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Develop Better Leaders Through Coaching by HR

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By David Lunken 5/15/2015

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Organizations are losing talent and struggling to retain employees. The average job tenure in 2014 was 4.6 years vs. 21 years in 1955, according to statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/tenure.pdf>) (BLS). Job tenures can vary widely depending on business and industry; for example, BLS data listed the average job tenure for the leisure and hospitality industry at 2.2 years.

While senior leadership tenure tends to be higher (approximately nine years for CEOs, (<https://www.conference-board.org/press/pressdetail.cfm?pressid=5430>) according to recent statistics), job changes at the most senior level hit record levels in 2014 (<http://www.challengergray.com/press/press-releases/2014-january-ceo-turnover-soars-32-percent-year-starts>). With executive leadership turning over more frequently, human resource professionals are needed now more than ever to take charge of their organizations' leadership development programs.

Selling Leadership Development

If you are like most HR professionals, you face a giant hurdle: you must first convince your company executives that leadership coaching is an urgent priority and that you and your team should take charge of it. The following selling points can help you gain approval:

- **Leadership development can solve organizational problems.**
Present leadership coaching as a strategic investment of resources that helps solve big organizational challenges. Help executives understand that leadership coaching is directly linked to driving the organization's strategic initiatives.
- **Leadership development can affect the bottom line positively.**
Developing leaders who can engage, motivate and empower their teams is key to improving the organization's bottom line. Most managers have been trained in the hard skills but not the soft skills, so leadership coaching that helps make that connection will ensure that each team member is reaching his or her full potential. Young leaders, especially, need to learn more about themselves before they can begin to understand others and their differences and to leverage those differences.
- **Leadership development can align leadership style with the current situation.** Each leadership style comes with a variety of strengths and challenges. A question your organization may be facing is what style does the current situation call for and how should the leader adapt his or her style to get results. Does the situation require collaboration, cooperation and engagement? Does the situation call for tough decisions that are risky, and is time of the essence?

The job of the leader is to adjust his or her approach situationally to get results and to get work done through engaging and empowering others. All individuals have their own natural leadership style; the challenge is playing to inherent strengths and learning how to leverage them for different situations and outcomes.

HR Is the Best Leadership Development Coach

HR professionals are in a unique position to maintain an objective view of the needs of their organization. Without the bias that comes from within a team, HR professionals are able to help leaders determine job definitions for the roles needed to accomplish their strategic goals.

Job definitions go beyond job descriptions in that they identify the goals for roles and then facilitate achievement of those goals through a process to create behavioral profiles. Leaders can use these behavioral profiles to get a more accurate picture of their team's needs. Consequently, leaders will better understand their team members' natural talents and communication styles, which will allow them to plan better for building capacity.

Leadership development is critical for driving revenue, engaging employees, and achieving and maintaining high overall productivity. It can best be facilitated by the HR team because of HR's objective view of the organization. Use the selling points listed above to help pitch your leadership on coaching. Leadership development helps in solving organizational problems, positively impacting the bottom line and aligning the leadership style with the situation.

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