Invest in Your Business by Developing Leaders From Within



Focus on your mid-level employees to help them grow with your company.

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A Note From The Editor

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In today’s tight labor market, it’s important companies not only invest in training new hires and management to retain key players, but those in-between, the mid-level employees.

They’re your succession plan. They need management. Just like any group in your company, they need training and development, and this group is especially important because they are the producers of the organization and the talent pipeline of potential company leaders.

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I started in an entry-level role at LaSalle Network 19 years ago, and as I grew up in the organization I didn’t know what I wanted, but I had a manager who did. My manager paid attention to me, sat down with me and painted that bigger picture to help me understand what I could become within the company.

Typically once people reach a certain level and tenure, they stay. They’ve overcome hurdles, had successes and reached a level of autonomy they enjoy. The key is getting them to that point. Here’s how:

Help them see the big picture.

While it’s not necessarily a challenge, something to be aware of is that employees oftentimes don’t know what they want their next career move to be. For instance, many think in order to grow their career, they need to go into management, which isn’t always the ideal role for every person. Companies can outline the different promotion tracks that employees can grow into, whether it’s a manager of people or process, and depending on which the employee is interested in, create a plan to help them get there.

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Offer internal and external training.

Companies can have a formal training program led by a training department that incorporates and utilizes the company's subject matter experts and leadership. Managers also can schedule time to meet with employees at least twice a month to discuss performance and for career coaching. Informally, managers should be providing on-the-spot training and feedback to employees. Externally, companies can pay for employees to attend conferences, workshops, seminars and meetups.

My firm, LaSalle Network, has published studies surveying people on what they value in a role, and time and again training and development are among the top things they look for when evaluating companies. Providing different opportunities for continued learning is crucial in keeping any employee, including mid-level employees, engaged. It could also help reengage those who are disengaged.

Keep a pulse on them.

When building your talent pipeline, it's important to keep a pulse on your mid-level employees. If you suddenly notice they are disengaged, consider if they've been contributing less in team meetings, or if they were social with the team, have they pulled back spending time with colleagues outside of the office? Are they volunteering less for new projects, or helping colleagues? Have you noticed a dip in performance and work product? Has their attitude changed? The biggest question you need to ask yourself as a manager is if this employees is taking away from the team in any way.

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Connect them with a mentor.

Having someone to confide in about how they're feeling, challenges they are facing, etc. is always helpful regardless of your level. It's even better when this person doesn't sit on the same team and isn't your manager. Great mentors can be the key to pushing someone from good to great, from mid-level to senior.

Hold them accountable.

Proving themselves means meeting specific KPIs and metrics. It removes the intangible and emotional aspect. Is someone doing her job? Has she done it consistently? It also allows for the employees to know *exactly* what they have to do to get promoted. If your organization does promote from within, talk about that … a lot!

At LaSalle, we talk a lot about the fact that we promote from within, and we want our managers to be homegrown. Eighty percent of our management team currently has been promoted from within. We're proud of that. We want employees to know there is opportunity to grow and develop here, that there is a path for them.

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