



## **”Decision Making: The Full Monty!” – A Uniquely Inspired Leadership Training Experience**

### **Mr. Noah Miller, Northrop Grumman, Electronic Systems**

Noah Miller – Change Agent, Intrapeneur, and Software Engineer – brings passion to all that he does, especially in fusing technology and people to accomplish the mission. Most recently, ”His business awareness and leadership skills have grown in scope as he takes on challenges beyond his cost and schedule objectives that are geared towards helping elicit excellence from others in the company.” He has kicked it into high-gear as an engineer-teacher after graduating from a prestigious experiential leadership training program in the Spring of 2010.

His unique perspectives on leadership come from experiences in both small, private companies with at most ten people to large, public companies that include upwards of fifteen thousand. He has worked as a facilitator, trainer, engineer, mentor, and leader within his ten years of industry experience. As part of a legacy greater than himself, Noah is a true believer in the divine, and seeks strength through diversity in both perspectives and open and honest dialogue.

Noah holds a Bachelor’s of Science in Computer Science from the School of Engineering and Applied Science at the University of Virginia, located in Charlottesville. He has recently relocated from Virginia to Chicago, IL. In his past life, he became an expert in modeling and synthesizing machinery control systems for the Maritime industry and founded the OWNERSHIP process as means to drive culture change from all directions within the organization. He currently works as a senior engineer to develop cutting-edge infrared counter measure systems, striving to use technology as a shield to human life. It’s all about the ends, not the means.

### **Mr. Timothy Boyd, Northrop Grumman Corporation**

After graduating from the California Institute of Technology in 2006, Tim started working at Northrop Grumman as a Systems Engineer. Since 2006, Boyd has not only been involved in performance analysis and on-orbit sensor characterization but has also managed technical teams as a technical team lead and a deputy Integrated Project Team lead within the SEIT (Systems Engineering Integration and Test) organization. Boyd has presented his work at both academic and industry conferences. Furthermore, to address his passion for leadership development and community building, he kickstarted a chapter of ConnectING; a professionally recognized yet non-traditional development program focused on engaging and assimilating new employees to the workplace through leadership development activities and networking. He is currently one of two Western Region liaisons for the program. Boyd was also selected to be a part of the company’s prestigious LTP (Leadership Training Program) and, just two cycles from graduation, planned and facilitated two recent offsite retreats, events involving a hundred participants, requiring months of detailed planning and acute project management. An avid nature lover, Boyd’s hobbies include back country camping and hiking as well as learning self reliance in the wild.

### **Mr. Eric Paul Pearson, Northrop Grumman**

Eric Pearson has experienced an extensive career of personnel and technical development during the past twenty-nine years at Northrop Grunna Corporation. After leading teams through intense technical radar development programs he transitioned to personnel development and Unveristy recruiting in 2000 creating both a world class New Grauate Professional Development Program and a unique Experiential Leadership Training Program for Northrop Grumman, Electronic Systems that recently celebrated it’s tenth year in existance.

Eric brings a passion for people and their development based on twenty years of high level coaching of several sports in addition to having taught middle school science prior to his curent position at Northrop Grumman as the Director, Cross-Sector Development Programs.

Eric holds a BS in Education from Bowie Stsre University and a Dual Masters from the Johns Hopkins Whiting School of Engineering.



In addition to his passions for developing future technology leaders, Eric has served on several University Engineering Board of Directors and has presented on leadership and recruiting at Several Conferences including ASEE, CIEC, NACE and SoACE for the past eight years.

In his spare time, Eric serves as a volunteer Adjunct Professor at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA.

## **“Decision Making: The Full Monty!” – A Uniquely Inspired Leadership Training Experience**

Leadership development is considered one of the most critical challenges facing many industries today. Most commercialized leadership training programs provide classroom training, team building opportunities and cross-team projects; however, few have the insight to engage participants in a safe environment where they are allowed to learn and grow in a remote location, away from their daily, risk adverse responsibilities. More specifically, a safe environment is one in which failure *is* not only an option but highly embraced when it occurs during a stretch assignment; for it is well documented that individuals learn far more from failures than from successes.

