

LESS MANAGEMENT, MORE LEADERSHIP NEEDED

Behavioural competencies can be instilled top-down and bottom-up to support a business culture.

The business landscape has changed significantly over the last two decades. With this change has come a need for a new breed of leader - one that is motivated, productive, creative, independent and strategic, rather than controlling, authoritarian and repressive. But conversely, many organisations err in their overdependence on management abilities. Based on logical and rational processes and the development of functional skills, it's a seductive and easy short-term success - but it's not achieving leadership development.

Managers plan, organise, control, solve problems and focus on processes and results. Leaders create vision and develop strategies, engage, motivate and inspire people, build trust and have courage.

Awareness of the need for both technical/functional (rational) skills and interpersonal attitudes and abilities (extra-rational) is gaining influence in the corporate world but a need for a consistent balance between the two is very much an issue of the new millennium. The answer to leadership development lies in creating parallel personal and business skills development paths.

THE NEW LEADER

The new leader is a person with the same recognised talents and drives of the traditional business, but who has further developed that ability to empower others to also lead. That 'spark' that defines the essence of leadership is hard to identify. It's a mixture of talent, skills, mindset and behavioural competencies and requires a certain maturity from the individual - companies no longer have the luxury of cultivating in the traditional work-your-way-up-the-ladder mentorship model.

Encouraging and recognising leaders within an organisation is paramount. The skill of this, however, lies in the identification and support of appropriate behaviours and attitudes.

IDENTIFYING BEHAVIOUR THAT SUPPORTS A CULTURE

The development of supporting behaviours that are appropriately distributed across the organisation is a starting point to ensure that the idea of individual leadership - and thus also individual ownership, responsibility and accountability - is inculcated throughout the company.

What is clear is that the outlook of leaders must change as their functional skills, level of responsibility and level of influence increase within the company. This requires real investment in more difficult areas such as relationship skills and personal development. Soft skills become increasingly important as leaders take responsibility for larger groups of people and need to make more strategic decisions - decisions which have an increasingly long-term impact on the company and its stakeholders.

Current thinking is that leaders need to self-evaluate and view their behaviour objectively. This enables them to make powerful personal choices, regarding action, behaviour and relationships in business. The process concentrates on outcomes and on acting within context as opposed to reactive and possibly negative behaviour.

LADDER OF LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

There is a core of leadership and managerial competencies and behaviours that can be linked to 'domains' of work within an organisation. Each of these domains necessitates a different outlook as the responsibility, functional skills and levels of influence expand. These competencies and behaviours can also serve to uphold the culture of an organisation through a focus on a set of competencies that should be developed and implemented within each level.

This 'Ladder of Leadership Competencies', built on the work of theorist Gillian Stamp and Luc Hoebeker, is a comprehensive tool that assists in the assessment and measurement of skills present within an organisation. From this analysis, a transparent skills development process can be formulated for an organisation to provide consistency of interaction across divisions, companies and groups. If properly implemented, such an HR development model will fast-track leadership maturity and concomitantly increase organisational maturity.

SYNOPSIS OF THE LADDER OF LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

Top Leadership: These people operate as global citizens. Decisions, ideas and inventions made at this level influence the worldwide economy for 25+ years hence.

Executive Management: Here individuals are involved in corporate citizenship and protecting the strategic unit against excessive turbulence. A focal point is alerting the organisation to opportunities and likely pressure. Significant personal and company networking across a variety of boundaries is required in order to position the organisation in such a way that it can continue to operate in the social, economic, environmental and political conditions 15 or more years ahead.

Working at this level also necessitates a focus on formulating the mission of the organisation and realising the strategic intent of the enterprise.

An essential part of the responsibilities is the representation of the organisation both internally and externally. Competencies include:

- Understanding of trends
- Company leadership
- Enabling individual charisma in line with company vision
- Actively developing an outward perspective

Middle Management: Individuals become responsible for focusing on formulating the mission of the organisation and realising the strategic intent of the enterprise. The concepts of 'ownership' and enablement form the foundational skills. Appreciation of the full realm of time in both the business and interpersonal contexts is essential.

The focus on this level is to manage the relationship between the future vision and the present. An essential part of the responsibilities is the internal and the external representation of the organisation. This focus necessitates letting go of personal interactions in order to maintain the overall direction and flow of the organisation. Some of the supporting behavioural skills needed include:

- Strategic thinking
- Identification of career/life ambition
- Company leadership and business creativity
- Personal and company networking
- Self-management that incorporates a heightened self-awareness
- Negotiating and selling ideas
- Innovation management

Supervisory level: It is skills developed at a supervisory level that truly assist in business sustainability. Investment in effective communication skills, combined with working knowledge, is an essential developmental area. Advancement through this level is dependent upon lateral thinking skills, maturity and vision for self. Supporting behavioural skills therefore include:

- Understanding change
- Personal productivity and motivation
- Participative decision-making
- Emotional control
- Creative thinking
- Team building
- Stress management
- Motivating others
- Conflict handling
- Facilitation
- Effective presentation skills
- Negotiation
- Goal setting

Lower Leadership skills: at the lowest levels, the leadership skill of becoming more self-aware and in control of individual behaviour is fundamental. These skills need to be intertwined with basic managerial skills such as organising, planning and delegation of tasks to others before people can assume responsibility for others. These skills include:

- Use of initiative/individual thinking
- Skills in the specific areas of focus
- Reliability
- Able to clarify and follow instructions
- Timely decision-making
- Self-management

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