

FOR THE PRACTICING MANAGER

Learning From Life

Turning Life's Lessons
Into Leadership
Experience

Marian N. Ruderman and Patricia J. Ohlott

Center for Creative Leadership

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Ideas into Action Guidebook

Aimed at managers and executives who are concerned with their own and others' development, each guidebook in this series gives specific advice on how to complete a developmental task or solve a leadership problem.

LEAD CONTRIBUTORS Marian N. Ruderman
Patricia J. Ohlott

GUIDEBOOK ADVISORY GROUP Victoria A. Guthrie
Cynthia D. McCauley
Russ S. Moxley

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS Martin Wilcox

EDITOR Peter Scisco

DESIGN AND LAYOUT Joanne Ferguson

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS Laura J. Gibson,
Chris Wilson, 29 & Company

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Center for Creative Leadership

Post Office Box 26300

Greensboro, North Carolina 27438-6300

336-288-7210

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AN IDEAS INTO ACTION GUIDEBOOK

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The Ideas Into Action Guidebook Series

This series of guidebooks draws on the practical knowledge that the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®) has generated in the course of more than thirty years of research and educational activity conducted in partnership with hundreds of thousands of managers and executives. Much of this knowledge is shared—in a way that is distinct from the typical university department, professional association, or consultancy. CCL is not simply a collection of individual experts, although the individual credentials of its staff are impressive; rather it is a community, with its members holding certain principles in common and working together to understand and generate practical responses to today's leadership and organizational challenges.

The purpose of the series is to provide managers with specific advice on how to complete a developmental task or solve a leadership challenge. In doing that the series carries out CCL's mission to advance the understanding, practice, and development of leadership for the benefit of society worldwide. We think you will find the Ideas Into Action Guidebooks an important addition to your leadership toolkit.

Executive Brief

It's widely accepted in organizations that experience gained from job assignments and formal training helps managers develop their skills in such areas as implementing agendas, working through relationships, creating change, and increasing personal awareness. If you are a manager who has set developmental goals for yourself, you will be able to achieve those goals through skills you learn and practice both on and off the job. This guidebook shows you how experiences from family relationships, friendships, volunteer work, and personal avocations can enhance your professional growth and effectiveness. This guidebook is for both women and men, to help them achieve a richer and more fruitful interaction between work and personal life.

The Pull of Work and Life

If you were to ask managers and executives where they get the most influential and effective developmental training, the answer you're likely to get is "on the job." It's widely accepted in organizations that experience gained from job assignments and formal training helps managers develop their skills in such areas as implementing agendas, working through relationships, creating change, and increasing personal awareness.

Too often, however, those same managers and executives discount what can be learned from experiences outside of work. The popular media consistently portrays the intersection of work life and family life as fraught with career peril. Phrases like "mommy track" define how some women's careers are handicapped when they take on the role of mother. The label "daddy stress" goes to the conflict men can feel when the expectations to excel at work and the desire to spend more time with family clash.

Although nonwork roles and responsibilities can limit and interfere with performance at work, there is another side to this story that is much richer in possibilities and rewards. Interests, roles, and responsibilities outside of work can also serve as creative and supportive sources for learning how to be a more effective manager.

It's important to see that ordinary nonwork activities such as organizing a fund-raising event, coaching a youth sports team, and even advocating for a community cause are not irrelevant to or disconnected from your work activities. Such activities provide both the practical skills and the psychological support that can enhance your leadership effectiveness on the job. It's not that you have to be superman or superwoman—having and doing it all—but that you recognize that off-the-job experiences create powerful managerial lessons. Be careful not to misunderstand the relationship between outside activities and work. Contrary to popular belief, and reinforced by CCL research, activities that take place outside of the regular workday contribute to a leader's effectiveness as a manager. In this guidebook you will learn:

- What management skills you can learn from nonwork experiences.
- How skills developed on the job can enhance your private life.
- How nonwork activities promote leadership development.
- How to break down the barriers between your work and your personal life.
- How to develop an action plan for creating connections between all your roles and responsibilities, on and off the job.