● self-confidence ● self-insight 	<p>Campbell et al., 1970; Digman, 1978; Honeywell, 1981</p> <p>Digman, 1978; Honeywell, 1981</p> <p>Honeywell, 1981 Campbell, et al., 1970</p> <p>Digman, 1978 Digman, 1978; Honeywell, 1981</p> <p>Glickman et al., 1968 Campbell et al., 1970</p>

One characteristic of developmental events running through all the categories is the presence of some new element not previously encountered by the manager--be it no bottom line, or a different boss, or a subordinate performance problem. These elements, like Levinson's (1978) marker events, often require adaptation. New situations demand new behaviors and can broaden the manager's perspective.

If new elements of experience are important for development and different types of experiences tend to teach different lessons, then a diversity of experience is needed to develop well-rounded executives. A manager needs to face assignments that require new skills, be encouraged to develop various relationships, and learn from his or her mistakes. The manager who is a great trouble-shooter might be continually given trouble-shooting assignments. Such a manager may never have the opportunity to learn how to think strategically or learn how functions in the organization are integrated. A manager who is exposed to more diverse experiences has a better chance of developing the broader viewpoint and skills desired in executives.

Another characteristic of developmental events is the challenge they provide managers. The challenge may be part of the manager's task, such as having broad responsibility; or it may be a contextual element of the job--a boss with high expectations or a group of people the manager has never worked with before. Or the challenge may be coming to grips with personal failures. A manager grows more competent as he or she meets these challenges.

The summary in Table 1 is based on a handful of studies, and thus the specifics of it are quite tentative. More research is needed if we want to be more specific about how much and what types of experience are necessary for satisfactory performance in executive jobs. Research indicates that if managers don't learn new skills and change old flaws, they may derail. Knowing what experiences provide the best opportunities to learn certain lessons would be useful to an organization in planning developmental experiences for their managers.

As stressed before, events provide a stimulus to learn; the actual response of learning itself is never a sure thing. More research is also needed on individual differences among managers in what they take away from a certain event. Are some managers better able to learn from experience? If so, how do we identify them? Is it a skill others can learn? Do some people learn better from doing and others by watching? Is there a best time in a manager's career for learning certain lessons?

Finally, to better understand the development process, we need to study managers as they go through developmental events, rather than relying totally on their own retrospective reporting of these events. Gabarro's (1985) longitudinal study of the taking-charge process of general managers is a good example of such research. We have developed a base of knowledge and now need to start filling in more detail so that organizations can make decisions about developing their managers based on research rather than intuition and piecemeal knowledge.

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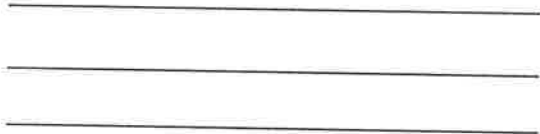
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Our organization should be a good place to work.

To demand the best of ourselves, and to attract, stimulate, and keep the best people, we believe we must make an environment that will support innovation, experimentation, and the taking of appropriate risks. As an organization we should prize the creative participation of each member of our staff. We should welcome the open exchange of ideas and foster the practice of careful listening. We have a duty to actively encourage the personal well-being and the professional development of every person who works here. We should, therefore, maximize the authority and responsibility each person has to continue to make an even greater contribution. Our policies should be implemented sensitively and consistently.

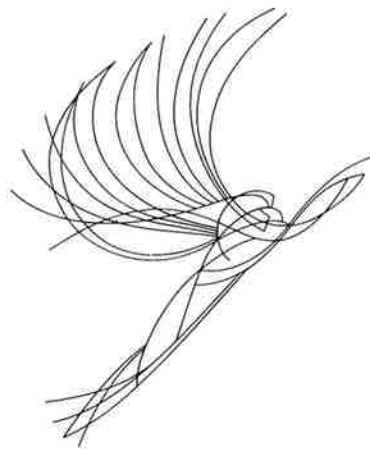
We should do our work with regard for one another.

We recognize the interdependence of everyone who works here, and we expect ourselves to treat one another with respect, candor, kindness, and a sense of the importance of teamwork. We should foster a spirit of service within the staff so that we may better serve the world at large.

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