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Leader and Manager Development Programs

In the simplest terms, organizations are people working together to achieve some common purpose, objective, or goal. To that end, every organization must have people in manager and leadership functions who promote order and unity among employees to achieve the common purpose. Leader and manager development can be defined as deliberate efforts to help individuals perform at enhanced levels with the purpose of realizing greater efficiency (manager) or effectiveness (leader) in their current positions. There are various types of programs for leader and manager development including training and education, job rotation, coaching, assessment programs, and action learning. These programs are usually a part of a larger overall concept or succession planning program.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe the elements of leader and manager development programs.
- Determine the most appropriate development tools given the organization's culture, needs, and skill gaps.

Leader and Manager Development Overview

Organizations have long realized the benefit of developing employees. Read almost any organization's mission statement, and there is likely a reference to the value that the organization places on its employees. However, not as many organizations have made developing leaders and managers skills a priority, because there is not a one-size-fits-all answer to implementing appropriate people development programs.

With the changing roles of leaders and managers comes a need to develop programs that ensure leaders and managers have the skills required to make a positive impact on the goals and objectives of the organization. Because the leadership development process is strategically linked to a company's business plan, it should have its own budget line and not be treated as an afterthought.

The most effective people development programs are supported by three key tenets:

- Each person is responsible for his or her own development.
- Executives are responsible for guiding and supporting the development of their subordinates.
- The organization is responsible for providing opportunities for the growth of all.

As an organization grows or as employees leave, the company must be able to draw on a pool of talent to fill key positions. Developing a leader pipeline is a critical business process that provides organizations with a sustainable supply of quality leaders to meet current and future challenges. Creating a pipeline of leaders is not achieved through a single program or tool. It is an integrated approach of strategies and techniques that provide the right quantity and quality of leaders to meet pressing business challenges.

A Global Leadership Forecast conducted by DDI in 2008 showed that only 41 percent of leaders were satisfied with what their organizations offered them to develop their individual capabilities—a decline of 12 percentage points in two years. All major world regions showed similar declines, indicating serious and growing dissatisfaction among leadership development consumers.

The methods used for development are primary sources of the leaders' frustration. To leaders, the most effective methods were those embedded in their on-the-job activities, such as special projects or moving to a new assignment; however, only a small percentage of organizations used these methods extensively.

Most organizations fail to offer their leaders enough variety in opportunities to lead; those that do offer a variety had the most effective leadership development programs.

Succession Planning Programs

Succession planning programs provide an overview for leader and manager talent development, and ensure a sustainable pipeline of people capable of taking on increasing

responsibility in the organization. Succession planning helps WLP professionals and organizations to answer the following questions:

- Do we have qualified people ready to fill key positions now and grow the business in the next three to five years? (Short-term emphasis)
- Will we have a sufficient number of qualified candidates ready in five to 10 years to fill key positions? (Long-term emphasis)

Executives periodically review their top executives and those in lower-level positions to proactively identify a pool of candidates with potential to fill key positions at different levels in the organization.

Without succession planning, a successful business can easily fail. Businesses often grow because there is a leader with experience, drive, and ability. Without proper succession planning, the future success of the business is left to chance. Without a succession plan, the passing of the baton from one generation to the next is often a battle among stakeholders' differing views and agendas.

In the succession planning process, WLP professionals need to partner with senior leaders to plan the development of future managers and leaders for identified positions. Developing potential candidates should be carefully planned to ensure little disruption to current responsibilities and the least amount of negative impact on organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Some of the difficulties that organizations face in proper succession planning include changes in leadership, direction of the organization, and changing internal and external influences on the business landscape.

There are a variety of leadership development methods that WLP professionals can leverage as part of succession planning programs to adequately prepare managers and leaders for the future. Some of these methods of leadership development fall into the following categories of programs:

- assessment
- training and education
- mentoring
- job rotation
- coaching
- action learning
- on-the-job training.

Assessment Programs

Succession planning should be supported by performance appraisal programs or assessments to provide other means of providing viable, dependable employee skill information. It is only with high-quality assessment information that WLP professionals and

senior leaders can partner to build an effective leadership program that appropriately equips candidates for future assignments. Four types of assessment programs aid in the succession planning and leadership development processes: professional development plans, 360-degree assessments, competency assessments, and simulations.