Developed over the past ten years, the Leadership Training Program (LTP) at Northrop Grumman Electronic Systems (NGES) provides this critical component in the form of an experiential education experience where participants have the opportunity to introspectively assess themselves and interact with like-minded peers in search of extreme leadership lessons. To those in the Northrop Grumman LTP, this experience is known as an “offsite” and considered by many to be a leadership "boot camp". Instead of what normally takes ten to fifteen years of progression through multiple levels of corporate leadership, LTP alumni that take full advantage of the program gain a fast-forwarded experience over a three to four year period.

As alumni of the program, the authors have benefited from the "complete experience," growing from participants to facilitators, facilitators to coaches, coaches to planners, and planners to leads. Through the evolution of the program and many lessons learned, their experience has helped them identify two main approaches to offsite execution: experiential and skills-based. While each type of offsite includes overlapping spheres of learning development, such that some of the elements are inseparable, their execution is unique.

This paper will focus on the execution of an experiential offsite; one that is focused on self-discovery and knowledge acquisition through full immersion into a simulated situation, preferably based in real-world application. Multiple modules are linked together to create a continual learning experience in which the outcomes of a previous module affect the setup of the next module; thus, a master simulation is executed over the entire duration the offsite.

This composition will take you through their journey to design, develop, and execute a 4-day experiential offsite for the LTP at NGES. Furthermore, the composition will attempt to validate the development methodologies chosen by the offsite planners along with qualitative results realized through the final execution. Finally, the composition will describe in detail the critical effect team coaches and intentional feedback have on the success of the simulation.

## *The Northrop Grumman, Electronic Systems Leadership Training Program*

As the 21<sup>st</sup> Century began on January 1, 2000, it was already evident, the “baby boomer” generation was fast approaching retirement age and there would soon be a shortage of engineers, scientists and corporate leaders. In 2003, Northrop Grumman Electronics Systems Engineering & Manufacturing Division at the Baltimore, Maryland location, in partnership with Learning and Development (L&D), developed a unique approach to accelerate leadership development for recent graduates by creating an experiential, eighteen-month Leadership Training Program (LTP). The core curriculum, known as the Foundations of Leadership, was a significant part of the experience and was designed, coordinated and facilitated by the L&D team. This program was designed and implemented after conducting significant research of several leadership training programs at defense electronic and non-defense Fortune 100 corporations. The potential participants were involved in the design as they completed surveys and personal interviews to evaluate their desire to grow both technically and as leaders during the early period of their new careers at Northrop Grumman, Electronic Systems.

This experimental program was developed during the early period of 2003 and in September of the same year the first of what would be seventeen groups of self-nominated professionals from across all functions and business areas began their eighteen-month journey through a combination of classroom experiences in traditional leadership studies combined with non-traditional experiential sessions outside of the work environment. The experiential portion offered participants an opportunity to develop self-confidence, to grow through networking with other like-minded peers across the country, and to challenge each other through a series of weekend Offsite Leadership Summits in mentally and physically challenging rustic environments. Another key element of the experiential portion of the LTP was when twenty of the program participants at a time prepared the role of a general during the Battle of Gettysburg and shared leadership discussions while spending a full day walking the hallowed grounds of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

This leadership program is a key component of the development efforts offered by NGES. In order to continue to provide a high impact and valuable growth opportunity for those involved, the program has continued to evolve over time. The early elements of the LTP have provided insightful trade studies on the effectiveness of specific techniques utilized within the program. A handful of these elements have stood the test of time while others have been replaced by more effective techniques in order to improve the overall experience of participants within the program. This rich history and adaptability has allowed the program to select the most compelling elements and combine them into an extremely powerful journey for those in search of extreme leadership lessons.

## *The Offsite Weekend Leadership Retreat*

Not only is the Offsite Weekend Retreat a unique developmental tool for growing leaders through the experience of the participants, the purpose and process of developing and executing the semi-annual event provides significant personal leadership developmental opportunities to growing leaders at different levels of their personal and professional development. The planning, content development, execution and participation during the weekend are accomplished by all involved through volunteering their time, expertise, and efforts.

