Open Source Leadership
Building a collaborative leadership community
A new approach to leadership development

"Leaders must prepare their collaborative minds."
- *Don Tapscott, Anthony Williams*, **Wikinomics**.

"Nowadays one can no longer remain within one's shell or one's home territory."
- *Howard Gardner*, **Five Minds For The Future**

"70% of our learning in life is informal.
It comes from stories, gossip, learning from the example of others..."
Professor Aidan Halligan

"Johnson & Johnson's strategy calls for the creation of an organization of 90,000 leaders. Since 90,000 people can't be put through the top development programs, technology is provided so employees around the world can interact and learn from each other."
- *Robert M. Fulmer and Marshall Goldsmith*, **The Leadership Investment: How the World's Best Organizations Gain Strategic Advantage through Leadership Development**
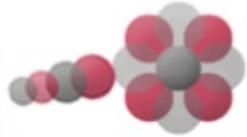
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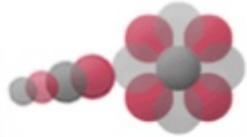
Foreword: 60 second summary

60 Second Summary

You cannot train people in leadership. But leadership can be learnt. Paradoxically, leaders learn and develop themselves most effectively when they are outwardly- focussed; when they are developing other leaders.

For the first time, the collaborative tools exist to allow an organization to build a global community of leaders who learn from each other and help develop each other; sharing experiences, ideas, practices and insights peer-to-peer online, allowing inspiring practice to spread, and a collective leadership culture to emerge.

The Leadership Hub is the world's first online community of practice for leadership using these Web 2.0 interactive tools.

This paper looks at how these principles of collaborative development are put into practice in **The Leadership Hub.**

An open version of **The Leadership Hub** lives on the Web as a showcase, demonstrating how organizations can benefit from creating an in-house version for their own leadership community.
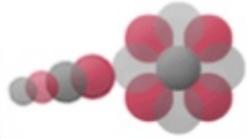
1. The problem with existing leadership development

Kamenev and Zinoviev were two Bolshevik leaders under Lenin. The impression Lenin made on them was so great that they both developed his handwriting. Marty Sklar was one of Walt Disney's right-hand men and became Chief Imagineer for the Disney Corporation. Walt always used a red pen to make notes. Long after Walt's death, handwritten red notes were still being passed around the Imagineer department, because Sklar would only use a red pen. At Disney, when casting around for a creative solution, the question everyone uses, even now, is "What would Walt do?"

The imprint leaders leave on people is mysterious and the legacy of effective leaders runs deep. But one thing it is not is standardized. HR departments in large organizations, currently working away diligently on standardized leadership behaviours, and development systems, please take note.

The leadership consultant Rene Carayol put it this way:

> "We have been told for years now that there is a standard, homogenized great leader type or template we have to aspire to. Organizations deliver one training programme, people are expected to become clone leaders. That doesn't work. ***The marketplace tells us that difference works.*** Challenging the status quo and standing out from the pack is what makes a great leader." *Rene Carayol* www.carayol.com

If you systematize anything you end up with too much similarity. And that applies to the way large organizations develop leaders. There is already too much sameness out there. Take this example from the maverick business leader Ricardo Semler, who sometimes teaches at *Harvard Business School,* and told me this when I asked him about his approach to leadership:

"I ran an exercise with forty-three *Fortune 500* CEOs. I got them to write down their company values on a piece of card. Then, when they were at coffee, I swapped all the cards around without telling them. When they came back it took them a while to figure out that they had somebody else's values in front of them. They were all saying the same thing."

According to all the recent research by ***The Gallup Organization, Marcus Buckingham*** and others, most corporate leaders are still failing to engage and inspire their people, despite the billions of dollars poured into management and leadership development every year.
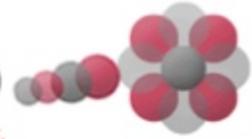
**"I was shocked to find
that I no longer believe
in business education."
Charles Handy, 2006*

*NB I had breakfast with Charles Handy in 2008 and asked him if he actually said this. He said he didn't, but that it's the kind of thing he might have said.

There's an old saying that the problem with training is that as soon as someone shows you how to do something, they have taken away the possibility of you inventing a better way of doing it.

It's a trap that leadership development falls squarely into.

