To Be a Great Leader, Be a Great Talent Manager

Six creative ways to build the team you need for the future.

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Years ago, when I was a vice president in corporate America, I was meeting with one of my direct reports and wanted to discuss her career goals. She seemed very shy and hesitant at the beginning of our conversation. I asked her about her reluctance. She said, “I’ve been working for a long time, and you are the first manager I have ever worked with who asked me about my goals.” As a speaker and trainer, I meet people every week who tell me their manager has never helped them develop or grow in their career.

In a fascinating new study by global leadership-consulting firm DDI, only 14 percent of CEOs say they have the talent they need to execute their business strategies. But it’s also up to an effective leader to manage that talent. Here are six ways to help ensure you develop all the support you’ll need for the future.

1. Make sure everyone has an IDP.

Everyone in the organization should meet with their manager once a year to discuss their career short-, mid- and long-term goals. It should be an in-depth discussion that leads to a written individual development plan, or IDP, on how the organization can help individuals acess the professional and personal guidance that they need. They should also schedule a

follow-up meeting several times a year to review their progress. Monitor and require that every leader does this with every employee. There should be no exceptions.

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2. Offer leadership-development programs.

Want to maximize organizational capabilities? Then don't wait until someone leaves to search for a replacement. Have talent already developed and sitting on the bench, ready for the game. A smart organization has a leadership development-program for people who want to be leaders and those are already in a management role, including senior leaders. As Noel Tichy said, "Winning companies win because they have good leaders who nurture the development of other leaders at all levels of the organization."

3. Provide training and educational opportunities.

Companies should provide exciting and varied opportunities for training and development in technical knowhow or other soft skills. Offer tuition reimbursement for employees to further their education. For example, I recently met someone who told me her employer paid for her pursuit of an MBA.

4. Train managers in the skill of coaching.

Many people get promoted to a leadership role but don't know how to coach effectively. Provide intensive training for everyone in a leadership role. Talent managers need to be

excellent coaches.

5. Use creative methods for developing talent.

Yes, talent can be developed with classroom training, but there are some other innovative approaches. Find a TED Talk, have the entire team watch it and then have a discussion afterward. Send an article link from a website like this one or a book everyone should read and then discuss it at a staff meeting and have employees take online-learning programs.

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6. Reward and incentivize development.

Every leader should be rated on how well they produce talent, while every employee should be evaluated on how well they've executed their development plan. The time is now to start developing talent. Employees are the most valuable asset to help the organization reach where it needs to go in the future. That is what talent managers do. As John Adams once said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

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