EVALUATION REPORT
Special Olympics Leadership Academy
Leadership I Workshop
Mexico City, Mexico
20 – 24 June, 2016
"Personally, the Leadership Academy helped me resolve many challenges regarding execution of my tasks. I am putting into practice what I have learned when organizing my staff and training sports coordinators by giving them tools to work efficiently and effectively."

**Pamela Davelouis**, National Director, SO Peru
Executive Summary

28 leaders from the Latin America Region participated in the fifth Special Olympics International (SOI) Leadership Academy organized in Mexico City, Mexico on June 20-24, 2016. The Academy involved 3 athlete leaders fully participating in the workshop. This was the first Academy to be delivered in two languages, Spanish and English.

The Mexico Leadership Academy was sponsored by American Express Foundation with additional in-kind and financial support from CEB, Goldman Sachs and Lions Club. The Academy featured workshops, consultants, and experts from Franklyn Covey, CEB, Scotiabank and BlackRock.

The Academy syllabus covered the topics of leadership roles, influencing and getting others to follow, leading the team, successful delegation and action planning. Among the workshop highlights were two moderated panel discussions. Experts from private and non-profit sectors voiced their vision of leadership today, discussed challenges faced in their leadership roles and shared best practices.

The Academy put a lot of emphasis on developing action plans for the participants. One-to-one coaching sections were incorporated into the 5 day agenda to ensure the quality of action plans. We have experienced an unprecedented level of participant engagement during the Academy. They were extremely interested in developing high quality, actionable plans, that reflected the material covered in the Academy.

Based on the participant evaluations, the Academy received a high 4.96 out of 5 points. The participants’ evaluations commended facilitators’ competency and high quality of material presented during the Academy. The newly trained leaders expressed strong beliefs that the Academy will help them improve their performance, therefore contributing to the overall development of Special Olympics.
Goals

The Leadership Academy is designed to drive stronger, more proactive leadership around the world. Our goals are to challenge and empower through:

- Creating leaders with vision, able to galvanize voluntary, political and government support, create and implement high quality programming, and influence others.

- Infusing leaders with the inspiration and capacity to perform at a higher level and significantly enhance our global impact.

- Providing useful, practical techniques and tools that help leaders be more authentic, strategic and effective in making the big changes and accelerating the Movement towards our global vision.

Location and Logistics

The Academy was held at the Holiday Inn Express Hotel in Mexico City. The location provided a good environment for learning. High quality synchronized Spanish – English translation of the workshops and panel discussions was provided throughout the course of the Academy.

Partnership Support

- The funding for the Academy was provided by American Express and Special Olympics International.

- Course content was developed through partnership with CEB and Goldman Sachs. Workshops were delivered by a CEB consultant, Special Olympics Staff, and external presenters from Scotiabank and BlackRock.

- A section on execution and action planning was delivered by Franklyn Covey consultants and was very well received by the participants.

- SkillSoft provided licenses for the participants to access online business skills courses and short videos for continuous leadership development.
In our effort to find the most effective approach to Action Planning, the Mexico Leadership Academy tried something new. Trained Special Olympics staff and external presenters scheduled multiple one-to-one coaching sessions with participants throughout the course of the Academy to guide them through the process of designing their action plans. As a result, high quality and specific plans were devised by the participants.

The participants were required to reflect the key learning points from each day of the Academy in their action plans. Additionally, the participants were asked to address one of the leadership development needs identified in their Enterprise Leadership surveys provided by CEB.

To ensure full athlete leaders participation in the Academy, three preparatory webinars were conducted in the weeks leading up to the workshop. Additional on-site coaching sessions at the beginning of each day were held to assist athletes in preparation for the scheduled activities for the day.

