

The Journey to Organization Excellence: Navigating the Forces Impacting Talent Management

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Leadership is not a God Like figure transforming subordinates into Superhuman but is in fact a process that nurtures talent, a process which often involves hundreds or even thousands of “little acts of leadership” orchestrated by people who have the profound insight to realize this. In most organisations the infrastructure of Human Resource Systems and processes is a jumble of unconnected, incomplete, and inconsistent methodologies. Senior executives, Leaders and Human resources practitioners understand the connection between organisation excellence and effective people management. But most organisations do not have a systemized approach for making this linkage – and its hurting their business.

The Paper focuses on what is the role of a leader in connecting organizational excellence to people management by systematically identifying, keeping, developing and promoting the organization’s best talented people.

In this context a study of various organisations for example Bharti Airtel Ltd, Tata Tele services Ltd, Reliance Communications, Vodafone Essar Limited, and Idea Cellular Limited is done in the Lucknow region. The paper makes an attempt to explore and analyze what steps the leaders of these organisations are taking in context with the Talent Management in their respective companies, and also in determining the appropriate skill and attitude mix of graduates who are their potential employees. Various interviews were conducted.

Key Words-Leadership, Establishing Direction, Aligning people, Motivation, Super performers, Talent planning, Building blocks of talent management

I. DEVELOPING FUTURE LEADERS

The Contribution of Talent Management

Bill Gates once said “Take our Twenty best people away from us and I can tell you that Microsoft could be an Unimportant company” When it comes to intellectual property, getting the best out of people can be an organization’s most important task. Encouraging key talent to continue to generate fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to maintain competitive advantage is frequently critical to business success. But what do organisations need to do to ensure that they attract key people, allow talent to thrive and, most importantly, avoid losing the talent to the competition. ‘Talent management’ seems to be the key theme driving strategic HRM throughout organizations. Organizations are becoming more and more aware of the fact that they are about to suffer a significant knowledge loss due to the looming retirement of the baby boomers, as between 40 and 70% of all senior executives will become eligible for retirement in the next five years at most major corporations (Gandossy & Kao, 2004). Couple this with the dwindling numbers of the younger generations in the developed countries, and there is the potential for a ‘talent’ shortage in the not-so-distant future.

This demographic shift is changing the nature of the psychological contract, such that workers are more able to pick and choose between employers based on issues such as life balance, diversity policy, and the extent to which they will have a voice (Berger,2004a). The highly educated professional employee is less a malleable resource for the company and more a mobile investor of his or her own intellectual, social and emotional capitals. Such as employees are ‘volunteers’ for organizations, who view themselves not as assets, but as investors in their organizations (Gratton & Ghoshal, 2003).

Perspective on Talent Management

As a concept in itself, talent management is actually quite difficult to define. It can be viewed from a number of perspectives, all of which give a different interpretation to the same activities within different organizations. The implications of each perspective on the development of the future leader could be quite stark. Table 1 summarizes how the five different perspectives are operationalized differently through HR practices.

Insert Table 1 about here

Firstly, there is the process perspective in which all people management processes are needed to optimize people within organization (Farley, 2005). This perspective would pull all the system in place to enable a talented individual to carve out their career and succeed in their chosen organization. Provided they meet the competency requirements and performance requirements that the process requires, they will move forwards. This could be one way of achieving the 'talent market' idea recently espoused by McKinseys (Bryan, Joyce, & Weiss 2006) where individuals are expected to find the best opportunities for themselves, within the organization.

Next is the cultural perspective that holds that talent management is a mindset (Crewman, 2004), where talent is believed to be critical for success (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelord, 2001). Here talent is king and talented people can thrive or falter on their own merit. The opportunities are greater for the entrepreneurial. There are not the rules and processes to be adhered to for promotions that occur in the process perspective. In organizations playing by these rules, talented individuals have all the rope they need to either hang them or prove their competence and worth. This is perhaps the least structured approach to talent management and suits the mavericks in the workplace.

Thirdly there is the competitive perspective where talent management is concerned with identifying a talented people, finding out what they want, and giving it to them- if not, your competitors will (Woodruffe, 2003). This is the perspective typically held by the large consultancy businesses or PR/ advertising business. In industries such as PR, where intellectual property is everything and accounts move when people do, finding a way to keep the most talented is everything (Bannister, 2005). This approach would tend to appeal to perhaps the most ambitious, or those who have chosen to work within industries where rewards are considered the greatest measure of one's achievement.

Next is the developmental perspective, which proposes talent management is about accelerated development paths for the highest potential employees (Wilcox, 2005). Here the organization wants to 'lock in' employees by targeting recruitment at entry level to the organization and then developing and promoting from within to maximize opportunities for high potentials. This perspective is the closest to reverting to the 'old psychological contract' of a job for life where your employer looks after your career.

Finally, there is a more general HR planning perspective which claims talent management is about having the right people matched to the right jobs at the right time, and doing the right things (Mucha, 2004). This is generally supported by a very sophisticated IT system which maps out various different scenario options and future possibilities as people are moved round the company like a game of chess.

