

Ideas for Finding Internal Talent for Executive Roles

By Donna Rawady, Executive Coach

Migrating from one company to another has become a common career track, leaving organizations struggling to implement effective succession planning. The onus is on organizations to create an environment that attracts, develops and retains people who may later contribute their depth and experience as executive leaders.

In addition to the responsibility of creating a motivating environment where people want to stay, a full-fledged executive development program or executive track requires strategic planning, time and commitment. And in the midst of business demands, many organizations may not be able to make succession planning or executive development a priority.

With that in mind, here are **several ideas that may immediately help you begin to identify or develop internal candidates for future leadership roles:**

- Identify three to five up-and-coming leaders and invite them to join a special task force. Charge task force members to work together to find innovative strategies for building executives from within. Schedule a target date for recommendations to be due to the executive team. Position the goal up front — to identify one or two strategies to be implemented. The benefits of this approach are numerous. You're engaging your executive team, engaging potential executive candidates while gaining their invaluable perspective, and hopefully jump-starting your executive development initiatives.

- If you are aware of a leader emerging in your organization, you might think about engaging that individual to work on a limited special project. That would provide an opportunity for her to exercise and demonstrate her creative leadership and strategic skills. Building in opportunities for you to coach and mentor the person throughout the project may help you better determine whether the person is a viable candidate.

- Revisit what your organization identifies as key leadership competencies. If the required or critical competencies have not been clarified, you may want to engage some help to do so. Knowing what attributes you're seeking in a leader will help narrow your search and create a meaningful executive development program.

- Provide the opportunity, technology and tools for comprehensive assessments of executive candidates. Assessment results will help would-be executives leverage their strengths and create their individual development plans. Cumulative assessment results also may help measure your organization's overall leadership effectiveness.

- Research, identify and provide varied resources that reinforce the organization's leadership standards (coaches, mentors, learning and development programs and recommended readings). Then communicate the availability of the resources and the organization's willingness to invest in them. __Provide opportunities for think tanks, networking sessions or confidential forums for problem solving where colleagues can share best practices and learn from one another.

In *The Extraordinary Leader: Turning Good Managers Into Great Leaders* (McGraw-Hill, \$32.95), John H. Zenger and Joseph Folkman offer the following insight into leadership development: "Good does not equal great — and your organization needs you to be great."

Organizations need to invest in identifying strong internal candidates and provide opportunities for them to become extraordinary.

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