LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:

A PSYCHOLOGICALLY-INFORMED PROCESS THAT SPAWNED A GENERATION OF CEOS

Karol Wasylyshyn and Raj Gupta provide an in-depth look at a long-term leadership development process at Rohm and Haas that was dubbed "one of the best CEO universities" in the world. On a deeper level, they provoke reflection on the value of connecting holistically with high potential employees and on how, in doing so, we can maximize both human potential and business growth.

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> We need to go inside-out. We need to assess the whole person, not just one's profile of leadership competencies. We need to establish real relationships with these people, and they need to know themselves and understand what influences their leadership behavior in good times and bad.-- Mark X. Feck

Between 1988 and 2008 Rohm and Haas, a global chemical manufacturing company, offered seventy high potential leaders the chance to participate in a customized leadership development program called Leadership 3000. After the company's surprising sale to Dow Chemical in 2008,[1] more than 20 percent of participants went on to become CEOs elsewhere.[2] Egon Zehnder, a global management consulting and executive search firm, assessed leaders on both sides of the deal and declared Rohm and Haas the "best CEO university" it had ever encountered. Ten years later, Botelho and Kos concurred with Egon Zehnder's assessment and included Rohm and Haas among the few companies they termed "stealth CEO factories." [3]

This is the story behind the Rohm and Haas legend. It is more complete than anything previously written on the subject.[4] Mark X. Feck, who was the Rohm and Haas chief human resources officer and co-creator of this development initiative,[5] captured both the essence of the work and his own commitment to the participants in the introductory quote. The company's process, rooted in psychology, was intended to go deep, providing participants with fresh insights which would make them ever more effective leaders. It viewed leaders holistically, considering their challenges at work within the full context of their lives. While the process was based on a four-phase model that unfolded over the course of a year, it was also open-ended and fostered ongoing relationships with the participants. [6] Senior leaders at Rohm and Haas consistently used certain management practices to accelerate the development of highly talented candidates. These developing leaders were given early opportunities to expand their abilities. They were placed in roles with significant authority and exhorted to think and act like CEOs. Rohm and Haas used a robust annual talent review process and ensured that likely candidates had the chance to work as expatriates. In keeping with Rohm and Haas' reputation for building strong global leaders, most of those who later became CEOs elsewhere had succeeded in at least one assignment as expats. The company's aforementioned managerial practices and leadership development helped to drive two of the its boldest initiatives: an expansion into the Asia Pacific region which drove global sales from 5 percent to 25 percent and the creation of the Electronic Materials division that grew from $150 million to nearly $2 billion. Indeed, Rohm and Haas became the second-best performing company in the S&P between 1999 and 2009, largely as a result of these two initiatives. In short, the Rohm and Haas story is not about the *newest* methods in leadership development but about the most *enduring*. This is how the process evolved.

The Development of the Process
In the mid-1980s Larry Wilson, then chairman and CEO of Rohm and Haas, was facing slackening growth. Beyond strategically addressing portfolio issues, Wilson believed that top nominal and functional leaders would need to become more aggressive in pursuit of growth opportunities. Wilson's chief human resources officer, Mark X. Feck, worked with Dr. Karol Wasylyshyn, a consulting psychologist and one of the authors of this paper,[7] to create and implement a four-phase program for developing the employees with the highest potential to be leaders (Table 1).

A number of interrelated factors contributed to the twenty-year life of the resulting program, Leadership 3000, which was built upon strong guiding principles, methodology, and practice considerations and which emphasized the behavioral dimension of leadership (Table 2).

The Guiding Principles of Leadership 3000: Ensuring Sustained Traction
We designed Leadership 3000 around three guiding principles to ensure that its participants engaged with and retained what they had learned: the imprimatur and active involvement of the CEO, a holistic approach, and clear confidentiality boundaries.

