

CASE STUDY: EMERGING LEADER PROGRAM

Measuring up emerging leaders

This business developed a multi-faceted assessment approach to engage and monitor emerging leader program participants. Linda Bisnette reports

Assessment can mean many things to many people. This client, in engaging Harbour Future Leaders (HFL) to help design the curriculum for a new emerging leader program, were seriously committed to assessing the participants as they proceeded on their leadership journey.

The enterprise had offered only limited leadership development opportunities in the past, and had concluded that they had an opportunity to build skills in some of the foundation leadership areas that would feed the enterprises' leadership pipeline, and also aid with staff retention.

Individual development

While the client had executed some programs in the emerging leader area previously, the aim for the new group was to better target the individual development needs.

The target audience was people who might aspire to senior operational roles.

Participants were nominated by their general managers and a

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group of 30 were selected.

A role profile for the senior operational leader was developed with a group of general managers looking at the future needs of the business. The profile included competencies, personal attributes, job experiences/ challenges and organisational and industry knowledge. It was built around the organisation's model of leading self, leading others and leading the business.

First assessment

The initial stage of the program was a 'Day-in-the-life' Development Centre. The exercises were structured around the role profile. Psychometric testing and a values and motive instrument were also conducted.

Each of the participants received individual feedback. They and their manager also rated the job experience and knowledge components to focus aspects of their development.

The organisation had planned a five-day workshop built around their model of leadership, where participants combined feedback from the Development Centre with their learning experience to create development plans.



Following the workshop, participants and managers finalised development objectives.

Second Assessment

For a mid-year assessment, a 360-degree survey around the competencies was conducted.

Small group sessions on a state-by-state basis were conducted by the organisation sponsor and HFL. These sessions focused on:

- Reviewing progress and results of the 360-degree survey
- Identifying the difference between leadership and management and highlighting the choice that people make in becoming leaders
- Refreshing leadership skills

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learned through skill practice.

The program was one-and-a-half days and participants' managers attended for the session on the 360-degree survey to discuss development activities. An informal dinner with managers followed.

Participants were asked to read one of two books (*The Leadership Challenge* by Kouzes and Posner or *Good to Great* by Jim Collins).

These books formed the basis for a discussion on leadership. A case study was also used to bring out the different behaviours of a manager and a leader.

Third Assessment

The third phase was a one-on-one visit by the organisation sponsor with the participant and their manager to review development.

Those who focused their development and applied their learning continued the leadership

journey the following year as mentors to the next emerging leader group.

The participants continued to receive coaching as they coached others and learned by developing others.

Key outcomes

This is a story with a happy ending. At the end of the formal process, all participants had remained with the organisation.

The participant group acknowledged a greater focus on balancing people needs with the business needs. Several reported examples of where they had applied the people leadership/coaching skills with success.

There was a clearer view of the potential in the group as determined by those who took the opportunity to apply learning.

Some of the participants recognised that they may not choose to be leaders, and decided to follow a technical expertise

career. This in its own right is a happy ending—trying to squeeze round pegs into square holes creates stress for both the individual manager, and all those that report to them.

Managers for the next program focused their nominations on a better understanding of the underlying characteristics needed to lead to take the organisation forward.

The next program designed had a stronger component on development planning, an earlier introduction of models of leadership and a more structured approach to mentoring.

This assignment was typical in way for HFL—the program was improved and further developed year-on-year. ■

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References

- (1) *The Leadership Challenge* by Kouzes and Posner
- (2) *Good to Great* by Jim Collins.
- (3) Assessment and Development Centres, <http://www.harbourfutureleaders.com/AssessmentCentres>
- (4) 360-degree assessments, <http://www.harbourfutureleaders.com/360assessments>
- (5) Building a mentoring program, <http://www.harbourfutureleaders.com/mentoring>

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.