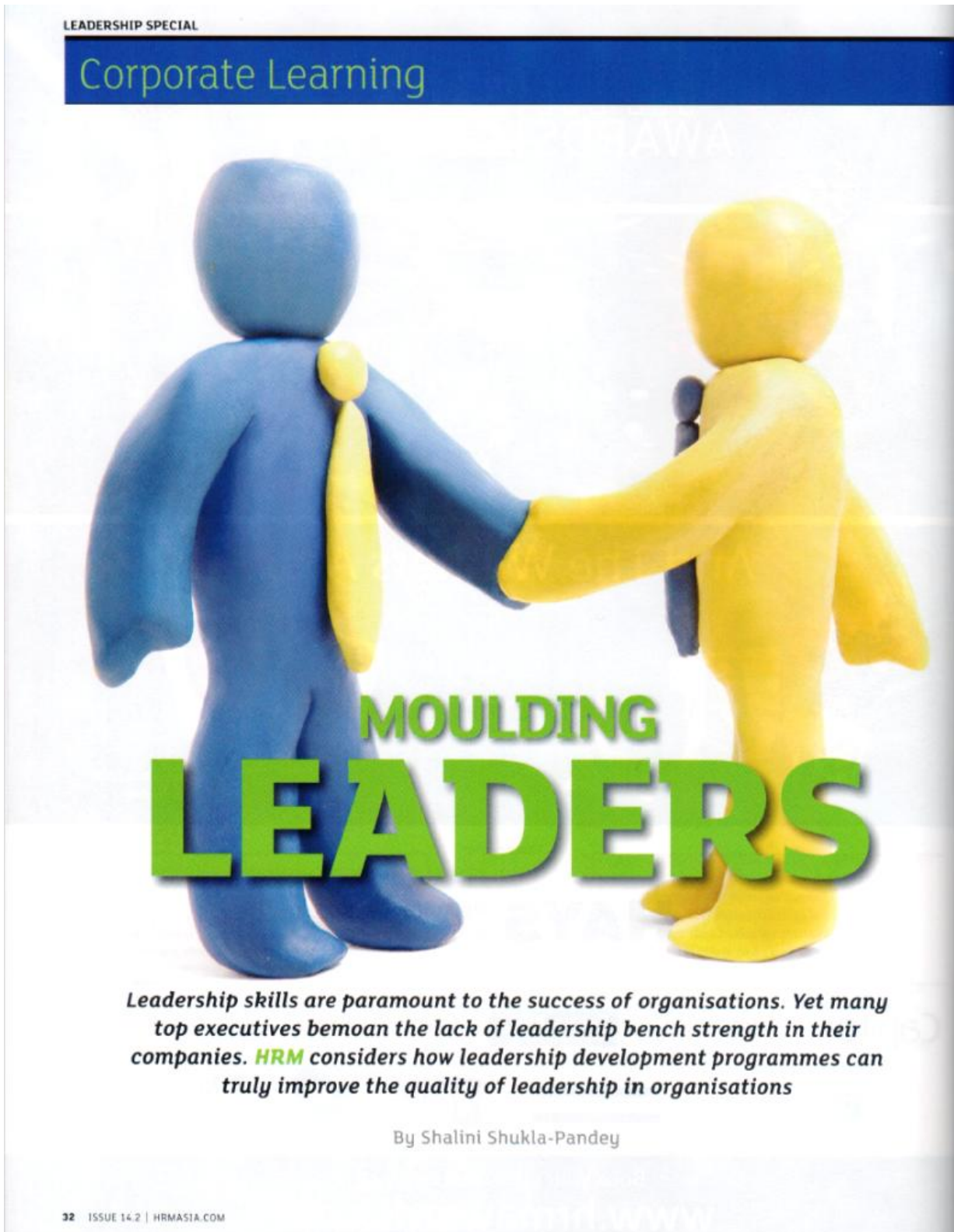


NEWS CLIPPING

Client:	ESSEC Asia Pacific		
Publication:	HRM		
Date:	February 2014	Section:	Leadership Special – Corporate Learning
Headline:	Moulding Leaders	Page:	32
Summary:	Professor Fabrice Cavarretta comments on the need for leadership development programmes in order to improve the quality of leadership in organisations, and shares points to consider when planning leadership development.		





Leadership development is critical at every stage of the leadership lifecycle – from first time leaders to seasoned C-level executives.