The weekend success centers on genuine and extreme output from a unique set of individuals:

1. Former program participants who volunteer to:
  - a. Create a unique theme and program content
  - b. Manage a budget and schedule
  - c. Recruit and lead volunteer content developers
  - d. Arrange executive speakers
  - e. Solicit and guide volunteer weekend coaches
  - f. Manage communications and logistics
2. Program participants who have agreed to attend a minimum of two weekend retreats
3. Previous program graduates who offer their expertise as volunteer:
  - a. Content developers
  - b. Logistic leads
  - c. Evaluators
  - d. Small team coaches
4. Executive speakers (minimum three per each offsite weekend)
5. Volunteer coaches, speakers, content developers from:
  - a. Industry executives (inside and outside of the company)
  - b. Education
  - c. Program planners personal contacts
  - d. Other Sector leaders across the corporation

This element of the program is unique in its content, success and effect on personal leadership growth because of the opportunities afforded by each of these groups of people who bring their own set of skills and diversity of thought to create a unique offsite and unparalleled success of learning and networking across a variety of opportunities and corporate communities. Each lead team is provided a structure and format for the weekend and from there everything from participants, to coaches, to content and weekend themes are different, providing many opportunities to fail and succeed in a safe environment where not only are leadership styles managed, all participants go through significant self-discovery and networking with people across the country and several disciplines.

When two to four developing leaders from the Leadership Training program volunteer to develop and execute a weekend leadership retreat, their responsibilities lie in the following areas;

1. Budget management
2. Weekend theme
3. Program content
4. Volunteer coach solicitation and training
5. Content speakers
6. Internal and external executive presence
7. Communications
8. Solicitation of participants
9. Feedback

These experiential weekend training summits involve between sixty-five and ninety participants, leads, coaches and keynote speakers. The opportunity to succeed and fail exists at every turn beginning with program development and continuing through execution. No matter the level of participation or the years of previous experience, everyone experiences group realizations and personal growth.

### ***Development of the Offsite Weekend Leadership Retreat***

This section outlines the construct and necessary framework to aid in the planning and execution of the fall 2011 Offsite for the Leadership Training Program. This offsite focused its execution as an experiential offsite; one that is focused on self-discovery and knowledge acquisition through full immersion into a simulated situation, specifically based in real-world application. It consisted of multiple modules that were intricately linked together to create a continual learning experience in which the outcomes of a previous module affected the setup of the next module; thereby, executing a master simulation over the entire duration the offsite.

The specific weekend theme was centered on the decision making process and how each decision made can affect the entirety of the company, not necessarily only one small aspect. Based on the corporate environment at the time of inception, the authors saw an emerging need for all future leaders to realize and embrace their responsibility to understand the full picture before, during, and after making a decision. Decisions have consequences, and consequences require further action. The continuity of an experiential offsite afforded the ability to provide greater exposure to the idea of consequence, thus, the decision making process was chosen for the theme of this offsite.

Participants were broken into teams and represented multiple companies each competing for increased market share. Each company consisted of multiple levels of leadership which were forced to make decisions that were in the best interest of the company based on a subset of information. Based on the decisions made at the varying levels of leadership within each of the

companies, the shareholders ultimately decided whether to invest or divest themselves from each entity causing each company to reflect and learn from their previous decisions.

It was our desire for them to learn that the decision making process is not a concrete or formulaic process that can be read off a checklist or a reference document. Rather, the ability to make sound decisions, if developed and utilized correctly, can become one of the most valuable assets to any individual in the organization.

It was our intent to re-iterate that no decision is black and white ... there are always caveats, exceptions or some subjective element that can be considered questionable. Not every decision can be, or needs to be, based on a significant regression analysis with an infinite amount of data points. One might not either have the time, the resources or the background to sufficiently develop a substantial finite data set before the deadline arrives to make the final decision.

We wanted the participants to not only learn to make decisions but also to learn from their mistakes. Through the course of the weekend, every decision they made would not be their most defining moment. In fact, we intentionally wanted to make the situations difficult enough to force unfavorable outcomes. Ultimately, we wanted to encourage them to realize this and learn from it as they moved forward, potentially broadening their minds and perspectives while sharpening their overall situational awareness.

A final element of our vision was to ensure that all participants realized that no matter what decision is made (whether good or bad), there will always be consequences. Either there would be push-back or complaints, or there would be significant rejoicing throughout the company. Not every person is guaranteed to like, or even agree, with the decisions made, but as the future leaders of this organization it is imperative that we make objectively justifiable decisions when we are called upon. We wanted each individual to realize that people make decisions but only leaders make improvements.