The aim of leadership development is to develop skills, certainly. But, that is only part of it. Warren Bennis, described by the *Financial Times* as 'The Dean of Leadership', defines growing into leadership as a process of finding your own voice and fully expressing yourself. He says leadership courses generally fail:

"I would argue that more leaders have been made by accident, circumstance, sheer grit, or will than have been made by all the leadership courses put together." – ***Warren Bennis***

Bennis and other leadership experts stress that the ingredients of leadership cannot be taught through courses. But, they can be learned.

> "Learning is meant to be...active, passionate and personal" – ***Warren Bennis***

> "When a company requires people to go through a one-size-fits-all leadership development programme, participants may simply go through the motions..." – ***Daniel Goleman, Primal Leadership***
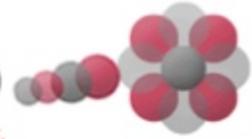
2.Principles for successful leadership development

At its best, leadership development helps people at all levels in an organization address some of the most fundamental questions facing all of us; questions we don't often get to address explicitly at work: Who are you? Why are you here? What do you believe in? How have your experiences shaped you? What do you want to contribute? How do you need to change?

Large organizations trying to tackle the issue of legacy – growing a cadre of leaders to take over from the current leadership – will find they only really succeed if the CEO and other formal leaders are actively involved in a hands-on way. When top management commit time and energy to the development of leadership is when it is taken seriously by those involved. **(1)** Also, best-practice companies tend to use fewer competencies in their leadership development models, feeling that simplicity and focus are strong advantages**.(2)**

If you are involved in developing leaders you also need to know that your development programme has to be focussed on 'doing' not on 'knowing'; it has to be designed expressly to stimulate action that directly benefits the performance of the organization, and to encourage leaders to reflect on and learn from their own and others' experiences. Leadership development has to be derived directly from the organization's strategy and revolve around real issues. The ideal approach is developing-while-doing.

Finally, get people to manage their leadership development in short, focussed chunks of time - say regular daily or three times a week or even weekly 10-15 minute bursts - that are part of the working week and link to their actual leadership activities, rather than just relying on traditional seminars, retreats, MBA courses, or other events that take people away from work for long periods. **(3)**

SOURCES
1 The Leadership Investment. How the World's Best Organizations Gain Strategic Advantage Through Leadership Development, *Robert M. Fulmer and Marshall Goldsmith*
2 Growing your company's leaders, *Robert Fulmer, Jay Conger*
3 The work of *David Rock, Jeffrey Schwartz* and others into how the brain processes information, changes to accept or adapt it, and how that is connected with shifts in behaviour, suggests regular short high-attention activities are more effective. See the next section of this paper for more on this.
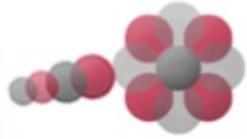
3. The Neuroscience of leadership development:
The 'few minutes' rule

The recent work of **David Rock** and **Jeffrey Schwartz** in defining and developing what is increasingly being called 'the neuroscience of leadership' gives us a far greater insight than previously into how people learn, change and develop.

These insights are critical in helping us work out the optimal session time and frequency spent on leadership development activity. It was the findings of Rock and Schwartz, and a general awareness of the inadequacy of existing leadership development offerings, that led to the creation of an online community of practice where the aim is to learn from each other how to be better at leadership.

Participants are unlikely to spend more than 15 minutes per session in an online community of practice. Schwartz and Rock's findings tell us this is just the right amount of time to optimize learning.

The neuroscience of leadership is based on watching how the brain changes, using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI scanners). Here are some of the insights Schwartz and Rock have provided us with in recent months, through books, articles and webinars. in which they discuss their findings:

Insights or 'epiphanies'

The first, critical finding, is on 'insights' or 'epiphanies', which are central to changing established wiring in the brain, Only recently has neuroscience started studying insight. Jeffrey Schwartz puts it this way: "The findings show that the moment of insight is central to facilitating change. An insight or an epiphany is a sudden spark and the person suddenly sees something. It's a specific defined moment that can be seen in the way parts of the brain light up through MRI images, and it can be measured."