Drawing on the results of 5 in-depth case studies into complex, multinational organizations, this paper will focus on the leadership development elements of the talent management is indeed contributing to the development of future leaders, or whether it is actually hindering the process.

Defining Talent

Regardless of the perspective taken, the fundamental question of what is and what is not considered to be talent needs to be addressed. Tansley et al (2006) claim that 'talent management requires HR professionals and their clients to understand how they define talent, who they regard as 'the talented and what their typical background might be. It also requires thinking about whether such recruits should be seen as particularly gifted. If talent is considered to be 'gifted', then how many people are we talking about in an organization? Berger (2004b) argues that only the top 3-5% are what he calls the 'superkeepers'. The identification, selection, development, and retention of Superkeepers are very important. Superkeepers are small group of individuals who have demonstrated superior accomplishments, have inspired others to attain superior accomplishments and who embody the core competencies and values of the organization. These talented people are the crown jewels of any organization and can help promulgate and reinforce the behaviors necessary for a high performing company. Chowdhary (2002) describes talented individuals as the spirits of an enterprise, being temperamental, creative, rule breakers and change initiators.

The case study organization ranged from one extreme to the other here. Two organizations considered everyone to be talented as part of their egalitarian culture that did not want to deny anyone opportunities afforded to others. This said, they did then recognize that some individuals had talent that was recognized as more relevant to the organization than the talent of others- but anyone could put themselves forward to be considered and developed, and everybody basically went through some of the same talent identification processes.

This is one of the fundamental debates around talent management- the extent to which it is inclusive or exclusive. Take an exclusive approach and there is a danger that elitist tendencies will simply ensure that future leaders are in the mold of the current leaders; take an inclusive approach and there is the danger that nobody will believe that you are doing anything different, which could be demotivating for the ambitious, reward oriented and more goal- driven members of the organization. In this context, would an 'inclusive of all' approach to talent management be likely to succeed in motivating and retaining the 'ones with more relevant

talent' amongst the group? Bryan et al(2006) believe that the talent marketplace is not for all employees. The majority of those at most companies are workers in the traditional sense: individuals who have skills that are largely interchangeable and can be managed adequately through line supervision. Hence, they advocate a more exclusive approach. Organizations that have no explicit talent management system are still doing something with regards to talent management, only it is implicitly within their other HR processes and functions. Heinen & O'Neil (2004) claim that every organization has a talent management system whether it is by default or design.

Transparency

The second big question facing all organizations is whether or not to tell people that they are considered to be talented. It would seem that if the organization takes the inclusive view and holds that everyone is talent, then it is safe to tell everyone, but if only a small group is recognized as talent, it is really beneficial to tell them? The 2005 What's Working Survey conducted by Mercer Human Resources Consulting found that 50% of employees who thought that their organizations could not meet their long-term career objective were thinking of leaving, while this number more than halved for employees who felt that their organizations could. Similarly, being given good opportunities for continuous learning reduced the number thinking of leaving from 57% to 32 % (Mercer HR 2005). This suggests telling your talented employees that they are considered talent could be advantageous. However, it does not all seem to be about opportunities. A Gallup study of 80000 managers concluded that the greatest drivers of employee's engagement and retention are intangible, mostly related to the way a line manager treats their reports (Branham, 2005). So, if you tell an employee they are considered talented, they may be more likely to stay as they feel they will be treated better by their manager, and have more opportunities if they stay than if they leave. On the other hand, depending on how the organization constructs the remaining employee population, there could be a detrimental effect on the other employees who perceive that they are less valued and have less access to the development opportunities.

Not having a transparent talent management system could also seem a little subversive. It means that an organization is scheming a person's career and future without taking into consideration the response of the individual to their plans. Also, there are some people who might be offering extra discretionary effort in their work in the false belief that they are not considered talent. That is why fearless conversations have such an important role in any talent management system, being able to have direct and tactful conversations that inquire into what the employee wants to invest on and what the company can offer. Could a lack of transparency in a talent management system impact negatively on the reflected self-resulting in less confident 'talent' under-achieving? Could a lack of ability in providing good quality feedback, both from manager and employee, hinder the possibility of the organization and the individual achieving the best possible outcome for both.

In the case study organizations, most tended towards a lack of transparency with one being completely opaque and secretive. The majority told the individuals concerned that they will consider talent but this was then generally held as a secret amongst those that needed to know rather than broadcast more widely, while only one organization was fairly open about where people stood in a public domain. The culture of the organization was the explanation for this choice; in a culture where Talent Management has a developmental approach, telling individuals their transient location on a talent map was believed to deviate from the original intention of the talent management ethos: to offer development opportunities that would ensure short- and long-term capabilities. This view within an egalitarian culture, led the organization to choose not to openly discuss 'placement' but to discuss feedback. Conger & Fulmer (2003) argue that succession planning systems have traditionally been shrouded in secrecy in an attempt to avoid sapping the motivation of those who aren't on the fast track, based on the idea that if you don't know where you stand you will continue to strive to climb the ladder. However, given that the employee contract is now based on performance rather than loyalty or seniority-they argue that people will contribute more now if they know what rung they are on.

