



Leadership of the Future: Strategies for Success

By Mark Jordan, Managing Principal, VERCOR

About Mark Jordan, Managing Principal, VERCOR

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Talented leaders are the backbone of a company; developing strategic initiatives to grow and preserve the business. With a weak US labor market, weak consumer spending, and other recession-induced pressures keeping demand for the staffing industry low, now more than ever it is critical you focus on creating management programs that develop leaders with the necessary skills for success. Building in-house programs to train and develop leaders will result in enhanced performance and increased revenue potential.

While US corporate profits, an indicator of corporate demand for personnel staffing services, are obviously down your industry will recover. Many reports project the output of US personnel supply services to return to growth in 2010. Now is a good time to consider if you will be prepared for the return to growth.

According to the McKinsey Global Survey Results, six important leadership skills are essential to a company's future success. These areas include challenging assumptions, encouraging risk taking, inspiring employees, clearly defining expectations, rewarding achievements and participative decision-making. Focusing on these areas can assist with positioning your company for future success.

Challenging Assumptions

A company can become "stuck" when leaders are not willing to challenge current assumptions. This can hamper the creative process; discouraging the growth of new ideas that are outside of normal assumptions. Encourage leaders to think beyond the constraints



of traditional assumptions. Incorporating this management strategy can foster both manager and employee innovation.

Encourage Risk Taking

Future leaders should be trained to incorporate strategies for risk taking. This is because taking the right risks can payoff with increased revenue and market share. Train your executives to get out of the “safe zone,” and consider new opportunities – like considering an acquisitions or a merger to break into a new market; or expanding products and services to reach underserved market segments.

Inspiring Employees

Once a leader has designed innovative strategies, it is important to inspire employees to get behind implementation efforts. In most cases, managers will need to reach out to front-line employees who personally serve customers. These employees are a key component to success because of their ability to impact customers directly.

Employees need to feel empowered by their ability to drive the company’s success – and managers must inspire them to want to put forth the effort. This requires unique strategies designed to forge a partnership between employees and management.

You can also inspire employees by creating a desirable work atmosphere to boost morale and foster a team environment. Also, consider designing a plan to reward valuable employee contributions. This could include a special employee recognition program tied to performance.

Clearly Define Expectations

When designing successful leadership strategies, it is important to clearly define expectations for employees. When employees understand what is expected of them (and have the tools to achieve the desired goals), job satisfaction is greatly improved. Also, provide a clear roadmap to success, and tie rewards to desired results. This will reinforce employee expectations. Even making simple changes, such as scheduling regular annual reviews, and creating individual benchmarks, can impact a company’s success.

Rewarding Achievement

Successful leaders also need to focus on rewarding employee achievements. Successful incentives take into consideration what motivates a group of employees. For example,



some employees will be motivated by monetary compensation or gift cards. Moreover, other groups of employees will be most satisfied with extra vacation days or a more flexible working schedule. Some employees will prefer personal recognition in front of their peers, or a special lunch with their manager. Choose a plan best suited for your working group to drive up job satisfaction and motivate employees to want to meet company goals.

Participative Decision Making

Future leaders of successful organizations should focus on cultivating a participative decision making environment. Participative decision-making is an effective strategy because a leader does not always have the foresight to anticipate all challenges when making a decision. Engaging others in the decision making process allows the executive to tap into an individual's unique talents. For example, a direct manager of the affected business unit may have valuable insight the senior manager has not anticipated.

A participative decision maker will consider all input, then make the final decision; accepting full responsibility for any consequences resulting from that decision.

Creating a Corporate Training Plan

According to the McKinsey Survey, companies interested in maximizing their success should consider implementing a corporate management-training plan. This allows executives to teach management principles that are most effective in their environment. Although these principles may deviate from an individual's management style, those who participated in the McKinsey Survey reported that when implementing these strategies, they became better managers.

Management Style to Avoid

When creating a corporate management program, avoid individualistic decision-making strategies. This type of strategy tends to be less successful and does not foster a team environment. Instead, focus on creating a team environment by encouraging the upward flow of communication.

Developing managers who encompass the leadership qualities of the future will allow your company to gain momentum and rise above the competition. In addition, employees will appreciate consistency among managers, and enjoy a team driven work environment.

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Resources:

“Leadership for the Future.” McKinsey Global Survey Results. www.First Research.com

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