There are four phases around insight:

1. Attention / Awareness
2. Reflection
3. Insight
4. Action
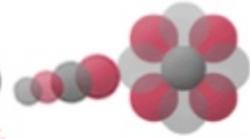
Beyond 'transmission' and teaching

Jeffrey Schwartz: "Our management models are based on the premise that knowledge is power. This *transmission* approach to exchanging information (exemplified by lectures and textbooks, where knowledge is *transmitted* to a passive receiver) has always been the prevailing teaching method in academia, including the business schools that many managers attend.

"Since many executives assume that the teaching methods they endured are the only teaching methods that work, it's no small matter to consider trying a different approach in our workplaces. For many executives, leading others in such a new way may be a bigger change, and therefore challenge, than driving on the other side of the road."

The attention model

"With an ***attention model***, learning becomes possible through many media, not just in a classroom. Also, given the small capacity of working memory, many small bites of learning, digested over time, may be more efficient than large blocks of time spent in workshops. The key is getting people to pay sufficient attention to new ideas, something the 'e-learning' industry has struggled with."

When asked in a recent webinar what leaders do differently that works in leadership development, **David Rock** replied:

"Small doses is what it's about...To facilitate change you have to get attention on the idea and push other ideas away for that short period of regular time. (ARIA – The Attention, Reflection, Insight, Action model). You have to create a space where people can quietly reflect then stop to take some action (think about it, talk about it, share it). Any change relies on small bites of intense learning followed up regularly by action over time."

From seminars and programmes to a few minutes per session

"The one-day event is the training paradigm offered by HR departments. That's equivalent to trying to grow a garden by watering it for one day a year. Small amounts of attention more regularly is much more efficient than overwhelming the brain. The reason is working memory. We are all familiar with being at a conference and by lunchtime on the second day the brain is full...even on the first day. So, we can re- think how we run training and change programmes and what's the most efficient way to drive people's attention and certain behaviours."
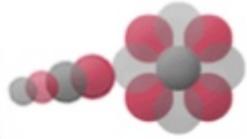
David Rock: "If you want to grow a forest pour rain onto it for not too long – ten minutes, half an hour is a long time for attention. Focus it regularly. Studies show that with fifteen minutes of practice once a week you can read something out and have something read to you and understand both after one month (four lots of practice). That's an example of the principle that a small amount of attention regularly, once a week minimum, it seems, (delivers change in behaviour)". **Jeffrey Schwartz adds:** "Five or ten minutes a day is a lot – it goes a long way."

The Leadership Hub takes the principles of learning for change, as defined by Schwartz, Rock and others, and applies them to a new online collaborative development environment where the participants commit to spending just a few minutes per session developing their own leadership and the leadership of other participants.

SOURCES
The work of David Rock, Jeffrey Schwartz and others into how the brain processes information, changes to accept or adapt it, and how that is connected with shifts in behaviour. This work suggests regular short high-attention activities are more effective than traditional training.

Quiet Leadership, by David Rock
The Mind and The Brain, by Jeffrey Schwartz
David Rock & Jeffrey Schwartz, talking in a Booz Allen webinar, 2 Nov 2006, on how leaders need to develop through "self-directed neuro-plasticity" i.e. changing their own brains, and how they are resistant to attempts to change their behaviour directed at them from the outside i.e. traditional leadership development training.
The Neuroscience of Leadership, an article by David Rock and Jeffrey Schwartz in Business+Strategy, available here:
http://www.strategy-business.com/
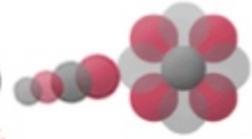
4. Self-directed AND Other-directed learning

One answer to the problem of conformity to a leadership course or a perceived ideal leadership state is self-directed learning. We all know we change and grow best when allowed to explore for ourselves, review our past actions versus our intentions, and reflect on that. As section 3. of this paper has shown us, the spark of change has to come from inside, from following our own lights.

Daniel Goleman, *Richard Boyatzis* and *Annie McKee* define self-directed learning as "the crux of leadership development: intentionally developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are, or who you want to be, or both." Richard Boyatzis' model of self-directed learning says that people who successfully change in sustainable ways cycle through the following five stages, or discoveries:

1. *The first discovery:* My ideal self – Who do I want to be?
2. *The second discovery:* My real self – Who am I? What are my strengths and gaps?
3. *The third discovery:* My learning agenda – How can I build on my strengths while reducing my gaps?
4. *The fourth discovery:* Experimenting with and practicing new behaviour, thoughts, and feelings to the point of mastery.
5. *The fifth discovery:* Developing supportive and trusting relationships that make change possible.

