

BUILDING LEADERS

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Dearth of business leaders and the ever-growing competition is propelling most firms across domains to have internal mechanisms to ensure ready availability of leaders. To address the same issue, most firms are turning towards their high performers and giving them that extra edge by putting them on special training programs. Talking of the same Kalpana Jayashanker, HR head, Patni stresses, "It's very important to have such programs for good performers especially in large and growing organisations. These programs not only give visibility to key performers in the company and aid them in future career path but also help us in identifying potential leaders within the organisations." Patni has a special program termed Leadership Excellence at Patni program (LEAP) which encompasses different tracks for the employee; performance appraisals as well as the fast track program meant for the star performers of the company. "The fast track program is targeted at the mid-level managers like project leaders who can be groomed further for larger roles of responsibility," Jayashanker adds.

Selected by a very intense and gruelling method, which comprises of assessment centres and leadership interviews, only those who get a high rating qualify to get into the fast track program. While the assessment centres include challenging exercises like role plays, case studies, business games, presentations, the leadership interview is as hard to crack if not more. "The idea behind keeping this is to evaluate the participants on various competencies like thought leadership, innovative strategy, stretch mindset, people leadership," Jayashanker points out. After this rigorous, fool proof evaluation those who qualify for the next level are assigned mentors who then groom these high performers and prepare them to take on the next growth opportunity. For each of these fast trackers, a docket is kept wherein their strong and weak areas are enlisted using which the mentor guides them. In addition to this, there's a quarterly review of these fast track protégés.

Further more, to avoid any negative biases setting in within the rest of the workforce, Patni ensures confidentiality with regards to these fast track protégés. "We don't make any public announcements and that works in everybody's favour," says Jayashanker.

Yet another firm, which is aggressively following such a practice, is Intelenet Global Services. Talking about the same Manuel D'Souza, executive VP – HR says, "We stress on identifying potential candidates and grooming them to move to the next level. This includes the Accelerated Career Growth Programme specially designed to help employees move to the next level. In order to maintain continuity in key management positions, we have a succession planning process, which allows us to identify and develop a pool of potential successors to fill key positions. This includes promotional and lateral moves, which enables us to increase experience and knowledge within the company."

Intelenet has implemented a program called I-versity, which is an internal promotion program for employees, designed to incorporate a growth path for them supported by performance and strategic inputs. Through this program, an employee is clear on the growth opportunities available to him/her as well as the requirements from his/her performance and the demand from the next growth level. Under the I-versity umbrella, the following programs are run as part of the first phase: STEP - Strive Towards Excellence Program (For agent to team leader (TL) promotions); LEAD - Leadership Excellence Accreditation & Development (For TL to team manager promotions); In-house MBA program for those who want to further enhance their skills offered jointly with NMIMS. This program is a three-year, part-time course enabling employees to study and earn at the same time.

The best part of all this is the fact that most companies like Patni and Intelenet are giving such special training programs to their high performers without making them sign on a legal bond or a special contract. Surely, the star employees have all the reasons to walk their way through on this training ladder of leadership!

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