

Deeds and needs: leadership development in practice.

Lee Hecht Harrison provides tips for finding fulfillment at work.

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The need for and usefulness of leadership development are well established — it has far-reaching implications for an organization and its future. But why and how it is accomplished varies greatly. This paper reports on recent research into how leadership is defined and how it is addressed in organizations.

Defining “leadership.”

- 69% of survey respondents said their organization’s definition of “leadership” is results-driven: based on “meeting the specific objectives of the organization.”
- 25-26% of respondents said other criteria were important characteristics in leaders, mostly:
 - integrity and consistency as role model
 - motivation
 - the ability to develop self while coaching others
- Other high-ranking leader-defining characteristics included:
 - vision
 - communication
 - competence in subject matter and the business
 - teamwork
 - influence

Leadership development as a strategy or with accountability.

- **The good news:** 57% of survey respondents said they perceive their organization’s leadership development as having an overall strategy.
- **The bad news:** a significant 38% of survey respondents indicated that leadership development is lacking the strategy/ accountability that is placed on organizational strategy. This figure suggests that the link between leadership development and organizational success is not getting the attention it should.

Accountability.

Experience tells us that, without a clear accountability component, the ROI in leadership development is likely to slip.

- 44% of survey respondents said their organizations’ leaders are held accountable for the development of future leaders through some type of performance management process:
 - Centralized HR/internal organizational development staff — 46%
 - Executive Leadership Team — 42%
 - CEO — 25%
- The high percentage of responses attributed to Centralized HR/internal organizational development staff suggests an “implementation” approach over a “strategy.”

Leadership development

- The prominence here on CEO and executive leadership accountability, combined with the importance placed on “role model” as important leadership characteristic (in the first section of this report) indicate the high degree of responsibility held by these positions.

Application and impact.

- Executives ranked the development of mid-leaders as receiving the greatest emphasis in most organizations.
- Based on low responses, leadership competency mapping appears to be an unfamiliar practice at this time.
- Based on respondents’ ratings of the effectiveness of their programs, customization of leadership development applications to an organization’s specific needs is, indeed, worth the time, energy and resources.
According to executives:
 - One-on-one executive coaching has instant benefits and allows for immediate application of learned strategies.
 - Group coaching with integrated succession planning is ranked less effective for its decreased one-on-one time and diminished opportunity for immediate application.
 - External leadership programs are scored low.
- Coaching is used by organizations for “team alignment” — to effectively organize people around a common purpose, or for “performance acceleration” — reminding us that “results” are a commanding defining characteristic of outstanding leadership.

- According to respondents, coaching is generally made available to senior executives, high-potential mid-level employees and C-level executives.
- Overall, 86% of those responding to our survey reported a two-year sustained investment in leadership development (including coaching), suggesting a heightened commitment to leadership development.

The results of the research suggest a strategic approach to leadership development provides improved organizational results and holds a team together. This report concludes that organizations can net maximum positive impact by assessing a definition of outstanding leadership, establishing a leadership development strategy and linking it to the organization’s needs.

To request a copy of the full report or to learn how we can help you with your leadership development strategy, please contact your local Lee Hecht Harrison office at 800.611.4LHH or visit LHH.com.

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