



EDITOR'S NOTE

HOMEGROWN LEADERSHIP

TAPPING INTERNAL TALENT

Are leaders born or made? It's probably a little of both, but recent research in the corporate realm indicates that we are doing a very bad job of developing employees into leaders. The findings, and what to do about them, are described in a November/December 2017 *Harvard Business Review* article titled, "Turning Potential into Success: The Missing Link in Leadership Development." The article, written by three leaders with the global executive search firm Egon Zehnder, shares insights from the firm's research on internal corporate leadership development programs designed to identify and grow talent from within.

The article also cites recent research by the Corporate Executive Board Company (CEB) indicating that while approximately 66 percent of companies have such programs, only 24 percent of company leaders view the programs as successful. Furthermore, 87 percent do not have confidence in their up-and-coming leaders. Additional research conducted by Egon Zehnder indicates that while there is plenty of untapped talent, the problem lies within the leadership development programs themselves. The institutional cost of this failure is high, as employees are less engaged and more likely to move on to other organizations. According to a Gallup poll, 55 percent of corporate managers are actively looking for another position.

Library leaders can learn a great deal about growing leadership potential from the corporate experience. Egon Zehnder recommends a four-step process that begins with assessing the greatest needs of the company, determining which leadership attributes are most likely to lead to success, and identifying which positions require those skills. Examples of the most commonly identified competencies are strategic thinking, collaboration, change management, and inclusiveness.

After determining the organization's needs, the next step is to evaluate employees' qualities and probabilities of success as leaders. Egon Zehnder identifies five predictors of success: motivation, curiosity, insight, engagement, and

determination. Individual employee strengths can then be compared to the attributes needed for particular roles within the organization. Finally, employees can receive individualized training and development in the identified areas.

The article also includes graphics and rubrics that are helpful in assessing competencies, matching skills to job roles, and comparing candidates.

Another interesting finding from the Egon Zehnder research is what successful leadership development actually looks like. The two most impactful activities, according to the survey, are moving potential leaders through a variety of positions and assigning them projects that require skills slightly more developed than they currently possess. For many of our institutions, these activities also have the potential to be quite disruptive to workflows. Learning a new position or using a skill such as project management for the first time will often come with some bumps in the road. Institutions will need to commit to some possible costs in efficiency and skill to reap the reward of growing talent, as well as increasing efficiency and skill from within the institution. How can you implement a similar leadership development program in your own library?

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