



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR SUCCESSION

Fostering talent for smooth transitions

By Sabine Fischer

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Integra Leadership Inc

The numbers are shocking - 75% of executives surveyed identified improving or leveraging talent as a top business priority.¹ When asked about the primary reason that leaders fail, leaders ranked a lack of leadership skills (such as facilitating change, building a team, coaching) and interpersonal skills (such as building relationships, networking, communication) at the top of their list.

At Integra, we hear this concern in most organizations we work with. We find that several key areas need to be managed well, and require ongoing focus and monitoring.

1. Senior management buy-in

Senior management has always been the vital factor in any leadership development area. The widespread organizational support people in the organization feel when senior leaders put attention to succession issues is a key success factor.

According to HR professionals surveyed, only 35 percent of senior managers were held accountable for the success of leadership development programs. Nearly half of the HR respondents (48 percent) agreed that senior managers did not give enough priority to developing leaders.²

A ripple effect occurs when direct reports know that they are not only evaluated on their own performance, but also on the performance and development of their reports. This, in turn, becomes a significant contribution to the overall success of a top-managed succession strategy.

2. Individual leadership development at senior levels

An organization does not deliver results – the employees do.

1 DDI GLOBAL LEADERSHIP FORECAST 2008|2009 Overcoming the Shortfalls in Developing Leaders. Ann Howard, Ph.D., Richard S. Wellins, Ph.D. pg 7

2 DDI GLOBAL LEADERSHIP FORECAST 2008|2009 Overcoming the Shortfalls in Developing Leaders. Ann Howard, Ph.D., Richard S. Wellins, Ph.D.; pg 22

Therefore the continuous attention at the individual level is essential to support the development of leadership competencies necessary for the unique needs of each organization.

Most people like to perform according to clearly defined parameters. Unfortunately, we often see that organizations state certain desired competencies and behaviors yet they continue to reward behaviors that are detrimental to organizational goals. The coaching process with an external coach can uncover such discrepancies, and provide clarity for the employee moving forward.

Instruments such as 360 feedback assessments provide insights and awareness for leaders, so that they are clear on what issues they want to focus on when the leadership development initiative begins. A coaching Development Plan defines the client's stated goals, and this tool serves to keep the coaching process on track. At the end of the initiative the client can demonstrate clearly what they have accomplished.

3. Team Development

When does a leader show up as a leader? Certainly not sitting alone in her office! Leaders become skillful in the interaction with their reports, peers and supervisors. Almost every single employee is part of a functional team - often several teams. We have seen especially impressive progress with team training and coaching for individual and team development.

"The function of leadership is to produce more leaders, not more followers."

Ralph Nader

Teams exist to produce results. Once a team designs a team contract and defines the Team Development Plan outlining goals, obstacles and opportunities, the output from these teams are truly remarkable – often exceeding their own expectations.

Additional Bonus: Each leader on the team usually takes this learning back to their team of reports, leveraging cost and effort for large-spread organizational impact.

4. Strategic Goal Integration

Preparing for high-level turnover is crucial because business conditions in many fields are growing more turbulent and unpredictable. A recent Booz Allen Hamilton study concludes that "over their entire tenures, CEOs appointed from the inside tend to outperform outsiders" when it comes to returns to shareholders. These initiatives are best supported with involvement from HR as well as the CEO and other department leaders. The senior executive team should derive their talent needs from their strategic objectives, and an effective succession management program can be designed involving comprehensive leadership development programs that reach down into the ranks of middle manager.

5. A central succession planning system allows HR and senior management to adapt more quickly to rapidly changing business conditions -- including adapting roles and responsibilities for executives. Instead of senior management spending a great deal of time interviewing managers and supervisors, it's possible to immediately zero in on the best candidate. A well designed system is based on organizational talent needs against the mid- to long-term plans for the business, and follows a transparent process to identify and address talent and skill gaps in employees.

A new type of leadership is needed at middle and senior levels as economies experience rapid change and upheaval

It's not so much filling the job anymore - it is all about reviewing the leadership talent needed for current and future organizational needs and helping it continually develop.

6. Training on How to give good feedback and empowering direct reports

The skill of giving meaningful and effective feedback is an important component in helping people develop professionally and getting the job done. Clearly understood roles, responsibilities and expectations result in confident leaders who act decisively and empower others.

7. Corporate Culture

Organizations with strong and responsive cultures promote effective succession in the leadership ranks. The culture both prepares successors and eases the transition. However, cultures need to be monitored and continually shaped, especially in a Mergers & Acquisitions or Joint Ventures situation. All too often organizational cultures evolve erratically and indirectly based on policy decisions of the organization. There is an opportunity for leaders to proactively measure and manage, and then deliberately shift their business culture.

Tools are now available to quantitatively measure culture, and inform the leadership team as they redefine their mission, vision and values, and then redefine the associated behaviors and competencies required to realize that desired state.

There are several positive side effects to a succession-planning program - we list a few:

- Talent-review discussions foster better teamwork and performance overall because people are more engaged when the organizations supports their professional development.
- Succession planning results in becoming an employer of choice to a wider spectrum of talent in the marketplace, and fosters diversity hiring.

Take the first step to explore effective succession management – book a complimentary consultation session with Integra’s OD specialists. Every improvement starts with the first step!



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Integra Leadership Inc.

Integra Leadership was established in 2006 as a result of the market's need for a global coaching organization. With a focus on North America, Integra is a global market leader in delivering enterprise-grade coaching solutions to its clients worldwide. Integra sources the world's finest coaches and ensures seamless and effective delivery of a diverse spectrum of coaching services.

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