Active participation of the CEO: By actively participating in planning and enacting Leadership 3000 meetings, the CEO and other C-level leaders had the chance to convey their executive wisdom. Specifically, in the I've-walked-in-your-shoes spirit of this work, C-level leaders shared knowledge from their own careers with participants. In so doing, they candidly described less obvious tactics, interpersonal dynamics, and the grittier political aspects of effectively leading a global business with a geographically dispersed team. In short, "The ongoing engagement of the CEO and other C-suite executives in rigorous and thorough follow-up ensures the necessary motivation and commitment of all involved. Leadership 3000 participants wanted to *show*

well and senior executives wanted to convey the lessons they had learned in ways that would accelerate business success."[8]

A holistic approach: In order to get Leadership 3000 participants fully engaged, we had to design a developmental experience deeper than most, by offering them fresh insights about their own leadership, and fuller than most, by seeing and interacting with them not just as executives but as peers, husbands, parents, and friends, that is to say, as whole people. Wasylyshyn encouraged participants to explore their holistic reality through questions such as: How do your work and personal lives interact? What might you change to become healthier, get more sleep, be happier and more connected with the people closest to you? If you need to make changes in the personal sphere, how will they make you a more effective leader? Participants often gained important insights and, by exploring them through candid and constructive discussion, maintained their traction in the development work. Wasylyshyn and Feck also designed an optional Spousal Module to help participants explore these issues more deeply.

Fostering trust and maintaining clear confidentiality boundaries: Wasylyshyn and Feck faced a considerable hurdle right at the outset because they had to find a way to keep participants receptive to development while in the presence of their boss and the CEO, or some other member of the CEO's leadership team. They therefore used several methods to encourage participants to be receptive and candid. First, each participant received a written invitation that emphasized the *developmental* (rather than evaluative) nature of the process. Often their boss or the Chief Human Resources Officer preceded or quickly followed this invitation with a personal conversation emphasizing that the Leadership 3000 participant was the *client* and the company was the *sponsor*. The client therefore owned whatever data was gathered during this development work.

While this confidentiality was key in fostering the trust of participants, leaders also made clear that the sponsor would receive information about each participant's strengths and particular areas of development, but that the core data from which this information was drawn belonged to the client. Likewise, while the client was free to share their information with anyone, the external consultant was not. And while it was considered appropriate for an HR representative to weigh in on key personnel decisions about participants, they did so as HR, not as a Leadership 3000 process owner.

Leadership 3000 Methodology: Unearthing Applicable Data and A Four-Phase Model

Leadership 3000 remained valuable throughout its twenty-plus years at Rohm and Haas because it was rooted in the identification of suitable participants and in a four-phase model.

Rohm and Haas identified Leadership 3000 participants through an annual review of talent conducted by senior representatives of HR and top corporate leaders. As Wasylyshyn once put it, "This linkage between the company's talent management strategy and the specialized Leadership 3000 development process was key in socializing its purpose and placing it in the array of company

Table 1: Rohm and Haas Leadership 3000 - A Four Phase Model for Developing High Potential Leaders	
PHASES	**TOOLS**
Phase 1: Multifaceted Data Gathering	Life history
	Psychometric Testing: • Myers-Briggs Type Indicator • Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal • Life Styles Inventory • Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R) • BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQi) • Rorschach • Hermann Brain Dominance • Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey • PRF-Form E
	Organization input – targeted interviews
Phase 2: Synthesized Feedback	Meeting 1 with external consultant; review of life history themes and psychometric data
	Meeting 2 with external consultant; review of targeted interviews
Phase 3: Comprehensive Action Planning	External consultant facilitates meeting with participant's brain trust (CEO, CHRO, and participant's boss)
Phase 4: Focused Follow-up	External consultant facilitates meeting with participant's brain trust to evaluate participant's progress on development plan

Table 2 – Rohm and Haas Leadership Competencies and Behaviors

Leadership Competencies

I. Outside-in Perspective
- Market Aware & Customer Driven
- Strategic Focus
- Global Perspective

II. Speed to Market
- Bias for Action
- Adaptive to Change
- Creative Problem Solving

III. Pursuit of Profitable Growth
- Professional Credibility
- Business Acumen
- Persuasion and Influence
- Safety Performance
- People and Performance Management
- Interpersonal Effectiveness

Leadership Behaviors and Personal Competencies

Courageous Leadership - relishes leading: willing to speak out, stand alone, influence open debate, probe unexpressed views, and leverage resident wisdom. The courage to confront any company sacred cows, decisions, policies, or practices that could interfere with success.

