

Extraordinary Leader™ Training Delivers Next Generation of Leaders

THE PROBLEM

The American Chemical Society was concerned about its leadership pipeline. With 160,000 members, the world's largest scientific society relies on 2,200 members to run nearly 200 local sections and 33 technical divisions. Another 3,000-4,000 members are involved in other forms of leadership. They tackle initiatives ranging from the Society's role in educating policy makers about chemistry's importance to running local events associated with National Chemistry Week. But estimates held that half the Society's elected and appointed leaders were older than 50.

Looking forward, the ACS officials were anxious about developing the group's next generation of leaders. And they were competing with increasing demands on their members.

"As with all associations, our people are busy," said Martha Lester, director of professional advancement at ACS. "They're working longer hours, they're having kids later in life, and they're taking them to soccer games and other good activities. They don't have as much time to participate in professional associations."

In addition to the potential dwindling of leadership availability, the Society also struggled with the question of leadership ability. Chemistry is a field that obviously relies on advanced education, but that rigorous preparation rarely includes leadership and management development programs.

"I've seen a hunger for this type of training among our members," Lester said.

ACS leaders and professional staff were determined to cultivate new leaders and arm them with the skills to advance their careers. They sought to create and implement a long-term leadership development system and began the search for assistance from an expert partner.

THE SOLUTION

The ACS invited Zenger Folkman to submit a proposal to build a leadership model that represented the capabilities ACS needed for the future. The company recommended a program that relies on decades of research and over 200,000 statistical profiles from more than 25,000 managers in a wide range of companies and industries. The competency model and supporting leadership development principles center on the firm's Extraordinary Leader research, documented in the book *The Extraordinary Leader: Turning Good Managers into Great Leaders* by Dr. Jack Zenger and Dr. Joe Folkman.

"Zenger Folkman stood out because of their emphasis on research," Lester said. "They were the only vendor who presented a data-driven approach. That really resonated with our members, who love data."

The solution includes a one-day training program and a 360-degree feedback process that gives participants input on

The Problem

- The world's largest scientific society was concerned that half its leadership pipeline was nearing retirement.

The Solution

- The ACS chose Zenger Folkman's research-driven Extraordinary Leader course to train the highly educated Society's next generation of leadership.
- Two pilot courses resulted in 100 percent agreement among participants that their leadership skills improved and that they would recommend the course to others.

The Results

- Participants cited the course's emphasis on improving strengths and its 360-degree feedback component as major appeals.
- The ACS now offers the course twice annually for its members, in conjunction with national and regional meetings.
- The ACS also trains internal staff members using the same leadership framework and principles.

ABOUT ACS

The American Chemical Society (ACS) is a congressionally chartered independent membership organization which represents professionals at all degree levels and in all fields of chemistry and sciences that involve chemistry.

their leadership competencies from a variety of raters. Zenger Folkman has conducted and analyzed hundreds of thousands of such surveys to understand which abilities correlate with key results.

The Extraordinary Leader approach also emphasizes building strengths rather than highlighting and attempting to reverse weaknesses. This, again, flows from the firm's extensive research showing that great leaders don't lack weaknesses—they simply excel in a few key competency areas.

The Zenger Folkman team contributed to the creation of the ACS' overall leadership development system, which includes topic-specific live workshops and online courses (www.acs.org/leaderdevelopment), punctuated by the day-long facilitated Extraordinary Leader course.

"I would highly recommend Zenger Folkman—everyone we've worked with there has been very professional," said Lester. After using the Extraordinary Leader workshop in the coming years, she expects to look back and see that "we'll have recruited new leaders and trained the next set."

THE RESULTS

Top ACS leaders have already participated in workshop pilots. Katie Hunt, Ph.D., 2007 ACS President, liked the course so much she took it twice.

"In 24 years I've taken a lot of leadership courses," Hunt said. "And I'll tell you, this (ACS Extraordinary Leader workshop)

is not just among the best—but the best—course I've ever taken."

The early success of the course led Lester to expand its pool of participants. "I looked at this and saw an opportunity for us to use this for staff as well," she said, and has begun offering the course to the Society's 2,000 employees in classes of about 20 people at a time.

Among staff and society members who have attended the ACS Extraordinary Leader workshop, the results have been solidly positive.

"We really highlight the research basis of the material, which helps reassure members right from the beginning and strengthens the level of trust," Lester said. "They also love focusing on improving strengths."

One hundred percent of workshop participants agreed or strongly agreed they had received the knowledge and tools to increase leadership effectiveness. Again, all 100 percent said they would recommend it to others.

As part of their anonymous feedback, participants cited the 360-degree feedback feature as a major strength of the course:

- "The 360-degree feedback by far is the most important component as it helps you understand the differences between how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you."
- "I have a better understanding of the motivators of the people who gave feedback and how my actions were a

turn-off. Having a better understanding of things that they value and dislike has allowed me to modify my behaviors."

The participants' anonymous feedback on the overarching purpose of the workshop confirmed that Lester and the ACS leadership had found the tool the Society needed.

- "Everyone who is or plans to be a major player in the leadership of the ACS should take this course."
- "Excellent course. One of the best courses of this type I have taken (and I have taken quite a few!)."

"I thought the ACS Extraordinary Leader workshop was extraordinarily eye-opening and insightful," said Sara N. Paisner, Ph.D., Senior Scientist, Lord Corporation. "A very different perspective on leadership development compared to traditional trainings. Well worth the time."

Zenger Folkman facilitators have trained society staff and member leaders to deliver the workshop over the next three years. The ACS will offer the Extraordinary Leader workshop to its members twice annually.

Lester said the Extraordinary Leader course is a major part of the solution to the Society's challenge with its leadership pipeline.

"This is a significant member benefit that will expand our pool of leaders and provide the next generation of leaders for the Society."

The Extraordinary Leader™ approach focuses on the ability—in fact, the necessity—for individuals to hone their leadership competencies in key areas, and organizations to develop great leaders in these areas. It provides research-based strategies for strengthening leadership, both in individuals and in organizations, and delivers today's most sensible and flexible leadership development program.