OC Line Leader Interviews: 2023

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Executive Summary

The part of God's global mission that One Challenge has been entrusted necessitates that every field team and region possess qualified leaders who provide gifted leadership to fulfill the mission. For this to be realized, there must be a greater number of its missionaries interested in and capable of serving in line leadership. This includes men and women, qualified older as well as qualified younger missionaries. OC desires a pattern of ongoing development of leaders such that there will be ample supply of potential leaders when new teams and/or ministry opportunities arise.

To this end a Leadership Development Task Force was convened to study issues related to the generation of new leaders in the organization. As part of its mandate, this task force elected to interview missionaries who have served in line leadership regarding the practices, experiences, and processes that enabled them to feel they could initially accept an invitation to field leadership, and to reflect upon the practices, experiences, and processes which, in fact, had been vital for their successful performance in their roles.

Questions were asked about motivations, strengths, deficiencies, role fulfillment, beneficial training, beneficial experiences, traumas, mentoring and coaching, ongoing training, and ongoing experiences. Respondents were invited to share additional comments and insights. Responses were aggregated and analyzed. Observations were drawn, and points for action and prayer were recommended.

Contents

Introduction

At the October 2023 OC Leadership Conference, a task force was created, under the direction of Rich Henderson to study the status of leadership development within One Challenge. It had been recognized that the part of God's global mission that OC had been entrusted necessitated that every field team and region possess qualified leaders to provide gifted leadership to fulfill the mission. There was a perceived scarcity of people within OC to live out this calling through organizational leadership roles.

To address this perceived scarcity for the purpose of "deepening the leadership bench of One Challenge," it was decided that a Leadership Development Task Force would canvass as many willing missionaries serving in line leadership regarding the practices, experiences, and processes that enabled them to feel they could initially accept an invitation to field leadership. In addition, it was decided that these same field leaders would be questioned regarding practices, experiences, and processes which, in fact, had been vital for the successful performance of their line leadership roles.

During the first half of 2023, an interview instrument (on-line survey) was created and tested. A list of missionaries considered "US-MC sent, field, and subsidiary leadership" was compiled. It included all Area Directors, Field Directors, US-MC Department heads, Team Treasurers, and Transition Coordinators, current as well as some missionaries who had held those positions in the past. All people on that list were invited to be interviewed. Fifty-two interviews were subsequently conducted by six members of the Leadership Development Task Force in April-June of 2023.

Methods

Interviewing

Interviews were conducted via a variety of platforms (e.g., Zoom, Teams, Skype, WhatsApp) as well as some face-to-face. Answers to the predominately open response questions were inserted directly into an on-line LimeSurvey tool which allowed the interviewer to record the responses as the interview progressed. The interviewers asked respondents up to 168 questions about their current primary position and up to 11 other OC leadership roles the leader may have had as a secondary or previous role. Two-thirds of the questions had open-responses. These included a set of 9 standard questions about each position, three additional questions about the current position, and a final question about comments or insights the respondent might have to help the Leadership Development Task Force going forward. The responses were downloaded to an Excel worksheet for analysis.

Coding

Please see the Appendix for a thorough explanation of the authors' use of AI for the thematic analysis of the interview responses.

Respondents

Information on demographic and employment characteristics were available for most of the line leaders interviewed. They included 10 women and 40 men. They ranged in age from 34 to 76 years. They had been with OC for one to 46 years, and had been in their current primary position from less than one year to 37 years. Fourteen of them were in US-MC positions, four were US-MC sent Area Directors, seven were Field Directors, eleven of them were Team Leaders, five of them were Team Treasurers, and nine were Thematic or other leaders.

These demographic and employment characteristics provided some insights into who responded in similar ways about their current position. Only the first identified theme in their responses were analyzed, as it probably identified the most important part of their answers. The small number of leaders in the various groups means that the findings described are suggestive, not necessarily significant in the standard statistical sense.

| Table 1. Known respondent characteristics	
Characteristics	Count
Gender	
Female	10
Male	40
Age	
34-54	10
55-64	17
65-69	12
70-76	10
Years with OC	
1 to 9	5
10 to 19	17
20 to 29	9
30 to39	14
40 to 46	5
Years in current position	
0 to 2	13
3 or 4	8
5 or 6	9
7 to 9	7
10 or more	14
Current primary position	
US-MC Position	14
US-MC Sent Area Director	4
Field Director	7
Team Leader	11
Team Treasurer	5
Thematic, other leadership	9

Findings

What follows is a listing of each of the questions asked in the interviews and a summary of our analysis.

Heart at Acceptance

> *Please choose a number from 1 to 10 that represents your heart when you accepted this leadership position, where 1= Cautious/reluctant and 10= Eager/Confident.*

Ten leaders said they were eager or confident (10) when the accepted their current primary position while one leader was cautious or reluctant (1). On the whole, they were favorable to the position at the time they accepted it, with an average of 7.3. However, the type of position made a difference. US-MC leaders were the most eager or confident in accepting their current position (7.9 average). US-MC Sent Area Directors were the least eager and confident, although slightly more positive that a neutral response (5.8 average). (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1

Average heart when accepted by current leadership position
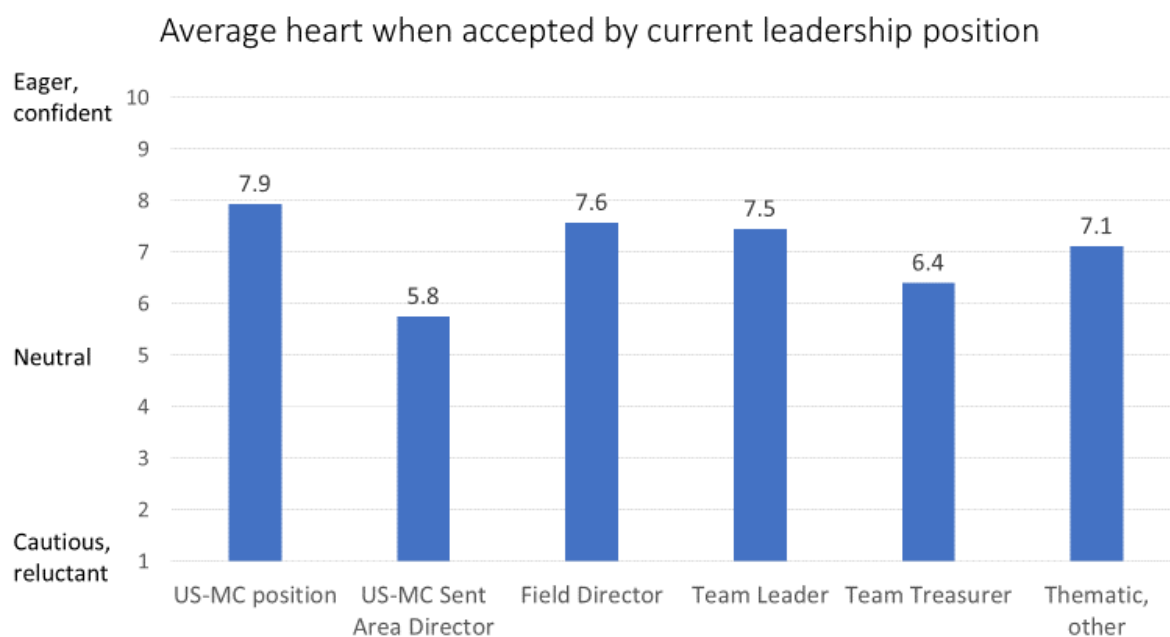
Motivation

> *What motivated you to accept the invitation to this leadership position?*

Individuals' motivations to accept their positions were diverse and multifaceted, with themes of faith, calling, responsibility, passion, and support recurring throughout the responses. These motivations reflected a complex interplay of personal beliefs, circumstances, and organizational needs.

ChatGPT identified twelve themes about motivation to accept their present primary position (52 responses) and for every other position that they had held (59 responses). Some answers produced one theme while others mentioned two or three themes. Combined, the 12 themes were

mentioned 176 times for an average of 1.6 themes per position. We found little difference in the relative frequency of themes for the present primary position and the other (secondary or past) leadership positions. We therefore combined them for analysis. (See Figure 2.) In the graphs below, 1st refers to the number of times a certain theme appeared as the primary thrust of a leader's response, 2nd as secondary and 3rd as the tertiary thrust.

