

2003 Excellence in Practice Citation

Workplace Learning & Development



Southern California Edison

Rosemead, California

Pragmatix: Practical Learning Solutions

Venice, California

Firstline Leadership Program

SUMMARY

Firstline Leadership is a pre-supervisory training program designed to develop leadership talent within the company. The program's primary focus is to develop leadership in non-supervisory employees by exposing them to such topics as self-management, effective communication, building and maintaining relationships, problem solving, and leadership self-assessment. Ultimately, program participants gain a common framework and understanding of how to successfully develop toward a leadership position, thus strengthening the pool of potential candidates within the company. The program was launched in June of 2000 and has been in place since that time.

An internal company program consultant facilitates brief opening and closing sessions to identify participant expectations, administer a leadership self-assessment tool, and ensure program consistency and follow-up. External consultants bring the latest in cutting edge leadership principles and deliver the majority of instruction to participants. The program consists of six courses:

1. Firstline Leadership Overview / What Matters Most
2. High-Performance Leadership Through Integrity & Ethics
3. Interpersonal Communication Skills
4. Problem Solving
5. Effective Business Writing
6. Firstline Leadership Challenge

Senior leaders expect that once employees are equipped with the right tools, improved employee morale and higher productivity will follow. Hence, Firstline Leadership is strongly endorsed by management within the company. To date, approximately 204 non-supervisory employees have participated in the program.

BACKGROUND

Original purpose. As Southern California Edison considered leadership development and succession planning in years prior to 2000, the need to develop leadership potential in non-supervisory employees was identified. As the data indicated, many experienced employees in key leadership positions throughout the company would soon be eligible for retirement in the years to come. Similarly, many existing managers and supervisors would potentially be eligible to promote up into higher leadership positions, leaving many first-line manager, supervisor, and other leadership positions vacant. Beyond succession planning reasons, it was also decided that employees would benefit from having exposure to leadership principles and skills, regardless of whether they went on to function as a manager or supervisor. Therefore, it was determined that Southern California Edison would be well served by developing its bench strength in leadership, both in formal leaders (manager and supervisor titles) and informal leaders (group leaders, individual contributors) who help direct the business of the company in the most productive and profitable directions. As a result, the Firstline Leadership program was created to fulfill this need.

Stage of implementation. Since its launch as a pilot program in July of 2000, Firstline Leadership has been well received. Minor adjustments have been made based on feedback from the pilot program participants, but the essential elements remain. Feedback continues to be very positive, but the employee development group remains open to needed changes and carefully reviews the program for content and quality of instruction improvements.

Location and employees served. Firstline Leadership is available to all non-supervisory employees in the company with an interest in leadership development, subject to management approval. Classes are held at the corporate office and in various field locations in order to minimize travel time and expenses for the participants. Thus far, employees from many divisions of the company have taken advantage of the training. To date, 204 employees or 23% of the company's target audience have participated in the program. The target audience is defined as non-supervisory employees identified for leadership development or approximately 10% (n=900) of the total non-supervisory population (n=9000).

Resources committed. Design of the Firstline Leadership program involved a needs assessment, which consisted of data gathering via interviews with key stakeholders. A team of internal staff, as well as a contract instructional designer, reviewed and synthesized the data to identify appropriate content and program structure. The result was a program design that met the communicated needs of various business units, as well as the requirements of key leadership competencies established for the organization.

The resources committed to Firstline Leadership on an ongoing basis include 30% of two full-time employees' time. A program coordinator oversees administration of the training (enrollments, reporting and tracking, coordination of classrooms and materials, etc.). Another, the program consultant, is responsible for overall program management and oversees planning, vendor management, program assessment, and quality control.

Additionally, supplemental contract trainers provide the classroom instruction for each class. All are professional trainers who are contracted specifically for their expertise in leadership topics included in the program, such as time, task, and priority management; relationship building; communication; problem solving; business writing, and goal-setting. The program consultant (an internal company employee) also provides brief, yet important training in areas including leadership foundations, self-assessment, and program logistics.