The limits of self-directed learning
The Open Source leadership approach that forms the foundation of **The Leadership Hub** aims to create a collaborative platform in which leaders can work through all the five stages of self-directed learning. But, the collaborative approach also recognizes the limits of self-directed learning and allows participants to get past those limits.
Self-directed learning on its own, when applied to leadership, can become navel- gazing. You get a clue to this limitation when you notice that the first *four* of Boyatzis' five stages, above, are about the self. Only at stage five does he start referring to other people.
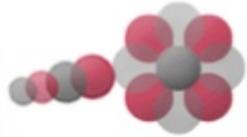
Other-directed learning
Leadership is something you, by definition, cannot do on your own (though self- leadership is its starting point). Leadership development needs to be a blend of **self**- directed learning and **other**-directed learning, in which we strengthen our leadership by allowing others to lead us; by testing our development against their reality. The two complement each other.

In fact, I would argue that being more outwardly-focussed, on the development needs of others, generates the insights and internal growth needed to populate the inner leadership landscape almost automatically.

'Other-directed learning' is based on the truth that we learn best by teaching what we think we know, test theories by doing, cement learning by sharing experiences and our underlying beliefs, ideas and assumptions with each other, and teasing out meaning together.

For the first time, collaborative online tools - known collectively as Web 2.0 – make it possible to create a community of practice founded on a combination of self-directed and collaborative – other-directed - learning.
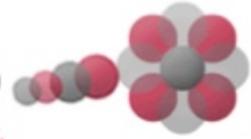
5. Leadership development 2.0: Emergent collaboration

Open Source Leadership Development – or development using 'emergent collaboration' - is an adaptation of the principle underlying Open Source Science, which itself borrows from the Open Source software movement. The principle is collaborative development. Open source software isn't created privately and published to an audience. It is created by its own audience. It emerges. The users have taken over the system. Linux is perhaps the best-known open source software developed collaboratively by its users.

Open source science

Borrowing a practice that is common in the open source software community, Harvard Business School professor *Karim R. Lakhani* and colleagues decided to see how "broadcasting" might work among scientists trying to solve scientific problems. Instead of working on issues and problems in isolation, scientists broadcast them to a community of peers and ask for their input.

What he and his co-authors discovered was that "broadcasting" or introducing problems to outsiders yields effective solutions. Indeed, it was outsiders—those with expertise at the periphery of a problem's field—who were most likely to find answers and do so quickly.

The study and its findings are described in his paper *The Value of Openness in Scientific Problem Solving*, co-authored with *Lars Bo Jeppesen, Peter A. Lohse*, and *Jill A. Panetta*. It describes how broadcast search was used with 166 distinct scientific problems from the research laboratories of twenty-six firms from ten countries over a four-and-a-half year period. Problems involved everything from biotech to consumer products and agrochemicals.

Thanks to broadcasting, nearly one-third of the previously unsolved problems found successful solutions.

"Innovations happen at the intersection of disciplines. People have talked about that a lot and I think we're providing some systematic evidence now with this study," Lakhani reported. "The insight is that what you want to do is open up your problem to other people —not just to serendipity, but in some systematic way." Source: Karim Lakhani, *HBS Working Knowledge. November 2006*

Don Tapscott and *Anthony Williams* describe this example of Open Source science:
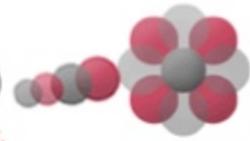
"At InnoCentive, companies — or "seekers" — anonymously post R&D problems on the InnoCentive website, while "solvers" submit their solutions...InnoCentive Chairman Darren Carroll says, "We're breaking down traditional laboratory doors and opening up an exciting new frontier where solution seekers — well-respected global corporations — can reach beyond their traditional R&D facilities and tap into more of the brightest scientific minds in the world."

