CONSULTING

Effective Leadership Development

Some questions you might ask about leadership development.

For the CEO

1. How great a priority do we place on leadership development in our organisation?

2. How does the Senior Team support leadership development?

3. What would indicate that our leadership development is successful?

For the HR/OD/LD team

1. How do we demonstrate the direct business and PD value of our leadership initiatives?

2. How well are our leadership programs meeting specific organisational needs? What difference do they actually make? Can we prove that?

3. Are key initiatives lost among a much greater list of 'nice-to-have' programs?

For the individual

1. What competencies do I most need to develop in order to move to the next level? How/where can I get this development?

2. How have I developed my leadership competencies in the past year? Are they nice-to-have or need-to-have?

3. Do I wait for leadership development opportunities or do I create them?

LEADERSHIP MATTERS!

Thinking about leadership and leadership development

With the immediate threat of the GFC receding, CEO Alan sat pondering the economic landscape ahead. What was the greatest internal lever of performance available to CUBE Enterprises? At the top of Alan's list was leadership capability throughout the organisation. On further reflection, Alan started to become increasingly anxious. The business had Programs, which seemed expensive, and it was never clear to him, or the senior team, how exactly the leadership training contributed to organisational performance.

As head of Learning and Development at CUBE, Sue was rather relieved that the GFC no longer occupied centre stage. Sue pulled a copy of the last ten-month leadership development program from the drawer, where it had been resting for over a year. She still felt sure that it gave thorough coverage to the complex topic. CUBE's Program seemed every bit as good as the leadership module she had completed in her postgraduate studies. She looked forward to commencing the nominations process.

Raymond was one of the younger and more talented middle managers in CUBE. He was thinking about how the end of the GFC signalled opportunities for career advancement. Personal development had always been an important consideration in his selection of employers. Disappointed by the absence of promised opportunities at CUBE, he had already completed a self-funded course. Raymond seriously doubted that CUBE's off-the-shelf program of a few days would fully equip him to deal with on-the-job challenges. Frankly, the immediate return on his investment of time just didn't stack up. Raymond opened Google in his internet browser, typing in '*employment*'.

Leadership matters!

The three vignettes above capture sentiments that UGM is encountering more and more post-GFC. Senior management has no doubt that leadership capability is critical to organisational success. Research is showing that senior leaders continue to consider leadership capability as mission-critical. Unfortunately, all too often, they report grave doubts about the effectiveness of programs that run in their enterprises. Studies are also pointing to a lack of clear alignment between personal development and critical business imperatives. However, the typical reaction of cutting back on Programs is far from the ideal long-term response.

Many in charge of developing leadership capability want the best for their people. They often believe that university-style programs will deliver the greatest value. However, such comprehensive but broad and generic programs are not effectively tailored to the needs of the business. Management

scholar Henry Mintzberg concurs. Consequently, it can be the right content, but the wrong time. It's likely also to lack sufficient focus for direct application and immediate benefit.

Finally, talented individuals engage in leadership development, expecting to progress their careers. Those who don't get personal development opportunities within organisations start looking around. Those who are involved in programs become justifiably concerned about their investment of time and effort when overlooked for positions on the grounds that they don't have specific capabilities required. Research shows that this valuable category of people are at high-risk of adding to the voluntary turn-over statistics of organisations.

The disconnect we've found

We continuously work and speak with many people in each of the three roles we've mentioned. A key insight we've gained is that there is often a (very big and concerning) disconnect in perspectives. Each is unaware of the others' views, and we believe this lack of congruence is extremely unhelpful. In the long run, it erodes confidence and trust and everyone and the organisation suffers.

A primary purpose of this particular newsletter is to stimulate and encourage dialogue, as needed, between the various parties. If you aren't aware, for sure, how each role holder views leadership in your organisation then you're well advised to proactively remedy that by initiating discussions.

Cost-effective leadership development

In good faith, many organisations model their leadership development programs on university curricula. It seems the right thing to do. But, a really good university program is intentionally high-level, broad and often conceptual.

What's good for one organisation, however, probably won't be what another needs at the same time. We take specialist medicine for a headache, for a stomach complaint and for a blood condition. Why would we hope that one generic, magic 'leadership' tablet will fix all organisational ailments? Off-the-shelf may be cheaper, but what if it doesn't address our problem?

Although traditional leadership programs are a good source of revenue, we're advocating a modular, just-in-time, built-for-me approach. It's the way many other organisational challenges are successfully addressed. A series of short, focused modules have an immediate and powerful effect, and good returns. We also know this approach addresses the needs of all roles we've examined. How do your organisation's leadership development initiatives stack up for you? Questions in the side-bar will help you decide.□