

# NEW LEADERS, PLEASE!

## 10 WAYS TO ACCELERATE LEADERSHIP TIME-TO-VALUE

YOU KNOW YOU NEED to develop the leadership capabilities of your second and third tier managers. You need them to step up to provide value to the organisation and you need to create a robust succession plan. This does pose a time-to-value challenge: getting them there has value—and getting them there quicker has even greater value. Here are ten things you can do to compress the cycle time of developing a cadre of new leaders.

**Look for the right stuff.** Technical and even managerial acumen is not necessarily the best pathway to leadership because leadership is more about shaping the future of the business than dealing with today for today. Look for people who try to see the big picture, who tend to be dissatisfied with the status quo, and who see ambiguous boundaries as opportunities to get involved rather than reasons to sit on the fence. Look for people who are self-aware—leaders with large "blind-spots" tend to make interventions that have unintended and often undesirable consequences. And look for people who are ethical—leaders set the norms for the business, so the choices you make today will set the ethical tone for the business in the future.

**Understand their motivations.** You need people who are self-starters and disciplined, able to follow things through and get things done. But a key requirement of leaders is that they develop other leaders, so they need to be team players and demonstrate an interest in developing others. They are also likely to be curious about projects that are outside their main job and demonstrate that they enjoy being involved in things that require them to learn.

**Understand their aspirations.** Does someone want to change things enough to take on the role of a senior leader of the business? Are they aware of the responsibilities as well as the rewards? They may well need a lot of your help to make it—that's fine, but if they don't have enough passion in themselves for the journey, you might be better to invest elsewhere—leaders need passion.

**Create expectations.** Without making any promises, make it crystal clear where you expect your high potentials to be in 1,2,3 years—and remind them of that expectation. Your expectations will help your candidate stretch his or her vision, and if they're not shooting for something stretching, they won't have a necessity to learn that is compelling enough for them to make the grade.

**Create space.** Senior leaders need to create space for others to fill because new leaders cannot develop if they don't have the opportunity to lead. This means that senior leaders (yes, you) need to stop doing certain things. Senior leaders need to practice situational leadership in creating this space: In many instances you need to practice delegation in its broadest sense—leaving a void for the new leader to fill even to the point of determining what it is that needs to be accomplished. In other instances you will need to provide more guidance.

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**Demand results.** People learn by necessity. Developing people quickly requires setting them very challenging targets that require collaboration and engagement with internal and external contributors—and then providing them with support in the form of coaching and training to ensure they develop as they deliver.

**Expose them to new environments.** Leadership is more than just being expert in your technical area. In fact, taking apprentice leaders outside their technical comfort zones often helps them to understand leadership better as a skill in of itself. Create the need to work through others to get results in "alien" parts of the business, and give them opportunities to learn about the broad functions of the business and do leadership stuff like board meetings, public presentations and staff functions.

**Coach, don't tell.** Leading is difficult and for many people, not what they expect, so new leaders need support. But this doesn't mean telling them what to do. Wherever possible, don't solve problems for people, but build a coaching relationship which helps them to solve their problems themselves. This builds their confidence and helps them learn a key skill for, in turn, developing others.

**Role model.** Research tells us that the leadership behaviour of your new leader will be shaped most significantly by you. Your leadership style creates a shadow in which others operate. Practice what you preach around leadership. Thoroughly examine your style, your priorities, how you spend your time (and how you don't). Hold up a mirror and realise that everything you do is telling people how they should act as leaders. Do you like what you see? Ask for help from your protégé - one of the most empowering opportunities for new leaders is to be asked to provide coaching and advice to the boss.

**Encourage networks.** One of the greatest resources for new leaders is other new leaders. Create opportunities for your next generation of leaders to learn from one another and share their challenges and successes.

Leadership development and succession planning is a critical responsibility of any senior leader: Just as there is value in reducing inventory and enhancing production processes, there is value in developing new leaders faster. Pose yourself the leadership time-to-value challenge. ■