Developing High Potentials

Whether the focus is on individual competence or organizational competence, developing competence within the organization is key to creating a talent management system. Berger (2004c) argues that an organization should develop a list of its core competencies and assessment tools for measuring them; develop training and development solutions to support these core competencies; assess everyone against them and forecast potential; and finally prepare action plans to ensure that the core competencies are covered.

In order to be sustainable, rather than a simple one hit activity, talent management needs an organizational commitment to continuous professional (Clarke, 2001). This will be visible through the range of development experiences offered within the organization, moving away from the traditional classroom training-based model, to include, stringing together a range of meaningful experiences to build character. These could include coaching issue development meetings, job rotation, interim and emergency assignments, task force assignments, extracurricular activities and so forth (Krewson, 2004). Phillips & Phillips (2004) argue that corporate universities can help by linking learning and strategy, and preparing employees for future challenges.

Ken Tucker of the Gallup organization sees most organizations focusing on individual's weakness, rather than their strengths. Developing plans are then drawn up to address these weaknesses, rather than people being paired with others with opposite strengths and weaknesses to work in teams (Digeorgio, 2004). He argues that while focusing on strengths leads to world class success, and people feel good about themselves, and find new ways of using their strengths for the organization's benefit. Focusing on strengths means focusing on existing capabilities rather than capabilities in need of development. Goodman (2000) also believes that institutions now need to be organizing so as to bring out the talent and capabilities existing within their organizations, to encourage people to take initiative, and to give them a chance to show what they can do, and a scope within which to grow. He sees this as a shift from management to managing, the nuance of which shifts the emphasis from a controlling development stance to an empowering development perspective.

Questions also arise as to what 'development path' to map out for those identified as talent. To some extent, talented individuals are likely to be self-directed learners (Tice et al.,2003). They will be highly motivated to learn and continually stretching themselves as they find this a positive rather than negative experience. Indeed, this may be the way to sort the talent from the rest- do not provide any formal training and see how the individuals use informal mechanisms to develop themselves. Care needs to be taken with the development path.

II. ROLE OF LEADER IN TALENT MANAGEMENT

Leadership is about creating a legacy, one that will propel the organization to new levels of success even when the leader has moved on. Many leaders find this difficult to imagine. They are irreplaceable. They have the experience. They know the secrets of success. And they have the intuition that will drive success because their decision making has been fine-tuned over the years. As wonderful as this vision may seem, it falls short in a world that begs for a new style. Employees are more interested and impressed by someone who listens more than tells, someone who is less concerned about being in charge than about enabling capabilities and outcomes. Working with the human resources and training staff of your organization, here's how you as a leader can create other leaders.

Ways to Prepare the Next Wave of Leaders.

The role of Leader in Talent Management could be compared with a metaphor from agriculture. Role of Leader in talent Management is about selecting the seed, understanding the environment in which its planted, assessing its early growth, providing the nutrients needed for further development meaning progress, pruning or gratifying where necessary, addressing obstacles and challenges in the environment and harvesting the fruits. Superkeepers (talented people) represents the seeds that must be carefully selected and nurtured.

Educational Leadership

It is about making a "positive difference" to learning, Doing the right things, Being transformative on system, Having a Social justice agenda, Being Democratic and Principled, Having Pedagogic Content knowledge, Leading Complex innovations. Key principles guiding educational leadership are Self-belief, belief in others, recognizing Potential, Focus on student Achievement, Focus on Pedagogy' Value based leadership. Key practices of educational leaders are Research practice, gathers and analyses data on achievement, reads current research, builds leadership capacity, builds vision, Challenges, supports risk taking and celebrates success, Change leader.

III. TRAINING TOP TALENT – EXECUTIVE EDUCATION (IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP)

As the needs of corporate sector grow and diversify, educational programs cannot be as general as previous programs. Now the Question arises as to what can be done to meet the ever-changing needs of Corporate. What Executive programs should be developed to meet ever changing needs.

The Role of Educational Leadership Starts in Designing Executive Education Programs.

There is a huge role the Education system can play in producing talented individuals which can fulfill the ever-demanding requirements of the organizations. The Educational institutes can have a rigorous program development process. Their main target should be to create talented individuals. The Executive education programs should be such that they should be coupled with in-depth knowledge of and collaboration with commerce and industry, which can lead to new thinking. Various knowledge delivery formats are developed from which executives can benefit. Entire faculty of this executive education should foster close links with the world of business practice, they should keep themselves up to date with current issues facing managers, enabling them to offer practical solutions through executive programs. Executive programs need to be flexible

in format and in the way they contextualize the content. Content needs to be based on solid business fundamentals; learners must develop essential skill sets. The ability to proactively lead an organization or an initiative, where direct lines of authority often do not exist, will become an increasingly valuable skill that can be effectively developed in executive education and professional development programs

Executive education programs must be inherently designed to meet the needs of business leaders, both in their present and future roles. Today's educators must understand that corporate leaders have added challenges. For example, truly innovative executive education programs must present an industry-specific curriculum which addresses critical issues, such as working within a highly regulated environment, managing legislative and strategic issues in product development and marketing, and of course, maximizing the capital intensive challenges of a protracted product development cycle. Secondly, strategically-oriented executive education programs must have the foresight to be predictive in their instruction. This is possible only through industry-specific executive education programs taught by faculty who have worked in the industry, but also have completed formal academic training. Industry-specific programs should include a curriculum that incorporates concepts and cases that address timely, real-world challenges. The program should provide knowledge and develop skills that would make those participating executives highly valuable.

