



# Tips For Hiring The Right People For Leadership Roles

## **How to Find and Nurture True Leaders**

Why is it still such a common practice to give leadership roles to people who are not ready for the position and accompanying responsibilities? With hindsight, in light of the eventual and inevitable failure of such individuals, many hiring leaders often opt to repeat this error. But consider what happens when you give authority and accountability to someone who does not have a comprehensive understanding of what a leadership role actually means. It is very likely that the probability remains significantly high that the person will not be able to handle the authority and will eventually cause collateral damage to many people, your productivity, and your bottom line.

That said, there is a critical need for CEOs to understand the link between weak leadership and its true cost to all stakeholders – the management team, employee base, shareholders, clients, and customers. Part of the problem involves where corporations spend money – often, unfortunately, on human resources programmes that do

little or nothing to further the development of the individual employee. Without such forward movement, innovativeness and creativity stagnate, causing a drag on the quality and reliability of the company's growth potential. Another source of unwise spending is recruiting, hiring, and training employees who do not "fit" with the values or do not have the requisite talent – especially when it comes to the dilemmas presented by mergers and acquisitions, a clear situation where values and missions are likely to clash.

## **Truly Committed Leadership**

Leaders appear at all levels of the organisation: senior staff, team leaders, unit supervisors, department heads, division heads, subsidiary presidents, and executives, right up to the CEO. To make the most use of valuable leadership talent, and ensure management succession and organisational continuity, consider the following pointers when you hire people for leadership roles.

”The more right  
people you hire, the  
fewer people you need  
to do a great job; the  
more wrong people  
you hire, the more  
people you need to do  
a job.”



1) Make sure that the employees who are given the leadership roles have an excellent track record of driving people behind them and not pushing people below them. Nobody can be called a true leader if the person is solely using authority to make things happen – and not true leadership. Such circumstances typically occur in the military, not in the majority of modern organisations that face very different realities and operate under very different strategies. In a company, management should be able to track potential leaders' historical feedback – that is, input they might have received during their previous career roles through 360° reviews or other feedback tools that the organisation has implemented. The key point is the need to track feedback.

2) Create an “open mouth” rather than “open door” policy, so that people can freely provide feedback about the person in question at any time (before or after the individual takes on the leadership role). No leader – no matter the organisational level – should be immune to periodic peer, supervisor, and subordinate reviews.

3) If the employee is not ready or mature enough to grow as a person, it is senseless and wasteful to attempt to stretch their abilities. A common conversation in such situations includes comments such as, “the person will grow into the role.” Inevitably, except in circumstances where the individual exhibits exceptional commitment, the anticipated growth does not appear.

4) Emphasise the importance of the leadership roles throughout the organisation on an on-going basis. Create and deploy a communication plan that reiterates the critical attributes of leadership roles. In addition, illustrate how these roles actually impact not only the person who is taking on the leadership role or the individual's department but also the entire organisational workforce. By indicating that every leader plays a role in supporting the efforts of other leaders, employees can readily grasp their own contributions to organisational performance and productivity.



5) Demand full accountability and commitment from the person who is accepting the leadership role. If the individuals are unwilling to commit to performing their best, developing others, behaving according to organisation values, or show any signs of semi-commitment, make it absolutely clear that there will be consequences. Although “consequences” might mean different things to different people, leadership roles do not come with light compensation packages. If things go south and the individual fails to perform as expected, demand that the individual as well as the hiring manager take full responsibility – which should include a negative impact on both individuals’ reward package. Tying performance to rewards, including the hiring manager, should be accepted practice.

6) Although it might be tempting, do not “turn the tables” and make things worse. In other words, if a leader does not show commitment and fails to make an optimal effort, do not appoint that individual to another leadership role with a naïve expectation that the person might do better the next time. Unfortunately, people do not usually change easily. Management would do better to focus on hiring the right person to do a great job.

7) Spend more and quality time in selecting the appropriate people for leadership roles. The company’s money will be well spent in the long run. The golden rule on hiring to grow your business is simple: The more right people you hire, the fewer people you need to do a great job; the more wrong people you hire, the more people you need to do a job. The old saying is true: “You get what you pay for,” and cheap labour comes with big costs! To stay at the cutting edge of productivity and provide higher returns to shareholders, spend more time seeking and hiring the right talent.

#### **The Cost Is Avoidable**

Consider this scenario: You appointed a person to a leadership role for which the individual is not ready. In addition, this person was never able to “grow into that role.” Ultimately, after two or three years of the individual underperforming in the leadership role, you realised that it was a bad choice. Recognising the failure, you decided to transfer the person to another role, hoping for a better result. In light of the time and resources wasted, can you estimate the cost of this failure to the organisation? Without knowing the



hidden costs – in terms of recruiting, hiring, training, lost productivity, poor quality, impact of low motivation on other employees working with that leader, and so on – management cannot operate an outstanding and successful business.

The bottom line is simple: Leadership roles are critical for growing the business and outperforming industry peers in this extremely competitive market environment. By not spending enough quality time and, therefore, appointing the wrong people to these roles, you are defying all your stakeholders – shareholders, board members, management, employees, suppliers, clients and customers, and the community at large. Discovering, hiring, engaging, developing, and retaining only the true leaders to grow your business offers the road to success.

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