The costs to develop the program, totaling just under \$24,000, were primarily attributed to assistance from consultants during the needs identification and instructional design phase. Ongoing expenses paid to external trainers for materials and facilitation average \$2,000 to \$3,000 per class session. The number of sessions per year is based on client projections of use; approximately \$40,000 in 2000 and 2001; approximately \$60,000 in 2002 and 2003; approximately \$80,000 is projected for 2004. As expenditures indicate, there has been a steady increase in the number of course offerings and participation rates in the program. This is attributed primarily to the program's increasing popularity with employees and their supporting managers, as well as the overall success of the program in developing potential leaders.

Exemplary application of sound learning. The Firstline Leadership program incorporates best practice tools, techniques, and state-of-the-art concepts on relevant topics such as leadership, time and task priority management, interpersonal communication effectiveness, written communication effectiveness, problem solving strategies, relationship building, and leader integrity and ethics. The design basis for each course offering and the program as a whole are founded in solid Instructional System Design (ISD) principles. It is well known that sound application of ISD offers many advantages for training curriculum, including a) enhanced transfer of knowledge back to job and b) the ability to effectively quantify learning and program outcomes, both of which were considered at the initial design stages of the Firstline Leadership program.

Continuity and integration are central to the success of Firstline Leadership. Program concepts build on one another in an integrated fashion and instructors are carefully screened to ensure best-in-class delivery, fit with the company culture, relevance of their materials, and value-added expertise. Similarly, the internal company program consultant attends and opens every session, provides program updates, answers program-related questions, and introduces trainers, which creates excellent rapport and a unified program flow. The end result is a more cohesive and consistent thread of learning throughout training and within the company.

A leadership self-assessment tool is used at the beginning and end of the program. This tool provides participants with insight into areas of strength and/or weakness and helps target and enhance their development. By completing the tool pre and post program, participants are able to use a comparative analysis as one means to determine specific progress in program topics and competencies.

Finally, a strategic individual development plan is incorporated into the program to assist participants with focusing on and tracking goals. The development plan was recently enhanced to better target the connection between personal and program goals,

as well as the application of learning back on the job. It is anticipated that the design of the development plan will assist with the measurement of Kirkpatrick levels 2 (learning) and 3 (change in performance) in future efforts to measure the impact the program.

DOCUMENTATION

Needs Identification

1. *Describe the problem or need for which this practice is designed and implemented. How was this problem identified, and how was it determined that this practice is an appropriate response?*

Firstline Leadership was developed to fulfill several needs within the organization. Some of these needs include the following:

- The company would be well served to develop bench strength in leadership potential. It was anticipated that these individuals would one day function as formal leaders (manager and supervisor titles) and as informal leaders (group leaders, individual contributors) who would help direct the business of the company in the most productive and profitable directions.
- Individuals within the company have been identified as having leadership potential. These individuals benefit from having exposure to leadership principles and skills, regardless of whether they go on to function as a manager or supervisor.
- The need to provide high-quality pre-supervisory leadership training emphasizing established leadership competencies.
- An expressed need from management to prepare employees to assume leadership roles (especially diversity candidates).
- Provide an opportunity for employees to develop identified “competitive skills” and to network across business units.
- A desire to increase organizational effectiveness in areas identified by employee responses to the semi-annual work environment survey. In particular, the need to improve communication and influence skills of employees.
- The need to increase transferability of talent across business units to eliminate silos and promote greater teamwork.
- Minimize costs and the ineffective utilization of resources by providing a single corporate program to meet most of the pre-supervisory leadership training needs across the company.

Several needs assessment methods were used to gather information in support of developing the Firstline Leadership Program. These methods included: 1) interviews with first-line supervisors, managers, and leaders, 2) input from other business unit training organizations, 3) interviews with functional subject matter experts (i.e. human resource consultants, equal opportunity, labor relations, etc.), 4) analysis of existing internal and external programs, 5) work environment survey results, and 6) review and alignment with organizational leadership competency profiles. As a result of the data gathered from these methodologies, it was determined that a unifying pre-supervisory

leadership development program would assist the company in addressing the above objectives.