Executive Programs and Business Schools Help Support the Needs of Organizations to Function Globally.

On one level, business schools can provide the tools and techniques to help executives operate in a global environment. There are programs such as the Advanced Development Program which prepares senior managers to lead companies at a global level. Geographic dispersment of employees is becoming commonplace. The internet is gaining acceptance as a tool to connect executives from around the world with content and instruction from high-quality business schools and providers of executive education. Balancing the use of synchronous and asynchronous delivery is essential to the ability of executives to manage participation in these programs with their personal and professional commitments, travel schedules, and time-zone issues. With the global presence of the companies, decision making is becoming more difficult. Executive education programs should equip executives with tools to be successful in this global environment. Any executive education program should prepare students for dealing with change, complexity, and the dynamic nature of industry. The curriculum should incorporate problems that would address these issues and challenge the students to make decisions that would prepare them for their real jobs.

Experienced Talent is Moving into Other Competitive Categories

An unanticipated outflow of experienced talent can be crippling for an organization. However, proactive strategies to retain talented and high-potential individuals can pay significant dividends. In addition to issues such as recognizing and rewarding individual contribution and improving work/life balance, proven strategies to hold on to the best talent include providing the opportunity to engage in meaningful new projects that intellectually challenge managers and offering professional development that provides individuals with the knowledge and skills to be successful. The tight integration of internal initiatives and high-quality programs from respected providers highlights the importance of development to organizational success and has been shown to be a strong motivating factor for high-potential employees.

Building Leaders for the Long Term

How do companies create a strong pipeline of management talent. "Are Leaders Portable?" "To some extent, the answer is yes. "If you want to create a sustainable competitive advantage in an industry, there is no substitute for developing your best and brightest," "More and more companies are conducting internal talent audits in which they try to figure out who those people are and what makes them so good. There's a greater understanding that they can't just pull a development or hiring strategy off the shelf and mimic what someone else is doing." This new reality places greater demands on human resources professionals and the executives whose job it is to build effective teams. On-the-job experience and mentoring will continue to play a significant role in developing human capital within a firm, but the strategic use of a leadership development program is another tool companies are using to build the management and leadership skills shown to be most portable across industry and function.

IV. Conclusions:

What is the Contribution of Talent Management to the Development of Future Leaders

While talent management systems may be established with the best of intentions for both the organization and the individual, the actual achievement of the benefits intended may be more difficult than anticipated to achieve. The history of the organization, its culture and the sensitive nature of some work environments can lead organizations to include everyone in the talent pool, without any attempt to differentiate between them. While this may appeal to the more egalitarian amongst the workforce, lack of segmentation results in the talent management system being little more than an enhanced performance management process. The culture of the organization will impact on the perspective taken on talent management, and talented individuals are likely to choose, in the longer-term, to work for organizations whose culture is more closely aligned to their personal lives.

If an organization does take a more exclusive approach and does segment a talent pool, they then face the question of transparency. At its worst, high transparency might disenfranchise those who are excluded from the talent pool while over-boosting the egos of those who are included, or it might put the identified talented individuals under such pressure that they fail to perform well as they fear whether or not they can continue to meet expectations. At its best, high transparency could have a no. of benefits

1. Supporting an open culture where information is exchanged freely and constructions about talent are discusses frankly.
2. Prompting some difficult conversations about performance that may have been avoided
3. Motivating individuals to influence the way they are defined (particularly when all definitions are attractive)
4. Providing clarity for people about opportunities and choices (especially if coupled a transient definition of Talent)

The issue also arises as to whether or not the identified talented individuals want to meet the expectations placed on them or not. People go through phases in their lives when different elements of their life take on different levels of imp, and talented people may prefer to have the option of stepping of stepping off the ladder every so often to focus their energy on family or other pursuits.

Developing the talent can also be difficult. Push them too far too quickly and there is the danger that they will over-focus on the organisation needs at the expense of wider moral and ethical principles, but leave them unsupported and undeveloped and they are likely to leave.

In making choices about the talent management approaches, organisations should consider the kind of leadership that the organisation is looking to foster for the future. The processes that are likely to identify, develop and communicate with “talent” are likely to have a significant impact on the kind of leadership that the organisation develops. In this sense, the approach that an organisation uses needs to be congruent with the type of leadership the organisation needs in the future. Whatever system is in place, if it is effective, a significant number of the future leaders of the organisation will be those individuals who thrived, were noticed succeeded within the talent management system of choice.

To some extent, the need for talent management systems is an organisation – made issue.