Development Plans

Development plans are a leader development technique that is integrated with succession planning. Succession planning must respond to workforce demands, including employee input. Organizations need more employees faster to fill key positions. Development programs help to fast track high-potential candidates.

A professional development plan (PDP), also called an individual development plan (IDP), addresses individual needs to improve performance in work-related activities. These plans help to balance development needs with the needs of the organization by focusing on improving employee learning and growth. PDPs set expected performance in measurable terms, and then document the timeframe and the desired outcomes of the professional development activities.

Unless development is a strong part of a succession planning program, the actual replacement will not be able to move into a designated position and high-potential candidates will not be prepared.

360-Degree Assessments

The **360-degree assessment** program, also known as “multi-rater feedback,” is employee development feedback that comes from all directions around the employee—meaning that it comes from subordinates, peers, and managers in the organizational hierarchy. The value of 360-degree feedback is often seen in terms of the individual being rated, but the feedback of all recipients’ results provides more valuable data for the organization as a whole. Additionally, 360-degree feedback programs can enhance self-development.

Although they are a worthwhile assessment tool, 360-degree assessments have been known to produce false results. Research has shown that about 33 percent of the time 360-degree feedbacks are erroneous. Some people might not take the feedback process seriously and make inappropriate or callous comments. Moreover, those receiving feedback may become overly obsessed with negative comments nullifying any positive feedback received. The 360-degree feedback should be seen as an aid or adjunct to other feedback or assessment methods. However, the 360-degree feedback can enable senior leaders and WLP professionals to identify and develop leaders and even leadership development plans by

- increasing productivity by taking advantage of underutilized strengths of candidates

- avoiding the trap of counting on skills that may be weak in the organization
- applying human assets data to the valuation of the organization
- making succession planning more accurate
- designing more efficient coaching and training initiatives
- supporting the organization in marketing the skills of its members.

The 360-degree feedback is only valuable if the raters are willing to provide feedback that is forthright and honest. This feedback does not guarantee that the raters are truthful. When the raters provide honest feedback, it benefits individuals receiving feedback by

- providing a broad perspective of how they are perceived by others
- increasing awareness of and relevance of competencies
- providing more reliable feedback to senior managers about their performance
- reinforcing the desired competencies of the business
- identifying key development areas for the individual, department, and organization
- supporting a climate of continuous improvement.

Competency Assessments

Competencies can take several forms in the workplace. Leader competencies fall into several categories including business acumen and leading people competencies. These competencies usually revolve around knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Organizations identify groups of competencies believed to be relevant to successful performance for specific jobs.

As another component intertwined with succession planning, competency assessments seek to measure an individual's competencies. There are a number of ways to assess competencies, and these methods vary in degrees of precision, complexity, and time and effort to administer. Some examples of competency assessment methods are cognitive ability tests, structured interviews, job knowledge tests, diagnostic and promotion tests, as well as measures of customer service, social skills, and so on.

Simulations

According to the National Training Laboratories, learning by doing derives a 75 percent retention rate and is superior to any other learning method with the exception of teaching others. Realistic **simulations** are a learn-by-doing method, which accelerate learning and drive long-term retention rates.

What is meant by simulation? Traditionally, simulation refers to a broad genre of experiences, including games for entertainment and immersive learning simulations for formal learning programs. Simulations are problem-based exercises. By definition, a simulation

must fulfill two criteria:

First, a specific issue, problem or policy is posed that precipitates a variety of actions. Second, roles are defined that interact with the proposed problem or issue in particular ways [In other words], simulations involve the experience of functioning in a bona-fide environment and encountering the consequence of one's actions as one makes decisions in that role Second, the participants address the issues and problems seriously and conscientiously. (Gredler, 14)

Simulations use models and present situations reflected in the interface. The responses and actions of the learner then affect relevant systems, and those systems produce feedback and results. One type of simulation, known as role play, involves acting out issues in a protected, low-risk environment as part of a scenario that reflects a real-life context or episode. Role playing is a learn-by-doing opportunity that helps to develop skills, provides an opportunity to practice what was learned, and enables leaders to gain insight into their own behavior and processes in specific contexts. Simulations differ from games and exercises because of their links to realistic contexts and the everyday lives of the participants. Simulation games offer valuable learning opportunities because they provide a context for learning basic concepts, such as collaboration or building consensus. The context is usually realistic in some way, yet it is not especially representative of what the participants experience every day. One example is a game where the participant is marooned on a desert island. This game is realistic in some ways, but it is not an everyday experience.

