# Leadership Elevation

*– let the organisation spread its beautiful wings*

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For leaders, there is rarely any requirement for "recertification" in the leadership role, and despite various feel-good courses, workshops and the like, it is not unusual for years of experience to make you more and more self-assured. Competences – including leadership competences – are, however, perishable.

A pilot like me must fly at least 12 hours within the last 24 months – including at least one hour with an instructor, where I demonstrate my skills satisfactorily – to keep the licence.

Both the individual leader and the leadership team as a whole – at all levels – should therefore regularly train, refresh and practise to stay sharp. Both in everyday work and in case the unexpected happens after all.

This article is about why leadership requires its own 12th hour – and how you can make it systematic.

## Competences are perishable

I fly from Roskilde myself, and every two years I have to document my 12 hours – including the one hour with the instructor beside me. That hour is not a formality. It is where small bad habits are spotted, procedures are refreshed, and emergencies you hope never to face are practised.

No pilot becomes too experienced to have an instructor on board. Quite the opposite. Aviation recognised long ago that competence is perishable – and that it must be maintained systematically.

Experience is not the same as maintained competence. 20 years of leadership experience can be 20 years of development. But it can also be one year, repeated 20 times. Routine becomes autopilot, and autopilot has blind spots. The danger is that the more experience you have, the fewer checks you make.

This does not only apply to the individual leader. Leadership teams also develop routines – in the way they hold meetings, make decisions and communicate. Without regular external observation and feedback – which I like to call "a mirror" – and concrete training, things silt up, and you only discover it when it really matters.

## Not just repetition – new procedures too

The 12th hour is not only about repeating what you already know. It is also about practising new procedures, adopting advanced technology such as AI and training the communication flow, so information reaches the right people at the right time, and the aircraft holds the right altitude, heading and speed.

Above all, it is about coordinating everything. A leadership team where each individual is skilled, but nobody has practised the interplay, is like a cockpit with two skilled pilots who have never flown together. In aviation, the crew therefore trains cockpit collaboration through Crew Resource Management: Who does what, how do you speak up, and how do you coordinate under pressure – while the passengers feel they are in safe hands and receive good service throughout the journey?

That is why it makes sense for the whole leadership team to train together in realistic simulators with the company's own strategy as the flight plan. Leadership teams should also train "formation flying" and effective collaboration under pressure with competent instructors who have the necessary wingspan themselves and can help elevate leadership quality to new heights.

Training and development in an organisation work best in terms of business results when they include all levels: The executive team, the leadership team, middle managers and teams. That is how the organisation becomes ready to be ready and learns to spread its beautiful wings.

## The magic happens between the modules – if facilitated properly

Real learning does not only take place on a modular development programme, but very much also in everyday work, if it is properly linked to operations. That is why we always build follow-up and activities in between the modules: How has what was learned been applied? What experiences, adversity and obstacles have participants met in implementation? And what impact has actually been created?

One of the strongest levers is to let participants from previous teams act as co-trainers on the next. They then have to refresh their own knowledge and be razor-sharp at conveying what they learned – spiced with cases of how it was all put into practice in everyday reality. It is their 12th hour, and at the same time it is the most credible teaching the new participants can get.

A good example is Christiansen & Essenbæk, where over two years we worked dedicatedly to raise overall leadership quality markedly. The leaders were put through all kinds of practical and exciting leadership training activities both in Denmark and abroad, all year round – supplemented by 1:1 business coaching sessions, strategy seminars, communication and feedback training, and personal and professional development areas in written homework assignments – including grades and qualitative assessments. Even the CEO. Follow-up days, more training and hardcore business economics. Again and again.

The interesting thing was that sickness absence only fell lastingly once we linked the leadership training to the effort on health, well-being, working environment and competence development. The middle managers were the key. Sickness absence was cut by more than two thirds, risk factors fell by 30%, and the well-being index took a leap of seven percentage points – alongside 60% revenue growth and +DKK 10 million in EBITDA.

Our project "Trivsel – 360 grader" (Well-being – 360 Degrees) first won the Danish Working Environment Award and then Børsen's CSR Communication Award, based on my book "Lederens inspirationsguide" (in Danish), which describes the journey.