Figure 2

What motivated you to accept the invitation to this leadership position?

The four most frequent motivations for OC line leaders to accept a leadership position were:

- 21 first & 25 total mentions of *Sense of duty and responsibility*: This sense of duty/responsibility to their teams, organizations, or ministries played a role in motivating respondents to accept their positions. They recognized the need and felt compelled to step up and serve. This was almost always the primary or only reason.
- 16 first & 22 total mentions of *No other suitable candidate*: They accepted their positions because there were no other suitable candidates available. They stepped up to fill a void or a necessity within their teams or organizations.
- 15 first & 22 total mentions of *Need identification and problem solving*: Individuals created new positions or accepted roles to address specific needs or challenges within their organizations. They saw an opportunity to contribute by solving existing problems.
- 14 first & 26 total mentions of *Passion and fit for the role*: Motivated to accept their positions because they felt a strong passion for the specific ministry or tasks associated with the role. They believed it was a good fit for their skills and interests. About half the time this was the primary reason and about half the time as a secondary reason.

At the other end, only six respondents accepted a position because they had *Previous Experience and Expertise,* and this was a secondary or tertiary reason for half of these.

The theme of *Sense of duty and responsibility* appeared among all demographic groups without any obvious clustering. The theme of *No other suitable candidate* was found in one-third of the leaders aged 65-69, three times more frequently than in any other age group. *Need identification and problem solving* was found among 50% of the leaders 65-69 years of age, 44% of Thematic and other leaders and those in their current position for 5-6 years, and 31% of those in their current position for 0-2 years. *Passion and fit for the role* was mentioned twice as frequently among those who had joined OC fewer than ten years ago than among those with longer tenure. Women were 10 times as likely as men to say *Practical Considerations* motivated them.

Strengths

> *Prior to beginning in this role, what personal strengths did you imagine would impact your ability to perform its necessary functions?*

While *Experience and Expertise* were seldom a motivation for accepting a leadership position, respondents most frequently felt their experience and expertise was their greatest strength for performing the functions of the position. (See Figure 3.) This was mentioned for 29% of the 109 positions as the primary strength and for 10% of the positions as secondary or tertiary strength. The next two were their organizational and administrative skills and their relational and people skills, both as primary strengths for 15% of the positions and secondary or tertiary strengths for 11% of the positions.

Figure 3

Personal strengths that would impact your ability to perform its functions
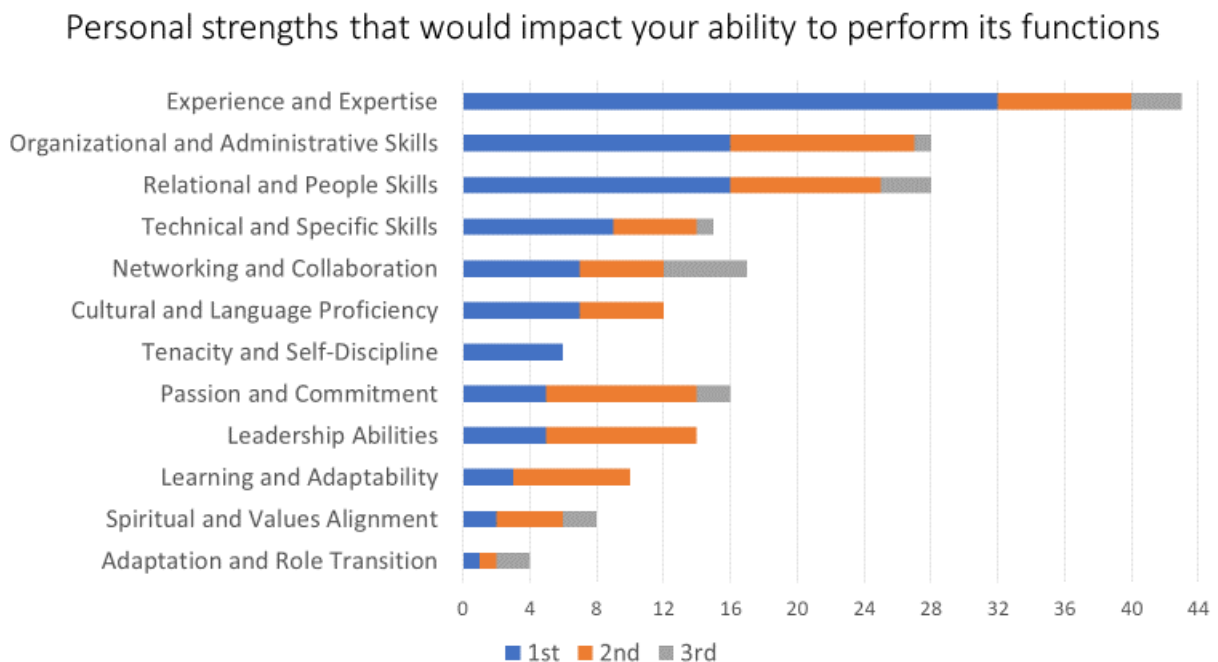
In terms of numbers for the three most frequent themes:
- 32 first & 43 total mentions of *Experience and Expertise:* Prior experiences, such as roles in adult education, training, management, and specific field experience; expertise in areas like finance, research, and technology.

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- 16 first & 28 total mentions of *Organizational and Administrative Skills*: This includes skills related to office management, budgeting, financial management, and record-keeping.
- 16 first & 28 total mentions of *Relational and People Skills*: Abilities to build trusting relationships, work well with teams, mentor others, and communicate effectively, including empathy and ability to understand and connect with people.

Descriptions of the other themes are:
- *Technical and Specific Skills*: Specific technical skills, such as bookkeeping, auditing, and computer proficiency, which were relevant to their roles.
- *Networking and Collaboration*: Networking skills and the ability to collaborate with various individuals and organizations; connecting with people, forming partnerships, and building teams.
- *Cultural and Language Proficiency*: Proficiency in languages and familiarity with various cultures. This was seen as an advantage in cross-cultural contexts.
- *Tenacity and Self-Discipline*: Important personal qualities that contributed to their ability to perform their roles effectively.
- *Passion and Commitment*: A deep passion for their work and a commitment to their organization's mission; a desire to see their teams and regions succeed.
- *Leadership Abilities*: Passion for leadership, strategic thinking, visionary thinking, and the ability to lead and develop teams effectively.
- *Learning and Adaptability*: Commitment to lifelong learning and adaptability, emphasizing willingness to take on new challenges, openness to new ideas and places, and ability to learn from experiences.
- *Spiritual and Values Alignment*: Alignment with the organization's values and their own spiritual gifts; a heart for ministry and a desire to fulfill their roles in a manner consistent with their faith.
- *Adaptation and Role Transition*: Ability to adapt to new roles and contexts, especially when transitioning from one role to another within the organization.

The theme of *Experience and Expertise* was given as a strength four times as frequently by leaders older than 65 years of age than by younger leaders, and it steadily increased from 0% for those who joined OC less than ten years ago to 40% among those who had been with OC for 40 or more years. However, those who have been with OC less than ten years were more likely to cite *Organizational and Administrative Skills* as strengths than those with longer tenure, and *Organizational and Administrative Skills* were mentioned by 50% of US-MC sent Area Directors and 40% of Team Treasurers.

Deficiencies

> *Prior to beginning in this role, what personal deficiencies did you imagine would impact your ability to perform its necessary functions?*

While they had strengths, respondents also identified what they considered to be personal deficiencies that could impact their abilities to realize the necessary functions of the position. The most frequently identified deficiencies were personal characteristics of gender, age, health, technical skills, detail orientation, learning styles, gifting, and the like. These were mentioned

for 26 positions, of the 85 positions (31%) in which leaders identified deficiencies. Lack of experience and training in fiscal management & organization was the second most cited deficiency. (See Figure 4).