The simulation required constant role playing and significant teamwork throughout the weekend. Due to the significant number of individuals that were in attendance, three unique companies were created in order to spread out the people involved. In order to enhance the experience, the companies were in constant competition and battle for the market share majority.

To better simulate the layout of a traditional company within the aerospace industry, each company was broken into four different levels or tiers; employees, sector leadership, corporate leadership and shareholders.

The employees of any company are the individuals who produce the products and drive the bottom line. The employees also produce all of the technical research and development behind the innovative ideas that are then sold for profit. It is these technical and low level decisions that can significantly streamline the cost, schedule and quality of the end product.

At the next level, many different employee branches (or sites) can exist within a large company. For example, a company might be based in one geographic location but might have many different branches across a much larger region to better serve its customers. This is analogous to that of a bank, which has many different local branches to provide a more convenient experience for its customers. Sector leadership is responsible for ensuring that all the employee groups within their part of the company are successful. They must make decisions that affect the bottom dollar of their portfolio, which can sometimes be very tough financial decisions.

At the corporate level, the corporate executives rely on input from the sector level leadership in order to define a vision and direction for the entire company. Instead of having each company march to its own beat, the executives must decide what structure and direction the company requires to be successful.

Finally, the shareholders are one of the core elements of any company. The shareholders are required to make significant financial decisions about whether they believe in the vision and the future of the company. Based off decisions made by the company, the shareholders must decide whether to invest additional funds into the company for future growth or to completely divest themselves because they believe failure is imminent.

In order to provide real time quantitative and qualitative feedback, we needed something that could monitor decisions in real time. Trying to continuously tie it back to the real world, we realized that the stock market is simply a quantitative financial indicator of real time decision making. Not only was it a great vehicle to provide the necessary real time feedback we were seeking, it also fit the model of the offsite (decisions being made by companies).

The market was designed with typical elements. Stocks could be bought and sold by any individual. Every individual had the same amount of initial funds to buy and sell their own portfolio. The decisions of an individual did not have a significant weight in factoring the ending stock price. However, the decisions of certain investors (in our case the shareholders) held a higher weighting factor in the overall score. In a typical corporation, the shareholders are fed information through executives, annual reports, etc. However, we wanted to ensure that every decision was transparent to ensure that each group understood the impact their decisions could have on the organization as a whole. Because of this access to all of the financial and decision making information, we felt it was necessary to increase the weighting factor of shareholders when making investment decisions. This decision factored in with the results of all other individual decisions being made, ultimately drove the stock price higher or lower depending on the results.

During each round, each tier received a specific packet of information for the company they were representing. Employees received technical details regarding their current projects as well as additional information regarding potential new products in the pipeline. This information was designed to encourage them to look into the future and determine what decisions should be

made. Employees from the upper levels (tiers 2 and 3, sector and corporate) received higher level of information; specifically staffing, financial and technical accomplishments and predictions for the future.

The shareholders not only received financial and business vision information, they were also provided the opportunity to hold discussions with each tier of the company in order to provide much needed transparency to the process. After decisions were made about the direction each tier was headed, their objective was to brief the shareholders before they made their choices in the stock market simulation.

To provide increased communication between the other tiers, so they would have an opportunity to align their vision before briefing the shareholders (so it appeared the company was migrating in a single direction), the employees and sector leadership were provided a small time window to share their decisions with the tier immediately above them (their leadership). This provided a valuable opportunity for the company to appear in synch and following a common vision.

After each round was complete (after participants made decisions in a particular role), the teams rotated to a different role within the company. We wanted each individual to rotate through all roles within a company to provide them with the full experience which taught them that each and every level of the organization makes decisions based off of different types of information. As decisions were being made, it became apparent that not every decision was popular or agreed with at the other tiers of the company. Being able to defend your position and provide input as to why your team made a particular decision was heavily utilized throughout the weekend. While characterizing a decision as good or bad can be subjective, participants began to slowly understand that decisions still have to be made regardless of the amount of information you have or the amount of negative impact it may have. The worst thing anyone can do is to fail to make a decision.

