

Research Brief

# Reinventing a Leadership Culture

at the **Girl Scouts** of Kentucky's  
Wilderness Road Council



January 2018

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## Demographics: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Leadership Development Study

**279** Global Responses



**28** Countries

- **74%** US/Canada
- **19%** EMEA
- **5%** APAC
- **2%** Latin/South America



**34** Industries

Top 5 industries represented:  
Healthcare, Technology/  
Software, Education,  
Manufacturing, Consulting/  
Business Services

Small, Mid-Size, and  
Large Organizations



**25%**

1 - 500  
employees



**30%**

501 - 5,000  
employees



**45%**

5,000+  
employees

- 30%** Learning/Leadership Development or Talent Acquisition Professional
- 26%** Head of Learning/Leadership Development
- 15%** Executive/Senior Leaders
- 10%** HR/Talent Professional
- 9%** Head of HR/Talent
- 5%** Operations/Technical Role
- 5%** Individual Contributor

## Introduction

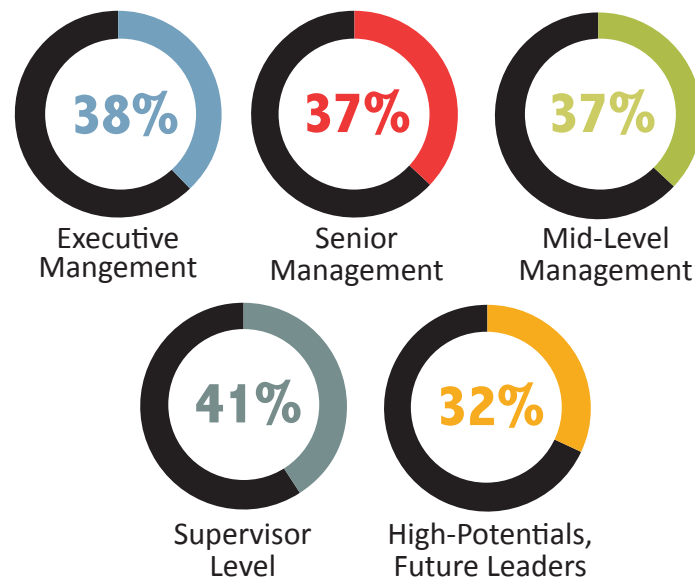
When Brandon Hall Group, the leading independent HCM research analyst firm, conducted its annual Leadership Development Study in 2017, it found that most organizations suffered from ineffective, and sometimes dysfunctional, Leadership Development (LD) programs. Key research findings included that:

- 68% of organizations consider leadership development essential or critical to their business strategies, while only 20% believe their LD program has a significant positive impact on business results.
- 56% of organizations believed coaching/mentoring was needed to develop leaders and planned to increase the use over the next 12-18 months.

- 47% of organizations believed they needed assessments to understand leadership gaps and planned to increase the use of them in the next 12-18 months.
- 34% of organizations are not ready for a strategic leadership development program due to the corporate culture and lack of support from top leadership.

Overall, less than two-fifths of organizations believed their LD programs were effective, and the lack of results existed at all levels of leadership:

### Leadership Development Programs Rated Effective/Exceptional



Source: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Leadership Development Study

# Reinventing a Leadership Culture at the Girl Scouts of Kentucky's Wilderness Road Council

Organizations suffered from a wide variety of barriers to effective Leadership Development programs, ranging from time constraints to lack of technology to scale the program.

## Top Barriers to Effective Leadership Development Programs



Source: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Leadership Development Study

Organizations around the country have found themselves unable to grow their businesses and serve their customers the way they want to because of a dramatic lack of leadership.

As an example, only **28%** of organizations believe that their leadership team can effectively meet more than half of their management responsibilities over the next two years, according to the Brandon Hall Group research.

The Girl Scouts of Kentucky's Wilderness Road Council (GSKWRC) found itself in a similar situation. As one of 112 Girl Scout councils nationwide, it was expected to pursue an organizational sales transformation developed by the Girl Scouts of the USA. This included updating systems, processes, and practices to support a new sales approach to customer service and member recruitment.

As GSKWRC leaders prepared to implement the transformation plan, a needs assessment of employees uncovered a significant barrier: a deeply rooted culture of tenured leaders who did not relate to, or empower, millennial employees. The disconnect ultimately caused an atmosphere of distrust and employee attrition. It became evident that the GSKWRC executive team would have to completely change the leadership culture before adopting the national sales strategy.

This is the story of how the GSKWRC, in partnership with The Training Associates, a global leader for Learning & Development talent and solutions, reinvented its leadership culture to better serve 68 counties in Kentucky and Southeastern Ohio. The program earned a Gold Award for Best Results of a Learning Program in the 2017 Brandon Hall Group HCM Excellence Awards.