Figure 4

Personal deficiencies to impact your ability to perform its necessary functions
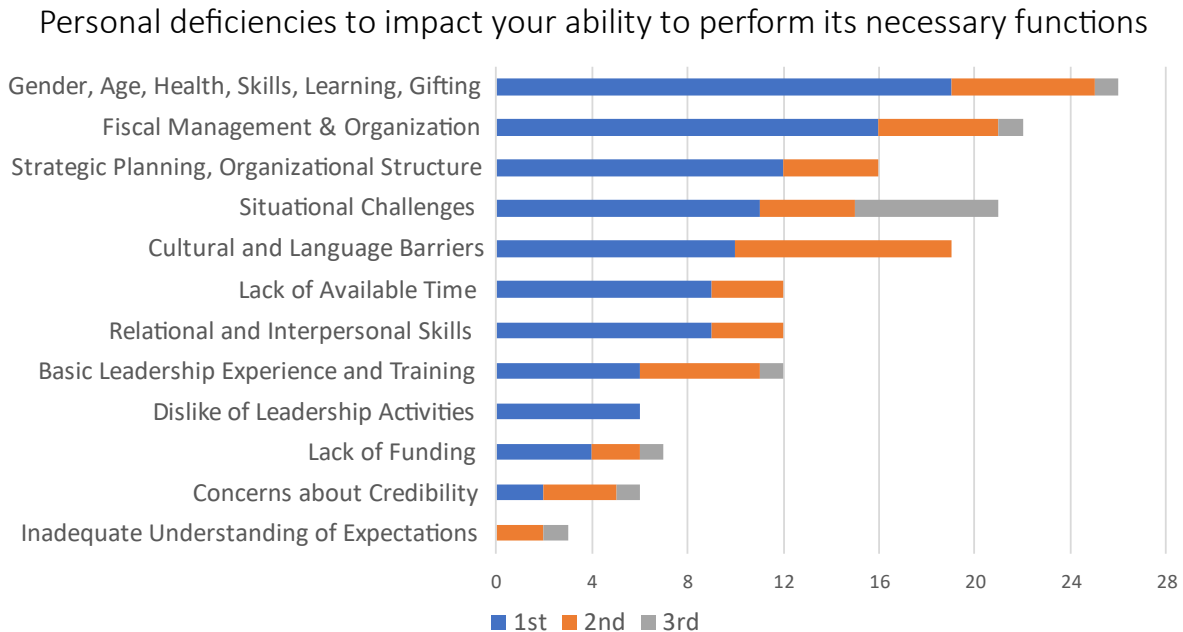
In terms of numbers for the five most frequent themes:

- 19 first & 26 total mentions of *Gender, Age, Health, Skills, Learning, Gifting*: These predominately reflected challenging personal characteristics and not acquired capacities.
- 16 first & 22 total mentions of *Fiscal Management & Organization*: These predominately reflected a lack of experience and training.
- 12 first & 16 total mentions of *Strategic Planning, Organizational Structure*: These include a relative absence of opportunities to have developed these capacities.
- 11 first & 21 total mentions of *Situational Challenges*: Such challenges were often personal or circumstantial in nature.
- 10 first & 19 total mentions of *Cultural and Language Barriers*:

Descriptions of the other themes include:
- *Lack of Available Time*: Too many other concurrent responsibilities.
- *Relational and Interpersonal Skills*: Self-identified difficulties in this area.
- *Basic Leadership Experience and Training*: Weak or absent prior to leadership role.
- *Dislike of Leadership Activities*: Too many meetings, conflict resolution, administrative duties.
- *Lack of Funding*: Inadequate financial support and/or ministry funds.
- *Concerns about Credibility*: Among national co-workers and teammates.
- *Inadequate Understanding of Expectations*: No clear job description or calendar of reporting requirements.

Personal deficiencies of *gender, age, health, technical skills, detail orientation, learning styles and gifting* were mentioned most frequently by those who had been in their current positions for less than three years and those who had been in their position for eleven or more years, and least by those who had served five to six years in their current position. *Lack of Experience and Training in Fiscal Management & Organization* were reported by 60% of Team Treasurers and 30% of women. Half of US-MC sent Area Directors reported *Inadequate Relational and Interpersonal Skills.*

Role fulfillment

Respondents answered two questions about how able they felt they would be in fulfilling the role to which they had been invited. The first question asked the positive side. The second asked the negative side.

> *What aspects of your role do you feel most able to fulfill?*

The responses to the question reveal several recurring themes related to positive expectations for their role performance. These themes provide insight into the perceived strengths and competencies for various leadership and administrative positions. ChatGPT identified 20 themes, but many of these had only slight differences and were grouped into seven broader themes. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5

What aspects of your role do you feel most able to fulfill?
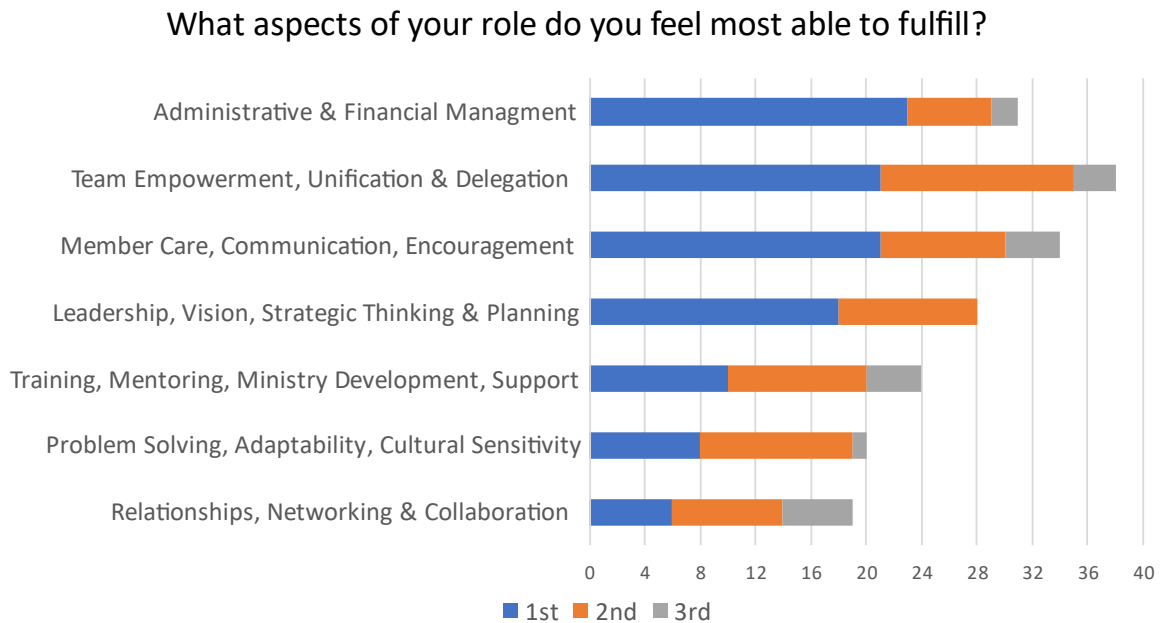
The four areas they felt most able to fulfill are:
- 23 first and 31 total mentions of *Administrative & Financial Management*: Three-fourths of the first mentions were in the administrative competence subtheme where they felt at ease with paperwork, budgeting, and other administrative responsibilities, even though these tasks may be time-consuming. The less frequent subtheme of financial management included audits and reporting.

- 21 first & 38 total mentions of *Team Empowerment, Unification & Delegation*: This included four subthemes of motivation and unity building, team empowerment and delegation, team building and unification, and facilitation and support in descending frequency.
- 21 first & 34 total mentions of *Member Care, Communication, Encouragement*: This included three subthemes of member care and pastoral skills, communication and listening, and optimism and encouragement in that order of frequency.
- 18 first & 28 total mentions of *Leadership, Vision, Strategic Thinking & Planning*: Included strategic leadership and vision casting, strategic thinking and planning, and leadership and vision.