***What makes the program unique to engineers? Or how do engineers achieve greater benefit?***

The “program” was never meant to be exclusive to just the “professional engineer;” however, a professional engineer is likely to enjoy the greatest benefits. Engineers bridge the gap between science and technology. Science drives the discovery of new ideas and new possibilities. Engineers are there to direct knowledge from scientific discovery into the creation and application of new technology that will have a direct and lasting impact on society. The greater an engineer’s ability to work with groups of others, to work within a team, the greater the opportunity to synthesize larger amounts of information, faster, and into more impactful technologies. There is strength in numbers. Scientific discovery and the creation of new technology do not occur without the most important ingredient, people. Engineers that wish to leave a lasting and magnanimous impact on society may increase their chances for doing so by perfecting their ability to lead – to successfully infuse a common vision within groups of diverse people that will allow them to execute efficiently and successfully towards a common goal,

specifically with respect to the creation of new, highly-complex technology. Engineer-leaders have led others to help them create some of the greatest wonders in modern history: the Panama Canal, the Golden Gate Bridge, the Space Shuttle, etc. Where would we be without the engineer-leader?

We've established why leadership is so important within engineering. Unfortunately, it is no secret that we are short of leaders that have the ability to bridge the gap, only in this case, we aren't talking about a technology gap. People come in all shapes and sizes with extremely unique abilities for cognition and creation. The engineer-leader must collate the output of these diverse individuals into a unified product. A simple example that illustrates the gap includes the makeup of a product team; the team could include people who must fulfill roles in finance, marketing, history, law, design, procurement, scientific research, manufacture, maintenance, and the list could go on and on. The ability to effectively communicate is the most important skill that allows an engineer-leader to bridge the gap. The continual development of all leaders, especially engineer-leaders, must include training and development of this most important skill. Therefore, every single LTP offsite has included this element as a means for training our future leaders to bridge the gap. The "Decision Making: The Full Monty!" offsite weekend summit was no exception.

### ***What makes the program unique compared to others?***

What other classroom, training, teaching, or educational experience not only encourages, but provides failure as a goal? In school, does one study to pass the test or to fail it? Does the karate master go through months of repetitive, pain staking training so that her pupil will fail to attain the next belt? Failure is a mechanism that signals when a goal has not been achieved; it exposes a limitation and possibly even a weakness in the object attempting to attain the goal. One's limitations are what continuing education must expose and expand. If one passes a test, there is no measure as to how far one could go. There is only a measure as to how far one has already gone. In order to expand to the fullest extent possible, one must know exactly how far they can go.

Why failure and not success? The only way to know one's true limits is to fail, only then one knows the ceiling with which one must break through to the other side of greatness, perfection, and strength. We strive to maximize our challenges, we embrace difficult tasks and we conduct feedback and evaluation so we may learn from our failures. We believe that only through successive failure will we grow and become the best leaders possible.

Self-discovery and individual failure are seen as necessary elements of the weekend summit. The objective is to identify one's exact weaknesses. Once identified, weaknesses are converted to strengths through intentional feedback, learning, growth and, ultimately, the assimilation of hands-on experience.

We learned long ago that true leaders can lead from any position in an organization, do not require a formal title or organizational assignment and if empowered, everyone has the opportunity to lead and grow from the experience. An offsite retreat weekend/summit provides different events, activities, and sessions where one serves as a leader, a follower, a teacher, a student and an observer.

*Case in Point: Take for example a runner training for a marathon (approximately 26.2 miles).*

In this first case, the goal of the runner is to succeed:

- The runner decides to take a test by running for 1 mile
- The runner ends up running greater than 1 mile
- The runner decides to stop at 1.5 miles, thus, she succeeded

How will the runner know how hard to train to attain the 26.2 mile mark?

Consider a second case, in which the runner's goal is to push her body to failure:

- The runner decides to take a test by running 52.4 miles
- The runner does not make it to 52.4 miles
- The runner was able to run 20 miles, thus, she failed

Now the runner is able to determine that she needs to increase her endurance another 6.2 miles exactly to reach her true goal.

In the first example, the runner does not incorporate one of the key effects of failure, negative consequence. In the real world, on-the-job failure could manifest as financial losses, termination from employment, lost time, or even, in the extreme, the loss of life. Yes, as engineering professionals, sometimes the freedom of failure is not acceptable.

