



Help your leaders focus on the skills they need to win

By Hilary Sayers on 19th December 2016

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The perception of great leadership has undergone a shift in recent years as economic and political uncertainty slowed the world economy and constrained business growth.

A directive style based on power and influence is no longer effective or admired no matter how charismatic a leader may be. Instead, an open, inclusive and collaborative approach is preferred, along with the ability to be versatile in different situations.

Released in 2014, the Leadership Architect™ competency framework captures the contemporary skills and attributes leaders need for success, including the ability to adapt quickly to change, lead innovation, value diversity and manage talent.

Given that proficiency in the right leadership competencies accounts for about 45 percent of total job performance for executives, success in 2017 will belong to those who can master these very special capabilities.

The science behind success

Korn Ferry's research in 2014 revealed a set of twelve leadership competencies that are highly related to executive performance. It's no surprise that eight of them are focused on driving business results and finding new and better ways for their organisation to be successful.

The other four competencies are related to personal adaptability, learning, courage and being able to select the best talent to meet current and future business needs.

Organisations can use these twelve competencies as a foundation for identifying exactly what skills senior leaders require to successfully implement their business strategy.

Gaining a winning edge

So, how do you help your leaders focus on the skills they need to win?

First, accurately identify the competencies that will enable them to deliver organisational goals. Then study those competencies. Whilst they are all important, some will be more powerful than others.

Competencies are powerful for various reasons. First, they may be hard to master because they involve complex skills, need time to learn and practice, are associated with a person's natural tendencies or are influenced by personal values and beliefs.

Second, as some are harder to learn than others we can expect that fewer people will be good at them. We see evidence of this in our global 360 data base and refer to them competitive-edge competencies because they give a distinct performance advantage to those who have them as strengths.

Executive level success factors

Two competencies that stand out at the executive level are *situational adaptability* and *cultivating innovation*. Not only are they hard to learn and fewer people are good at them, but studies have shown that a high level of skill in them means a person is more likely to be recognised with a promotion and a lack of skill increases the risk of career derailment.

The fact that their real importance kicks in at the executive level suggests they may not have been featured in management development programs earlier in an executive's career and fast-track strategies to strengthen them may be needed.

With the weight of the research findings, we would say that they are truly differentiating competencies that may underpin outstanding leadership performance.

building leadership skills that matter

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