The other themes include:
- *Training, Mentoring, Ministry Development, Support*: Training, mentoring, and coaching team members to reach their potential, and supporting missionaries and helping them develop their ministries.
- *Problem Solving, Adaptability, Cultural Sensitivity*: Adaptability, willingness to learn and adapt to new tools, systems, and challenges, and find solutions to challenges and navigate complex problems.
- *Relationships, Networking & Collaboration*: Bring people together, collaboration with people from various parts of the world, and facilitating relationships between teams and organizations.

The number of years that leaders had been part of OC had statistically significant relationships to the aspect of their role they felt most able to fulfill. Those with less than 20 years as part of OC were not concentrated in any one aspect, while those with 20-29 years felt most able to fulfill *Member Care and Pastoral Skills*, those with 30-39 years in OC cited *Administrative and Financial Management*, and those with 40 of more years in OC cited *Training, Mentoring, Ministry Development and Support*. In terms of current positions, the majority of Team Treasures felt they were most able to fulfill the *Administrative and Financial Management* aspect, and Field Directors felt they were most able to fulfill *Member Care, Communication and Encouragement* aspects.

What aspects of your role are most difficult for you to fulfill?

On the other hand, respondents expressed ten themes about what they felt to be most difficult to them to fulfill. These thematic areas reflect the multifaceted nature of leadership and ministry roles, highlighting the diverse challenges individuals encounter while fulfilling their responsibilities. Addressing these challenges requires a combination of leadership skills, adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and a strong commitment to the mission and vision of the organization. Topping the list were other administrative areas led by managing finances, finding administrative support, handling financial obligations, and handling forms, policies, and reporting requirements. (See Figure 6.)

 The frequency of mentions of the top three are:
- 24 first & 27 total mentions of *Resource and Administrative Challenges*:
- 17 first & 26 total mentions of *Leadership and Management Challenges*: Shepherding team members, aligning team members with organizational objectives, delegating tasks

Figure 6

What aspects of your role are most difficult to fulfill?
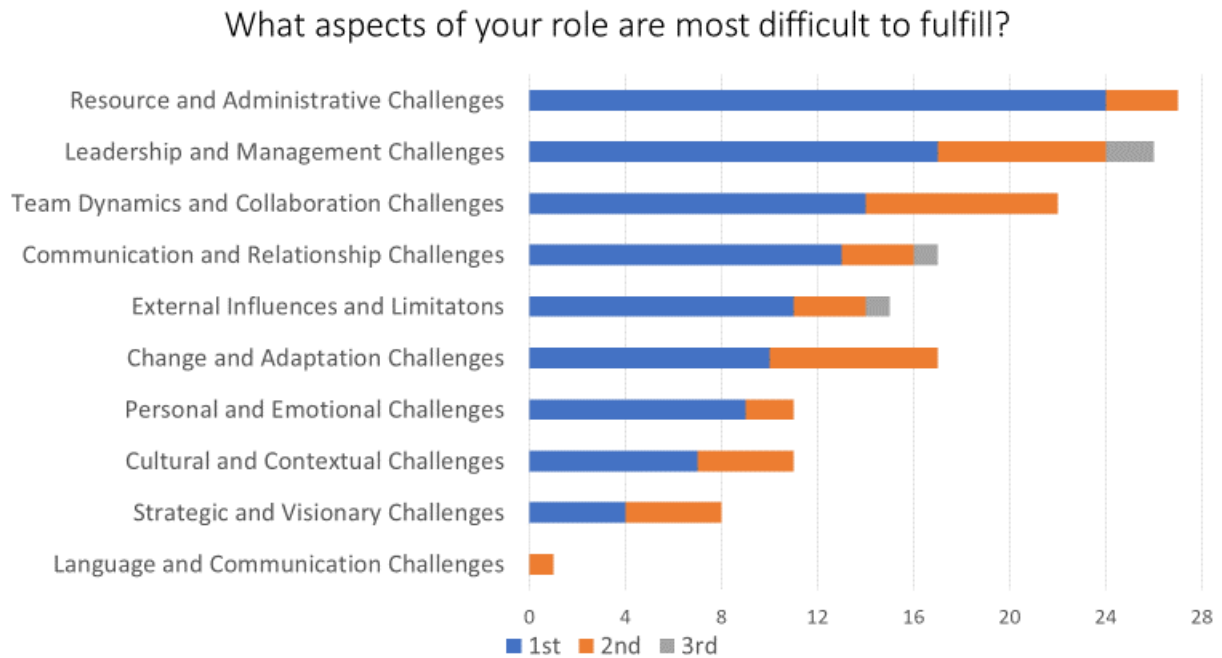
with long-term vision, managing and leading teams remotely, and navigating the dynamics of governing boards.

- 14 first & 22 total mentions of *Team Dynamics and Colaboration Challenges*: Fostering teamwork and collaboration among busy team members, aligning team members with project objectives, ensuring everyone works together, and handling interpersonal conflicts.

The other theme descriptions are:

- *Communication and Relationship Challenges*: Communicating the importance of their work to supporters. Building informal connections with team members due to remote work. Aligning objectives and goals with team members' expectations. Resolving conflicts within teams and helping others deal with conflict. Networking and interacting with external leaders and authorities.
- *External Influences and Limitations*: Adapting to external factors such as travel restrictions (e.g., during COVID-19). Responding to changing expectations and demands from senior leadership. Managing the impact of organizational decisions on fieldwork and ministry.
- *Change and Adaptation Challenges*: Adapting to changes in roles and responsibilities. Navigating organizational changes and transitions. Encouraging and facilitating change within the organization. Letting go of responsibilities and trusting in delegation.
- *Personal and Emotional Challenges*: Coping with personal health challenges or limitations. Handling personal struggles and insecurities related to leadership. Struggling with the emotional burden of leadership and ministry roles. Balancing personal and professional responsibilities.

- *Cultural and Contextual Challenges*: Understanding and adapting to the cultural context that affects team members' ability to align with organizational goals. Balancing the needs and expectations of diverse team members, including those from different cultural backgrounds. Fostering collaboration and cooperation among team members with varying cultural perspectives.
- *Strategic and Visionary Challenges*: Developing and implementing strategic plans. Achieving a paradigm shift or change in organizational culture. Promoting a broader missiological theology of mission. Identifying and implementing technology solutions. Building and maintaining relationships with national pastors and leaders.
- *Language and Communication Challenges*: Overcoming language and communication barriers. Translating and conveying information effectively in multilingual settings. Addressing nuances in language and culture when working with national staff members.

Beneficial Training

What prior training was most beneficial to you in your fulfillment of your role?

Many respondents found formal education and specific training programs valuable, while others placed a strong emphasis on the role of mentors, personal development, and learning through practical experiences. The diversity of responses reflects the multifaceted nature of training and development in fulfilling various roles within the organization. ChatGPT identified 12 themes among the responses but missed the import theme of none, or no training.

Leaders report that for half of their positions they had received no training to help them fulfill their responsibilities (19% of first mentions), that all the training was on-the-job (17%), or that they relied on their educational background (14%). (See Figure 7.) Another 15% relied on

