

Attracting and Developing Talent . . .

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Individuals are responsible for their own development, but if the organization does not do its share, development becomes even harder for people. You have a choice—you can either have slow or nonexistent development, or you can invest your time in creating an environment that supports and encourages development.

Shape the environment

Use the following statements to assess the current environment:

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| • Open discussions with people about performance and development needs are common here. | Yes | No |
| • People feel like they get honest feedback. | Yes | No |
| • People feel responsible to focus and meet their objectives. | Yes | No |
| • Leaders encourage others to take appropriate risks in pursuit of learning. | Yes | No |
| • People here are willing to try new things. | Yes | No |
| • New ideas and fresh perspectives are welcomed. | Yes | No |
| • People can challenge the status quo here. | Yes | No |
| • Our culture encourages people to do new things. | Yes | No |
| • People here are held accountable for meeting objectives and delivering on commitments. | Yes | No |
| • People here trust their leaders to walk their talk. | Yes | No |

If you answered “yes” to many of these statements you are on your way to a culture that supports and encourages development. If you answered no, it is likely that less development of people occurs. Development may be seen as an HR responsibility or this year's slogan. Many organizations say fine things about the importance of people and development, but they struggle to make this a reality.

- If you want to create an environment of continuous learning and development, you have to invest your own time and energy. The primary methods you can use include:
 - Set clear expectations about investments in attracting and developing people.
 - Become a visible role model.
 - Strengthen the learning climate within your own group.
 - Leverage the organizational culture, systems, and processes to promote learning.



Clarify the importance of development

Given the rapidly accelerating pace of change and shortages of people with particular skills, attracting and developing people has become a prerequisite of business success and is a clear competitive differentiator. To accomplish this objective, you can:

- Identify the constraints to achieving the strategic business goals. For most organizations, especially those in knowledge-based businesses, the primary constraint to achieving business goals is not having the right people in the right place when needed.
- Demonstrate through the strategic planning process that you cannot achieve organizational priorities without people who have the right mix of skills.
- Establish this understanding of the criticality of development to provide the rationale and motivation for the management team and employees to invest time and energy in development. Unfortunately, without this understanding, many people see development as what is done after work objectives have been completed. The new necessary understanding is that development is one of the primary business objectives of the organization.
- Create a vision with your team that supports investment in attracting, coaching, and developing employees and building a learning organization. Build a thorough understanding of the business reasons for doing this. Discuss the importance of both attracting and developing talent within the organization.
- Determine two or three behaviors which, if adopted, would result in greater focus on development and learning. For example, identify development as one of the core organizational competencies and ask that:
 - all employees regularly ask for feedback to help develop themselves.
 - your company incorporates development planning into business planning and individual goal setting.
 - all employees encourage others to learn and develop.
- Meet with your staff and your human resources support to identify the key roles in the organization. Establish a reliable method for determining the needed competencies for these roles. Then establish processes for assessing the talent and talent potential in the organization, so that you know possible successors and can begin the development process.

Establish expectations

- Establish clear expectations of the role you expect executives, managers, and employees in the organization to play with respect to development and learning.
- Develop and communicate a clear picture of the role of managers, employees, and human resources in the development of people.
 - Employees are responsible for their own development. As such they need to become aware of their strengths and development areas, their own goals and values, the perceptions of others, and the expectations of the organization.
 - Managers are responsible for helping employees develop themselves. Therefore, they need to provide access to information and opportunities for learning and practicing the new skills.
 - Human resources people have both a strategic role in helping to manage the organization's talent portfolio, and a consultant role with individual managers and employees.

- Common expectations are:
 - Managers are expected to coach and develop employees.
 - Each person is expected to work on his or her development on a regular basis.
 - Managers are expected to give employees access to information that helps them understand how they are seen by others and what is expected of them.
 - People are expected to share their knowledge and learn from one another.
 - Executives and managers are expected to work with their teams to establish core practices that support development.
 - Executives and managers are expected to support human resources systems and practices that attract and develop people.

Model your commitment to learning

- Demonstrate that you are personally engaged in development by sharing your development plan, discussing your development activities, giving progress reports, taking appropriate risks in the pursuit of learning, and asking for feedback and help. This public commitment to development will send a strong message to the organization and set the expectation for learning for others.
- Share your development goals.
- Tell people what you have learned.
- Talk about your learning experiences—both the successful as well as the challenging ones. Your willingness to model struggling with learning will be an important lesson for others.
- Ask others for their feedback and help.
- Tell people about your failures as well as your successes. Discuss what you did to recover from the failure or lack of success.