Translate the purpose and consequences of failure learned during these weekend experiential summits to corporate failure:

Failure is not an option in today's fast paced, cut-throat corporate environment. The shareholder has been crowned king due to their ability to make or break large multinational corporations with the stroke of a key. This environment has shown the importance of sound leadership decisions - after all, they can make or break the organization just as quickly as the shareholder. As a result, formal leadership training programs have become widespread throughout the corporate world, yet questions still remain as to their effectiveness. Can a leadership training program produce truly effective leaders? We believe we have created an opportunity that demonstrates the possibility and have proven it twenty times during the past ten years leading, guiding and developing growing leaders through weekend summits designed to include failure and feedback. Where does an inexperienced professional go to push themselves to the point of failure so that

they can determine their exact development needs? The answer lies in an experiential leadership training model that encourages failure.

The difference between the real world and an LTP offsite is that an offsite is a place where the long lasting, tangible effects of negative consequence do not exist. In this regard, what happens at the offsite stays at the offsite. The learning experience, the ability to determine the exact limitations of each individual participant through failure, is what leaves with each participant. The goal is to fail, learn, and grow in a place where consequence cannot take root, so that when the time comes to execute as an engineer-leader in the real world, one can choose where to position the goal so that it is well within limitations. The keyword is choice. Unless one knows their own limitations, they do not have the ability to choose a well informed goal.

### ***Leadership Roles during an Offsite Weekend Summit***

#### **Planner/Leaders (2-4)**

The Planners are the key to the successful creation, development and execution of a Leadership Weekend Summit. Between two and four extreme leaders who have completed their LTP experiences volunteer their time, thoughts and personal visions to create a weekend summit retreat. They spend between six and twelve months creating a theme, developing a program structure, soliciting a cadre of volunteers to assist in the development and execution phases of the program and leading the four day/three night experiential leadership event for up to ninety volunteer participants, coaches, session champions and group coaches.

The efforts are similar to serving as a program manager who has won a project, must select and lead a team of high energy volunteers and execute a successful experiential event consisting of several proven key elements that provide participants with advanced and accelerated leadership development modules based on self-discovery, networking, team building and constant feedback.

Planner/Leaders of an offsite weekend have the most at risk in their journey and, at the same time, have the greatest opportunity for personal development and growth through leadership experiences. Beginning with the day they volunteer through the end of the planning, development and execution phases many obstacles appear. It is through these small failures along the way that Northrop Grumman develops wiser leaders who have faced many obstacles leading to a successful event. When the day of the event comes, it's time to execute and lead others while celebrating as the event comes to life.

## Planner Responsibilities

1. Create the weekend vision
2. Define and describe the theme
3. Negotiate the budget
4. Develop a plan and schedule
5. Generate content outline
6. Solicit volunteers for logistics & content sessions
7. Invite executive speakers
8. Arrange keynote speakers
9. Execute facility and meal contracts
10. Invite and track attendees
11. Select and train coaches
12. Assemble documentation
13. Host planning meetings and conference calls
14. Manage expectations and last minute changes
15. Execute and lead the event

## **Content Developers (6-8)**

The content developers serve two roles. They create learning modules based on the vision and theme proposed by the Planners/Offsite Leaders and participate in the event to deliver the content and lead the participants through the modules.

Once a topic has been proposed and accepted by the Planners, the content developer is on their own to create and present the topic. This becomes an excellent opportunity for the developers to grow in their preparation, presentation skills, content organization and small/large group leadership. Because these developers are empowered to create and present material from their personal experiences and ideas, there is a lot of trust in addition to great diversity of how leadership topics are approached and presented. This adds to the uniqueness of each offsite.

In addition to never repeating a theme, we do not repeat content from one offsite to another. In the leadership development process it's far more about the development and individualistic approach than it is delivery of specific content or answers to "what is leadership". There has been one content area that has been used multiple times since the first development as a module. That content area is feedback. Feedback has become an integral part of the offsite experience. It has been presented by different content developers, based on the initial session and consistently improved over the past four years. The feedback process developed at these offsite weekend retreats has been so successful that we have shared it during external conferences for American Society of Engineering Education (ASEE), National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) and Southern Association of Colleges and Employers (SoACE). When committed to

personal growth and sharing of successful leadership, unplanned results come out of these leadership developmental programs.

### **Executive Speakers (2-3)**

An important element of the offsite weekend is the personal support and commitment of executed speakers to come and speak at the weekend retreats. The Executive Team, starting with the Sector President has continued to support the events by taking the time to appear at the offsite, deliver a short and inspirational testimonial about his/her leadership journey and remain for hours at a time to interact with the participants. We have been fortunate enough to have two Sector presidents appear at the same weekend retreat to demonstrate the cross-sector support for leadership development.