Organizations’ response to business process re-engineering, TQM, and the downsizing that dominated the previous decade have now resulted in the realization that actually they do need good people, and having wiped out layers of managers, they perhaps don’t have the pool of people ready for senior positions that they once had. Having taken job security and development opportunities away from individuals, and putting career management and employability firmly on the individual’s agenda, organisations are now trying to reverse this trend by enticing individuals back to the idea of loyalty to one organisation, and they want more say in their careers. Talent management systems may yet have the potential to provide a rigor in defining business critical skills for an organisation, behaviors required now and, in the future, and enable focused development for different talent segments. Will they be able to achieve this? Time will tell.

KEY FEATURES OF CEO- LED TALENT MANAGEMENT

Various interviews were conducted of The CEOs of various companies in the Lucknow region. The examples are Bharti Airtel Limited, Vodafone Essar Limited, Reliance Communications, Idea Cellular Limited, Tata Teleservices Limited. The CEOs interviewed were Mr Saleem Haq, Mr Shankar Bali, Mr N.F Aibera, Mr Harsh Chandra.

Despite the variety of backgrounds, all the interviewees share a similar understanding of the importance of talent management in identifying and grooming employees at all levels of the company so that they can rise faster up the corporate ladder. Talent management consists of many elements including performance evaluations to identify potential psychological testing and assessment centers to determine capability gaps; training and development programs, relocations, project work and job experience to accelerate

development. However, few of the executives appear to have a strategic approach to talent management of the same rigor as other business planning processes.

All of the firms evaluate executive annually or more frequently using scores and documenting the outcomes. CEOs hold follow-up meetings to discuss results and determine what programs and job experience their subordinates need to improve their weaknesses. HR advises on what programming is most appropriate from a range of options, including off site retreats, classroom and internet learning, executive coaching and formal mentoring. Most of the executives mentor their direct reports and others on a more informal basis.

Good talent management promotes people based not only on their performance but also on the manner in which they have made their mark. "If I have a leader who's getting the results but is damaging the organization because of the way they've achieved results, that's not okay," says one corporate leader. Talent management was traditionally the domain of HR and the role of the CEO was intermittent and distant. Two factors largely account for increased CEO involvement in the past few years: the shift in focus towards intangible assets such as talent, and increased bold scrutiny in relation to both ethics and performance. Now it is a strategic necessity for these executives not only to keep abreast of the latest developments in the company's talent program, but also to plot strategy, own associated initiative and regularly participate in events related to talent management. The most successful Talent Reservoir solutions are initiated and designed by a senior executive team with strong CEO input, accountability and approval. To ensure that premium employees remain committed to the organization. Managing the "can't leave" talent will be the main strategy for corporate survival. Selecting new employee is the most critical purchasing decision an organization can make.

Driving Competitive Advantage

The leaders in this paper say, in a nutshell, that talent management is a source of competitive advantage. They find that talented executives plan and execute strategy better and create a positive work environment. They believe that good talent management leads to greater productivity, and even faster revenue growth, although the exact impact is hard to quantify.

According to the interviewees, developing their most senior executive is especially important. If these leaders have the right skills and experience, their direct reports and middle managers below them will thrive. The executives interviewed say that good talent management increase job satisfaction and improves retention rates. It is expensive to recruit and train new executives and estimates of the cost vary widely. The cost of hiring and training an executive is about twice the recruit's annual pay. Some executives recruiting firms believe the cost is closer to 150 %. Other estimates that it is even higher. Companies with sound talent management don't wind up paying headhunters but business continuity is the most important reason for strong talent management. The fact that people are prepared to move into positions rapidly and can assume that position is an important thing."

Yet it is becoming more difficult to keep people- this is the response of all corporate leaders interviewed for this study. Employees who feel that their career path is blocked are more likely to leave and these employees have an increasing number of companies from which to choose. People need to be lifelong learners. Companies have to provide them with opportunities to learn and to further their careers without organization – hopping. The result is that organizations are paying closer attention to training and job assignments, creative changes in responsibility or an accelerated career track that may keep aspiring or existing executives in their positions longer. If you're developing a leader pipeline, you are helping to empower the individual, replies. In the end it helps retention. In fact, talent management is so important that some firms are even tying compensation to it. At least one-half of the firm interviewed cover employee development in annual performance reviews that determine pay increases.

The Hands-on CEO

The amount of time corporate leaders spent on talent management can sometimes be considerable. All of the interviewees regularly evaluate their direct reports as a basis for top level talent decisions, often with written performance evaluations. Their companies conduct at least one lengthy format assessment of top executive each year. The reviews combine written feedback and a scored section covering several leadership categories. Most of the interviewees acknowledge the role mentors play in the development of their own careers. All of them mentor subordinates one or more levels down the organization.