Design Values

- 2. Please describe how this practice takes into account the best interests of both the organization and the employees targeted.*

Every effort was made to ensure that the program met as many of the needs identified in the data gathering stage as possible, both from the perspective of moving the organization forward in light of aging workforce trends and to address skill gaps of the potential leaders within the organization. Input from existing managers and feedback from the pilot sessions also played a key role in ensuring that the end product fully met expectations and would receive ongoing support.

The key developmental objectives of the program are to:

- **Develop leadership potential:** By focusing on the competencies identified as vital to developing leadership potential, participants are exposed to curriculum that enhances their ability to perform as formal and informal leaders within the company. Similarly, by developing leadership potential, the company is better equipped to tap a pool of leadership talent that will support the organization's supervisory, management, and leadership needs now and in the future.
- **Improve individual effectiveness:** through a careful and thorough needs assessment process, employees who participate in the program are better equipped to perform as leaders. Notable is the alignment of the programs curriculum with the organization's leadership competency model. Developing these leadership competencies provides employees an enhanced opportunity to promote into supervisory and management positions in the future.

Courses in Firstline Leadership were developed internally and, where appropriate, were sourced through external vendors. Faculty meetings were held to ensure integration and promotion of the program as a comprehensive suite of courses versus a fragmented set of offerings. To ensure effective learning, lectures, interactive discussions, group exercises, self-assessments, and case scenarios are integrated throughout the program workshops.

Firstline Leadership is structured in "rollouts" (i.e., a grouping of the six courses), in which employees enroll in all six courses of the program at one time. Flexibility in scheduling date and time allows participants to take courses that are convenient for them. Each rollout includes the same group of participants for the series of classes. This framework provides an excellent opportunity for participants to develop relationships with peers while supporting the synergy of learning as an integrated group. This approach promotes building networks among the participants and encourages

knowledge sharing across business units. Participants report that the opportunity to meet, interact with, and learn from peers is a strong benefit of the program.

The Firstline Leadership program represents a blend of meeting needs on two levels: 1) the opportunity for individual skill development and career enhancement for non-supervisory employees and 2) for the corporation to increase bench strength through competency development, sharing knowledge, common vocabulary, increased transferability across business lines, increased understanding of the organization, and employee retention.

The program was also designed to align with the company’s people strategy (of attracting, retaining, developing, and recognizing talent critical to our success). Finally, some classes are held in remote locations to minimize impacts to productivity and mitigate the results of time lost due to travel away from the traditional worksite.

Alignment

3. *How is this practice in alignment with the performance identified, as described in your answer to question 1?*

Firstline Leadership meets higher level needs through the use of external expert instructors and company-specific needs through internal program coordination. As described in the response to question 1, the program was conceived and designed with significant input from line managers, supervisors, leaders, and other key stakeholders. Additionally, the program curriculum is in solid alignment with the company’s leadership competency model, as shown below.

