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A Guide to Leadership Development at a Company

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Honors Project Reflection

A Guide to Implementing Leadership Development at a Company

For my honors project, I researched leadership development and how to implement it at a company. Leadership development is the process of building the skills necessary for a person to lead the group to a goal. Many companies don't have these programs because they don't see the long-term benefit. Without developing leadership, companies will have to look outside for the skills they lack, rather than developing them from within. The goal of leadership development is to create leaders out of your employees, so that they can move up in the company. Looking long-term, it will reduce employee turnover rates, saving the company money on new hire costs. There will be a more productive work environment because employees will have more job satisfaction from the continuing development.

The first step to the leadership development process is determining who to develop. There are many things to consider, such as, an employee's potential, performance, and readiness. However, it's also about the needs of the company. Management has to make sure that the development has a purpose for the company's strategic agenda. The company uses assessments of people to identify ideal candidates for leadership development. One type of assessment is the nine-box grid, which is a chart that compares the potential and performance of the employee. Management has to determine what each box within the nine-box grid means for the company, so they can accurately place the employee in the correct box on the scale. The grid will then tell management what is needed to get the employee to improve their standing on the grid.
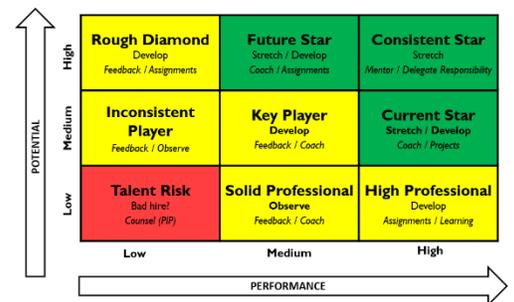
Another thing to consider when deciding who to develop is succession planning, which is when you plan for when top executives leave the company. You need a plan in place for someone to take an executive's place, so there is a smooth transition. To have a successful succession plan, you have to look at who in the company is ready to move up and determine what they need in order to make that step. After determining the employees that are best suited for leadership development, you can continue the process.

The next step is finding the skills gap in the employee, which is what the employee is lacking or needs improvement on. By addressing a specific skill, management can better target it when creating a development plan. Finding the skills gap is done by using assessments that show what skills employees lack versus what skills they have. One assessment is the Campbell Leadership Index, which measures employees in five main categories: leadership, energy, affability, dependability, and resilience. The employee takes the assessment, as well as others who work with the individual, so management can see the employee's perception of themselves versus what others perceive. This allows for a more well-rounded view of the employee because there are multiple perspectives being considered. In order to give examples of skills gap in employees, I broke up management into three categories: executive level, middle management, and lower management.

By categorizing them, I could make broad generalizations about the specific group as to what their skills gap would most likely be. Executive level management is the highest level of management that oversees big picture operations that will affect the whole company. They tend to lack the ability to look long-term when looking at the big picture. It's important for the company to be long-term focused, so that it is successful. Middle management reports to the

executives and oversees lower management, making sure that there is efficiency. The skills gap typically seen in middle management is the need to improve their strategic thinking skills, so that they can effect change in the company. Because they are overseeing the company on a smaller scale, they see the inefficiencies in the company. It is their job to improve these, but they need to be able to think critically in order to solve the problem. Lower management is in charge of overseeing employees and dealing with them directly. Usually, this group needs to further develop their management skills, including conflict resolution, communication, etc. By addressing these skills gaps in the different levels of management, there will be more employees who are able to move up in the company, making it more efficient with transitions.

After identifying the skills that need to be developed, you can create the development plan, which lays out how the skill will be developed. This is a largely individualized process because everyone has a different learning process and unique experiences. It also depends on the skill that is needing development. There are numerous ways to go about development. There's mentoring, coaching, external class, internal training, shadowing, giving more responsibility, etc. If the skill needing to be addressed is a hard skill, the development plan will usually consist of a class or in-house training. If it's a soft skill, the plan will vary on how it's laid out. For instance, if a manager is lacking presentation skills, then the plan would consist of multiple mini presentations, until it culminates with one big presentation. This would allow the employee to gain confidence in their abilities, and then test them with a bigger presentation. Another example is if a manager is being targeted in the succession planning, then their capabilities to handle situations on their own should be assessed. This can be done by giving them more autonomy and responsibility in the company. They should also be given a coach to

guide them through the process. By using these methods, the manager will be better equipped to handle the roles that come with an executive level position. Coming up with a successful development plan is essential to the company because it will help advance the company as a whole.

After going through the development plan, it's necessary to evaluate the outcome of development. You have to determine if the goal was achieved and if the individual benefitted from it. With successful development plans, the employee will be more prepared for a promotion and more likely to receive the opportunity for upward mobility. They will also have a sense of skill mastery, which will increase their job satisfaction because there will be more commitment to the company. They will have a sense of purpose at the company because they will know that the company cares about their well-being. The company will cut costs in the long-run because there will be increased employee retention, lower turnover costs, and increased efficiency. With all of these benefits, development becomes an important task for companies to complete.

Leadership development is essential for companies to do because it has long-term benefits. The process itself is an individualized one that has many factors to take into consideration. Leadership development has the potential to create leaders who are ready for more responsibility in the company. Many companies don't implement these programs because they see it as a cost without assessing the costs it will save in the future. Because companies aren't thinking in the long-term when deciding to implement leadership development, they are stunted from growth due to their employees not becoming their highest potential. Therefore,

companies need to implement leadership development programs in order to become more

efficient and productive, which is a necessity to see growth.

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