They go on to conclude that working together and sharing knowledge across organizational boundaries — in much the same way that the Net Generation swaps songs and videos over the Internet — is increasingly 'normal' and needs to be adopted in the way organizations communicate internally and with others. "Organizations' leaders and their HR departments need to wake up to today's new forms of mass collaboration, and explore a more self-organizing approach*..." Wikinomics, Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams*

What are these new collaborative tools
Andrew McAfee perhaps best described the sea-change in web and intranet tools with a Spring 2006 paper in the MIT Sloan Management Review titled *Enterprise 2.0: The Dawn of Emergent Collaboration*.

McAfee described how a new wave of business communication tools including **blogs**, **wikis** and **group messaging software**—which the author dubbed, collectively, Enterprise 2.0—allow for more spontaneous, knowledge-based collaboration.

These new tools may well supplant other communication and knowledge management systems, because of their superior ability to capture tacit knowledge, best practices and relevant experiences from throughout a company and make them readily available to more users.

The resulting organizational communication patterns can lead to highly productive and highly collaborative environments by making both the practices of knowledge work and its outputs more visible. Drawing on case studies and survey data, McAfee offered managers a set of ground rules for implementing the new technologies.

• *First,* it is necessary to create a receptive culture in order to prepare the way for new practices.
• *Second,* a common platform must be created to allow for a collaboration infrastructure.
• *Third,* an informal rollout of the technologies may be preferred to a more formal procedural change.
• *And fourth*, managerial support and leadership is crucial.
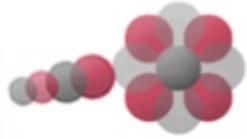
What McAfee fails to emphasize enough, perhaps, is that ***the very act of collaborating through sharing and challenging thinking, insights, experiences, feelings, assumptions, methods and practices with peers – not just sharing knowledge – is a powerful learning and development experience, not just a mechanism for producing solutions and outcomes.***
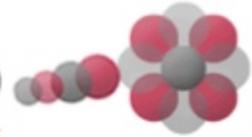
6. Not e-learning as we know it

Stanford University Professor Bob Sutton describes traditional e-learning this way :

"On the one hand, you have formal, structured learning delivered on-line, typically presentation slides with a little window in the corner of the screen where somebody talks. For the more formal e-learning, the computer can sometimes be a problem because you lose the interactivity."

"The Information Age is enhancing innovation, especially innovation that comes from new combinations of disparate fields. This is the more informal side of e-learning. In some ways, it's a structured versus an unstructured problem."

The Leadership Hub takes a relatively unstructured approach, relying on emergence and participation to create patterns and structure. But, you do, however, need to impose a time structure – a schedule – to the creation of content in a relatively unstructured environment.

Regular posting of short, sharp inspirational leadership tips and tools borrows from TV scheduling to encourage users to build regular scheduled visits into their diaries.
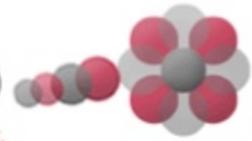
Appendix I

The in-house Leadership Hub

The in-house Leadership Hub is a corporate leadership collaboration and development platform, a tool for HR departments to help fix the leadership deficit currently experienced by all large organizations. It is particularly useful for global organizations with a dispersed community of leaders, who need them to collaborate, build relationships and share practice with each other, to lead in a co-ordinated way and become better at leadership as they use the platform.

It is built on four principles.

1) Leadership redux

"'No time, no time', said the White Rabbit." *Lewis Carroll.*

There is too much 'stuff' out there on leadership. It is overwhelming, of variable quality, and hard to navigate. The ***In-house Leadership Hub*** simplifies (but not too much) and distils the essence of great Leadership into 60 second bites, as building blocks for 15-minute modules, which act as the catalyst for interaction and changed behaviour.

2) Blending knowing and doing

"Leadership, like swimming, cannot be learned by reading about it."
- Henry Mintzberg.

Interaction with the ***In-house Leadership Hub*** has to be part of getting the job of leadership done, not separate from it, not 'learning' as it is traditionally seen.

3) Let them build it and they will come

Co-creation, co-operation, community: The **Leadership Hub** blends inspirational content – interactive learning modules designed around your organization's 'desired leadership behaviours' – plus a closed, collaborative community (similar to the open Leadership Hub, but made up of just your organization's leadership community).

Users help build the system and share examples of putting leadership behaviours into action, through collaborative tools, from leadership diaries to multi-user blogs used to discuss and
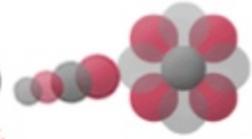
share solutions, to common problems, to Q & A tools designed to tap into and share the group's collected expertise.

