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Six Tips for Recognizing High Potentials

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According to research done at CEB HIPOs are 91% more valuable than non-HIPOs. But today's reality is that 73% of HIPO programs are failing to deliver business outcomes or ROI.

Recognizing The HiPO

Almost daily I speak with business executives and talent development professionals who want to increase their organization's competitive advantage by developing leaders and building a strong leadership bench. And in almost 100% of those conversations we discuss the company's high potentials and HIPO programs

I find myself often amazed that even though this is recognized as such a critical business need many organizations have no real process in place for recognizing, selecting, engaging and developing these critically needed employees. Generally, we have two types of conversations – very strategic and tactical.

On the strategic level the discussion focuses on; the impact on employee retention and productivity outcomes. The impact on innovation, market share, client retention and even good press/PR. We also discuss why hi-potential programs are necessary and should be focused at all levels, not just at the existing leader/manager levels.

On the executable, level we can get into the weeds, driving down into the tactical pieces. Getting into the nitty gritty and asking the very basic questions around how to recognize and select HIPOs and even what processes should be implemented, like the good ol' nine box, that is still used by many companies. Or creating new innovative ways – like generating profiles of hi-potentials and using metrics and data standards to help find HIPOs that may not be flushed out in more traditional ways. We also explore some basic questions like; who is a leader or manager, what defines them? Who has the right stuff to move to the next level? What is the right stuff? Who will be considered and in the long term, evolve, into an emerging leader or executive? Who can we groom, prepare and develop to ensure our company can meet the global market and competition head-on and win?

In these considerations, the executives I speak with are thinking not only about the success of the company – but also the challenge of retaining their employees. Knowing that strong leaders and managers will help ensure enduring employee engagement and give their organizations a solid framework to be in business for years to come. Giving them an edge when recruiting talent in today's highly competitive and visible talent landscape. And where tools such as Glass Door can give anyone insight into your corporate culture and expose your leaders as rock stars or duds.

Here are a few simple ideas to pay to attention to when considering who should be included in your hi-potential program:

- Engagement: does this person possess the internal motivation to make a difference, does this HIPO use language and behaviors that reflect concern for the betterment of the organization and others?
- EQ (Emotional Intelligence): does the HIPO seem grounded in her response to both positive and adverse situation? Is he thoughtful in language and mindful of the ripple effect his behavior or comments can create?
- What do their peers say: is the HIPO seen as leader among peers, is her opinion sought out, when she speaks do her peers seem engaged and interested in what she has to offer? Do his peers want to know about and implement his best practices?
- If they are in leadership: how do the folks that report to him feel about him, are they inspired by, do they trust him? Too often companies only listen to a HIPO's leader/manager to determine who is a HIPO. This process is a big miss and can often lead to biased and subjective candidate selection. Try not to rely too heavily on the direct manager's feedback – make it factor – but not an end all, be all.
- Does the HIPO proactively develop innovative ideas: not just come with problems or complaints but formulate even design ideas that will promote positive change, solve pressing issues and look for ways to create a better workplace/ environment?
- Is the HIPO in demand: meaning are other departments or teams are seeking her out, is she being wooed internally?

Today the world of work is an open “operating system” and your HiPOs are able to connect seamlessly and quickly to other opportunities and yes even to your competition. So once you've recognized them - What's next?

Do you have some ideas regarding HIPOs? Please share them... Contact me directly at sshamberger@skylineg.com

About Skyline Group

Skyline Group is the leading provider of scalable leadership solutions with a foundation built upon decades of executive coaching with some of the most recognized companies in the world. Launched in 2012, we are revolutionizing the leadership development industry with our C4X coaching platform. C4X is the only coaching solution that gives you the ability to develop all of your leaders consistently and systematically from onboarding to executive development. C4X combines a flexible technology platform (integrated assessment, content, metrics, and coach management system) with the personalized impact and connection of 1:1 coaching. Learn more at www.SkylineG.com and www.C4X.com.