Simulations offer several other advantages to WLP professionals. Simulations that work diligently to represent reality, such as those used in military, firefighting, police, and airline training, provide the ability to observe and evaluate individuals under normal or duress conditions. For example, airline pilots must qualify in the aircraft simulator before ever stepping onto the flight deck of a real aircraft. There are a number of adventure simulation games on the market as well. For example, a simulation of a rafting trip may be useful to develop an understanding of alternative viewpoints in a group.

However, not all simulations are computer-based, so simulations should not be viewed only from this perspective. Computer-driven simulations have a unique allure and they are convenient, but cannot reproduce what happens during an interpersonal, "table-top" simulation driven by the human dynamic of people in a room together. Additionally, simulations using a realistically designed and developed scenario can provide a true-to-life decisional environment where people get the opportunity to practice interpersonal skills, decision making, and new ideas in an environment where it is safe to play and learn.

Training and Education Programs

It may seem like development is something that happens in a classroom. Yet, only one percent of an employee's time is spent in the classroom, so the majority of development

happens on the job. There are a variety of training and education programs associated with developing leaders and managers that take place both in and out of the classroom. Some of these programs are:

Internal or external group training

Internal or external group training gathers potential leaders and managers in group settings to discuss their current and potential challenges.

External education

External education involves taking formal courses or workshops outside of the organization, such as classes at local or community colleges.

On-the-job training

On-the-job training is particularly useful for developing improved job performance. It may be used to upgrade skills or technical knowledge and may involve progress discussions, question-and-answer sessions, or working through an actual problem with the individual to provide direction and guidance. On-the-job training may also include shadowing, a technique where the potential candidate follows another person around to learn about a particular area of function of the organization.

Self-development and self-study

Self-development and *self-study* employ a variety of media from which to learn—CD-ROM, audio, print, and video.

Online learning

Online learning is an all-encompassing method of learning that refers to any learning done with a computer.

Mentoring Programs

Mentoring, also referred to as sponsorship, involves a relationship between a more senior or experienced manager and a new or less experienced employee. Some organizations establish formal mentor programs to assist new or high-potential managers and leaders with their careers. During these mentoring relationships, mentees often gain valuable information and feedback from mentors regarding the organizational culture and unwritten organization norms, which the employees might otherwise have not been able to receive.

Action Learning

Action learning is an educational process whereby the potential leader studies their own actions and experience to improve performance. This is done in conjunction with

others in small groups and is particularly suitable for adults, as it enables each person to reflect on and review the action they have taken and the learning points arising. This ostensibly guides future action and improves performance.

Job Rotation Programs

Another type of leadership development strategy is job rotation, a process designed to give an employee exposure to the entire operation through a planned schedule of different job assignments. Job rotation is tightly linked with succession planning by developing a pool of employees capable of stepping into an existing job.

Job rotation involves moving to other, same-level jobs within the organization with the goal of providing candidates cross-functional learning experiences. Exposure to different functions increases employees' knowledge of the organization and introduces new skill sets. Often job rotation is included in the organizational succession plan. The process benefits high-potential employees who are being groomed for higher level assignments.

Coaching Programs

Coaching programs have become increasingly important as a strategy for developing managers and leaders. Over the past 25 years, rapid organizational change has created a need for customized solutions that effectively target the development needs of potential candidates in the succession planning pipeline. As the need for increasing the skills of potential leaders has grown, so has the need for coaching programs.

Coaching has evolved to include several different approaches, all based on different assumptions about how people are motivated to change, the role of the coach, and the nature of the relationships between the coach and the client. Specific coaching applications regarding leader development include executive coaching and mentoring or sponsorship.

The rapid pace of change in today's world necessitates continuous learning at all levels of the organization. As senior leaders and executives move up the ladder, it becomes more and more difficult for them to find objective feedback about their performance. Because continued development is paramount for developing leaders, many organizations provide executive coaches for their top managers.

Summary

A strong succession pipeline means that organizations must identify candidates early by looking for those who have the motivation and ability to be future leaders. Succession planning is the proactive process to ensure that there are leaders ready to meet the organization's demands for the future, and succession planning provides these leaders

with the support and development to ensure their success. There are several development strategies and programs that can increase the success of the operation when used in conjunction with succession planning, such as training and education, job rotation, coaching and mentoring, and assessment programs.