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The Next Wave of Leadership

Finding and grooming your company's diamonds in the rough

The equation for organizational success is fairly simple: Results = Employee Productivity x Leadership.

For too long, organizations have focused primarily on one part of this equation: employee productivity. One HR executive with an S&P 500 company that I spoke with said, "The gains in productivity of the past few years have been on the backs of our employees who are



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maxed out. I don't know where we're going to get the next round of productivity."

If your organization hopes to continue to achieve the results that shareholders have come to expect, you need to shift the focus to leadership. Consider these statistics:

- Unemployment is hovering at a three-year low of 4.7 percent nationwide;
- The Bureau of Labor statistics projects a labor shortage of more than 10 million workers by 2010;
- The impending boomer retirement will create both a knowledge and leadership gap for many corporations;
- A recent poll by OfficeTeam showed that 71 percent of American workers say

"they do not want to be the boss at their workplace."

Problem or Opportunity?

What actions should your organization take now? In the short-term, attracting, developing and retaining key leaders should be Job One. Creating a culture where leaders can develop the skills necessary to ensure the organization's future success and growth is critical. These skills include communication, relationship and critical-thinking skills. However, based on current trends, your company will be well-served by focusing on developing and grooming a different kind of leader—those individuals who may not formally hold a leadership title within your organization.

Core Competencies

Leaders most in demand today are those that can motivate and engage employees who are outside the scope of their functional responsibilities. What makes these leaders effective? Leaders—particularly those that are not in a boss/subordinate relationship—typically exhibit the following behaviors:

1. They are ethical in their actions. They are clear about their values, goals and expectations. They do what they say they will. They are willing to admit to mistakes.

2. They are well connected. They nurture relationships at all levels. They know where to go for information, both inside and outside the organization, and they are willing to share information when appropriate.

3. They are good collaborators. Rather than tell people what to do, they ask people for their ideas. They offer ideas as part of a

broader solution. They model or demonstrate the behaviors they would like to see.

4. They use personal influence effectively. They get people to do things for them because they want to, not because they have to. They are not controlling, manipulative or impatient. They relate with people on a personal level and help bring the vision alive for them.

5. They understand how to manage conflict. They look beneath the conflict to identify solutions. They know when and how to utilize various approaches when resolving conflict.

6. They learn from experience. They continually examine outcomes, both good and bad. They place a high value on lessons learned and quickly utilize these learnings to make adjustments.

7. They provide feedback. They coach people both formally and informally, and

view this as a natural part of any relationship or process.

People exhibiting these core behaviors are able to create an environment of trust where people feel connected to their work. As organizational hierarchies continue to flatten and as leaders continue to have increased span of control, success in leading others will become critical.

John F. Kennedy once said, “It is time for a new generation of leadership to cope with new problems and new opportunities. For there is a new world to be won.” Those who exhibit the behaviors outlined above will be well positioned to handle new problems and opportunities. Those who master them will be well positioned for success. 

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