“According to several research studies, leaders that know and understand the business will be able to execute strategy more effectively and deliver faster results,” Darryl Parrant, managing director of the Align HR Group, explains. “However, it is vital talent can lead, influence, motivate, empower and guide others to a shared vision at all levels of the organisation.

“The level of impact increases more the further you move up the ladder, so it is important that organisations invest in leadership development to build a pipeline and succession plan for key leadership roles,” he adds.

Leadership development is indeed critical, especially in light of leadership succession and talent planning, as well as the new demands brought on by an increasingly globalised and complex business landscape.

“No longer can leaders depend on their traditional roles and functions as they are fast superseded by new demands brought on by technological changes and an increasingly well-informed consumer base,” says Peggy Lee, Director, SIM Professional Development.

“An example is that of the Chief Finance Officer (CFO), who is now expected to play the role of a business partner, and be comfortable in managing different business portfolios as well as the finance function,” she adds.

Leadership development is all the more crucial when an executive rises from junior levels. “Front loading the development cycle makes sense for two reasons,” says Fabrice Cavarretta, Assistant Professor – Management and Entrepreneurship, ESSEC Business School. “First, these are soft subjects that require long maturation, hence the need to inject that in them as early as possible in a career. Second, “imprinting” has been demonstrated, whereby the first position(s) one takes will have disproportionate consequences on the behaviour of managers subsequently.”

Therefore, whatever framing occurs in early leadership experiences is likely to influence the style and skills one puts into leadership activities throughout their careers.

Identifying needs

Before embarking on any kind of leadership development programme, HR should identify the

specific development needs of its leaders.

First, there is a need to evolve traditional HR roles, says Lee. Like the CFO, the HR director needs to be keenly engaged in the organisation’s strategic business direction and mission.

With knowledge of the business plans, the HR director can then proceed to identify the future manpower needs and expectations, and at the same time review the organisation’s current manpower establishments.

“Any identified gaps can and should be addressed accordingly – either through training and developmental interventions, or a case of internal or external sourcing for new talents,” says Lee.

Steps to identify development needs

STEP 1

Ensure that the leadership drivers and capability needs for the organisation are clearly articulated and in alignment with its Vision, Mission and Values.

STEP 2

Leadership competencies are then developed to ensure the knowledge, skills, and behaviours are defined with results in mind.

STEP 3

Develop assessment tools and an approach to measure and evaluate leadership performance against the competencies and business deliverables for each key role.

STEP 4

Once the above are in place, an Individual Development Plan can then be used to close the competency gaps based on a robust review process. Today, an integrated learning approach needs to be employed to develop the competencies and capabilities expected at each leadership level.

STEP 5

A leadership roadmap and matrix can then highlight the type of training and development needed for each competency (learning approaches could include: books, videos, coaching and mentoring, training programmes, and projects) based on individual leadership or team leadership needs.

Source: Darryl Parrant, MD, Align HR Group

Corporate Learning

Gap in leadership exposed

Forty per cent of workers in Singapore have changed jobs in the last two years, and 71.4% are looking for a job at the moment, highlighting a possibly significant increase in intentions to change jobs.

The findings from Hudson's annual Singapore remuneration report, *Salary & Employment Insights 2014*, demonstrate the importance that Singapore workers place on strong leadership. It also reveals a gap in the quality of the managerial leadership in their organisations, a primary driver for Singaporeans to look for new jobs this year.

The importance of effective and inspiring leadership is clear. The survey showed that 56.8% of employees rated the quality of their current manager as 'good' or 'excellent', while 43.2% rated their current manager as being 'average', 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Over two-thirds (68.3%) of the professionals surveyed had left a job because of a poor manager, 63.3% are currently thinking about leaving their job because of their manager, and 46% of those that say they currently have a 'poor' manager are actively looking for a new job because of it.

Conversely, the report shows that strong leadership positively impacts engagement and productivity, and is a great retention tool in a climate where there is significant fluidity in the workforce. About 42% of employees plan to stay in their current role because of the quality of their manager, with 39.2% saying their productivity has increased as a result of having a manager they respected and trusted. Similarly, 70% felt motivated and engaged directly because of their manager.

"There is a potentially significant issue regarding the need for more effective leadership within Singaporean organisations," says Andrew Tomich, Executive General Manager, Hudson Singapore. "It's clear that strong leadership impacts engagement, driving productivity and increased employee retention. This is something that should not be ignored, particularly in a climate where there is increasingly high potential for movement within the workforce."

"Our findings clearly demonstrate that the workforce is willing to move, and move quickly. The impact to the business and cost of replacing, training and up-skilling new workers is likely to be much higher than retaining and developing staff that are already performing well; particularly when high performing individuals leave the business," Tomich adds.

