

Industry News

Report: Hurdles Keep Leadership Programs from Being Successful

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Too often, companies fall victim to the organizational hurdles that keep leadership development programs from being truly top-notch. Lack of measurement tools and rewards systems of leadership behaviors are commonly cited obstacles that corporations face. That's according to a new global survey commissioned by American Management Association (AMA) and conducted by the Human Resource Institute (HRI).

The AMA/HRI survey on "Leading into the Future" included responses from 1,573 managers and HR experts from around the world. The survey was conducted in conjunction with AMA's affiliates and global partners, including Canadian Management Centre in Toronto, Management Center de Mexico in Mexico City, Management Centre Europe in Belgium, and AMA Asia in Japan.

"In order for organizations to have effective leadership development programs, there must be a strategy that is supported from the top. The program must be able to measure its successes and must also recognize and reward positive leadership behaviors," said Edward T. Reilly, president and CEO of American Management Association. "Leaders at every level of the organization should also be engaged in the process by being mentors to the next generation of leaders."

The AMA/HRI survey asked respondents what they thought were the main barriers to developing leaders. Number one was a lack of measurement of leadership behaviors. As the old management saw goes, you can't manage what you can't measure, and that's as true for leadership as for anything else.

The second most highly ranked barrier was inadequate leadership development program content. This is surprising in light of the fact that leadership training and development has been a real growth industry over the last decade.

"In our follow-up interviews on why the content of the courses was ranked number two, it was clear to us that it was related to the first barrier—lack of proper measurement," said Jay Jamrog, executive director of the Human Resource Institute.

"When a person attends a class to learn new leadership behaviors, but is not recognized and measured on those new behaviors when he or she returns to the office, those new behaviors will not be reinforced. The automatic reaction of the organization, then, is to blame the content of the program, rather than the lack of a proper measurement tool that reflects the new behaviors," Jamrog said.

The next two barriers were a lack of rewards for leadership behaviors and a lack of a supportive culture. Many companies lack the right measurement tools, the right content, and the right culture, including reward systems. Alignment seems to be a key issue, as is having a re-entry system in place for the employee after the training is complete.

Some companies need to do a better job of identifying critical leadership competencies and then selecting, developing, assessing and compensating based on those competencies. Of course, the required competencies may change over time, and the whole process has got to be linked to measurable business results. But better alignment can help companies develop the kind of people who will successfully lead their organizations into the future.

To make sure they have the future leaders they need, companies will have to be committed to the development process. The AMA/HRI survey showed that, over the next 10 years, the features of organizational culture with the greatest impact on a firm's ability to develop leaders will be leadership development strategies, top executive support, succession planning, talent-pool planning, and the leadership's responsibility to develop other leaders.

The AMA/HRI survey found that the number one driver of changes that will have an impact on leadership is increased global competition. The next highly-ranked drivers include the need to focus on customers, then to make sure the organization is operating efficiently and, finally, to adapt to the accelerating pace of change.

For more information: <http://www.amanet.org>