



Identifying Employees with Potential

Most organisations like to identify staff with “potential”. This can be done formally or informally and the information is used for key decisions such as who to promote, who has access to rare development postings etc.

Often the unspoken concern is “have we picked the right people?”

What is potential and how should we identify it?

High potential employees are usually described as those who in the future will be able to work in a role at least 2 levels higher than where they currently work. Levels in this case don't mean “job grades” but moving between distinct organisational levels such as team member to team leader, or divisional manager to general manager.

Outsourcing the process

Some companies outsource the process to executive search firms or companies using proprietary psychometric tests. These processes have their place but they are expensive and neglect the knowledge held by senior staff in the organisation who have worked with these people for years.

Doing it yourself

An alternative is to place this task firmly in the hands of the executive team of the organisation – after all it is a key task for this group.

The executive team should propose candidates and then debate whether they meet a set of clearly defined factors required to qualify for high potential status. HR should facilitate and quality control that debate, probing for real evidence to support views that are put forward.

Executive team members should then be tasked with developing those successful candidates in their areas of the business.

The key factors to consider

Motivation

Intelligence

Competencies

Disqualifiers

But.....

- People can and should move on and off high potential lists over time, make sure they know that.
- High potentials are not a protected species. They simply get more access to challenges which they might pass or fail!
- Never forget that the most important people in an organisation are those who are high performers in the biggest job they will ever be able to do i.e. people with limited or no potential!



What factors should be considered when judging potential

1. **Motivation** – senior roles are difficult and you have to want to take them on. Motivation cannot be assumed and can change over time. It needs to be confirmed on a regular basis.
2. **Intelligence** – having the intellectual horsepower to perform the work at the next level. As work levels increase we have to deal with more complexity, greater time spans of control and difficult political and interpersonal issues – all of which require greater intelligence (defined beyond mathematical or language intelligence to include both intra and inter personal intelligence).
3. **Competencies** – being able to perform the leadership role as required by the company. Competencies describe the desired behaviours leaders need to exhibit to model and support the preferred culture of the organisation. People whose natural style is outside of that cultural norm may struggle to lead in the way the company desires.
4. Absence of **Disqualifiers** – not being disqualified from a leadership role for a specific reason. Sometimes people possess a flaw which effectively disqualifies them from promotion. This might include a particular behavioural trait (which may or may not be covered by the Competency heading), an inability to handle pressure, inappropriate work ethic etc.

Best Wishes

David Gunzburg

✉ gunzburg@bigpond.net.au

☎ 0407 844 649

☎ (03) 8677 3305 (fax)

🌐 www.dghrservices.com.au

If you no longer wish to receive these emails, please reply to this message with "Unsubscribe" in the subject line.