Emotional Fortitude - ability to use self-awareness, self-management (focus, discipline, tact and diplomacy), attunement (empathy), and relationship-building skills (relating to people in ways that are deeper than transactional need) to drive business success. Emotional resilience (the ability to cope with ambiguity, crises, and adversity in all forms). Stays cool under pressure.

Enterprise Thinking - playing for the house. Avoids silo mentality. Input into key decisions focused on overall company objectives. Will put personal comfort aside to take on difficult new roles or additional assignments. More focused on building a great company than on personal ambition.

Pragmatic Optimism - instills hope about the company's future through consistent messages that emphasize the rightness of the strategic direction, specificity of objectives and realistic timelines, company values, and effectiveness of executive leaders.

Steel Trap Accountability - relentless drive for positive results. No defensiveness. No sad stories. No excuses. No blaming others. Making the necessary adjustments (in people, process, and/or strategy) as needed, and doing it quickly. Knows that hard work is not enough without results.

Truth-Telling - stating the business reality as it *truly is* compared to established goals. Consistent candor and early indication about the current reality of results, problems, projections, and performance issues. Behavioral transparency and authenticity.

human resource development activities."[9] Throughout the program's twenty year run, three or four participants were nominated each year.

The four phases of Leadership 3000 were multifaceted data gathering, synthesized feedback, comprehensive planning, and focused follow-up (see Table 1). This model is similar to those of some other data-driven leadership development initiatives and serves to remind program leaders of best practices and to reinforce their use. Reviewing these practices and considering possible variations of them may prove catalytic to those currently engaged in the rapid development of senior executive talent.

Multifaceted Data Gathering: Wasylyshyn gathered data from participants' full life histories,[10] a battery of psychometric tools,[11] and the company's established set of leadership and behavior competencies. These data were combined to provide participants with deeper insights about their own motivations, aspirations, and behaviors, and about the quality of their interpersonal relationships, especially in leadership positions. By performing these interviews over twenty years the organization itself learned to consider leadership competencies and behaviors, as well as personal skills, in other facets of talent management such as recruitment and performance review. Many managers came to refer to this information as the "Rohm and Haas *what* (competencies) and *how* (behaviors) of leadership."

> The first feedback meeting was designed to integrate the core themes of participants' life histories with their psychometric findings. Armed with increased self-awareness and deeper insights about their leadership, participants were then primed to absorb the organization's data about them.

Synthesized Feedback: Wasylyshyn met individually with participants twice to give them feedback. The first meeting was designed to

integrate the core themes of participants' life histories with their psychometric findings. Armed with increased self-awareness and deeper insights about their leadership, participants were then primed to absorb the organization's data about them. The second feedback meeting focused on using the organization's leadership and behavior data to identify the participants' specific strengths as well as qualities they should strive to develop. The meetings rarely revealed any glaring deficiencies. Instead, they uncovered nuances of behavior and ability which are invaluable to business leaders with great potential. The focus on making best use of the participants strengths often yielded more developmental progress—and even breakthroughs. Many participants exhibited strengths such as: bias for action, strategic focus, business acumen, and courageous leadership.

The behavior which participants most frequently needed to develop further was emotional fortitude,[12] which confirmed the importance of our focusing on the behavioral dimension of leadership, or what has become known as emotional intelligence. These qualities are composed of self-awareness, self-management, attunement to others, and the skills needed to build relationships. Several years after we commenced Leadership 3000, Daniel Goleman wrote, "To enhance emotional intelligence, organizations must refocus their training to include the limbic system. They must help people break old behavioral habits and establish new ones. That not only takes much more time than conventional training programs, it also requires an individualized approach."[13] Jack Welch concurred, writing some years later, "No doubt emotional intelligence is more rare than book smarts, but my experience says it is actually

more important in the making of a leader. You just can't ignore it."[14]