Figure 7

What prior training was most beneficial to you in your fulfillment of your role?
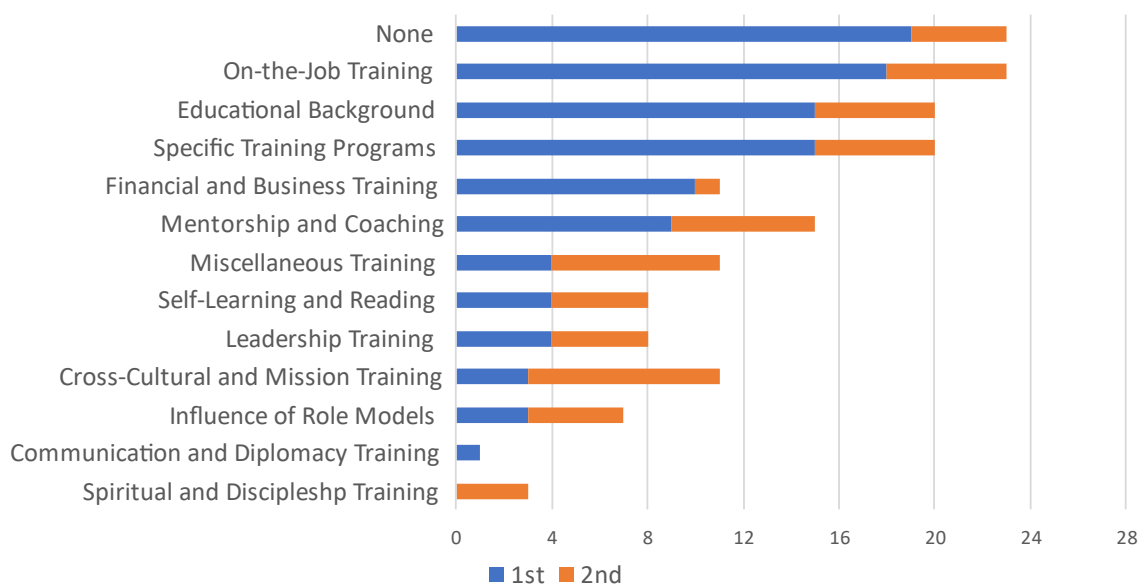
mentorship and coaching, self-learning and reading, or the influence of role models. Only 15% had specific training programs related to their positions. The remainder of the positions received training on specified topic areas.

The four most frequent responses about benefical training for the 107 positions that leaders reported were:
- 19 first & 23 total had received *None*, or no specific training for their role.
- 18 first & 23 total reported *On-the-Job Training*: Their most valuable training came from learning on the job. They acquired skills and knowledge through real-world experiences, often without specific formal training programs.
- 15 first & 20 total reported *Educational Background*: Formal education was beneficial, including degrees in fields such as business, Christian education, intercultural studies, and technical communications. These degrees provided foundational knowledge and skills applicable to their roles.
- 15 first & 20 total reported *Specific Training Programs*: Programs offered by the organization, such as OC Internship, LDP, and HART training, were valuable in preparing them for their roles.

Definition for the other themes include:
- *Financial and Business Training*: This training played a significant role in success for roles involving financial responsibilities.
- *Mentorship and Coaching*: Emphasized the value of mentorship and coaching, both within and outside the organization. Mentors provided guidance, counseling, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. This informal training was often considered the most beneficial.
- *Miscellaneous Training*: A variety of other training experiences were mentioned, such as Enneagram certification, crisis management training, and courses on organizational leadership.
- *Self-Learning and Reading*: Self-learning, continuous reading, and staying informed were the primary sources of their training and development.
- *Leadership Training*: This included courses, workshops, and books on leadership. It was especially valuable when it provided practical skills and insights into leading teams effectively.
- *Cross-Cultural and Mission Training*: Training related to cross-cultural understanding, missions, and diaspora issues.
- *Influence of Role Models*: Being influenced by role models or leaders they observed and sought to emulate.
- *Communication and Diplomacy Training*: Training in effective communication and diplomatic skills was seen as essential, particularly in roles that involved negotiation and interaction with diverse stakeholders.
- *Spiritual and Discipleship Training*: Those involved in ministry roles highlighted the significance of spiritual and discipleship training as a foundation for their work.

Educational Background was mentioned as helpful training by one-third of the leaders younger than 55, while one-third of those 65-69 mentioned *On the Job Training*. *On the Job Training*

was also mentioned as the most helpful by 60% of Team Treasurers and 40% of those with OC for less than ten years.

Beneficial Experience

What prior experiences were most beneficial to you in your fulfillment of your role?

The respondents' prior experiences that proved most beneficial in fulfilling their roles within OC encompassed a wide range of areas, including leadership, cross-cultural experiences, education, personal development, business acumen, networking, problem-solving, teaching, and specific field expertise. These diverse experiences collectively contributed to their ability to serve effectively in their roles within OC's mission and ministry context.

ChatGPT identified 11 themes among the beneficial experiences for 94 positions. Respondents identified one to three of these themes per position, for an average of 1.6. The most frequently beneficial experience, 31% of positions, was prior leadership roles within OC that provided them with insights into OC's operations and leadership dynamics. This was followed by other leadership and ministry experience (22%) and cross-cultural and multicultural experience (27%). (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8

What prior experiences were most beneficial to you in your fulfillment of your role?
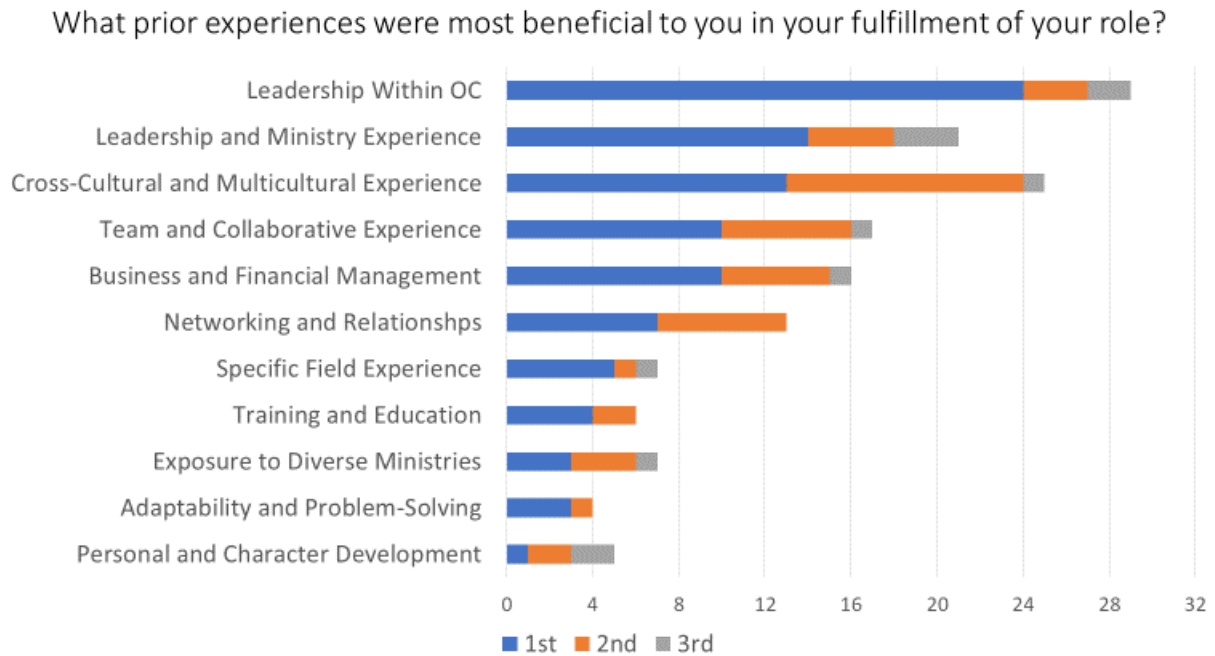
What respondents said that were coded into these 11 themes are summarized below, with the frequency of responses shown for the three most frequent themes:
- 24 first & 29 total mentions into *Leadership Within OC*: Specifically mentioned their prior leadership roles within OC, including field director, area director, and other positions within the organization. These roles provided them with insights into OC's operations and leadership dynamics.

