

CASE STUDY: LEADERSHIP FOR HIPOs

Fermenting future leaders

After completing an initial program for senior leaders, this enterprise decided they needed to be proactive in developing the next generation. Let the fermentation begin.

It is very often the way in our experience—when a senior leadership team are exposed to the powerful benefits of leadership development via a program designed for them—that the next initiative is to cascade the leadership learning down the enterprise.

In this particular instance, however, the enterprise determined it was more important to identify and develop a pool of *potential* senior leaders, rather than simply cascade the program to existing immediate reports.

HFL was invited to assist in the process for developing the program, and we were aided by the fact that the initial program had highlighted some approaches that all parties felt were important to change for the high potential (HIPO) program.

Key learnings

One key learning from the senior leadership program was that a single workshop followed by action learning was not enough. It was decided that a 15 month program with 3 key workshops would enable topics to be covered more thoroughly and support the learning back on the job.

In addition, more emphasis was to be placed on building targeted development plans built around a role success profile and 360-degree feedback at the start of the program. On-going



development progress was to be monitored.

Harbour Future Leaders (HFL) teamed with another organisation (HR Catalyst, a Perth-based human resources consulting firm) who had been involved with leadership development in the organisation.

Working jointly, the following components were developed and delivered.

“ Participants agreed that potential derailers identified during the program would have been, left untreated, career limiting.”

1. Success profiles

A success profile for roles reporting into general manager positions was developed. This was a role one level higher than the program nominees and would provide a “stretch” target for readiness and development.

The profile consisted of competencies, personal attributes, job challenges/ experiences and organisation knowledge.

2. Selection process

A nomination and selection process based around the organisation's values, performance and learning agility was established. The decision for

the final 12 was to be made by the executive leadership group at a facilitated meeting.

The client understood the importance of making sure, given the investment involved, that 12 properly qualified participants were selected.

3. Initial assessment

A 360-degree survey, built around the competencies from the role success profile, was conducted. The enterprises' human resources staff conducted feedback sessions to initiate discussion around development needs.

4. Executive sponsorship

An executive leadership team member sponsored the program and actively supported the program, individuals and feedback throughout the 15 months.

This sponsorship was made very visible throughout the organisation.

5. Spaced blended learning

Formal learning activities were carefully blended with facilitated recall days, and project assignments.

Three group workshops (2/3 days) spaced about four months

“ The sponsorship of senior managers was made very visible throughout the organisation.”

apart. Workshops were structured around the competencies from the role success profile, with two or three competencies addressed at each workshop. (Topics included building trust role-plays, presentation by an external business partner, presentations by



internal senior leaders, a one-day business simulation and group problem solving exercises.)

Workshops were followed up after approximately six weeks with a "recall" day, where skills were assessed and on-the-job application was discussed and reviewed.

Pre- and post-assignments for each workshop were required. This included a change project, reading, customer survey, research on strategies, activities to be applied in their current role and mentor meetings.

6. Secondary Assessment

Midway through the program participants were assessed through the Life Styles Inventory (LSI) and provided with individual feedback and planning. This provided a closer look at their own personal attributes and the impact it had on their leadership. Each participant had a development objective around their style

enhancement and was required to report and gain feedback on their development.

7. Accountability

Midway through the program and at the end, participants prepared and presented to the executive leadership team on their development activities and progress. Sessions were interactive, with the executive team questioning and challenging their learning. The final presentation was directed at how the person would take accountability for their own learning.

8. Mentoring

A mentor was assigned to each participant. While direct managers had prime accountability for working on development plans with participants, mentors provided a sponsorship/coaching/support role.

Mentors undertook a two day

“Participants were clearer on the aspects of developing themselves and their staff.”

coaching/role playing/assessing workshop and were “accredited” through a final role play scenario with feedback. Mentors were involved in the program in various capacities:

- As role-players and assessors in role play activities (since they were senior leaders, this provided a realistic and heightened challenge for the role plays);
- As coaches in particular skill areas;
- As mentors in individual discussions to broaden participants’ knowledge of other areas of the business; and
- As sources of development activities.

9. Assessment Centre

At the end of the program, participants attended a “day-in-the-life” development centre. The aim was to assess their readiness of the more senior role and to assist them in targeting their own on-going development.

Feedback was provided to the participant and their manager, and from this—where required—an on-going personal development plan was created.

10. Reflection

A key theme throughout the program was the individual



accountability for development. Skills in development planning were provided and time was spent at each session re-assessing development objectives and having people reflect on their own development.

Key outcomes

After all the planning and investment, both HFL and the enterprise were interested in measuring the results of the HIPO initiative. The conclusions were as follows:

- One participant left the enterprise. This was early in the program and the person reported that because of the program, they had almost not taken up the job offer.
- Five people in the program

received promotions or job changes that would enhance their career prospects.

- All participants showed progress in at least four competency areas through the development centre.
- Potential “derailers” were identified by several of the participants and they acknowledged that had they not worked on these, they might have been less successful in future roles.
- Participants were clearer on the aspects of developing themselves and their staff. They applied many of the learnings in their own work teams.

Post-program activity

The organisation was pleased with the progress and results and has booked a second program to begin next year.

As well, the format was considered effective and will be used to conduct a senior leadership program next year.

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About HFL

Harbour Future Leaders is an HR consultancy that specialises in assisting enterprises to identify and grow their leadership capability. We uniquely combine world-class assessment methods with effective blended leadership development programs. We have designed and executed over 100 programs for over 30 clients across the region in the last six years. We are privileged to work with some of the regions’ most admired companies across the Asia-Pacific region, who entrust us with the planning, measurement and development of their most valuable asset – their future leaders. HFL has offices in Sydney, Melbourne, and Singapore.