The Importance of Succession

Tragedies like world trade center are a wakeup call, necessity for succession planning. Tragic events of 9/11 brought home in a dramatic way the need for succession planning. Among the 3000 lives lost on that fateful day were a no. of key leaders for whom little thought have been given in terms of success. Suddenly there was a void at the Top. Stage actors have understudies, Athletes are backed by Second Strings, Orchestras invariably include Second chair musicians. It only seems very logical that the corporate world would have made

similar provisions. Smart organizations often employ leadership development both in succession planning and for building internal “bench strength”. All of the executives interviewed say that succession planning is a crucial part of talent management and that transparency in this regard motivates employees to perform at a high level, thereby fostering stability. You need to be able to justify and communicate to people that why they are on a list. If you articulate why you have the views that you do, you lose fewer people. Consequently, the entire firm had multiple succession plans to address different levels of leadership. All but one could identify their potential successors now and several years into the future. All could name potential replacements at other key positions.

Accelerating Leader’s Development

The firms interviewed provide increasingly structured opportunities for executives to improve their leadership acumen through formal programs, often off-site. Some organizations conduct week long retreats for vice-presidents. The events cover strategy, execution and personnel issues. Executives may even pursue an MBA at the school. All of the companies use mentoring, executive coaching or both. Some corporate leaders pick through problems and tries to meet with them often outside of work.” In a lot of ways, a CEO’s job is chief mentor. But many interviewees say that on-the-job experience is also critical. When choosing and promoting managers, they prefer the person to have a broad background rather than expertise in one or two areas. Their firms encourage executives to pursue opportunities in unfamiliar settings, including international assignments and project work designed to hone new skills.

Challenges and Risks

Companies must anticipate their future needs in order to ensure they have the skills to match them. Many of the executives interviewed say that they have made good progress in developing a talent strategy that achieved this, but acknowledged several significant challenges in this regard. Most respondents believe that succession planning in particular is a delegate process requiring foresight and considerable diplomatic skill. They say their companies monitor progress and regularly revisit their succession plans to ensure that they remain future facing.

Other interviewees are of the opinion that timing promotion is difficult. If the process is too slow, there is a risk of losing a talent executive to a rival company- occasionally after a candidate has been developed for year. But promoting someone too quickly represents a risk to the business and can create resentment and job vacancies that cannot be filled lower down. Several respondents say it is difficult to promote executive over the heads of less-talented supervisors. According to a few interviewees, setting the right tone and mix of learning activities and promotions is also difficult.

V. Conclusions

Despite the variety of experience and opinions of the executives profiled in this study. A number of common themes emerge. Strong talent management leads to greater workforce, productivity and other benefits. Indeed, companies are increasingly realizing that they cannot be successful unless they have a good strategy for developing talent.

Given its importance, the strategy needs to be given from the top. CEOs should oversee talent management strategy rather than delegating it to HR departments. HR, in turn, should be made responsible for supporting the strategy and executing it.

Talent management should be explicitly linked with overall strategic planning and deliver the quantity and quality of leaders the company will need in the future to achieve its goals,

Formal processes for identifying top talent, including performance evaluations and strategic reviews of key talent should occur at least annually and incorporate written feedback to buttress scored categories. There are many other components required in a good program, and a rigorous approach to obtaining reliable performance data is essential.

Smart companies communicate effectively about the importance of talent management. By publicly recognizing and rewarding deserving candidates with promotion and other awards, companies can cultivate an environment in which talent flourishes.

A varied business background is the best grounding for the CEO and COO roles. As today’s corporate leaders face such diverse challenges and opportunities, firms are looking for people with wide experience in terms of function, role, and, increasingly, geography.

Talent Development programs should combine both theory and practice in the form of structured learning experiences and off-site meetings as well as the proper business experience. They should be supported on a daily basis by coaching and mentoring activity.

EXCERPTS OF THE INTERVIEWS TAKEN

Executive Interviewed –CEO

Company- Vodafone Essar Limited

Location- Lucknow

The CEO says that effective talent management starts at the top. He says talent management is his priority. "Part of making sure that the environment is right is by developing the leaders in our organization in a way that encourages them to do the same thing to other people,". Therefore, he says that strong senior leadership leads to better middle management and "increases the likelihood of front-line people" developing "the right skills" for their jobs.

He mentors his eight direct reports and three or four people a level below, although he finds it is important to do this "in a non-public way. Otherwise, they get labeled as somebody who's got a special inside track and it hurts them more than it helps them. "He has frequent, informal lunches and other interactions with a range of employees "I talk about leadership and personal growth," he says. Vodafone's talent management begins with recruiting. The company aggressively seeks talented graduates and mid-career executives. But it is systematic about evaluating. "If you get good results the wrong way, you don't have a really bright future here for a long time."

Through an annual survey, the company gauges employee attitudes towards management. The study asks questions about such topics as leaders' honesty, Vodafone's ability to provide clear information and job autonomy. The company uses the results to identify strengths and weaknesses in its leadership ranks. Talent management to customer and employee satisfaction. Good scores equate to strong productivity. Performance evaluations consider how people have achieved results. "If you get good results the wrong way, you don't have a really bright future here for a long time.

But sometimes the Company may weigh the potential of candidates as much as their past performance. The company may also nurture these individuals in unfamiliar jobs, with the provision that they are aware of the developmental challenges when they take on the role, and are well supported by more senior people. Vodafone's biggest challenge in talent management is getting people to change. Executives may be set in their ways or have difficulty adapting to broader roles or a changing business environment. As you move through an organization, the skills required at different levels of leadership change and people get reluctant to abandon what made them successful and to reach out for something to make themselves more successful.