The Academy schedule provided ample opportunities for dialogue, best practice sharing and self-reflection to enhance the learning experience of the group. The syllabus structure was designed to transition from understanding personal leadership roles to the topics of influencing others, leading the team and getting others to follow. Special Olympics’ Global Development and Government Relations team presented a day-long workshop on tools and tips of engaging national and local...
governments. The Academy concluded with a session on execution and action planning conducted by Franklin Covey consultants.

**Day One**

Latin American leaders were welcomed to the Academy by Denis Doolan and Special Olympics Latin America Regional Director Claudia Echeverry. Denis encouraged the participants to be open to learning new things going through the Academy experience. As a first icebreaker the leaders were asked to discuss their favorite quotes from the list spread out around the room.

Adriana Hughes from CEB led the morning workshop session titled “Leadership Roles.” Her session focused on CEB’s competency model and the three leadership roles – Transactional, Transformational and Network. Adriana also explained the Enterprise Leadership Report and its results to the participants. Her workshop concluded with sharing examples and best practices of Transformational / Network leadership among the Academy participants.

The second half of the day was moderated by Federico de Castillo, a guest speaker from the financial group Aserta. Mr. Castillo shared best practices and challenges of leadership today and introduced the group to different types of leader personalities. His session was based on his personal experience in the leadership role and the empirical research from Ivey Business School.

The day concluded with post-presentation reflection and the first action planning sessions.
Day Two

Denis Doolan led the opening session of Day Two. The goal of the session was to help the participants understand their behavioral styles through an interactive and dynamic set of exercises. The participants practiced adjusting, or stretching their styles and learned about influencing others.

The afternoon of Day Two was focused on Team Leadership facilitated by dynamic Juan Alberto Leautaud, the Managing Director of BlackRock financial services and CEO of 12 Fondo Inversion. Mr. Leautaud covered task-specific performance levels and corresponding delegation styles. This session equipped the participants with an important team building tool that ensures the best results for the team members and the leaders themselves.

Next on the agenda was a session on successful delegation. The leaders were encouraged to reflect on their daily tasks using the “What’s on your plate?” interactive exercise. The participants assessed the tasks that could be delegated while taking into consideration different skill and will levels of their team members.

A designated action planning session followed, to give the participants an opportunity to reflect on the learned material. The day concluded with a cultural tour to Mexico City Historic Center. The leaders continued networking and reflection on the Leadership workshops. A few participants used the time to provide their feedback and ask for help with action planning.

The Leaders are learning about their behavioral styles

The leaders are sharing with each other tasks they have on their “plates”
Day Three

Day Three opened up with an inspirational panel discussion moderated by the ESPN Mexico celebrity Ciro Procuno. Themed “Leadership Today: High Performance Teams and Partnerships” the panel included Humberto Zesati, LIV Capital, Adrián Aguilera, Vertex Private Capital Investors and returning guest Juan Alberto Leautaud, Managing Director of BlackRock. The panelists shared the best practices of private sector leadership and shared their vision for the future of leadership. Academy participants were given an opportunity to ask the panelists additional questions following the formal discussion.

Ciro Procuno followed up with a quick presentation on Leadership linking the panel discussion topics to the world of professional sports.

The afternoon session on execution and action planning was delivered by Melida Quinonez and her colleague consultants from Franklyn Covey Mexico, the experts in leadership development. The session described 4 execution disciplines and provided the participants with practical solutions on how to become more productive while consuming the least amount of energy. The sessions demonstrated to the leaders the importance of regular action and strategic planning in their daily lives.
Day Four

Special Olympics Global Development and Government Relations (GDGR) Department, with support from the Organizational Excellence Department and Special Olympics Latin America, convened the partnership skills workshop.

The workshop introduced strategies and approaches to forging partnerships with governments and development organizations to achieve common goals in the region. The workshop helped participants understand the global goals (UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)) that guide national policies and investments by governments and development organizations in socio-economic development around the world, and understand how these global goals influence disability-related policies and investments. Participants had an opportunity to learn and practice strategies, including applying their leadership skills, to develop and maintain partnerships with governments and development organizations to meet Special Olympics Program objectives. Our ability to engage with key partners and governments to influence policies, programs and resources is ultimately what will ensure sustainable, inclusive communities that can be scaled at a rate beyond our means alone.