Comprehensive Action Planning: After the two feedback meetings, Wasylyshyn collaborated with each participant to create a *preliminary action plan (PAP)* that provided the basis for an action planning meeting attended by the participant and members of their Leadership 3000 brain trust.[15] In this meeting, the CEO and the participant's boss described actions they felt had been central to their own evolution into senior business leaders, offering the participant meaningful, immediately applicable guidance for their ongoing success and future prospects. By integrating the fruits of this meeting into their PAP, participants then created a *Master Action Plan (MAP)* that included timelines for their progress. Wasylyshyn noted, "While MAPs could include familiar development vehicles such as business school executive education programs, job rotations, task force assignments, short-term mentoring, and executive coaching, they were especially distinguished by the pursuit of 'lessons learned' as provided by C-suite members." [16]

Focused Follow-up: A year after the Leadership 3000 action planning meeting, the participant would once again meet with their brain trust for a focused follow-up discussion. By then, the participant had had sufficient time to work the MAP in their everyday life. In preparation for this meeting, Wasylyshyn, having spent time with the participant throughout the year, worked with the leader to annotate the original MAP. Their notes indicated both progress made and areas, either already identified or arising from the participant's new responsibilities, in which further guidance was needed. Now having shifted from the role of executive coach to that of trusted leadership advisor to the majority of participants, Wasylyshyn continued to

work with them on internalizing and applying the insights they'd gained. [17]

As one spouse said, "We had our tension like any married couple but not so bad that we'd go to therapy. Having this confidential opportunity to explore the work-related pressures and impact on our family helped us resolve some things in a constructive and problem-solving manner."

Optional Spousal Module: In keeping with the holistic intent of Leadership 3000, we designed a completely confidential and optional spousal module.[18] More than 80 percent of the participants had partners who, along with their boss, colleagues, direct reports, and key business contacts, were major figures in the participants' lives. We wanted to offer these couples a meaningful experience that might help to ease the pressures and concerns they felt and, by so doing, improve the participant's ability to focus on and respond to business concerns. The participants' partners were often both surprised and impressed that the company was attuned to the crucial role they played in the participants' success. As one spouse said, "We had our tension like any married couple but not so bad that we'd go to therapy. Having this confidential opportunity to explore the work-related pressures and impact on our family helped us resolve some things in a constructive and problem-solving manner." Wasylyshyn facilitated this module by gathering data from each partner and meeting with both

to discuss the common themes that had arisen. These customized interviews focused on work/family integration issues including the stress of assignments abroad, repatriation, dual careers, and planning for retirement.[19] About 10 percent of Leadership 3000 participants chose to use this optional module. Although this article does not explore why participation wasn't higher, the topic of partner participation in top leader development certainly deserves further research.

Practice Considerations: Forging Meaningful and Sustainable Workplace Relationships

Leadership 3000 was built on the established talent management practices cited above. It also strove to build powerful relationships, particularly through three practice goals: *continuity*, a commitment to one process and one external partner, *fierce truth-telling*, and *attunement*, meeting with participants according to their needs and supporting their ongoing work with Wasylyshyn.

Leadership 3000 participants were frequently contacted by executive recruiters hoping to lure them away. Because of the safety and candor of their relationships with members of their Leadership 3000 brain trust, they could openly discuss the pros and cons of leaving the company. The result was that, in over twenty years, the company lost only two of its top leaders.

Continuity: By committing to *one* psychologically-informed leadership development model and one external consultant, Rohm and Haas reaped several benefits including: preparing leaders faster for bigger roles, delineating a clear and sustained set of desired leadership competencies, devising a clear vocabulary of the *behavioral* norms for effective leadership, and the unexpected benefit of retaining top talent. Leadership 3000 participants were frequently contacted by executive recruiters hoping to lure them away. Because of the safety and candor of their relationships with members of their Leadership 3000 brain trust, they could openly discuss the pros and cons of leaving the company. The result was that, in over twenty years, the company lost only two of its top leaders.[20]

Fierce Truth-Telling: While the program held the guiding principle of data confidentiality sacrosanct, Wasylyshyn did use this information to identify participants' strengths and weaknesses. This encouraged all members of each participant's brain trust to be highly honest and transparent. This truthfulness gradually effected the company's pervading culture as well, which surely would have pleased former CEO Larry Wilson. Wasylyshyn wrote, "It would appear that the fierce truth-telling that characterized this work also chipped away at a 'Rohm and Haas polite' dynamic…in the early days of the Dow acquisition (2009), Dow executives described Rohm and Haas top talent as 'considerably more aggressive and direct' as compared to their Dow peers."

