

TUNING IN TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF *leaders*

Employers need to look now at creating their **future leaders** from their first day at work if they are going to avert a future **leadership void** in business.



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It is increasingly apparent that most organisations will scramble in the coming decade to attract young talent and to sufficiently prepare them for the future challenges faced as a young leader.

This issue is becoming ever more critical for organisations with the looming mass retirement of baby boomers who occupy a majority of senior leadership roles and are a demographically larger segment than Generation X. The situation is compounded by insufficient numbers of 'ready-to-lead' Generation Y to fill the void. A solution is much more complex than simple leadership development programs. It lies in Generation Y 'stepping up' to meet the current need.

The missing piece

In a best practice survey by Executive Development Associates titled 'Trends in Executive Development: A Benchmark Report (2009)', senior executives were questioned on the outlook of the next generation of workers, notably Generation Y's, to fill executive level positions. Survey respondents found that next generation leaders had many highly prized capabilities, notably:

- > High integrity and honesty
- > Ability to deliver results and prioritise multiple demands
- > Skill and knowledge to master operational aspects of a business
- > Technology capabilities that are far greater than their predecessors.

What they most lacked were:

- > Strategic thinking and ability to create a vision
- > Ability to inspire and engage others around that vision
- > Experience in the interaction of various elements of a total organisation
- > Knowledge and experience in leading change.

The Solution

Organisations must build a 'pathway to success' for emerging leaders to accelerate and prepare themselves sooner for leadership roles. Emerging leaders need to be impacted and motivated via a well thought through process that starts from the day they start work.

Unfortunately, few organisations invest in leadership programs for young people on a sufficient scale to have meaningful impact. For these to provide a return on investment there must be a complete rethink of where leadership development effort and investment is directed, otherwise there is a real risk of a dearth of talent to adequately replace those leaving the workforce.

Internal mentoring and coaching has a significant impact on the development of emerging leaders. To be truly effective, senior managers must become teachers to coach and mentor within the day-to-day experiences (formal and informal) of emerging leaders. They must also be held accountable for the steady but measurable development of a critical mass of emerging leaders.

Critical thinking leadership roles should be incorporated early in the career of emerging leaders. Organisations can fast-track the emerging leader's problem solving, judgment and decision-making processes and accountabilities by expanding their roles at the early stages of their career. Roles include strategy formulation, leading major organisational projects, leading business units and teams as well as accountability for business outcomes. ■

Baby boomers: 1946-1964, Generation X: 1965-1981 and Generation Y: 1982-2000.