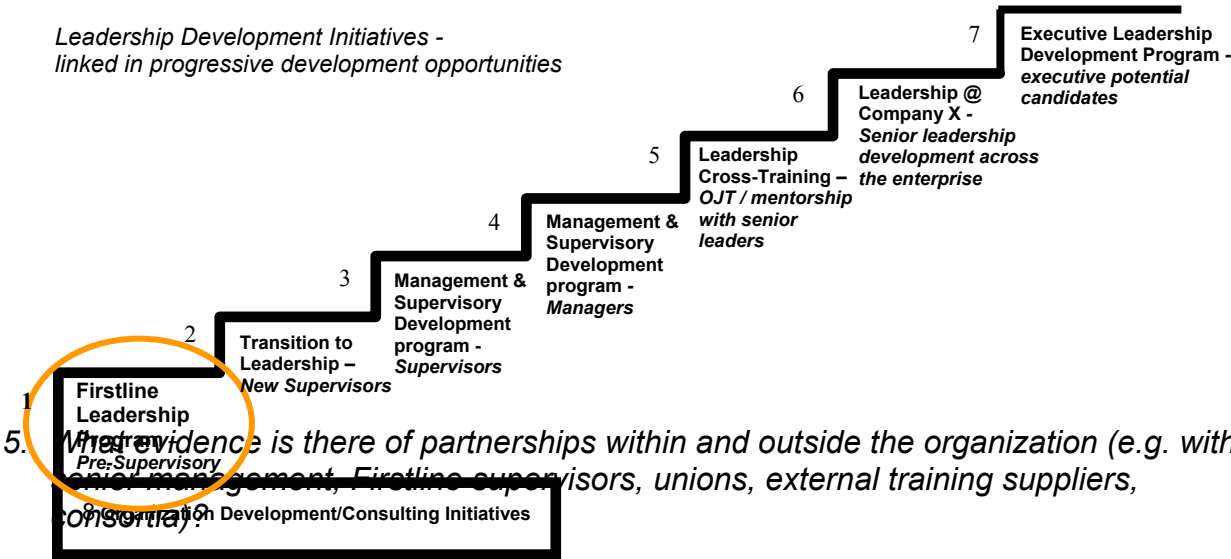
Frontline Leadership Course	Leadership Competency Alignment
1. Firstline Leadership Overview / What Matters Most	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic Thinking/Planning ▪ Change Management ▪ Technology Management
2. High-Performance Leadership Through Integrity & Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Integrity & Ethics ▪ Relationship Building/Conflict Management
3. Interpersonal Communication Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relationship Building/Conflict Management ▪ Coaching & Mentoring ▪ Build and Manage a Diverse Workforce
4. Problem Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change Management ▪ Customer Focus ▪ Creativity and Innovation
5. Effective Business Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Customer Focus ▪ Cross-Functional Business Knowledge

6. Firstline Leadership Challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategic Thinking/Planning ▪ Creativity and Innovation ▪ Motivation/Influence
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Alignment with key stakeholders' expressed needs and with the company's leadership competency model, as well as the curriculum's focus on developing leadership potential, are all supportive of addressing desired performance initiatives.

4. Please describe how this practice integrates other training, learning, and performance improvement practices, and aligns itself with organizational goals to achieve the desired outcomes.

Firstline Leadership is part of a suite of leadership development initiatives (see chart below) that begin at the pre-supervisory level with an introduction to foundational leadership concepts in Firstline Leadership (1). A Transition to Leadership course (2) is available, which emphasizes the transition from individual contributor to supervising others. Supervisory and managerial leadership development is addressed through the Management & Supervisory Development program (3). Additional high-level development is available in the Leadership Cross Training program (5) for senior leadership mentoring opportunities; Leadership @ Southern California Edison (6) involves development across the enterprise; and finally, the Executive Leadership Potential program (7) is for senior-level employees who have been identified as potential successors for executive positions. Furthermore, all organization development/consulting activities (8) (e.g., change management initiatives, team building initiatives, etc.) are also in alignment with the leadership development curricula—they are used to complement and build on one and other as needed. The result is that all of the company's leadership development initiatives, including the Firstline Leadership Program, are integrated and offer a complete approach to performance improvement and development efforts.



Internal partnerships. The employee development organization partnered with key stakeholders to acquire input on program development. Further, an effective feedback loop was established with two of the company's largest and primary business units, resulting in course enhancements from participant suggestions. Partnerships with management at the business unit level have led to business unit-specific efforts for the program. For example intact-group sessions have been offered at the business unit level, targeting specific employees within the unit. Senior managers have been actively involved in the program by encouraging enrollment and attendance, as well as assisting with the forecasting needs and scheduling of the program for business units each year.

The structure of the program's courses is beneficial to business units, some of which have considered customizing certain aspects of the program to meet specific objectives. For example, one business unit has determined it has a specific need for future leaders who can manage projects and communicate in a heavily regulated, policy-driven environment. Similarly, employee schedules are less flexible in this business unit due to a facility that operates twenty-four hours a day. Toward this end, a customized version of the program is being considered for launch in 2004 for this particular business unit that will meet these specific needs. The adept knowledge and flexibility of the program, its trainers, and the program consultant and coordinator will make this effort possible.

External partnerships. Training experts outside the company partnered to create the comprehensive, high quality, and integrated program. Faculty discussions are held periodically to share information and concepts in order to maintain a fully integrated program. The internal company program consultant maintains close relations with external trainers to ensure consistent communication, program quality, and to identify needed program enhancements.

