The Leadership Development Architecture™

Leadership Capacity and Capability

All organizations —if they are to thrive over the long term— need leadership. And most ambitious organizations invest significant time, money and energy cultivating leaders. That said, most leadership development efforts fall short.

While there are many reasons why leadership development initiatives fail to deliver desired results, two of the most common are 1) viewing leadership development too narrowly, and, 2) failure to follow-through on leadership development priorities.

This paper describes a Leadership Development Architecture™ (LDA) for developing leadership capacity that both recognizes the range of competencies essential to leadership, and describes a comprehensive, "systems" approach building this capacity in the organization.

Core Leadership Competencies

Viewed from a corporate perspective, leadership capacity is the degree to which the organization has the depth and breadth of leadership skill needed achieve its goals. At the level of the individual, the competencies required of leaders generally fall into two areas:

Business & Technical Skills

- **Business development and management.** Running and growing an organization, both strategically and operationally;
- **Technical expertise.** "Discipline expertise" (marketing, finance, R&D, manufacturing, etc.) that is useful to the organization.

People & Organization Skills

- **Organizational development.** Shaping and fostering an organization capable of attracting, developing, and retaining the talent it needs to be successful over the long term.
- **People leadership.** Articulating an inclusive, compelling vision that engenders "followership," as well as aligning individual effort with broader organizational goals and priorities.

Developmental Domains and Mechanisms

Competency develops through the interaction of many factors. Each individual follows a somewhat different learning path based on his or her learning style, and the range of developmental opportunities available to them.

That said, we have identified **four broad developmental domains** we believe organizations must address in order to strategically assist leaders develop proficiency in both Business & Technical and People & Organization competencies:

Structured Learning Events

Specific, scheduled activities designed to address a particular set of predetermined learning objectives. Classroom instruction and Benchmarking tours are two examples of possible structured learning events.

Developmental Assignments

These are "learning by doing" activities where the leader takes on job responsibilities designed to broaden and/or deepen the individuals technical, business and/or people and organizational capabilities. Special projects, job rotation, and corporate exchange are examples of developmental assignments.

Communities of Practice (CoP)

Communities of Practice are a less formal -but no less strategic- way of fostering learning and collaboration among people with similar interests, roles and/or responsibilities. CoPs facilitate relationship building, the exchange of information and views, as well as the flow of strategic information through the organization. CoP members might organize specific "sessions" and/or they might interact "virtually." Action Learning groups, leadership forums, learning partners and team coaching are examples of CoPs.

Individualized Support

People adopt new behaviour best in an environment of encouragement and feedback. Individualized support focusses these two elements on the learning opportunities and needs of each specific leader. Coaching*, mentoring, 360 feedback, personal game plan, learning maps are all examples of individualized support.

When the two key competency areas (Business & Technical and People & Organizational) are addressed through focused attention in the four domains described above, the result is an integrated, comprehensive approach to building leadership capacity in the organization.

The following pages illustrate the complete model, and describe a range of "interventions" or support activities that could be useful in each developmental domain.

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Developmental Interventions

The following describe possible approaches in each developmental domain:

Structured Learning Events

- **Classroom Instruction.** Group learning opportunities designed around specific content areas (eg. Leadership principles and practice, decision making, self-awareness, influence & negotiation, etc.)
- **Benchmarking Tours.** Organized visits to other companies to examine best practices.
- **Conferences.** Learning about specific topics and interacting with others with similar interests.
- **Lunch & Learn.** Less formal, short sessions covering specific topics of interest.

Developmental Assignments

- **Special Projects.** Individual or group projects addressing issues of strategic importance to the company.
- **Job Rotation.** Broadening individual expertise through postings to specific roles outside of their principal expertise.
- **Corporate Exchange.** Broadening the individual's business horizons through placements or postings with organizations (private or public) with which reciprocal relationships have been established.

Individualized Support

- **Mentoring.** Connecting the individual with a more experienced leader for the purpose of transferring "lessons learned," and for offering guidance and advice to assist development.
- **Learning Partners.** An ongoing, mutually supportive and facilitative learning relationship usually between 2 people who understand each other's role and challenges, but do not work with each other directly.
- **Learning Maps**. Individualized career development planning.
- **Coaching.** A coach is an objective, highly-trained individual who contributes to learning and performance enhancement by guiding and supporting people in the process of personal review and reflection, goal formation, gap analysis, action planning, implementation and review. Coaches focus both on the "here and now" (current challenges) and the "there and then" (future goals and capabilities).

Communities of Practice (CoP)

- **Leadership Forums.** The leadership cadre of the organization constitutes a CoP because they all share responsibility for shaping the strategic direction of the corporation, and for aligning and mobilizing resources to achieve the companies business goals. Organizational performance is therefore a direct reflection of the degree and quality of communication, trust and collaboration among this highly influential group of people.
- **Action Learning.** Action Learning involves a small group of peer leaders who meet regularly to talk about and support each other in addressing their respective work challenges. Action learning groups are often formed as a consequence of a structured learning event, and focus -in part- on assisting each other in applying new learning and skills to "real world" situations.
- **Team Coaching.** A coach can assist any type of team (functional, project, leadership) improve its functioning over time by supporting and facilitating goal formation, reflection and diagnosis, action planning and implementation.

The specific items described above are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to give examples of the type of initiatives that could be undertaken in each domain.

Succession Planning: a key driver and beneficiary of leadership development

In increasingly complex, turbulent, and high velocity environments, it is imperative that the organization take steps to ensure it has the leadership capacity it needs to guide it through existing, emerging, and anticipated challenges. Succession planning is a strategic, disciplined process that enables the organization to consider the capabilities and potential of people in relation to where the enterprise is headed.

By carefully reviewing capability against requirements, leaders can determine both the strengths and vulnerabilities of the organization from a talent perspective. This in turn allows strategic development decisions to be made. The Leadership Architecture enhances succession planning by specifying the areas in which action can and should be taken.

Organizations that are successful over the long haul have woven succession planning into the very culture of the enterprise. Managers throughout the system are required to oversee the career development of their employees or suffer "financial and career consequences." However, without the proper tools, managers will struggle and likely fail in this responsibility. Succession Planning and the Leadership Development Architecture are part of a strategic human resource planning process and structure.