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IN DEPTH: EXECUTIVE CAREERS

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Company coaching programs get employees on career track

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Fact: More than 40 percent of all new managers fail.

Letting go of the old mindset that automatically routed top performers into management is often difficult, but the reality is that not everyone is cut out for management roles.

A shift to a new system ultimately generates these questions:

- What processes are in place to identify high-potential employees?
- Does the company have programs focused on knowledge transfer for top performers?
- Are there on-the-job training opportunities where the risk for mistakes is minimal?
- Has the company built a safe environment in which high performers can succeed and fail?
- Do the company's high potentials get the coaching they need to move ahead?
- Does the company have a mechanism for evaluating future hiring and work force so managers can begin grooming individuals before the need actually exists?

The new approach requires organizations to attract, develop, promote and retain high-potential employees in a much more systematized and strategic process than most organizations now have in place.

As a first step, an organization must become a dynamic ecosystem -- a community of multiple functions in a state of constant change -- where every strategy is proactive, from determining what competencies are needed to recruitment being planned rather than reactionary.

Are employee learning activities planned? Is management in place to develop these high potentials -- and is coaching available to help employees develop the foundation to succeed before they are given new responsibilities?

Coaching, implemented within the organization, can deliver dramatic results and drive significant financial impact to the bottom line.

Instead of building expectations, coaches partner with employees in architecting the best road for each individual. Key to this new coaching approach is recognizing high potentials early and working with each employee to tap into his interests and passions.

Using the old system of promoting high performers into management, thousands of talented people have been overlooked because the focus has been on dynamic personalities as future managers. In reality, it is sometimes the quiet, more methodical personality that makes the best manager. However, if there is no process to identify these "diamonds in the rough," they are overlooked and eventually leave in search of appreciation elsewhere.

A good example of a diamond in the rough is Olympian Jesse Owens. The son of a sharecropper and grandson of a slave, Owens' talent was noticed one day in gym class when Coach Charlie Riley was timing students in the 60-yard dash. Riley offered to coach Owens, and in the 1936 Olympics, Owens set three Olympic records and won four gold medals.

Attracting the right talent and then coaching and developing it may not be world-changing -- as was the case with Owens -- but embracing this new mindset and direction could have unbelievable impact on any organization.

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