



## Developing Employees on the Job

Recently, to introduce the topic of delegation with a group of managers and supervisors, they were asked to list the reasons why they don't delegate. Not surprisingly, they filled two full sheets of flipchart paper with dozens of reasons and explanations for why they don't delegate. Further discussion revealed that many of the participants had team members whose ability and motivation were above and beyond the requirements of their job and were eager to do more, to move upward in the company, to broaden their knowledge and skillful capability. And yet, their manager attending our program admitted that he was reluctant to delegate "because they'll never do the task as well as I would."

For these managers and for many others, they have never really embraced their job requirement as managers to develop their direct reports. Many will cite that no one helped them develop before they became formal leaders, and the requirement for advancement was simply to work harder than everybody else, but not because their manager had assisted them with personal job-related development.

That is why delegation is so important in the development of a strong, vital company whose employees recognize that there are pathways to advancement. They see the motivational messages from their boss that growth is a part of the job they hold. Even for those employees who do not seek to climb up the next rung on the ladder to advancement, most would welcome the chance to do more to demonstrate their value and contribution to the company.

### **Succession Planning, the ultimate delegation system:**

More and more in today's highly competitive job market, we see candidates who ask during the interview process if the job they seek is part of a developmental pathway. Business schools are preparing their students to ask potential employers about growth opportunities in the jobs they seek.

If senior management is asked to look at any senior position in the company from a developmental pathway viewpoint, they find that they can, although it hasn't often been asked of them before.

How does an employee move from individual contributor to supervisor? Without formal development, that employee soon learns that the very skills that allowed them to move up will be liabilities in the leadership role. Without the learning that comes through developmental planning, that former high performer may struggle in the new leadership role. Those developmental opportunities and learning should be started before the actual move upward.

What if the employer has already thought about and identified what that employee will need to know to be successful in the supervisor role? What if that pathway is written down and shared with the employee if and when they express a desire to do more? Again, the concepts of developmental and succession planning need not be reserved for those seeking leadership positions. When a person demonstrates high motivation and ability within their current

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assignment, they are appreciative when the company offers them the chance to grow in their job. We have written previously about job enrichment and enlargement, and they play an important role in providing the employee with new opportunities that do not have to be related to hierarchical advancement.

The concept of succession and development planning is an easy concept to grasp and, perhaps, a difficult one to formalize. To explore all the possible pathways that might be utilized by an employee can be time consuming and complex. Typically, the project is much easier when it is approached by a team of employees

with experience and knowledge about what is necessary in any position.

One additional factor in the effective creation of a succession plan is for the employee to be free to decline or withdraw from the plan. That employee can return to their job without sanctions or a sense of failure. Every job in the company is not suited to every employee and, sometimes, when an employee sees what the pathway looks like and what skills need to be added to make the change, they realize that it isn't a fit for them. They often return to their jobs with a renewed sense of purpose as well as respect for others who may choose to move.