Evaluation Strategy

6. How is this practice evaluated? What factors are included in your calculations (e.g. time, costs, staff count, lost phone calls, customer satisfaction)? Are the financial costs of this practice calculated? If so, how? How often is this practice evaluated?

Kirkpatrick level one evaluations for each class in the program are collected. Individual results are confidential, but organizational trends are analyzed, including quantitative data (in the form of Likert scale ratings) and qualitative data (in the form of open-ended comments). An overall program satisfaction score of 4.7 (with 5.0 being highest) and positive trends in comments continue to support the success of the program. These data have proven to be an excellent means of identifying content, trainer delivery, and overall program quality and satisfaction and have also facilitated several adjustments to enhance the program.

Initial analysis of program participants' current job position within company is positive. Approximately 73 or 34.3% of the 204 employees who have participated in the program thus far are currently in leadership-related positions. A more detailed analysis of these data will be undertaken in 2004 to determine other factors associated with position

movement within the company. However, initial results are attributed to employee leadership development through the Firstline Leadership program and demonstrate solid support for the ongoing success of the program.

Business unit forecasts on enrollment and budgeting for the program for the past three years show an increase in attendance, largely attributed to participant and manager satisfaction with the program. For example, the number of program offerings have gone from two to three rollouts (grouping of the six courses) from 2002 to 2003. In 2004, four rollouts are anticipated. Similarly, in 2003, the number of attendees in each course session has reached capacity, with thirty people in each class.

Work Environment Survey scores, particularly survey items regarding employee satisfaction with their supervisor, will be analyzed over the next two years to determine if increases can be attributed to the Firstline Leadership program.

Results

7. What specific participant behaviors are observed as a result of this practice, and how do these behaviors contribute to the goals of the practice? Are the impacts of these behaviors short-term or long-term? How do these behaviors differ from the results of previous practices?

The resulting participant behaviors demonstrated are a) increased awareness of vital leadership foundations, b) stronger inter-departmental communications, and c) employee movement into leadership-related positions and/or projects, all of which support overall program goals and tend to represent long-term impacts. Evidence that indicates an increase in awareness of leadership foundations includes the results of the leadership self-assessment instrument administered pre- and post-program. Although not quantified at this time, voluntary score reporting from participants suggests higher scores and, thus, higher leadership awareness. Further evidence is provided by observation of class performance of individuals. Again, although not quantified at this time, many employees demonstrate increased communication skills and overall participation in courses, as observed by trainers and the program consultant throughout the program. Strong inter-departmental communications are demonstrated by interactions of employees during courses, as well as some lasting networks and relationships maintained after completing the program. Finally, employee movement into leadership-related positions and/or projects suggests that the program has modified or enhanced leadership behaviors such that these positions and/or projects are now more attainable. As mentioned previously, the initial data (73 or 34.3% of the 204 employees who have participated in the program are currently in leadership-related positions) supports this claim. In addition, a high percentage of those participating in the program have been women (56%) and diversity candidates (25% Hispanic/Latino, 19% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 16% Black/African American). This provides further contribution to company representation goals.

Other anecdotal evidence supports positive program impact and behaviors. Managers are encouraging their employees to attend Firstline Leadership (as evidenced by

increased enrollments in and scheduling of the program) and program consultants have received very positive feedback in person, over the phone, and through e-mail.

In 2004, a “measures of effectiveness” team will assess and begin measurement of Kirkpatrick levels 2 (learning), 3 (change in performance), and 4 (business impact) for the Frontline Leadership program. The goal will be to quantify these levels such that the program can be properly validated for its current success in developing employees and the organization, as well as to identify concrete opportunities to continuously improve the program curriculum and impact.

The most obvious difference between this practice and the previous pre-supervisory development initiatives is that Firstline Leadership is the first formal program of its kind within the company. That is, no complete program specifically designed for pre-supervisory leadership development existed previously. The behavioral results of previous development initiatives tended to be less focused and structured. With Firstline Leadership, participants have clear direction in preparing themselves as future leaders within the company. Direction is further enhanced by a newly revised personal development plan that participants complete within the program.