Table 1:
Most important qualities required of a leader

Quality	Percentage of respondents
Treats staff fairly	67.2%
Is supportive of staff	65.1%
Provides clear and transparent communication	57.5%
Has a clear vision of what to achieve	45.9%

ONE-THIRD

of employers don't have any budget allocated towards their professional development

Source:
Hudson's Salary & Employment Insights 2014

Some tools to consider are classical assessments, such as annual performance reviews expressed by the supervisor as well the employee. "Careful reading of such performance reviews, particularly if they are of '360-degree' type (including peers and reports), would yield the most interesting information," Cavarretta explains.

Ultimately, Lee says it is HR's prerogative to ensure that a formal talent development and management plan is developed and administered in accordance to the needs of the organisation.

Bridging gaps

An integrated leadership development programme is the only way to effectively close competency gaps, says Parrant. However, leaders are busy and they need different modes and avenues to learn, reinforce, and, most importantly, apply their skills and knowledge.

"Executive coaching is a great way to ensure on-going challenges and reflection is present," Parrant explains. "Leadership development is on-going because the environment is always changing, so leaders need to be agile, adaptive and 'know what to do when they don't know what to do'."

Leadership development, especially through coaching and mentoring initiatives, has proven to be effective, though time consuming. Such initiatives provide a structured but intimate engagement between the coach and the staff being coached.

"Often, the coach (who may be a leader himself) can seize opportunities to coach and mentor on real life business issues and challenges," says Lee. "This makes the whole interaction a lot more meaningful and practical, yet at the same time allows the leader to manage and function optimally."

Tracking success

One way to measure the success of an organisation's leadership development programmes is to measure the staff turnover rate, as well as to ensure that the employees' performance management process is systematically administered and adhered to by supervisors, says Lee.

It is also important for HR to have evaluation tools in place, as well as the metric to assess impact and return on investment.

"This is a weak area in Asia. Evaluation tools can range from simple feedback forms, culture climate surveys, 360-degree feedback assessments, focus groups to assess change in leadership capability or shifts in focus," says Parrant. "Leadership development is one part of the equation but it is a critical part to bring key leaders together to share and collaborate to develop solutions."



Align HR works with senior leaders to develop real case scenarios as part of the leadership development journey, linking the competencies and learning around a situation.

"This approach leads to action learning projects that can be cascaded through the organisation to really build leadership at all levels," says Parrant. "This is also another way to see the impact of what leadership programmes can do if done strategically and as part of a leadership journey." hrm



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— DARRYL PARRANT,
MANAGING DIRECTOR, THE ALIGN HR GROUP

Preventing failure

Many leadership development programmes fail.

"They fail because they are neither developed strategically nor aligned to the leadership competencies and capabilities to deliver on organisational goals," says Darryl Parrant, managing director of the Align HR Group.

Another reason these programmes don't succeed is often a lack of clarity and transparency. Also, providing "lip service" will not carry development programmes far either. "HR has to ensure the proper execution of the initiative, and to ensure that senior management is committed to the cause as it has a financial cost to it," says Peggy Lee, Director of SIM Professional Development.

Leadership development programmes can also be limited by the organisation's willingness to allow people to truly behave as leaders, rather than as 'simple employees'.

"A genuine motivation of the firm by its management, and subsequently by HR, to let a generation of 'leaders' emerge should be the first foundation stone to build a successful leadership development programme," says Fabrice Cavarretta, Assistant Professor – Management and Entrepreneurship, ESSEC Business School.

Leaders today are extremely busy and can no longer have on-going retreats and leadership workshops in isolation. Often that learning is not applied back into the workplace.

"Programmes must be integrated and interwoven with learning 'touch-points' to reinforce learning and get leaders to think, plan, and apply," says Parrant.

"Hence a mix of learning modes, both face-to-face and e-learning, helps ensure successful leadership development programmes are applied back to the workplace. Training programmes are just part of the leadership development process." Communicating the intent and implications of the organisation's leadership development programmes to management and staff also helps to prevent the failure of such programmes.

"Closely monitor the initiative and processes involved, and constantly seek feedback from end-users as the business environment they are operating in does change quite quickly," Lee advises.

Before accepting to test, select and train leaders, HR should spend significant time developing a shared understanding of what leadership actually means for the organisation, says Cavarretta. This might include whether the risks and traits of individuals behaving as leaders or entrepreneurs can actually be accommodated in the existing structure.