He adds: "The world keeps changing, so often what made us more successful in one environment is exactly what does not make us successful in another environment."

Executive Interviewed –CEO

Company- Reliance Communications

Location- Lucknow

The CEO tells that the communications between management and employees is weak. But since Reliance bolstered its development activities and created a more open environment, the staff are feeling better about the firm. Among other trends, Reliance is sharing information about promotions and "There is no doubt that the older folks, such as myself, could learn an awful lot from the younger folk. Technologies are changing all the time. Enthusiasm and energy bubble up from the bottom."

Succession planning "If people aren't aware that they may be on those lists, they may go elsewhere," he says. "There are times when you are having a candid discussion when it is not particularly joyful. But at the end of the day, people respect you for being direct and honest rather than manipulative and shady. You're respected for that. People will trust you if you're like that. If you haven't got trust, then you haven't got a lot."

He sees a link between performance and talent management. Still, he says the connection is difficult to measure.

Reliance Communications conducts annual performance appraisals. The evaluations weigh financial performance. But they score executives in seven or eight leadership areas. Executives must meet or exceed standards for their position. Written feedback specifies where someone needs improvement. It is important for employees to fit into Reliance culture. Emphasis should be on customer service, exceptional communication skills, an ability to execute strategy, and a willingness to learn and share information.

The company has many, different development programs. He establishes the tone for talent management throughout the organization. "It is about setting the culture of what's expected of people and their behavior," he says. "I'm a firm believer that if you don't do things at the leadership level, at the board level, then you can't expect other people to do it." He spends lot of time on talent management. He sees himself as a mentor to his direct reports and a few other people beyond his immediate circle. He says that communication is crucial to good working relationships. He holds various discussions with his employees. That seems to work with people because one of the problems we have is that people are often reluctant to speak their minds because they fear the repercussions.

He writes the evaluations on about half a dozen direct reports, He reads evaluations of other senior executives too. He seeks regular feedback about his performance. His reports and other personnel contribute input to his annual evaluation. He says that finding talented employees and allotting enough time to develop them are major stress points. He says he could spend more time with people outside his immediate circle. He does not see any one job as the best stepping stone to CEO. Having the right skills and leadership qualities is more important. "You have to look at the skills required of the role and skills possessed by people and match those." But he believes that a well-rounded background is helpful for these roles.

Executive Interviewed - CEO
Company - Idea Cellular Limited
Location- Lucknow

The CEO believes that strong leadership has enabled Idea Cellular to execute its business plans and hit short-term financial targets. This has led to long-range growth. He says "I'm one who strongly believes that business is about people and people are always looking for leadership, and creating a strong leadership group is extremely important, "So having the right people on the team is of the utmost priority, so my role is in all f acts of that area."

He spends lot of time on talent management. He has 12 direct reports—his inner circle. The review considers productivity, leadership skills, succession, goals for the ensuing year and individual development plans. "We look at the role of that individual, where he is today, where he is capable of going, and what he needs (to do).

But much of his participation occurs is in informal settings. He mentors several direct reports. He holds one-hour meetings with these managers a month. Idea Cellular measures performance through revenue growth, profitability and more qualitative leadership skills. Employees provide input. Has an executive focused sufficiently on customer satisfaction? Is the "Experience in multiple disciplines is extremely critical because business is moving so fast and it's so dynamic that it requires to make quick decisions. It requires a leader to be very perceptive and to synthesize information and arrive at conclusions and decisions, and to do that you have to have an understanding of the multi-facets of the business. "The pulse of the organization is something that I like HR to be on top of. It's a very dynamic environment and this environment requires the organization to be flexible. "Idea Cellular has a range of development programs for executives at all levels. Supervisors receive general leadership training covering skills, practical information and general business topics. One course videotapes executives to help them improve their skills.

In an attempt to improve leadership quality across the board and build its pipeline, the company runs structured transition programs: As the employee progresses from one level to another we have them go through specific leadership development training.

Idea Cellular has an emergency succession plan. The company awards the grade of A to executives who are ready for higher positions now. Those who need a year of seasoning receive a B, while managers who need another three years of experience receive a C. He believes such wide-ranging knowledge is good preparation.

Executives Interviewed – CEO, GM HRD
Company- Tata Teleservices Limited
Location- Lucknow

Even a thorough recruiting process may not ensure that the right person is recruited. "No matter how good your due diligence is, you can never be sure that the person you are hiring really is well suited for the job, you may get somebody onboard and discover that they are not really as good as you thought. That can strain growth. In a business like ours, there is such an incredible interdependency that the lack of an effective leader in one part of the organization can actually strain another."

The CEO spends 5-10% of his time on talent management, but he plans to increase this level. He sees talent management as his exclusive responsibility. "We have created replacement tables that help us to design programs that give people the skills and experience that they need to move up," he says.