Attunement: Meeting participants where they needed to be met: Initially, broader logistical and scheduling issues made establishing and maintaining interaction with Leadership 3000 participants challenging.[21] As employees came to perceive the program as a particular developmental advantage, however,

the difficulty waned. The program's pragmatic, step by step collaboration on both the preliminary and master action plans made the benefits more tangible. Participants were also strongly motivated by having the CEO or other C-level executives at the table to discuss their development plans and then to scrutinize their progress a year later. In other words, it mattered that this work had not been relegated to Human Resources. The participants benefited from greater exposure to senior management and individual attention to their specific development needs. Because of the program's emphasis on relationships and a holistic, *'we see you'* perspective, several participants also received support and assistance during difficult personal events. Wasylyshyn helped one participating couple to adjust to the news that one of their children was gay and arranged for another participant to work with a bilingual bereavement counselor after the sudden death of his father. While this article's focus is elsewhere, it is clear that affiliative love, the strong bonds of friendship and mutual concern, played an important role in the Leadership 3000 program. As Wasylyshyn wrote, "…meeting Leadership 3000 participants where *they needed to be met* involved many acts of attunement and committed caring that could be considered a way of loving. It is possible then that, on a deeper, psychodynamic level, such caring was part of the glue in these close, development-oriented relationships." And perhaps in evidence of that love, the majority of participants elected to continue being coached by Wasylyshyn so as to internalize and make best use of what they had learned.

Conclusion

So why is Rohm and Haas considered one of the best "CEO universities" in the world? On the surface, we believe it is due to the

company's steadfast use of specific management practices and of a psychologically informed leadership development program which emphasized behavior to accelerate the careers of its high potential talent. Over 20 percent of Leadership 3000's seventy participants went on to become CEOs elsewhere after the company was sold to Dow in 2009. While we have described these practices and the Leadership 3000 model, some critical questions remain: What were the key factors in the success of this work? Does the work have enduring aspects which could be useful in current leadership development initiatives? To answer these questions fully would require research into the value of running one leadership development model for many years, the impact of a CEO's active participation in planning the development of high potential employees, and the role of psychological insight in leadership development initiatives.

For now, let us simply emphasize that the company's twenty year commitment to Leadership 3000 was central to its success. Likewise, its basis a steady set of leadership competencies and essential leader behaviors was key. The active interactions of the CEO and other C-level executives with participants throughout, which we referred to as *conveyance of wisdom,* was critical as well.

On a deeper level, we believe the strength of this work was its philosophical commitment to what Feck described as the need to go "inside-out" with participants. We helped them to discover and apply fresh psychological insights about their own motivations, aspirations, and impact. Our holistic approach deepened their self-awareness. And by forming close relationships with them we increased their ability to internalize and apply what they had learned.

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Through all of this, we wanted the participants to realize that we were trying to see the full complexity of their lives, not just their professional roles. We believe it was through this fundamental human need to be seen, to be heard, and to be understood that we engaged with these gifted people. We strove to honor them with the certainty that, in the totality of their lives, they could become even more. Is engaging with employees in this way still important now? Yes…more than ever. ■

Dr. Karol M. Wasylyshyn is President of Leadership Development Forum. She is a business and psychology hybrid professional and specializes in executive development. Trusted leadership advisor to numerous CEOs and other executives, author, poet, and expert on emotional intelligence, she is also an Adjunct Associate Professor in Widener University's Institute of Graduate Clinical Psychology. As a recognized pioneer of executive coaching, she has worked with hundreds of business leaders in every sector and has served on the coaching faculty in the Advanced Management program at The Wharton School of Business. Her most recent book, *Destined to Lead,* is a collection of executive coaching cases and includes senior business leaders' reflections on their experience of her coaching. Dr. Wasylyshyn is a Fellow of both the American Psychological Association (APA) and APA Division 13 (Consulting Psychology).

