

Book Review: The Future of Executive Development

James F. Bolt, Editor

Reviewed By David Giber

David is a senior vice president at Linkage, Inc. In that capacity, he has responsibility for the company's Research business, as well as the New Programs and Leadership Development segments of the company's Professional Services Group. David has more than twenty years of experience in transforming companies into high-performing organizations by creating integrated human resource and leadership systems with measurable business impact. Nationally known as a leader in the field, he has consulted with leaders from a wide variety of international organizations on issues such as succession planning, management development, action learning, executive coaching, workforce assessment, and developing performance and selection systems. He is also the editor of several landmark books, including *Best Practices in Leading the Global Workforce* (Linkage Press, 2004), *Best Practices in Organizational Development and Change* (Jossey-Bass, 2001), and *Linkage, Inc.'s Best Practices in Leadership Development Handbook* (Jossey-Bass, 2000), as well as a contributing author for *The Art and Practice of Leadership Coaching* (John Wiley & Sons, 2004).

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Internationally recognized Executive Development Expert, James Bolt has edited one of the best collections to date on the trends and future of Executive Development. Drawing from his more than 25 years of experience in the field, Bolt and the contributors provide a wide ranging perspective on both the past and the future of executive development. The articles contributed by both top consultants and internal practitioners overview all of the leading areas in the field including simulations, coaching, action-oriented learning, peer to peer networks and also review such best practices as leader as teachers, building global talent bench strength, creating communities of practice and measuring impact. This is clearly one of the most informative and comprehensive books currently available. It is helpful for both the experienced practitioner and novice alike.

While many collections of this type contain one similar example after another of corporate case studies and programs, Bolt's book provides a more critical view of some of these trends and the business rationale behind them. The chapters on experiential learning and on leaders as teachers for example, provide specific detail on various ways these approaches are used. Bolt and McGrath's chapter on Increasing Speed to Market for Executive Programs describes the innovative concept of Rapid Cycle Design as a method to build line involvement in leadership development and gain quicker and deeper buy in for an executive development effort. The chapter from leadership gurus Jay Conger and Robert Fulmer on succession provides some insights on the use of technology while critiquing competency models and 360° feedback. Also helpful and distinctive is the amount of focus on transferring, measuring and embedding learning in the organization. The chapter by Dulworth and Forcillo on peer to peer networks provides success factors needed for these networks which are an often overlooked tool in developing leadership. In these and other chapters, Bolt and his contributors are challenging us to look beyond the typical executive development programs and to examine them in terms of how they connect to the future needs of our leaders and organizations.

Overall, I recommend this book highly. It is broad and comprehensive in its overview of the field yet specific enough to offer practical ideas and takeaways. It does not push any one viewpoint and reflects well on the constructive inquiry that James Bolt has brought to this field for many years.

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Linkage is a global organizational development company that specializes in leadership development. We provide clients around the globe with integrated solutions that include strategic consulting services, customized leadership development and training experiences, tailored assessment services, and benchmark research. Linkage's mission is to connect high-performing leaders and organizations to the futures they want to create.

With a relentless commitment to learning, Linkage also offers conferences, institutes, summits, open-enrollment workshops, and distance learning programs on leading-edge topics in leadership, management, human resources, and organizational development. More than 200,000 leaders and managers have attended Linkage programs since 1988.

Linkage
Burlington, MA
781.402.5555
info@linkageinc.com