8. What was the impact of the practice on your organization? Are the impacts of these behaviors short-term or long-term? Wherever possible please include actual figures related to the practice.

The most significant impact on the organization is that approximately 73 or 34.3% of the 204 employees who have participated in the program are currently in leadership-related positions, which indicates that one of the underlying goals of the Firstline Leadership program is being met—to develop leaders within the company. Similarly, as mentioned previously, 56% of the 204 participants are women and 60% are diversity candidates (25% Hispanic/Latino, 19% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 16% Black/African American). The implications of this result tie heavily into the company’s strategic plans for succession planning and workforce representation. This demonstrates that the company’s succession planning and diversity efforts are being realized. Again, further analysis of job movement is necessary, but initial results are positive.

Another impact is that the organization has become more of a learning culture. The sharing of information across divisions is a huge positive impact to a previously siloed environment. Also, with the quality of the program certain, there has been an increased emphasis on employee development in the company, as supported by increased enrollments in the Frontline Leadership program.

Shared Learning

9. What have been some of the specific lessons learned from designing and implementing this practice for the purposes of continuous internal improvement? Please discuss whether and how this practice might be transferred and replicated both internally and external to your organization.

Key success factors of this practice include:

- Obtaining line management and other key stakeholder input during development
- Securing strong sponsorship from senior managers
- Aligning curriculum with company leadership competencies
- Blending internal and external expertise, to balance specific company practices with external best practices
- Automating administrative logistics (e.g., enrollments, reporting, etc.)
- Enrolling participants from different business units together to increase cross-business unit networking and knowledge-sharing opportunities

Further factors that contributed to the successful implementation of the program:

Participant needs/Quality assurance: Through a careful needs assessment process and ongoing feedback, participant needs were paramount when designing and enhancing the program. Program consultants regularly review the participant experience and instructor performance to ensure that content is up-to-date and relevant. The instructors and their content are continuously integrated to encourage continuity without redundancy. The faculty members meet to share information; some attend each other's sessions. We audit our faculty and review the program requirements to make sure the objectives remain relevant and clear-cut. Some courses and instructors have been modified to increase relevance, encourage interaction, and meet expressed participant needs.

Administration: Efficient handling of logistics has been critical to the success of the program. The program consultant and coordinator track the training history of participants to ensure proper credit for completion. By automating enrollment and reporting, we have freed resources from administrative tasks, allowing them to spend more time on qualitative maintenance and improvements.

Marketing: An aggressive marketing program supports Firstline Leadership, including a Web site that allows users to access course schedules, course descriptions, enrollment forms, and training history validations. Other collateral marketing materials include posters and flyers that are distributed at various field locations, as well as targeted e-mails and phone calls to participants identified via database queries.

Business unit support and acceptance: Reinforcement of the program by business unit management is critical so that everyone is "speaking the same language." Firstline Leadership receives consistent management support and the program consultant and coordinator maintain effective relations with key staff in all company business units to ensure needs are being met.

Many lessons were learned during the development of the program. The most significant include:

- Involving the customer (end user) in the design and pilot
- Building a solid and flexible core program that allows for business unit customization

- Developing an integrated program that supports company goals and philosophy
- Ensuring strong senior management sponsorship
- Controlling the quality of instructors
- Aligning content to competencies
- Establish systems and processes to increase administrative efficiency

Transferability of the Firstline Leadership program within the company has been successfully demonstrated. Many business units have incorporated the program into their comprehensive suite of training offerings. Similarly, the program has been successful in reaching various geographical locations and, for 2004, will potentially be customized to meet the needs of one particular business unit.

In conclusion, the Firstline Leadership Program has proven to be a high-quality program that effectively drives targeted behaviors. The program consultant and team will continue to monitor the results to ensure that the program meets the needs of its participants and brings value to the company.

The rigor with which this program has been developed and maintained is a superior example of how to identify and meet the needs of an organization. We whole-heartedly endorse and recommend the process we have followed because the program continues to demonstrate enduring success and valuable impact.

Contact

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