### **Industry Speakers (1-2)**

A bonus for the participants has been the opportunity to meet, listen and network with volunteer speakers from industry and the university settings. These individuals have volunteered their personal time and expenses to share their thoughts of leadership development, offer specific training modules, and even serve as team coaches throughout the weekend.

<b>Industry Speakers (Volunteer time and expenses)</b>	
<i>First Name</i>	<i>Area of Expertise</i>
George	Lobbyist / Defense Acquisition
Mason	Entrepreneurship / Business development
Bob	Student Leadership
Margaret	"True Colors" and motivation
Ted	Naval Post Graduate Leadership
Tim	Cross Sector Communications
Steve	Extreme Leadership
Amanda	Financial / Investment Services

Examples of Commitment to Leadership Development

### **Logistics (4-6)**

The logistics team volunteers in the early days were past participants who completed their required two offsites, were looking to further develop their leadership experiences and had

thoughts of some day volunteering to develop and lead an entire weekend session. As the years passed, we began to find a number of volunteers who desired to continue their support for the LTP and participate in the weekend. However, many did not have the time to develop content or the desire to lead an entire weekend. A small group of volunteers emerged as engaged individuals ready to support. This group of individuals were similar to “roadies”, who teardown and setup equipment for musical shows. We suddenly had a dedicated and trained set of logisticians for each offsite. Without this cadre of experienced volunteers, the planners and presenters would have to take time from the planning and preparation of the event.

### Logistician Responsibilities

1. Plan and acquire snacks & supplies
2. Negotiate and execute catering contract
3. Manage cleaning tasks and supply materials to sessions
4. Arrange and execute AV / media needs
5. Setup and teardown facilities and equipment
6. Supervise transitions to / from activities
7. Create video clips and present during meal sessions
8. Create and manage sleeping arrangements
9. Assist planners / speakers / presenters as needed
10. Pack & ship / unpack and distribute materials & supplies

### Participants (45-60)

Offsite weekend participants vary in their previous experiences in both the basic classroom sessions and number of offsites attended. Participants have been required to attend two offsites and a number of people actually attend three as a participant. With a new LTP group starting every six months, every offsite includes participants from three or four different LTP Groups; providing greater networking opportunities across groups and work locations.

The participants’ responsibilities throughout the weekend are as recipients of information, lectures, speeches and challenges that were developed over the previous twelve months. The more involved the participants become in each activity the more successful the weekend and the greater individual leadership development that occurs.

Scheduled events start with an early morning breakfast, often preceded by organized exercise sessions and conclude late in the night as teams work feverishly to complete challenges and requirements to design the most functional and innovative machines out of simple supplies like wooden dowels, plastic wheels, rubber bands and LEGOs.

Participants are expected to maintain full engagement, share personal experiences with others and work through common goals during challenges, case studies, community service, design-to-build competitions and feedback sessions. These activities occur between 6:00 P.M. on

Thursday and 11:00 A.M. on Sunday morning. Few hours are wasted on sleep and relaxation as the participants become fully integrated into their team responsibilities and cherish the opportunities to network and practice leadership sessions.

Offsite Weekend Leadership Summit Participants (Sample #s)			
Category	# in Group	% of Attendees (Range)	
Planners / Leaders	(2-4)	3.0%	4.3%
Content Developers	(6-8)	9.0%	8.5%
Logistics Team	(4-6)	6.0%	6.4%
Speakers – Keynote & Content	(2-3)	3.0%	3.2%
Participants	(45 – 60)	67.2%	63.8%
Coaches	(6-12)	9.0%	12.8%
Totals participants over 20 Summits	(67 – 94)		

Experiential Leadership Summits Require Significant Personal Investment

Over a ten year period, it was determined that the best range of participants seemed to be six to eight participants per team, two coaches per team, three keynote speakers, six to eight content module/session developers and several opportunities for individual and group feedback. Varying levels of competition, intensity, time for self-reflection and sleep deprivation continue to be evaluated and modified depending on the summit theme and the vision of the program developers/leads.