Raj L. Gupta has been Chairman of APTIV PLC (formerly Delphi Automotive PLC) since March 2015. From 1999 - 2009, Mr. Gupta was Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Rohm and Haas, where he held a variety of posts beginning in 1971. Mr. Gupta earned a B.S. in mechanical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology (1967), an M.S. in Operations Research from Cornell University (1969) and an M.B.A. in finance from Drexel University (1972). Mr. Gupta is a former Chairman of the American Chemistry Council and the Society of Chemical Industry, America Section. He is a member of the board of Dupont and is the Chairman of Avantor Inc. He has also served on the boards of Hewlett Packard, IRI, The Vanguard Group, Tyco International, and Arconic (Howmet Aerospace), amongst others.

Endnotes

1. Gupta, R.l. (2010, November). How I did it: Rohm and Haas's former CEO on pulling off a sweet deal in a down market. *Harvard Business Review.*

2. After the company was sold to Dow, twelve of these leaders became CEOs of public companies. These include Pierre Brondeau (FMC), Guillermo Novo (Ashland), and Carol Eicher (Innocore). Another six assumed CEO responsibility for private or community entities.

3. Botelho, E.L. & Kos, S. (2020, January 10). Unexpected companies produce some of the best CEOs. *Harvard Business Review.* Retrieved from website https://hbr.org/2020/01/unexpected-companies-produce-some-of-the-best-ceos.

4. Gupta, R.L. & Wasylyshyn, K.M. (2009). Developing world class leaders: The Rohm and Haas story. *People and Strategy Journal, 32(4),* 37-41.

5. Feck died in 2000 and Wasylyshyn had three subsequent CHRO partners in Leadership 3000.

6. When this program was initiated, the balance between work and family was not the prominent workplace consideration that it is now. This work legitimized it as an important issue and it became more aptly referred to as *work-family integration*.

7. Given the behavioral dimension of this leadership development challenge, Feck specifically wanted to include a consulting psychologist.

8. Wasylyshyn, K.M. (2011). Developing top talent: Guiding principles, methodology and practice considerations. In L. A. Berger & D. R. Berger (Eds.), The talent management handbook (2nd ed., pp. 205–216). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

9. Wasylyshyn, K.M. (2011). Developing top talent: Guiding principles, methodology and practice considerations. In L. A. Berger & D. R. Berger (Eds.), The talent management handbook (2nd ed., pp. 205–216). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

10. Wasylyshyn was trained as a clinical psychologist with an emphasis on the stages of human development based on Erik Erikson's theory of human development stages. The way a participant completed the psycho/social tasks of each development stage often had important implications on how they were handling their leadership roles.

11. The psychometric battery used for Leadership 3000 included the following; Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, Life Styles Inventory 1, Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R), BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQi), Rorschach, Hermann Brain Dominance, Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament Survey, and PRF-Form E.

12. This emerged as a particular development need. Participants possessed significant innate capability and industry knowledge but were often less strong in terms of emotional intelligence (EQ). For many, Leadership 3000 provided the opportunity for them to integrate IQ and EQ in ways that intensified their overall effectiveness as leaders.

13. Goleman, D. 1998. What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review*, (November–December): 93–102.

14. Welch, J. 2004, January 23. Four e's (a jolly good fellow). Wall Street Journal, A14.

15. The Leadership 3000 brain trust of every participant consisted of his or her boss, the CEO or another C-suite executive, the corporate head of HR, and the external consultant. Since there was no end date placed on participants' access to members of their development brain trust, participants could call on them for years thereafter, as well as through the four phases of the Leadership 3000 process.

16. Wasylyshyn, K.M. (2011). Developing top talent: Guiding principles, methodology and practice considerations. In L. A. Berger & D. R. Berger (Eds.), The talent management handbook (2nd ed., pp. 205–216). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

17. Wasylyshyn, K. M. (March 2019). The trusted leadership advisor: Defined, unpacked, encouraged. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research, 71*, 1–15.

18. The Leadership 3000 Spousal Module was created in 1990; if it were created now, it would be called the Partner Module.

19. Again, we use the more apt term "work-family integration" instead of the popular "work-family balance." For top talent individuals, work-family balance—if viewed literally as an even division between work and family—is not a realistic objective.

20. During the twenty-one years of Leadership 3000, only two out of seventy participants left the company—one for personal reasons and one to take a senior post with a salary Rohm and Haas could not match.

21. Many of the Leadership 3000 participants worked in regions other than the U.S.