## The Old Culture

The Council's workplace culture was dysfunctional due to inconsistent processes, avoidance of accountability, lack of commitment, and absence of trust. Similar to what the Brandon Hall Group research showed, the GSKWRC was driven by the following realities:

- Stagnant legacy culture
- Antiquated technology

- Remote employees working in silos
- Employee turnover
- Employee generational gap
- Outdated and informal training
- Deficiencies in succession planning and hiring practices

With a vision to see change in the organization, the executive team decided to take corrective measures to fix the culture before taking on the sales training endeavor. The focus was to transform and rebuild the Council from an unenthusiastic legacy culture to one of inspiration, collaboration, and empowerment.



## Most Effective Approaches to Leadership Development



Source: 2017 Brandon Hall Group Leadership Development Study

## Developing Leaders into Enablers of Change

The 18-month leadership training program began in August 2015. The goal was to train Council managers how to build a workplace culture of inspiration and collaboration by implementing strategies to nurture the professional growth and retention of employees.

GSKWRC and The Training Associates adopted many strategies that the Brandon Hall Group research showed were highly effective. The customized training program included instructor-led training, virtual instructor-led training, and behavioral coaching. Learning was reinforced with small group sessions. Plus, the LD initiative grew out of a needs assessment.

The vision of the Council's new culture became a reality and revealed that change in culture is possible.

The GSKWRC transformed into a culture of innovation with the following guiding principles:

- Clear expectations, communications, and outcomes
- Professional staff development program
- Leadership trained to evangelize and coach teams
- Inspiration and empowerment
- Honesty, acceptance, and accountability
- Collaboration and enjoyment

Leaders became enablers of change, and the new approach became part of the organization's mission to influence current and future leadership. As a result, the Council successfully achieved the national business objective to transition from a service model to a sales model while maintaining the Girl Scouts' brand integrity.



Source: 2018 Girl Scouts

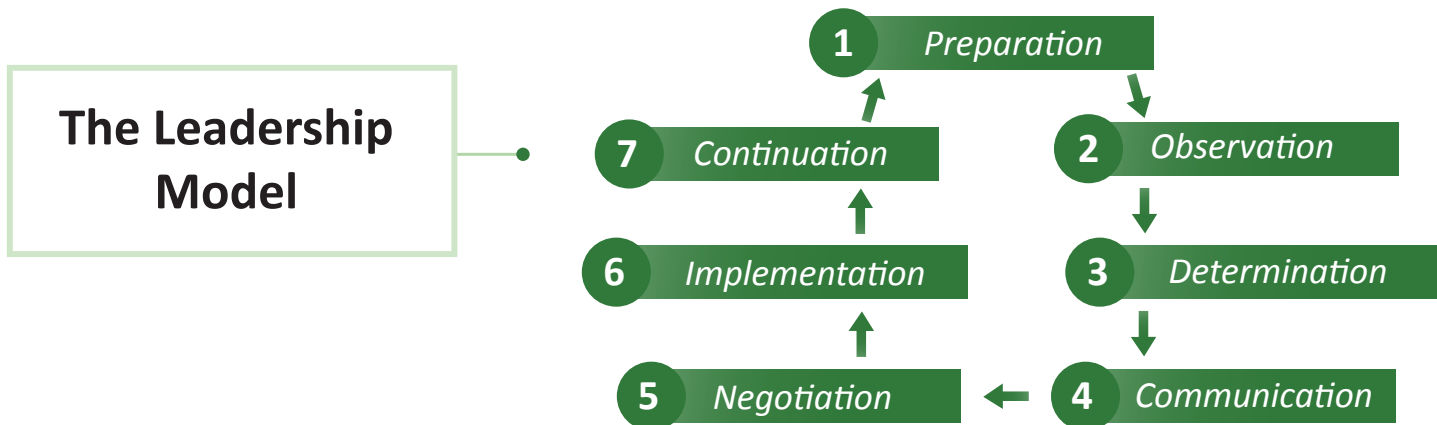
## The Power of Communication

To design a leadership development program, it was critical to first identify the pain points of the managers and employees in the organization. Focus groups, 1:1 sessions, interviews, and surveys were conducted to understand the challenges and training needs.

The needs assessment provided insights on employee behavioral patterns and identified training gaps. A driving force of the program was to coach managers on the importance of communicating effectively. Leaders in the organization had to “speak” the same language to create change in the Council.

How people communicated effectively was the core foundation of the learning program.

It also was important for management to set the tone of the culture and enforce expectations in the workplace. The development program started with a “top-down” leadership approach to foster organizational behavioral change and speed adoption of the strategy. A seven-step, behavior-based leadership model was applied to focus on the key coaching behaviors.



Source: 2018 Girl Scouts



## Program Delivery

The following key actions highlight how the training was deployed to executives and staff.