- 14 first & 21 total mentions for *Leadership and Ministry Experience*: Leadership roles in various contexts, such as church staff ministry, youth leadership, and managerial positions. These experiences equipped them with skills in team building, empowering others, and decision-making. Additionally, prior involvement in discipleship, teaching, and mentoring roles contributed to their leadership development.
- 13 first & 25 total mentions of *Cross-Cultural and Multicultural Experience*: Experiences living and working in different cultural contexts, such as overseas missions, interactions with international leaders, and multicultural environments. These experiences fostered cross-cultural understanding, conflict resolution skills, and the ability to work interculturally.
- *Team and Collaborative Experience*: Collaborative experiences, including working in teams, coaching, and mentoring others, were seen as beneficial for their leadership roles within OC.
- *Business and Financial Management*: Experience in business, financial management, and budgeting as beneficial for their roles. This background helped them in managing resources effectively within their roles.
- *Networking and Relationships*: Building and maintaining relationships with others, both within OC and with external organizations. Networking at conferences, collaborating with partners, and mentoring relationships played a significant role in their experience.
- *Specific Field Experience*: Experiences specific to their field or region, such as working with Muslim communities, indigenous populations, or Latin Americans.
- *Training and Education*: Formal education, such as school administration and discipleship training in a church; specific training programs, conferences, and workshops that provided them with valuable knowledge and skills related to their roles.
- *Exposure to Diverse Ministries*: Exposure to sports ministry, discipleship programs, and mission organizations, contributed to their leadership development and understanding of different facets of ministry.
- *Adaptability and Problem-Solving*: Experiences that required adaptability, problem-solving, and innovation; learning to navigate challenges and finding creative solutions to complex issues.
- *Personal and Character Development*: Personal growth and spiritual development as essential to fulfilling their roles. This included deepening their faith, learning to trust in God, and understanding the importance of mentorship and life-on-life relationships.

Trauma

What traumas, if any, have been most debilitating?

Overall, these responses demonstrate the diverse range of challenges and traumas experienced by individuals in leadership roles within Christian mission organizations. These challenges encompass personal, interpersonal, cultural, organizational, and external factors that impact their work and well-being. It is evident that resilience, adaptability, and support systems play crucial roles in navigating these challenges.

Responses to traumas they have faced in their leadership positions generated twelve general themes. While the most frequent type of traumas occurred in leadership challenges, ten other themes were frequently mentioned. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9

What traumas, if any, have been most debilitating?
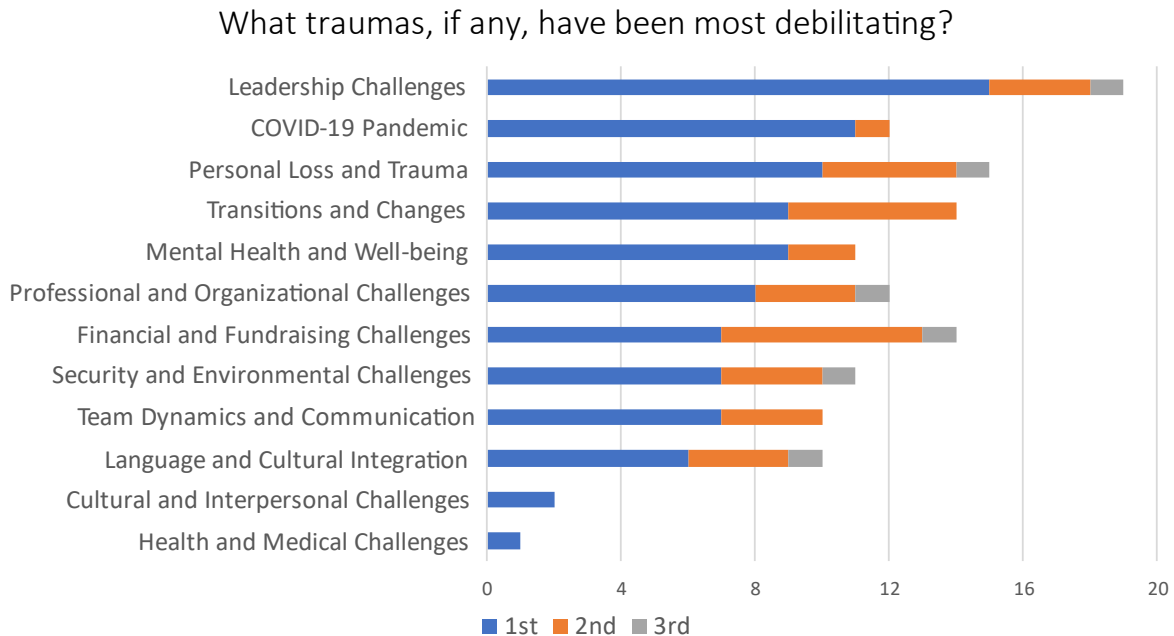
The more frequently were:
- 15 first & 19 total mentions of *Leadership Challenges*: Backlash from colleagues, breaches in friendships, managing teams, and leadership undermining decisions or lacking clear communication.
- 11 first & 12 total mentions of *COVID-19 Pandemic*: It affected travel, team dynamics, and the ability to carry out their missions. However, the pandemic also led to positive changes, such as solidifying the teams.
- 10 first & 15 total mentions of *Personal Loss and Trauma*: Loss of family members, financial losses, and wire fraud.
- 9 first & 14 total mentions of *Transitions and Changes*: New roles, dealing with changes within the organization, personnel turnover, team dynamics, and leadership transitions.
- 9 first & 11 total mentions of *Metal Health and Well-being*: Excessive stress or obsession with certain issues, coping with trauma and resilience-building.
- 8 first & 12 total mentions of *Professional and Organizational Challenges*: Struggling with specific roles or responsibilities, dealing with management decisions, and conflicts with leadership.
- 7 first & 14 total mentions of *Financial and Fundraising Challenges*: Both personally and organizationally, fundraising, and disagreements over financial management.
- 7 first & 11 total mentions of *Security and Environmental Challenges*: Questioned by authorities, living in hostile environments, experiencing government crackdowns, and environmental challenges like earthquakes.

- 7 first & 10 total mentions of *Team Dynamics and Communication*: Communication challenges within teams, conflicts and misunderstandings, and differing priorities and expectations.
- 6 first & 10 total mentions of *Language and Cultural Integration*: Language barriers and cultural misunderstandings, and need to adapt to new cultural norms and expectations.

The *COVID-19 Pandemic* was the only trauma that was concentrated in any demographic and employment group. Two-thirds of those who had been in their current position for 3-4 years reported the pandemic as a debilitating trauma.
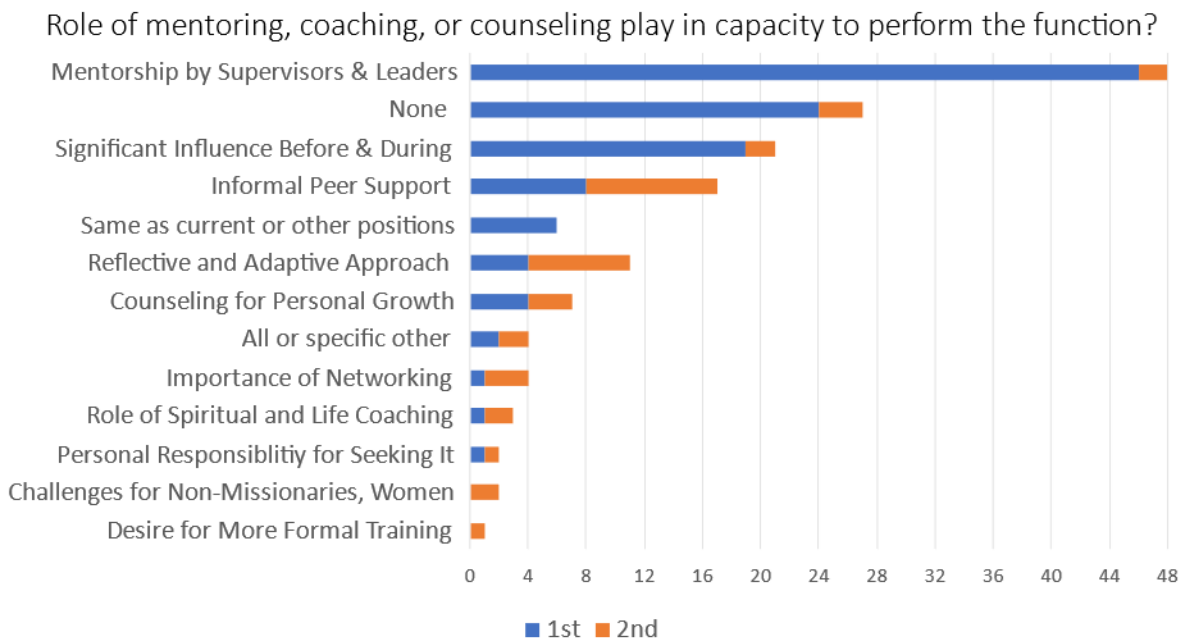
Mentoring and Coaching

> *What role did mentoring, coaching, or counseling play in your capacity to perform this function?*

Mentoring, coaching, and counseling have played various roles in supporting individuals in their leadership positions. These roles encompass both formal and informal support systems, emphasizing the importance of personal growth, networking, and peer collaboration. Some respondents expressed a desire for more structured mentorship programs within the organization to enhance leadership development.

