Leadership Skills Across Organizational Levels
A Closer Examination

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Leadership Pipeline

Skill requirements of managerial jobs vary across organizational levels

– Charan, Drotter and Noel: Six-Passage (2001)
The Leadership Pipeline

![Diagram of the Leadership Pipeline](image)

Adapted from *The Leadership Pipeline* (Charan, Drotter, & Noel, 2001)

Continuity Model

![Diagram of the Continuity Model](image)
Discontinuity Model

Continuity Model

• **Eight categories** of work managers typically perform Mahoney, Jerdee, & Carroll (1965)

• Although the amount of time allocated to each category of work was different between different management levels, *each job type was represented at all management levels*.

• The job of top management and those of supervisory management are *similar in terms of performance profiles*. 
Continuity Model

• **Leadership Skills Strataplex Theory**
  Mumford, Campion, & Morgeson (2007)

• Jobs at higher levels require higher levels of *all leadership* skills.

• Skills important for lower levels *do not diminish* at higher levels in the organization.

• Leadership development requires the *continual refinement of existing skills* as well as the development of new skills.

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*Continuity Model*

*Instead of distinguishing leaders from managers, we should encourage all managers to be leaders. And we should define “leadership” as management practiced well.*

Henry Mintzberg, 2009, p. 68
Discontinuity Model

- Behaviors, activities, and styles that were effective, highly valued, and appreciated at lower levels are often inadequate or dysfunctional at the next higher level (Arthur Freedman, 1998).

- **Upwardly mobile managers must**
  - Let go of those competencies and attributes that enable them to effectively perform no-longer-relevant responsibilities.
  - Preserve those skills to continue to perform certain familiar tasks, activities, and functions that still are practical and useful.
  - Add on competencies to take responsibilities with which they are unfamiliar and not proficient.

Discontinuity Model

- Decision-making profiles do a complete flip over the course of a management career (Brousseau, Driver, Hourihan, & Larsson, 2006).
Discontinuity Model

• **Behaviors associated with effectiveness** were different at the bottom, middle, and top and these differences were **largely discontinuous**, reflecting qualitative differences by level (Kaiser, Craig, Overfield, & Yarborough, 2010).

• Leadership behavior that is **positively related** to effectiveness at one level could **become negatively related** to effectiveness at another level.

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The Current Study

- **Purpose**: To investigate the pattern of changing skill requirements across management levels using 360-degree data.

- **Instrument**: VOICES® that assesses 67 competencies

- **Scales**: Importance and Skill Ratings

- **Sample**: 1021 managers
  - 34% supervisors
  - 42% middle-level managers
  - 24% high-level managers
Importance Rating Data

Supported Continuity Model

• 53 of the 67 competencies (79%) increased in importance across management levels
• 13 competencies (20%) remained stable in importance
• Only 1 competency – Technical Learning – decreased in importance

Performance expectations for a manager increase as one moves up the corporate ladder

Skill Rating Data

Supported Discontinuity Model

• 13 competencies increase in skill efficiencies along the corporate ladder
• 10 competencies decrease in skill efficiencies
• 44 competencies remain stable in skill efficiencies
And Yet...

- High correspondence between Importance and Skill Ratings
- Changes in skill ratings are highly correlated with changes in importance ratings
  - From supervisors to middle level managers, \( r = 0.61 \)
  - From middle to high level managers, \( r = 0.62 \)
  - From supervisors to high level managers, \( r = 0.63 \)

Explanations

- Moving up the corporate ladder, leadership is increasingly complex (Day & Lance, 2004)
- People have limited social and cognitive resource to handle the increased complexity
- Adaptive approach for leaders
  - Focus on areas that become more important
  - Relinquish those that become relatively less important
Transition from Supervisor to Middle Manager

Importance
– Managing Vision/Purpose
– Hiring/Staffing
– Sizing up People
– Command Skills
– Building Effective Teams
– Developing Others
– Confronting Direct Reports
– Motivating Others

Skill
– Command Skills
– Managerial Courage
– Delegation
– Comfort around Higher Management
– Motivating Others
– Confronting Direct Reports

People Management
Transition from Middle Manager to Executive

Importance
- Strategic Agility
- Business Acumen
- Perspective
- Creativity
- Managing Vision/Purpose
- Political Savvy

Skill
- Strategic Agility
- Perspective
- Managing Vision/Purpose
- Creativity
- Intellectual Horsepower
- Business Acumen
- Political Savvy
- Innovation Management

Business and Strategy
Cautionary Notes

• Some competencies decrease in skill efficiencies
  – Patience
  – Approachability
  – Listening
  – Caring about Direct Reports
  – Fairness to Direct Reports
  – Personal Disclosure
  – Humor
• Managers become more self-centered and less sensitive to others
• Derailment potential grows

Implications for Talent Management

• Select high potentials for important positions
  • Importance of learning agile managers
• Be aware of the growing derailment potential
  – Increasingly insensitive
  – Behavioral addiction
• Anticipate what is expected for next job and develop early