## Measurements must become training – and better results

Appraisal interviews, well-being surveys and NPS are all too often carried out, reported and filed away in a drawer. But a measurement is only worth something when it is turned into concrete training and new behaviour that strengthens customer value and business results.

At Cepheo, we brought the customers' voice directly into the Nordic consultant training and product development. The customers were co-trainers, and the consultants could listen, ask, challenge their own assumptions and reflect on their practice. That is how NPS and customer feedback become a 12th hour instead of a number in a spreadsheet.

The most personal measurement is the re-hiring interview. Try this thought experiment: If you had to apply for your own job today – competing with the best candidates on the market – would you get it? And what would you then need to train, refresh or learn to be the obvious candidate?

The leadership team can ask itself the same question as a team. Leadership elevation is not random experience, but systematically executed development, where you train together with discipline and hold each other mutually accountable to a set of Shared High Team Standards. This can advantageously be established in the company's own academy.

## My own 12th hour

I take my own medicine. I continuously take part in development programmes and panel debates, think tanks and networks, give talks, contribute to leadership books and write articles on organisational and business development based on the latest research.

I set ambitious and now and then slightly crazy goals, such as walking 130 km north of the Arctic Circle and climbing a mountain, running 50 half marathons, learning to drive a dog sled, skydiving, earning a black belt, becoming an incident commander and running a hospital in a war zone. Whatever it takes to stay sharp. And I use coaches and mentors myself.

The guiding stars I have deep conversations with are wonderfully inspiring people who, as practitioners, have achieved something extraordinary in this world – and who, like me, are completely immune to self-appointed "experts" who mostly let out hot air and fill the room with meaningless consultant gobbledygook worthy of Professor Calculus. The guiding stars, on the other hand, help light the path I choose myself.

The foundation of everything in my life – and what I try to pass on to my clients as best I can – is inner leadership preparedness. The surplus mentality and inherent creative power that always gets us through the hardships and successfully to the finish line every time. Those who know themselves under pressure also know what needs to be trained.

Leadership teams should do the same together in closed groups, with the full, polished business plan as flight plan and runway, because a strategy does not easily execute itself. Project ideas do not turn into more dynamic and effective operations with greater customer value and better business results unless you consistently follow up and communicate directly.

Leadership elevation can make the organisation spread its beautiful wings and fly very high. Just always remember: Landing is the hardest part.

## How to plan your 12th hour

**Five levers for management:**

- **Put it in the calendar:** Plan fixed annual training for each leader and for the leadership team as a whole.
- **Train the new – not just the old:** New procedures, smarter technology and better communication flow.
- **Follow up between modules:** Share experiences, adversity and impact, so learning stays in everyday work.
- **Make former participants co-trainers:** Those who teach others must be razor-sharp themselves.
- **Turn measurements into training:** Use well-being, Customer Deep Dive data and NPS as the basis for concrete development.

## Three questions for the leadership team

**Ask yourselves:**

- How would we like to train together as a leadership team, with the strategy as the training ground?
- Which of our internal and external measurements are turned into training, and which end up in a drawer?
- Is there a training partner who can help us strengthen our business in practice?

## Conclusion – leadership elevation

Experience is valuable, but leadership competences are perishable. Both the individual leader and the whole leadership team together should regularly train, refresh and practise the new – and coordinate it all, including the communication flow. This should be based on the company's reality; the strategy is the flight plan.

The pilot takes the 12th hour because not doing so can cost lives. Leaders should take theirs because not doing so can cost the company dearly. So the question is: How, and with whom, would you like to train together to make your business fly even higher – and land safely?

*The article builds on, among others, my LinkedIn articles "12.time: Når lederskab kræver genopfriskning – ikke bare erfaring" (The 12th Hour: When Leadership Requires Refreshing – Not Just Experience, 2026) and "Det indre lederberedskab" (Inner Leadership Preparedness, 2026) as well as the book "Lederens inspirationsguide" (2012).*

### When will your leadership team take its 12th hour?

*Cronquist Consult ApS helps leaders and leadership teams train, refresh and stay sharp – based on the business strategy. Read more here:*
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