



## **Designing an In-company Program**

### **Introduction**

It is my strong conviction that the best bespoke leadership development programs are the result of a joint effort of both external expertise and internal managers and senior professionals. This counts both for the design phase and the delivery. Nothing can substitute the knowledge of internal leaders and senior professionals of the market and operations of that specific organization. In addition, external advisors can deliver structure, learning expertise and an outside-in perspective.

Development of future management and leadership are of great importance for the success of any organization. Many CEO's do see this as one of the most important responsibilities of top management. HR Directors, as surveyed by BCG, do see Leadership, Talent Management, Behavior and Culture, HR and people strategy, employee engagement, and strategic workforce planning as the most urgently in need for action.<sup>1</sup>

Development of future leaders starts with identifying your potential leaders. To do so an important condition is that the relevant knowledge, skills and competencies (K/S/C's) which make someone a successful leader are known and defined in such a way that people can be assessed against them. Some will be generic and relevant for a broad range of organizations. However often the for the success of a company, most relevant K/S/C's, not only differ between organizations, but also through time.

Of course becoming a great leader has everything to do with experience. The most important activity in developing leaders is giving your high potential employees the right challenges. However formal training and learning experiences still add value and can make the difference between good and excellent.

In this paper I start with some observations on the meaning and importance of what too often is referred to as the "soft stuff" of management but what -as has been proven- is pivotal for the success of organizations.

Secondly based on my experience in different larger corporations, a short description is given of management and leadership development programs as delivered in these organizations to develop professional staff and leaders in different stages of their career. This gives an insight in what companies expect in terms of knowledge, skills and competencies.

Finally some ideas on the design of an in-company/bespoke leadership development program.

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<sup>1</sup>Creating People Advantage 2014-2015: How to Set Up Great HR Functions. BCG/WFPMA



## **Management & Leadership**

The word “Management” is used in different connotations, both as a verb or as a position/role in the organization. Different definitions of management among others are:

- The activities associated with running a company, such as controlling, leading, monitoring, organizing and planning;
- The act or skill of controlling and making decisions about a business, department, sports-team etc;
- Managements primary function is to get people to work together for the attainment of an organization’s goals and objectives.

“Leadership” is often used as a synonym of management but in most literature it is given a slightly different meaning. It seems to resemble more to the “soft skills and competencies” part of management: “the ability to lead people or an organization”. In literature management is often linked to execution and implementation, and leadership more to vision and inspiration.

Of course there is a lot of literature on the importance of the so called “ soft stuff”, however not many books give such a compelling story on the importance thereof, as “Beyond Performance” of Scott Keller and Colin Price <sup>2</sup>.

“When it comes to achieving and sustaining excellence in performance, what separates winners from losers is paradoxically the very focus on performance itself. Performance-focused leaders invest heavily in those things that enable targets to be met quarter by quarter, year by year. What they tend to neglect, however, are investments in company health—investments in the organization that need to be today in order to survive and thrive tomorrow (....)”

*Performance* is what enterprises delivers to its stakeholders in financial and operational terms, evaluated through such measures as net operating profit, return on capital employed, total returns to shareholders, net operating costs and stock turn.

*Health* is the ability of an organization to align, execute and renew itself faster than the competition so that it can sustain exceptional performance over time.” Performance and Health are both important. “A 2010 survey of companies undergoing transformations revealed that organizations that focused on performance and health simultaneously were nearly twice as successful as those that focused on health alone, and nearly three times as successful as those that focused on performance alone.” <sup>3</sup> The essence of this book is that first organizational health can be measured and secondly that it can be influenced.

When recognizing this, it becomes evident that acquiring the relevant skills and competencies on how to take people with you, or in other words how to influence, motivate and inspire people to realize the goals of an organization are of utmost importance.

Organization-, Management and Leadership Development should therefore be an integral part of the curriculum in the future of any course on Business Management, both internal (bespoke) or external by Business Schools.

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<sup>2</sup> Beyond Performance, Scott Keller and Colin Price 2011© by McKinsey & Company

<sup>3</sup> idem page 5



## **Management & Leadership programs within companies**

A lot of, larger corporations do have a systematic leadership and management development program with different development objectives at different stages of someones career. For example:

1. First and second year trainee-programs for young professionals (graduates).
  - I. Further vocational training, knowledge of the companies organization, markets, health and safety, company objectives etc;
  - II. Working in teams;
  - III. Behavioral styles;
  - IV. Project management as a team member (if applicable);
  - V. Bridging cultural differences (if applicable).
2. First line Management training for newly appointed managers.
  - I. Starting point is working within a single function, but often with strong working relations to several other teams within that specific part of the organization, e.g in manufacturing, process operators in different shifts, maintenance, quality etc.;
  - II. Application of management instruments in leading people like, absence and grievance procedures, performance management and objective setting etc.;
  - III. Situational leadership, the use of different management styles under different circumstances;
  - IV. Projectmanagement, often in a leading role (if applicable);
  - V. Bridging cultural differences (if applicable).
3. Middle management (often in Second line management roles)
  - I. Deep understanding of company objectives and the strategic choices and deployment of operational/tactical processes and procedures. Focus still on execution;
  - II. Leading several teams (through) managers;
  - III. Aligning teams in different, but often still related functions;
  - IV. Leading management team of own function/department and represent own function/department and at the same time being part of a management team with membership of different functions e.g. management team of a manufacturing plant; operations, maintenance, quality, health and safety, human resources, finance;
  - V. Bridging cultural differences (if applicable).
4. Senior Management often with the end responsibility for a large function or small sub-company
  - I. Deep understanding of the external environment the company is working in
  - II. and being able to adapt and define functional strategic goals and tactical and operational processes and procedures accordingly;
  - III. Lead and inspire;
  - IV. Bridging cultural differences (if applicable);
5. Top Management, Executive board, CEO
  - I. Define company goals and strategy;
  - II. Lead or be a member of the highest management level of a company;



- III. Lead and inspire the organization as a whole.
- IV. Manage/communicate with, lobby external stakeholders e.g. shareholders, trade unions, ngo's, government etc

### **An In-company Program**

The best programs I have experienced were designed and delivered by a mix of internal Leaders and Senior Professionals and external subject experts. One cannot underestimate the importance for (junior) staff and managers of being exposed to their own Top Leaders. Also its an excellent opportunity for senior leaders to get to know the (high) potentials of their organization. Nothing can replace the knowledge of internal leaders and senior professionals of their own market and operations. External advisors can deliver structure, learning expertise and an outside-in perspective.

In designing a program the following can be taken into account:

1. Define the purpose of the training; what is the target group?
2. Specify the desired outcome, in particular, what are the required Knowledge, Skills and Competencies to be successful in a role in this organization;
3. The real experts who do know all the ins and outs of your processes and procedures, and the market and operation of the organization are, at all levels, your own leaders, managers and senior professionals;
4. What the external advisor can do is helping you to prioritize, develop learning materials, and coach internal presenters and facilitate the course;
5. An outside perspective on your market en operations can be delivered by external experts on those subjects. E.g. academics in finance or marketing;
6. Also leadership Knowledge, Skills and Competencies are something an external advisor can help you both in defining which are important in your organization, but also in delivering;
7. Furthermore internal seniors often do have compelling stories about how they get things done in the organization.