He covers leadership development and succession at quarterly business reviews with his top executives, quarterly conference calls. The meetings have a secondary purpose of involving promising managers in important business decisions. Human resources is a source of ideas and ensures that the company executes its personnel strategies. "The HR guys are the facilitators,". The company holds seminars and other talent management events, where he himself is a regular speaker. Among his favorite topics is what makes a great leader. Although he has personally found mentors to be more helpful, He says that his informal advisers taught him the importance of "clear, effective communication and common sense".

These are, he says, "the two most important management attributes. The only way you can be effective as a leader is to empower your leadership team and give them as much information as you can and as much of

the thought process to deal with the information so that they will make decisions that are as good as one can make. My management philosophy is what I try to impart on my team. I try to get them to the point where they would make the same decision I would make if I was in that position. That entails getting them to think logically and clearly about the issue and getting them to ask questions, to probe for data and make sure that they really understand the situation."

"You have to be acknowledged as extraordinary in what you do," he says. "That combined with breadth gives you the necessary prerequisites for the CEO job. The hardest part about this job is that you have to be able to dig fairly deeply into so many different areas. You have to be conversant in what goes on in sales and marketing, product development, finance and auditing. There has to be in-depth knowledge in all those areas. You have to excel in one of them and have developed competencies in the rest."

He embraces different management styles and says that good executives can change approaches according to circumstances. "Management styles are clearly situational. There is a time for a very authoritarian management style and a time for a more collaborative style. Effective managers understand the role they need to play and adapt accordingly."

**Executives Interviewed –CEO
Company - Bharti Airtel Limited
Location- Lucknow**

"The visibility and the role model that I present as chief executive is absolutely critical to the behavior that we wish people to adhere to and in people recognizing the importance I attach to developing our talents and using all our resources to their full potential. The leadership led by myself is demonstrating how we expect others to manage and lead.

He felt that by promoting more from within, the Group could control the quality of its management team. "Our goal is to get to the point where 70% of senior-level appointments are internal and 30% are external," he explains. Towards that end, the Bharti Airtel Limited has become more systematic about tracking performance and providing development opportunities. The company has separate pools of middle and senior executives and programs geared to each group. He says that the Co-operative Group has increased the number of potential candidates for plum positions at all levels. "The scale of changes we're driving takes time. He believes strong long-term growth stems largely from good talent management. That said, he believes the company is already cutting recruiting costs and other expenses that occur when companies do not hire the right people or retain talented workers. "Fundamentally raising the capability of the organization has to have a significant financial return that would greatly outweigh any cost of investment," he says.

According to him, deciding whom to include in the senior management pool is another big obstacle. The Co-operative Group tries to identify junior managers who can advance two levels. But it is possible to choose wrongly or to slight good managers with special expertise but not the proper background or temperament for general management roles. "You've got to make sure they understand why they're not in a talent pool for developing broad management capability," he says. "If the appraisal process is working well, then you should have that understanding of where you stand in the organization, how you're valued, what your further potential is and therefore it shouldn't be a total shock when you find you haven't been selected for the talent pool." Performance evaluations score employees in leadership and business categories and incorporate comments from managers.

The Co-operative Group then uses outside consultants to conduct in-depth interviews with executives placed in these pools. They help prescribe development programs, possible future jobs and special project work. The programs include workshops, retreats and group meetings. Promising executives also receive mentoring and coaching.

He says HR is a source of ideas and is responsible for executing strategy and tracking progress: "I see HR as a positive catalyst for change." He informally mentors several executives and oversees special projects, where he can watch talented employees in action.

TABLE-1

Perspective	Driver	Recruitment & Selection	Retention	Reward	Succession Planning	Development Approach
Process	Use people management processes to optimize development and deployment of talent.	Competence based consistent approach.	Attention paid to processes such as WLB & intrinsic factors that make people feel they belong.	Calculated according to performance review and some element of potential.	Routine review process based on performance review cycle.	PDPs and development reviews as part of performance management. Maybe some individual interventions.

Cultural	Belief that talent is the most critical factor for success.	Look for raw talent. Allow introductions from in-house.	Allow people the freedom to demonstrate their talent and to succeed and fail.	Flexible package according to individual needs.	Develop in house if possible, if not look outside.	Individuals negotiate their own development paths. Coaching
Competitive	Keep talent away from the competition.	Pay the best so you attract the best. Poach the best from the competition.	Good people like to work with good people. Aim to be employer of choice.	Offer more than the competition. If people leave it won't be for a better reward package.	Geared towards retention- letting people know what their target jobs are.	Both planned and opportunistic approaches adopted. Mentors used to build loyalty.
Developmental	Accelerate the development of high potentials.	Ideally only recruit at entry point and then develop.	Clear development paths and schemes to lock high potentials into career paths.	Increments based on development as well as performance.	Identified groups are being developed for each level of the organization	Both planned and opportunistic. Focussed on development into key roles.
HR Planning	Ensure right people in the right jobs at the right time.	Target areas of shortage across the company. Numbers and quotas approach.	Turnover expected, monitored and accounted for in plans.	Clear salary scales and structures.	Detailed in-house mappings for individuals.	Planned in cycles according to business needs.

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