

## ***Why we need to become more agile at talent development***

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Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends 2015 report, highlights that "organizations around the world are struggling to strengthen their leadership pipelines" with the leadership capability gap growing despite an increase in leadership program spending.

<http://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/human-capital/articles/introduction-human-capital-trends.html>

A lack of consistent investment, inadequate follow-through and accountability are all seen as contributing factors.

Having served as a talent management principal advising many diverse organizations, my experience is that organizations typically have good intentions toward leadership and talent development.

However, development programs are often overly complex and not sufficiently aligned to the dynamic environment in which businesses and the managers responsible operate.

As a result, talent development can cause frustration. Organizations can get bogged down in details and paperwork and miss considerable opportunities for real-time, day-to-day talent development.

Per Efron (2013) "Development plans typically crash at the intersection of good intentions and busy managers" <http://talentstrategygroup1.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Delusions-of-Employee-Development.pdf>

We therefore need to be more pragmatic in the design of our talent programs and more agile in how we execute, taking into account organizational hurdles and leveraging the considerable day-to-day opportunities for the development of our teams.

Below I list some common pitfalls and practical suggestions from improvement.

Pitfalls:

- *Lack of clarity*: To develop successful leaders we need a clearer understanding of the goal i.e. what behaviors and skills are we seeking from our future managers and leaders? Armed with this information, identification and development of talent will be more effective
- *Too much form filling and too little conversation*: Instead of asking managers to complete a large template evaluating their team, ask them, for example, to identify their high potentials and describe what differentiates them
- *Development is "optional"*: If development is to take place it cannot be seen as optional. It needs to be given appropriate weight in goals and objectives with line managers being held accountable for setting development objectives and follow through on plans
- *Unrealistic goals*: There needs to be a balance between organizational needs, individual career goals and what development opportunities are feasible in the current organization
- *Only building functional careers*: Employees may have the possibility to grow and extend their careers outside of their current function. This should form part of development discussions
- *Dropping the ball*: A transition plan is needed if the employee or line manager responsible for development changes departments. High potentials can also be assigned a mentor so that they have continuity of development

- *No exit strategy*: Exit strategies are required so that people do not get stuck in the same roles for unlimited periods and, in parallel, prevent others from coming through

#### Opportunities:

- *More conversations*: Managers typically know the strengths and weaknesses of their team and are happy to discuss them and suggest development needs. Use discussions not forms to facilitate information capture
- *Give everyone a development objective*: While high-potentials may receive more investment in their development, ensure that everyone has at least one development objective and growth opportunity
- *Allocate a small amount of weekly time to each member of your team*: Check in with each member of your team for a few minutes on a weekly basis. Ask people what they need to do their job better and how you can help
- *Hold better 1-on-1s*: Ask your directs to create the agenda for their 1-on-1s with you. This means that you will discuss what's important to them as well as uncover important issues you may not be aware of
- *Encourage feedback*: Encourage your team to share their development objectives with their line team and peers, and to ask for feedback. Development is about a series of conversations and 360 support
- *Share the leadership role*: Look through your current responsibilities and identify one or two meetings you can delegate to a team member; when forming project teams share the leadership role between countries, functions and ranks
- *Provide access to leadership*: Invite team members to contribute to and present periodically at your leadership meetings, as well as attend forums with senior leaders
- *Accelerate learning*: Invite other functions to attend your meetings and vice-versa to facilitate knowledge transfer and information sharing

In summary, while more consistent investment will help, there are also considerable opportunities to increase the effectiveness of talent development through simpler processes, a greater focus on conversation over form filling, and by seeking out opportunities for real-time, day-to-day development.