Respondents answered the question on the role of mentoring, coaching, or counseling for 116 of the positions they have had. However, one-fifth of these then said they had not received any mentoring or coaching. (See Figure 10.) One-third of the mentoring, coaching, and counseling had come from supervisors and other OC leaders, and one-tenth from peers through informal support. A few (6) said the role of mentoring had been the same as in other positions.

Figure 10

Role of mentoring, coaching, or counseling play in capacity to perform the function?

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The specific number of the four most frequent responses and amplification of what went into each theme follows:

- 46 first & 48 total mentions of *Mentorship by Supervisors and Leaders*: Importance of mentorship and coaching provided by their supervisors, leaders, and senior colleagues. They mentioned specific names of individuals who had a significant impact on their development and decision-making processes.
- 24 first & 27 total mentions of *None*.
- 19 first & 21 total mentions of *Significant Influence Before and During the Role*: These forms of support were instrumental in preparing them for their roles and continued to be valuable during their tenure.
- 8 first & 17 total mentions of *Informal Peer Support*: They relied on colleagues, peers, and team members for guidance and shared experiences, which contributed to their success in their roles.
- 6 did not provide specific information on mentoring for a secondary or previous position but just reported it was the same as for a position they had discussed earlier in the interview, most likely their current position.
- *Reflective and Adaptive Approach*: Adopted a reflective and adaptive approach to mentorship and coaching, seeking help when needed and valuing ongoing learning and support.
- *Counseling for Personal Growth*: Counseling associated with personal growth and overcoming challenges, especially in dealing with trauma and difficult situations. It played a crucial role in helping individuals navigate the demands of their roles.
- *All or specific other:* Mentoring, Coaching and Counseling had played all types of roles in in their ability to perform their functions.
- *Importance of Networking*: Importance of networking and building relationships outside their organization. They found mentorship and coaching from external sources to be valuable in their professional development.
- *Role of Spiritual and Life Coaching*: Significance of spiritual direction and life coaching in maintaining work-life balance and personal growth.
- *Challenges in Mentorship for Non-Missionaries and Women*: Challenges in mentorship for non-missionaries and women within their organization, suggesting that more efforts should be made in this regard.
- *Desire for More Formal Training*: Desire for more formal training and structured mentoring programs within their organization, highlighting the lack of clear guidelines and training manuals for their leadership roles.

Women were twice as likely as men to report *Mentorship by Supervisors and Leaders* (50% and 28%) while men were more likely than women to report *Significant Influenced Before and During the Role* (30% and 10%). Age had no relationship to reporting *Mentorship by Supervisors and Leaders,* but the years since joining OC did: Two-thirds who had been with OC 20-29 years reported *Mentorship by Supervisors and Leaders* compared to one-eighth of those with shorter or longer tenure. All US-MC Sent Area Directors reported *Mentorship by Supervisors and Leaders* while no Field Directors did.

Ongoing Training

What ongoing training do you feel would enable you to continue effectively in this role?

The responses highlight the diverse training needs and personal growth priorities of individuals in leadership roles within their respective organizations. The common thread is a commitment to continuous improvement and preparation for the future. ChatGPT found 16 themes in the responses regarding the need for training to perform high-level functions.

This question was only asked for the current position and 14 respondents said they either had no need for ongoing training or they did not respond to the question. For the others, they expressed as many as three training needs with the following frequency:
- 11   Leadership Development and Succession Planning
- 10   Skills Enhancement
- 9   Adaptive Leadership
- 8   Self-Directed Learning
- 8   Mentoring and Coaching
- 5   Clear Communication and Expectations
- 4   Continuous Learning and Adaptation
- 4   Coaching and Mentoring Others
- 3   Networking and Collaboration
- 3   Technology and Software Training
- 2   Spiritual and Personal Growth
- 2   Change Management and Transition
- 2   Age and Retirement Planning
- 2   Other Specific Training Needs
- 1   Cultural Sensitivity
- 1   Emotional and Trauma Response

Ongoing Experience

What ongoing experiences do you feel would enable you to continue effectively in this role?

Overall, these responses highlight the multifaceted nature of effective leadership within the organization, with a focus on continuous development, mentorship, networking, and maintaining a strong personal and spiritual foundation. Additionally, there is an emphasis on learning from others' experiences and fostering a supportive and collaborative environment within the organization. ChatGPT identified 10 themes in the 52 responses.

This question was only asked of the current role and 14 respondents said they did not need ongoing experiences or did not answer the question. The others identified as many as three ongoing experiences that they thought would help them:
- 10   Transition and Succession Planning.
- 9   Leadership Collaboration.
- 6   Mentorship and Support.

- 6   Networking and Exposure.
- 6   Professional Development and Skill Enhancement.
- 5   Cross-Cultural Experiences.
- 4   Personal and Spiritual Growth.
- 4   Other.
- 4   Team Dynamics and Support.
- 4   Learning from Experienced Individuals.
- 1   Coaching and Self-Discovery.

Comments or Insights

> *What comments or insights do you have that might help the Leadership Development Task Force plan and prepare for the right number of qualified leaders as One Challenge moves into the future?*

These themes and insights offer a comprehensive overview of the considerations and strategies that the Leadership Development Task Force can employ to plan and prepare for the future of leadership within One Challenge. They highlight the multifaceted nature of leadership development, the importance of adaptability and inclusivity, and the need to balance character and competency in leaders.

This opportunity for comments or insights occurred only once at the end of the interview and 47 respondents offered comments or insights. ChatGPT initially identified 28 themes, but coding found seven of these to be essentially duplicates of others. Coding found an average of 1.7 themes in the responses contained two themes. The frequency the themes were mentioned are:
- 8   Internal Leadership Development.
- 7   Adaptability and Innovation.
- 7   Younger Leaders and Innovation.
- 6   Transition Planning.
- 6   Formal Training and Resources.
- 6   Diversity in Leadership.
- 5   Mentoring and Coaching.
- 5   Balancing Leadership and Management.
- 5   Recruitment and Internship Program.
- 5   Clear Communication and Expectations.
- 4   On-the-Job Training.
- 3   Focus on Character and Competency.
- 3   Coaching and Mentoring Skills.
- 2   Holistic Approach to Leadership.
- 1   Collaboration and Learning from Others.
- 1   Clear Communication and Expectations.
- 1   Incorporating Spirituality.
- 1   Spiritual Guidance.
- 1   Empowerment and Inclusivity.
- 1   Continuous Learning.

- 1   Cultural Sensitivity and Language Proficiency.
- 2   Other.

Discussion

OC is to be commended for many positive aspects of its current leadership profile. Many OC missionaries in line leadership are there because of a high degree of coherence between their passion and fit for a position and their team's circumstances and needs. They identified many skills, inherent and acquired, that made them apt for their roles. They possessed capabilities that were clearly in line with the organizational ethos of One Challenge. One Challenge can praise God for this high level of competence and satisfaction.

Many of these same missionaries, however, also face formidable challenges. The absence of specific prior training, coupled with realities beyond their control (e.g., gender, age, health, gifting, learning styles, etc.) appear to impact the ability of some line leaders in OC to nurture strong team relationships and move courageously into greater networking and collaboration.

