

Book review

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Developing Leaders and Leadership: Principles, Practices, and Processes

by David V. Day,

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Context and significance

Leadership development remains a critical concern for organizations seeking to thrive in complex, fast-evolving environments. David V. Day, a leading scholar in leadership and organizational psychology, addresses this enduring challenge with his book *Developing Leaders and Leadership: Principles, Practices, and Processes*. This work synthesizes decades of research and practical insight into a comprehensive examination of how individuals and organizations can cultivate effective leadership capacity. Its timely publication positions it as a valuable resource for scholars, HRD practitioners and organizational leaders committed to evidence-based development practices.

Day distinguishes between *leader development*, which focuses on enhancing individual capacity, and *leadership development*, which emphasizes collective, systemic capability. This distinction forms the conceptual backbone of the book, providing a coherent lens through which training professionals can assess, design and evaluate development initiatives. For readers of the *European Journal of Training and Development*, the book's emphasis on aligning theoretical rigor with practical applications is particularly relevant.

Summary of content

The book unfolds through eight substantive chapters, beginning with foundational principles and progressing through individual and collective development dynamics:

- *Principles of developing leaders and leadership*: The book opens by clarifying key terms, drawing a critical distinction between developing individuals and cultivating collective leadership capacity. Day sets the stage for a dual-focused approach that integrates both dimensions.
- *Developmental systems*: Here, Day emphasizes the systemic nature of leadership development. He outlines how organizational culture, structures and contextual factors create an environment that can either foster or inhibit leadership growth.
- *Individual-level growth*: The subsequent chapters explore the mechanisms of individual development, including self-concept, identity formation and adult developmental theory. Day delves into how self-awareness, reflection and feedback contribute to personal leadership growth.



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- *Collective leadership capacity*: A key contribution of the book is its treatment of leadership as a shared, networked phenomenon. This chapter shifts focus from individual traits to collaborative dynamics, highlighting how organizations can build leadership cultures that transcend positional authority.
- *Motivation and networks*: Day explores how social and professional networks act as catalysts for leadership development. He underscores the importance of relational dynamics, mentoring and communities of practice in sustaining leadership capacity.
- *Advancing research in leadership development*: The final chapter sets an agenda for future research, advocating for longitudinal studies, dynamic systems modeling and cross-level investigations that bridge individual and organizational outcomes.

Throughout, Day integrates insights from psychology, management and education, creating a multidisciplinary framework that offers both depth and practical relevance.

Strengths of the book

One of the book's primary strengths is its *conceptual clarity*. Day offers a precise articulation of the differences and interconnections between leader development and leadership development. This distinction is vital for practitioners who often conflate the two, leading to misaligned training interventions.

Another notable strength is the *evidence-based approach*. Day consistently advocates for rigorous evaluation of development initiatives, emphasizing methodologies such as longitudinal tracking, multisource feedback and reflective practice. This aligns with the growing demand for accountability and measurable outcomes in HRD programs.

The book also excels in its *practical orientation*. Despite its theoretical depth, Day provides actionable insights on how organizations can design systemic developmental pathways. He challenges superficial interventions, urging practitioners to move beyond one-off training events toward sustained, integrated development processes.

In addition, the book's emphasis on *networks and social systems* offers a refreshing perspective. By framing leadership as a distributed capability embedded within organizational networks, Day encourages a shift from leader-centric models to collaborative, ecosystem-based approaches.

Finally, Day's forward-looking *research agenda* provides valuable guidance for scholars and practitioner-researchers. His call for dynamic systems modeling and cross-level analyses opens new pathways for advancing leadership development research and practice.

Limitations and critique

While the book is rich in theoretical rigor, its *academic tone* may present challenges for practitioners seeking more accessible, immediately applicable content. The prose is dense in places, and readers without a background in leadership theory may find certain sections abstract.

Moreover, the book offers *limited contextual diversity*. While Day acknowledges the influence of organizational culture, there is little exploration of how leadership development varies across industries, sectors or cultural contexts. Given the global readership of *EJTD*, a more nuanced treatment of contextual variables would enhance its applicability.

A further limitation is the book's *minimal engagement with technology-mediated learning*. Emerging modalities such as digital learning platforms, AI-driven coaching tools and virtual leadership simulations are transforming the development landscape. The book

would benefit from a deeper exploration of how these technologies intersect with developmental principles and systems. European Journal of Training and Development

Implications for training and development practice

For practitioners, the book offers several actionable takeaways:

- *Designing developmental systems:* Day's framework encourages organizations to align individual growth initiatives with systemic support structures. This holistic approach ensures that leadership development is embedded within the fabric of organizational learning.
- *Emphasis on evaluation:* The book advocates for robust assessment strategies. Practitioners can leverage mixed-methods evaluations, longitudinal tracking and feedback loops to ensure that development interventions yield tangible outcomes.
- *Leveraging networks and communities of practice:* Day's focus on networks underscores the importance of relational dynamics in leadership growth. Training designers can apply these insights to create mentoring programs, peer-learning cohorts and collaborative learning ecosystems.
- *Balancing individual and collective development:* The dual focus on leader and leadership development urges practitioners to design programs that not only enhance individual competencies but also build collective leadership capacity across teams and networks.

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Conclusion

Developing Leaders and Leadership: Principles, Practices, and Processes is a significant contribution to the field of leadership development. David V. Day offers a comprehensive, evidence-based exploration of how organizations can cultivate both individual leaders and systemic leadership capacity. While the book's academic tone and limited treatment of technological and contextual diversity may pose some limitations, its conceptual rigor, practical relevance and forward-thinking research agenda make it a valuable resource for *EJTD* readers.

For scholars, the book provides a robust theoretical foundation and clear research pathways. For practitioners, it offers practical frameworks and strategies to design, implement and evaluate effective leadership development programs. Its systemic approach encourages organizations to move beyond isolated interventions toward integrated, sustainable developmental practices.

Given the *European Journal of Training and Development's* focus on bridging theory and practice in training, learning and organizational development, this book stands as a timely and impactful contribution worthy of review and broader scholarly discussion.

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Further reading

Day, D.V. (2024), *Developing Leaders and Leadership: Principles, Practices, and Processes*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, NY.