The community select the tools they use. By omission, they also de-select and therefore shape their own collaborative environment as the tools they do not use are eventually removed.

This is a much more cost-effective approach than building a learning platform and pushing people through it. The Hub's shape emerges rather than being prescribed in advance. Usage is part of the building process: as people use it, they shape it.

Dave Snowden & Cynthia Kurtz explain the principle of emergence this way:

"In an ideal approach you define how things should be and attempt to achieve it; in a naturalising approach you introduce technologies and practices on a safe-fail basis and see what works. Amplification of good patterns, damping of bad patterns allows something to emerge that is more resilient and risk free, not to mention a lower cost, solution."

- ***Bramble Bushes in a Thicket***, a paper by Dave Snowden and Cynthia Kurtz on idealistic versus naturalistic change

4) Commitment-based leadership

Commitment to action is a condition of participation in The Hub. The active participation of the top leadership team is recommended as a spur to participation from others.

Participants are expected to evidence changes in their leadership behaviour. Participants commit to spending 15 minutes a week getting better at one critical leadership area per week (eg inspiring high performance in a team, leading by example, leading innovation).

There are currently 30 critical elements of leadership that can create a skeleton syllabus in the in-house Hub: HR clients select elements that map onto their desired corporate behaviour to create their own syllabus for their particular leadership community. Alternatively, modules can be created to deliver on the HR client's particular leadership development needs, creating their own syllabus.

The community collaborates on these modules within the Leadership Hub online platform – either within your intranet or sitting in a password protected area on the Net - and then use what they have learnt to change their leadership behaviour and report back to the community on what works and what doesn't.
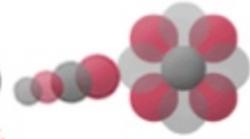
Appendix 2

## Mix it up: a clarifying note on openness and hierarchy

Peer-to-peer does not mean parity across a level in a hierarchy; that mid-level leaders mix with other mid-level leaders; that fast track high potentials mix and learn exclusively from other fast track high potentials; or that the Board experiences exclusive Board-level leadership programmes, retreats, coaching...which is how most leadership development programmes are sadly grouped: pitched at distinct horizontal levels within a hierarchy.

We learn best by mixing it up. How much collective leadership experience does your Board have in person-years: 100 years, 200 years? And what exactly do you and they do with that stored up accumulation of gold standard leadership capital? Where is your program(me) for unlocking that treasure chest of leadership expertise and experience, and cascading it down through your organization, like one of those champagne glass pyramids at weddings?

Where and how do your top level leaders mix it up with the rest of your organization, candidly sharing their leadership legacy regularly and systematically –sharing true tales of success and failure, of what works and what doesn't, and learning **THEMSELVES** by being challenged by those they share these stories with. Jack Welch used to do exactly this by teaching leadership classes at GE's learning centre at Crotonville.

Most Board-level leaders don't do this. Because most large organizations do not have a platform for robust two-way leadership conversations and exchanges of learning up and down the hierarchy. Most organizations' Board-level leaders are, therefore, failing to lead.

If you help to run a large organization's HR department and are tasked with leadership development, and your Board is not given the opportunity to share its leadership legacy regularly with the rest of the organization, then you are culpable, too: it's your job to challenge them to earmark a certain amount of their own time each week to leadership development shared across the organization; to come up with program(me)s or with a space – which is what the in-house version of **The Leadership Hub** is designed to be - to help them open up and stop hoarding that leadership capital.

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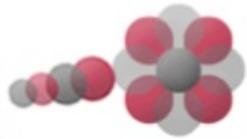
About the author

Phil Dourado is a leadership author, consultant and community builder. He is the author of two books on leadership, published by *John Wiley & Sons*, and is founder and curator of *The Leadership Hub*, an online community of practice. He was for five years Chief Learning Officer of *The Inspired Leaders Network*, where his job was to research and identify what makes inspiring leaders and how best to develop leadership capital in large organizations. He holds an MA in History from Cambridge University, is married with two sons and lives in North Oxfordshire, the United Kingdom. Phil was named the 17th most influential leadership 'guru' in the world in the 2011 Leadership Gurus Global Top 30, http://www.leadershipgurus.net.

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