Leadership and Leadership Pipeline

Introduction

First, it is very important to be clear about the meaning of the term "Leadership". If anyone wants to achieve full leadership at any organization there will be requirements for more complex definitions of leadership and comprehensive methods of measuring results or performance.

One definition for leadership is "to make things happen" or "to make performance happen". There is a misunderstanding in defining the concept of "Leadership", i.e they focus on "potential". It is very important to know that leadership is not about a new program which builds the potential of an individual. It is about creating and establishing a flexible and enduring individual who makes things or performance happen. After all it is simple to say that a good leader does not build his/her organization based on potential. Different leaders may follow different strategies as their own strategies, therefore a strategy is deemed to be good or bad, depending on the results. Finally, in order to measure effectiveness of a leader or a leadership strategy, there should be appropriate measurements to measure the results. (Stephen Drotter, 2003)

The goal of any organization is to achieve, or to get the full performance now and in the future, from each and every job which belongs to the organization and does not consider how much the work load has changed throughout the life of the business. Further, organizations seek to retain only the jobs that are absolutely important to the organization. Because employing high performing employees on unnecessary jobs wastes the resources of the organization as well as the skills of the individual.

Having said that when and how to select leaders is very important. One of the biggest mistakes that can occur in an organization is , waiting too long to choose a good person who fits the job, and most of the time positions are given to someone outside of company or someone not related to the company at all. In effective and well functioning organizations, the selection is not based on the personality or an arbitrary set of standards. Management believes that good leaders are grown within the company itself and not imported.

The Leadership Pipeline

Lack of capable leaders who can navigate in volatile, complex global environment has been a mechanism to the organizations to strengthen their leadership development functions and processes. Even though external hiring is required to develop new skills and perspective, studies show that the most reliable and cost effective method and the strategy is to build and grow your own leaders as far as possible within the organization. On the other hand, governmental organizations seek to manage and develop their leadership latent, capacity and capability by managing their public financial and physical assets for a long applied future. Leadership Pipeline provides a framework upon which organizations can be built while reconfiguring old ones. At each passage of the pipeline a person has very specific values, compulsory skills, and necessary time applications. In a pipeline system different leadership levels have different key requirements. Under this system leaders are developed throughout their career, with the support provided for job transitions (The forum corporation of North America 2006). For example, starting from first level leader to middle level leader, and then to a senior leader.

Figure 01: Leadership Pipeline
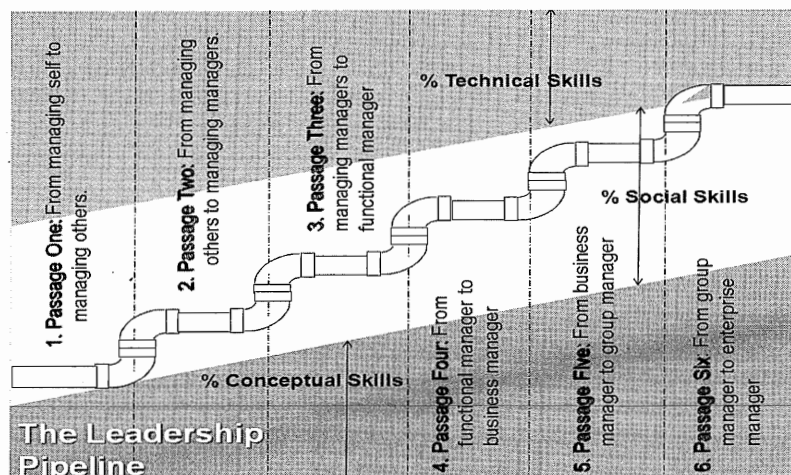
(Dr. PT Perera 2011, PIM)

There are six passages in the leadership pipeline as shown in the above figure.

Passage 1: Managing self to managing others

Most young employees and new entrants usually spend the first period of their tenure as individual contributors to the organization while accomplishing the given task using the given time period. Most organizations require technical or professional skills from these new employees in the early stages of their tenure in the organization. With time, these individual employees enhance their individual skills and become heavy contributors to the organizations and then they are considered for their career developments or promotions.

With time individuals involve themselves with the learning process which includes planning, work, time application (punctuality), quality, content and the reliability of the work (Drotter and Charan 2001). At the same time, individual employees develop their work values while incorporating with the organizational culture and applying and adopting professional ethics and standards to their profession. Once they become skilled individual contributors to the organization while producing better performance and once they exhibit the ability to collaborate with each other in the organization, they will be recognized by the organization and receive more responsibilities. After they demonstrate the ability and the capability of handling the given responsibilities while adhering to the organizational culture and values, organization will promote these individuals to the first-line manager (Drotter and Charan 2001). Now the individual is at the first passage of the pipe line.

