

Boost Your Talent Development

Want to increase your Talent Development efforts? Use the energy of managers who make everyday a development day

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Just as companies are emerging from a period of cutbacks on staff, training and advancement opportunities - a new challenge. With the economy picking up, many employees are ready for greener developmental pastures.

Here is a timely, cost sensitive solution for developing the workforce. And, HR is favorably positioned to help managers implement this practical and elegant approach.

The roots of this solution are embedded in established research: the most valuable development comes from experience (vs classroom or reading). Despite this vast source for development, only 10% of managers are effective at significantly developing employees this way.

Additional research indicates that less than 15% of managers are actually held accountable for developing talent, and many turn to HR for training to close the gap.

We wondered: "how can managers, in the best position to leverage work environment for development, be equipped to do that"? Reaching out to bona fide mem-

bers of that 10% club, managers who do substantially develop people, we did our own research.

Our conversations with managers we call Exceptional Development Managers (EDMs) from companies such as Adidas, Microsoft, Merck, Siemens, Corning and Kraft identified five crucial practices that when woven together create a wonderfully effective ongoing driver of development. Once learned, this approach shifts the manager's plate of work without adding to it.

Here's a brief look at each of the five practices with examples of EDMs who put them to use

1. **"Make everyday a development day"** Kim takes risks with people, giving them the latitude and explicit requirement to learn. She constantly delegates new challenges that intertwine their performance target and requirement to learn into one seamless goal. Then, she regularly provides feedback and coaching to help close the gaps.



2. **“Tap the psychological side of development.”** Jorge gets to know his staff well to formulate good decisions about how far to push them without over- or under- protecting them. He knows that making the assignments *edgy* leads to greater learning and sense of accomplishment. And he creates a work relationship safe enough for people to open up and act on his feedback.

3. **“Connect people with development partners”.** Linda is smart. She’s mastered the incredible multiplier of connecting people with the right development partners to transfer specific learning. She also teaches her staff how to maximize their exchanges with development partners. Of course, she stays in touch to help employees leverage and apply the lessons learned.

4. **“Teach skills to navigate organization politics.”** Ravi knows that the success of his staff’s efforts will greatly depend on how others’ receive and can apply those efforts. He helps staff recognize the importance of mapping the political terrain and building skills to approach complex interactions so their work has big impact.

5. **“Shape your environment”.** Ellen truly crafts her team’s workplace by consistently shining a light on development and creating ‘development abundance’ not just for key individuals, but for everyone. Ellen also knows how to collaborate with those supplying organization-wide tools for development to make the most of what works for her team.

The EDMs who operate this way get great performance results while raising the capabilities of people, truly moving the dial on talent development. Acting like magnets for motivated employees (particularly Gen X and Y), they retain talented people for the company.

When asked, “Why do you do this?”, one EDM told us: “Utter satisfaction, knowing I have helped to develop others. Though my job title hasn’t changed, I now make developing people my main job.”

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Do you wish you had more of these managers in your organization? We think there’s a lot you can do to make it happen.

Consider:

- Lobbying to put managers at the very heart of talent development—not off in the shadows. Include the managers’ efforts as a key component of the TM strategy.
- Taking managers to the next level, once they have mastered the basics of feedback and coaching. Give them the tools, support and responsibility to implement the five EDM practices.
- Making the right count. It’s convenient to count people who attend training, though more result-focused measures identify true ‘increased capacity’ that comes from making work developmental. Work with managers to plan for and track these development results.

What seems like an elusive target may be in range. Help shift the focus of managers, equipping them to drive talent development while getting increased results. . . every day.

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