During the workshop, participants began applying lessons about partnership, development and management to develop national action plans for the Regional Games in April 2017 and a concurrent Sport for the Development Summit.

This GDGR skills workshop will result in a workshop guide and workbook that can be used with Special Olympics Programs around the world to guide development of partnerships with governments and development organizations.
Day Five: Wrap-Up

The Academy concluded with a certificate award ceremony led by athlete leaders. As part of the next steps overview, the SkillSoft online learning platform was introduced to the participants. Skillsoft video library provides an opportunity for continuous learning and leadership development. The final action planning section took place at the close of the Academy. Each leader was given an opportunity to have a final coaching session with an assigned coach.

Mexico Leadership Academy participants continue engagement and best practices sharing via a WhatsApp group created by one of the leaders on the second day of the Academy.

Evaluation

On the last day of the Academy the participants were asked to evaluate the quality of the Leadership Academy based on a number of parameters. The evaluation results showed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of presented material, facilitators, venue and logistics. The Academy received the overall rating of high 4.96 out of 5.
The survey evaluated the quality of material covered in the Academy and its estimated effect on the professional lives of the participants. The trained leaders believe that the Academy will help them in achieving higher results and putting plans into actions.

The leaders were also asked to evaluate their personal skills, conviction and understanding before and after the Academy. Positive trend were reported in each of these criteria. Remarks at the close of the Academy by some of the participants echoed the comments in the evaluation forms.
Workshop Strengths

The lessons learned during previous workshops were applied to the preparation of Mexico Academy. We put more emphasis on action plan development and strengthened our preparation work with athlete leaders.

We have seen an unprecedented level of involvement among the Latin American participants. They took action planning exercises extremely seriously, constantly seeking feedback and help throughout the workshop, both formally during the designated coaching sessions and informally. The comment by one of the participants: “You gave us tools for improvement that will enable us to exercise leadership, many thanks for your dedication to improve our performance” was echoed throughout many of the evaluation forms. Especially high praises were given to the quality of the presenters and presented material. Panel discussion was highlighted as a great platform for sharing best practices. Importantly, the participants felt that the Academy workshops presented them with practical, hands-on tools for development.

The evaluations testified that more opportunities of a kind would have an enormous positive effect on the development of leaders, their Programs and Special Olympics Movement as a whole. There is a great interest for training in other areas of Leadership and continuity of engagement.

Areas for Improvement and Follow-Up

It was suggested that more athlete leaders should be given the opportunity to participate in the Leadership Academies. Some participants expressed strong interest in having Academies recorded. The biggest comment was related to the need for continuous opportunities for collaboration and leadership development. Some minor logistical suggestions for improvement were mentioned as well (larger room, better quality of lunch meals). Other suggestions included evaluation exercises at the end of each day/session and more input from the participants on the agenda topics.
“I found the Academy to be very dynamic, every workshop was extremely interesting. The panel discussions were great as they were based on personal experiences of the speakers. Great team energy allowed for more interactions among the participants.”

Roberto Bezare, National Sport Director, SO Mexico

“Every single Academy session and the action plan coaching has proven that the Academy wasn’t just a theory-based training, but rather equipped us with practical tools. Thank you so much for this opportunity”

Pilar Bazan, National Director, SO Mexico

“Thank you for making our region get to know each other even closer. We have had a need for the Academy for a long time. I am so glad it was materialized, although I know it was a significant investment”

Sandra Sanchez, SO Panama

The Academy was a really enriching experience. The sessions were well structured, the topics covered were reflective of our professional needs and everyone was very involved. Thank you so much for this wonderful experience.”

María Jose Cuevom National Director, SO Ecuador