- **Employee needs assessment and multi-generational evaluation tools.** Individual interviews and focus groups were conducted to determine training needs and development strengths in the organization. Feedback was collected with anonymous employee satisfaction surveys.
- **Leadership development tools.** Management training included discussion forums, a monthly leadership-development book club, and role-playing activities. The first book introduced to managers was *The Little Book of Coaching* by Ken Blanchard and Don Shula.
- **Coaching models/techniques.** A series of professional communication classes and supporting coaching sessions

were provided to each manager. The importance of motivating a multi-generational workforce, setting clear expectations, communications, and outcomes were the core business skills topics.

- **Strengths assessment and development tools.** The last step of the training focused on identifying professional strengths of the entire staff. The consultant used a strengths-finder assessment tool based on four domains to analyze team strength. This one-day onsite workshop on behavioral-skills training was delivered to all employees and was followed up with a coaching session for managers to reinforce how to effectively communicate the results in a positive way. The goal was to identify team strengths to build a positive environment.

### Strengths Finder Assessment Tool

#### Four Domains of Team Strength

<b>Executing</b>	People with dominant executing themes know how to make things happen. ..... Achiever - Arranger - Belief - Consistency - Deliberative-Discipline - Focus - Responsibility - Restorative	<b>Relationship Building</b>	People with dominant relationship building themes have the ability to build strong relationships that can hold a team together and make the team greater than the sum of its parts. ..... Adaptability - Connectedness - Developer - Empathy - Harmony - Includer - Individualization - Positivity - Relator
<b>Influencing</b>	People with dominant influencing themes know how to take charge, speak up, and make sure the team is heard. ..... Achiever - Activator - Communication - Competition - Maximizer - Self-Assurance - Significant - Woo	<b>Strategic Thinking</b>	People with dominant strategic thinking themes help teams consider what could be. They absorb and analyze information that can inform better decisions. ..... Analytical - Context - Futuristic - Ideation - Input - Intellection - Learner - Strategic

Source: 2018 Girl Scouts

The strengths-finder assessment tool was identified as important early in the project. However, it was integrated into the long-term training strategy because the executive team was concerned that the organization would perceive the assessment as a negative tool if presented in the beginning stages of training.

Five months after the leadership development training, the Council was able to launch the sales training for managers, followed by sales training for the entire staff six months later.

## Measurable Benefits

What was an anticipated sales-training initiative turned into an opportunity to foster a critical change in organizational behavior and culture. The professional leadership program transformed the Council.

A legacy-punitive culture with low morale, fleeting accountability, and chaos transformed into a culture of collaboration, empowerment, and transparency.

Beyond making the Council a rewarding place to work, the training program delivered the following results:

- **Staff development.** A formal professional-development program was developed to nurture the growth and retention of employees.
- **Measured success.** The executive team integrated professional development into the overall success of the organization.
- **Employee turnover.** Decreased 22% within one year.
- **Culture change.** Transformed to a culture of empowerment based on new expectations, standards, and training.
- **Sales strategy.** A communication and sales training program was developed to guide employees to support the new GSUSA national sales strategy.
- **Annual membership renewal.** Increased 10%.
- **Membership retention.** Increased 10%.
- **Cookies sales.** Increased to 4% above the sales goal compared to being 9% below the sales goal before the program.



“One of the greatest achievements of our organizational transformation is to see first-hand the professional growth of our staff.”

- Susan Douglas, CEO of the Girl Scouts of Kentucky's Wilderness Road Council

## About the Training Associates



Training Talent and Solutions

[TheTrainingAssociates.com](http://TheTrainingAssociates.com)

An award-winning innovator, The Training Associates is a recognized global leader for Learning & Development (L&D) talent and solutions. Organizations of all sizes, including Fortune 500 corporations, rely on The Training Associates' agility to support their L&D initiatives of any size or scope across all training modalities.

Our strength lies in our adaptive workforce of 25,000 L&D professionals combined with our expertise to provide organizations with customized, scalable training solutions, and engaging learner experiences.

## About Brandon Hall Group

[brandonhall.com](http://brandonhall.com)

Brandon Hall Group is a HCM research and advisory services firm that provides insights around key performance areas, including Learning and Development, Talent Management, Leadership Development, Talent Acquisition, and HR/Workforce Management. With more than 10,000 clients globally and 25 years of delivering world-class research and advisory services, Brandon Hall Group is focused on developing research that drives performance in emerging and large organizations, and provides strategic insights for executives and practitioners responsible for growth and business results.

### Inspiring a Better Workplace Experience

Our mission: Empower excellence in organizations around the world through our research and tools every day. At the core of our offerings is a Membership Program that combines research, benchmarking and unlimited access to data and analysts. The Membership Program offers insights and best practices to enable executives and practitioners to make the right decisions about people, processes, and systems, coalesced with analyst advisory services which aim to put the research into action in a way that is practical and efficient.

### Membership Offers Tailored Support

Our membership delivers much more than research. Membership provides you direct access to our seasoned team of thought leaders dedicated to your success, backed by a rich member community, and proactive support from our client services team.