An important key to the personal development of the planner/leaders is that they have full responsibility to create and develop their own vision for the weekend, theme and content plan. There is an enormous amount of extremely successful projects, presentations, content and examples of design-to-build projects; however, after ten years and twenty offsite weekend summits, no theme or project content other than a well-developed feedback process has been used more than once. For the planner/leaders, their growth comes from the long process of planning a unique experience for their peers and mentors who attend the weekend event. They too have the opportunity to fail and succeed; fear and stress leads to eventual excitement and satisfaction once their weekend journey is complete.

Role Progression at Weekend Offsites	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Total # of Offsites</i>
Participant	(2-3)
Logistics support	(2-4)
Content developer / lead	(3-5)
Team Coach	(1-5)
Planner / Leader	(3-8)

Growth & Development through a Variety of Roles

### **Team Coaches (6-12)**

Coaches are commissioned to provide feedback to the team and the individual. Coaches observe what participants do well, what they need to work on, and initiate honest discussions about their observations throughout the weekend experiences. The most impactful coaches are those that volunteer time, energy, and passion into each and every participant at an offsite. Over a three year period a feedback process and documentation was developed that includes instructions, communication aids, feedback forms and examples of effective individual and group feedback.

Coaching requires a great sense and understanding of interpersonal development and communication, since they must continually assess the individual needs of each member on their team to provide feedback – one of the most fundamental ingredients to growth and learning at an experiential offsite. Feedback provides objective and subjective data points for each participant to assess their current behaviors as a leader and team member. Feedback creates a baseline for which a participant can track existing growth and map out future growth, for one cannot determine where to go next without first knowing where one has been and where one is now.

The coach's role is not to provide answers or guide participants to solutions, rather to allow experimentation, failure and success and only interject to bring the team back to the task at hand or to intervene to ensure safety and initiate conflict resolution techniques as necessary.

It's often the case that a group of people, diverse in experience and demographic, have a hard time making themselves open to feedback in an extremely short period of time. It can often take years to develop a trusting relationship; however, experience has shown that the offsites are able to produce these bonds within hours. It's all about the setup, specifically the encouragement of a safe learning environment that includes practice of the "golden rule". The "safe" environment is a catalyst that provides greater opportunity for feedback to occur and to get absorbed by each participant. When there isn't negative consequence for the discovery of one's weakness, specifically in a public forum, it makes it much easier for one to open the door to one's peers.

As an added benefit, coaches get exposed to the same topics, techniques, and hands-on learning as the participants; thus, they have the opportunity to grow as leaders. The topics from each offsite are easily applied to any company's bottom line: whether it is affordability, efficient decision making – as is the case with the offsite detailed in this paper, development of business relationships, business and social etiquette aka personal perception and marketing, and any other hot topic that could benefit our future leaders. Furthermore, and just as important, the human network and the bonds formed during the offsites are largely shaped by the coaches that attend. Coaches are there to nurture, challenge and keep the participants engaged in the material. They are there to provide feedback to the offsite leads so that they may shape and adapt the material, on the fly, if needed.

### ***Final Thoughts***

This paper focused on the design, development and execution of an experiential offsite; one that is focused on self-discovery and knowledge acquisition gained through full immersion in a simulated environment in search of extreme leadership lessons. The continuity of an experiential offsite afforded the ability to provide greater exposure to the idea of consequence by intensely focusing on the decision making process.

In order to provide an intriguing and valuable experience, a group of passionate individuals worked together to ensure success. Planners imagined a theme and created a vision for the offsite weekend. Content developers were responsible for the development and optimized the planning elements to ensure that all learning objectives and needs were met. Finally, the event was realized through execution during which all other roles participated in order to make the event successful.

The insertion of keynote speakers from various backgrounds and different industries greatly complemented the learning environment by providing first hand experiences from successful individuals in their own disciplines. These special moments, when coupled with the camaraderie

built through the weekend with their peers, provided unforgettable lessons that are not easily forgotten.

The planners, content developers, logistics personnel and coaches all have an opportunity to change lives during the execution of these professional development experiences. Each and every individual is passionate and dedicated to the development of these continuous learning experiences for the future leaders of the organization. They are committed to leaving the organization better than when they started, paving the way for the future of Northrop Grumman. They have become part of a legacy, something greater than themselves. They continue to pay it forward, hoping to one day change the world ... one offsite at a time.