It is noteworthy that some issues regarding leadership preparation and capacity were simultaneously identified by the group as both present and absent, positive and negative. This occurred, for example, in the areas of administrative competence and financial management, and in the question regarding the role of coaching and mentoring. Line leaders felt both competent and incompetent in their administrative and fiscal roles. They both did, and did not, benefit from coaching and mentoring. Possible explanations for this paradox in finance and administration may be that those who had aptitude and/or received prior training in team administration and finance felt well able to perform those duties, while those who did not, did not (that is, two distinct sub-groups). Another possible explanation may be that prior to taking on a leadership role, a missionary may have perceived him/herself to have management and finance skills but, once in the position, discovered them to be insufficient. A possible explanation for this apparent contradiction in the area of coaching and mentoring might be that those who received coaching or mentoring benefitted from it, but many of those interviewed had not had access to this resource. In any case, these observations merit further consideration.

This observation, that extremes were expressed regarding a given issue, also appeared pertinent regarding existing training opportunities. Many missionaries who had taken advantage of in-place programs found them helpful. Many more said they had received no prior training before assuming leadership responsibilities. Might this apparent contradiction be more a statement of an insufficient number of missionaries being invited into training opportunities, rather than of the quality of those opportunities? This hypothesis might be seen to support the observation that many line leaders were concerned about succession planning. Many had taken on their role because there was "no other suitable candidate." The most desired ongoing training and experience identified by those interviewed was "Transition and Succession Planning."

Also noteworthy was the distinction between fiscal management and technical skills. At one point in the history of One Challenge, these two areas may have enjoyed great overlap (i.e., anyone good with budgets and numbers could reasonably be expected to be good with technology). This may no longer be the case, as so many more organizational functions (e.g., communication, reporting, recruiting, even prayer) now require technical expertise. More intentional development of both financial acumen and software expertise may be indicated.

Having had a prior leadership role within an OC team was clearly seen as helpful for subsequent roles. When this prior leadership role contained a cross-cultural or multicultural component, it was even more beneficial. This appears to support the positive impact of internal "promotions" (i.e., filling leadership roles from personnel within the organization) in One Challenge. It also, however, contributes to the problem of succession preparation and planning, especially for field (i.e., not US-MC) assignments. For an organization that does not recruit field leaders externally (that is, does not hire them from outside the organization to fill internal leadership roles) the "pool" of available candidates may not always be optimal. An examination of secular leadership studies (e.g., in monarchies, family dynasties, etc.) may yield insights as to how to maximize the benefits and minimize the limitations of succession planning from within an existing employee pool.

It was evident that the very challenges of leadership in a ministry such as One Challenge can be traumatic. Add to these the challenges and limitations that come with age and loss, and the need for the development of new resilient leaders becomes even more compelling.

Finally, it may be helpful to look outside the bounds of leadership development for solutions to some of the questions arising from this inquiry. If, for example, challenges to networking and collaboration are as much a financial concern as a personnel concern (i.e., how to fund networking opportunities), it may be wise to invite additional voices to speak into this issue.

Prayer recommendations:

- Heavenly Father, we praise You for the men and women you have invited into line leadership at the One Challenge US-MC. Thank You for calling them and thank You for their servant hearts that motivated them to respond to Your call.
- The world in which these leaders minister is becoming increasingly complex. Please, Lord, fit them with the skills they need through well-pondered, well-executed training resources and opportunities.
- For those who will be creating and implementing new training opportunities, help them to discern priorities appropriately. To the extent that it may be useful, enable them to incorporate the topics identified by those who were interviewed in this study.
- Where specific skill sets are required (particularly in the preparation of team treasurers), may there be excellent coordination between the US-MC Finance Department and those more broadly responsible for leadership development.
- Please bring to the awareness of those responsible for leadership training such resources that may be pertinent, especially with regard to leadership succession in a closed environment.
- If the One Challenge US-MC is to be nimble and swift to seize opportunities for ministry growth, it will need to have many more men and women prepared for leadership responsibilities. Please show us how to maximize the number of OC missionaries who are equipped to assume these roles.
- We thank you, Lord, for the high level of self-motivation for upskilling demonstrated by the respondents in this study. Help One Challenge leadership take advantage of this momentum to recommend (and perhaps facilitate acquisition of) the best books, materials, and courses for leadership preparation.

- As some of our leaders desire greater professional development and skill enhancement, help the trainers in One Challenge strike the best balance between soft learning opportunities (e.g., adult education through discovery) and rigorous practical training.
- We recognize, Lord, that every OC missionary must develop the character and competencies necessary to lead so that they might contribute their part to ensure the mission advances. Please keep us in a lifelong posture of learning and growth.
- Please help all those involved in leadership development (US-MC staff, field supervisors, mentors, coaches, etc.) to think and look broadly to find appropriate and ever more sophisticated tools to equip all OC missionaries with what is necessary for fruitful Kingdom work.

Amen.

Appendix

Task Force

Members of the Leadership Development Task Force performing the 2023 interviews were:
- David Bulger
- Dave DeVries
- Sarah Gerhart
- Rich Henderson
- Stephanie Kraft
- Terry Tuggy

Methodological Observations

By way of explanation, thematic analysis of patterns within qualitative (textual) data provides deeper understanding of common themes among respondents' answers to a question. Different technologies can be used to identify themes. All require judgements by people familiar with the purpose for asking the question. The first step is to identify a few themes that are meaningful and to assign them a single word, phrase, or number called a "code." These codes should have two properties—validity and reliability. Validity refers to a clear theme that represents the purpose of the question, the respondent's answer, and that will be useful for decision-making. Reliability refers to different coders making the same judgement that the code captures the essence of a respondent's answer. In the past, members of the GRT developed and assigned codes using paper and pencil, basic computer programs for word documents (Word) and spreadsheets (Excel), and specialized qualitative analysis programs (QDA Miner), all which have free versions. Often these take a lot of time and effort, which makes it impractical to involve more than one coder to test the validity and reliability of identified themes. New AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can reduce the effort of initially identifying themes, assigning a code number, and permitting a less time-consuming effort to test for validity and reliability.

Given the volume of open text these interviews generated, the authors elected to test some AI software in the fall 2023 by using responses for the primary current position. We each independently developed codes for the responses to two of the questions about the current position. One used the downloaded spreadsheet directly and the other used QDA Miner after uploading the data into it. We had just begun comparing our two codings when the Krafts attended a conference focused on ChatGPT. They used the data from the downloaded spreadsheet for the same two questions as a learning exercise to see how ChatGPT 3.5 worked. The ChatCPT results appeared promising. The authors then compared the three results for the question, "What motivated you to accept the invitation to this leadership position." The ChatGPT analysis produced 18 codes mentioned 76 times among the 52 respondents about their current leadership role. One of us had developed 7 codes with 70 total mentions. The other had developed 15 codes with 83 total mentions. Many of the code titles developed by the three methods appeared to be comparable. This initial comparison suggested enough similarities among all three methods that the time savings (and thus cost) of using ChatGPT as a first step to identify coded themes in the data was considerable. ChatGPT took less than one minute to identify the themes, the Excel coding took 4-6 hours, and the QDA Minor coding took 10 hours.

The Global Research Team was grateful for this opportunity to use this project as an AI learning experiment. Lessons learned included:

- Acronyms, especially non-standard ones, should be avoided in transcribing interview responses. AI databases are not yet fine-tuned enough for our missions reality to reliably attribute internal abbreviations. (Example: "IO" appeared in one typed interview response. It was intended to mean "Internal Obligation." More standard meanings for "IO" are "Input/Output" "Initial Object" "Investigating Officer" and a host of others. This acronym should have been avoided.

- Proper names of people and institutions should be spelled out completely, or at least registered in a systematic way (e.g. first initial followed by complete surname). Truncated mentions threaten understanding. (Example: one respondent mentioned as a challenge "working at faith." This could have been interpreted as a character issue-- that is, the missionary was working on his/her faith. In fact, it was an employment issue, as that missionary worked at Faith Academy in the Philippines.). Interviewers should be encouraged to read through a completed interview text before going on to do a subsequent interview. "Same as before" should be followed by a cut and paste of the previous response. This adds value to the data.

- "Cleaning up" the data is therefore the most important first step in using AI for thematic analysis. To genuinely save time by using machine learning, time must be invested up front to make data fields as standard, clear, and concise as possible. What exactly this entails will become better understood as our practice with AI tools increases.