Once an individual becomes the first-line manager he/she has to plan and manage time to plan and complete his/her assigned task while helping others to complete their tasks effectively and efficiently. He/she has to work to get things done by others. This is a difficult task for the first-line managers as they want to continue their old job even after they take the responsibility of a team or a group. A leader should allocate his/her time appropriately from the beginning and if he/she fails to do so, that will become the major reason to fail and that is where most leaders fail in the pipeline system.

One of the most difficult tasks in the passage one is that the leader has to involve with value managerial work. Allocating time for others, planning, directing and coaching are the responsibilities assigned to them (The forum corporation of North America 2006). It is important to know that development in skills and time allocation can be measured, but the development in values is difficult to measure. In order to have value changes of leaders, the senior managers need to emphasize the need and the requirement of value changes and also individuals need to understand that they are successful at their new job after the value change.

Passage 2: managing others to managing managers

This passage is very important as this level constructs the management foundation. The major function and task of this level is "manager must manage". (Drotter and Charan 2001). At this level managers should select people for passage one, assigning managerial and leadership work to them, measuring their performance and progress as managers and coaching them (Drotter and Charan 2001). In order to be a good leader, he/she should go through passage one effectively as passage one changes skills, time application and work values of an individual.

Managers of this passage]should identify the value based resistance to managerial work; this is a common feature of first-line managers. Hence, one difficult task of this passage is managers of managers should return people to individual contributors' roles if as they do not shift behaviors and values.

Most of the first-line managers do not receive any sort of formal training on how to become a manager. For this requirement, managers of managers always coach them in the right direction as these first-line managers are always dependant on instructions.

Passage 3: managing others to managing a function

The difference between passage 2 and 3 appears to be very thin, but the transition is not that great. Rather than communicating only with individual contributors, managers need to communicate with two levels of management. Hence managers need to work their other or new functional area while valuing it.

Managers of this passage report to general managers and therefore, they need to be more skillful compared to other functional managers. At the same time a functional manager should be a team player with other functional managers especially in a resource and results based organization. This is the time for functional managers to identify how they should direct their own strategy to achieve the organizational objectives. Hence functional managers always work with other functional managers, and due to their busy schedules they delegate their responsibilities to their subordinates.

Maturity is a main requirement for a manager of this passage. With experience and maturity a functional manager should be a functional leader rather than being as a functional member (Drotter 2003).

Passage 4: Functional manager to business manager

Business managers are responsible for the bottom line (Drotter and Charan 2001). Business level managers should be able to see their efforts with bottom line results. There will be major transitions in skills and time application of a business manager. Strategic thinking is one of the most important features.
Whenever there is an activity, they have to think in both short and long term perspective.
Managers of this level will have more responsibilities compared to those of other levels especially as they have to work in other areas which are not familiar to them at all. Due to that they have to master on skills not only to perform their assigned functions but also to work with different kind of personnel.

Passage 5: Business manager to group manager

The assumption of this passage is "if you can do one business successfully, you should be able to do two or more businesses" (Drotter and Charan 2001). This is not a difficult task to a business manager, because business managers value their own business, but group manager should value other people's businesses.
Group managers should master in four types of skills

1.   Evaluate strategy in order to allocate and deploy capital
        This involves asking the right questions, data analysis, applying the right perspective to evaluate a business strategy to understand whether the strategy has the potential of success and should therefore be funded.
2.   Develop business managers
        Group level managers should coach functional managers to become business managers.
3.   Develop and implement a portfolio strategy
4.   Assess whether they have the right core capabilities to win
        Need to look objectively at everything and need to judge based on experience and analysis.
                (Drotter and Charan 2001)

Passage 6: Group manager to enterprise manager

The last passage of the pipeline focuses more on values rather than on technical skills. An enterprise manager should look at the business as a whole and not an individual function or a business. Enterprise managers should be thorough about how the enterprise executes and get things done. An enterprise manager should be more proactive than reactive as he/she is the manager for the entire enterprise (E.g. CEO) (Drotter 2003). The performance of an enterprise manager is based on high performance decisions per year. Visionary thinking and global perspective are the main features of this passage. This is the passage where one sharpens the soft side of the enterprise.

References
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