

# The RESOURCE

## EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT - LESSONS LEARNED FROM 60 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

**1.** The biggest challenge in employee development is in helping employees recognize the importance of continuous personal change and skill development for job success now and in the future. The skills and competencies that allowed them to achieve their current job success are insufficient to continue their success in the future.

**2.** Leadership development begins with examining the skills and competencies that the individual and the organization will need to achieve their goals, now and in the future. This includes not only knowledge-based learning but also increased self-awareness of how an individual's personal style helps or hinders success in achieving work and personal goals.

**3.** True leadership development takes individuals out of their comfort zones and requires them to stretch and learn. Those who are willing to put such demands on themselves are more likely to be successful leaders now and in the future.

**4.** If employees are not continuously learning, they are not growing, or worse – they are repeating the same mistakes.

**5.** More often, the problems that leaders encounter in their organization are a result of their getting in their own way as they try to accomplish goals. Seldom do leaders ask themselves, "How do others feel after I have met with them?" "What can I do to more positively impact my direct reports to achieve workplace goals?" The movie **Twelve O'Clock High** with Gregory Peck remains an excellent example of how leaders get in the way of others achieving success. It is recommended viewing for anyone in a leadership position.

**6.** Career development should not be limited to individuals at managerial and professional levels. PSP has found that companies can benefit significantly from providing developmental opportunities to employees at all levels, including hourly production employees, both union and non-union, to improve their skill sets and future potential for success. At PSP, we have seen hourly employees assume responsibilities previously thought beyond their ability, both through the use of self-directed work teams and, for some, by progressing into professional and management ranks.

**7.** Just as organizations must change to be successful, so must individuals. It is the executive leaders who model these change behaviors who will have greater success in getting others to follow. In short, executives who strive for excellence and make continued demands on themselves to grow and develop also stimulate others to do the same. This synergy can exponentially increase the contributions that executives can make to their organization because it helps them to gain greater control over factors that affect their own performance as well as the performance of their direct reports.

**8.** Customized training plans are critical for success in any leadership development program. Such training programs need to focus both on skills required, as well as specific behavioral competencies that individuals need to develop and practice.

**9.** A training needs assessment is the foundation of an effective management training program, whether it be for an individual or an entire company. Tied into a strategic leadership competency model, this assessment includes ratings from regular observers of the manager as well as career development testing. PSP's unique 360 Survey and career development evaluations are ideal tools for such an assessment.

**10.** Employee development needs to distinguish between short-term and long-term learning requirements. An example of short-term learning requirements may be obtaining information that affects one's industry or functional area, such as a change in tax laws. An example of long-term learning may be the need to improve one's listening skills or develop one's leadership or social impact. This kind of learning requires greater commitment and involvement over a longer period of time.

**11.** Leadership development ultimately rests on the individual accountability of employees for their own development, if they are to progress as future leaders. Companies can give them the tools to work with but it is up to the individual to take advantage of these opportunities and stretch themselves to grow and develop. This self-direction is what will separate those who go on to achieve future success and those who do not. It remains an excellent way to identify future leaders.



## WHEN OUR BEST ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH

In the business world, all of us fail at one time or another – not because we don't try hard, but because someone else does it better, faster, or smarter. Our best is just not good enough in these situations. When we do our best and still fail, our response to failure often determines our future success. Responding to failure is not just a matter of getting up off the floor, dusting off, and trying again. When our best is not good enough, we need to, as Roy Haley of WESCO says, "learn to do what ought to be done, when it should be done, whether you like it or not."

### What Ought To Be Done

Some people say that doing what ought to be done simply means that we need to "try harder" the second time around. In other words, do the same thing, only more of it. Remember the old adage "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again"? Occasionally, trying the same thing over and over again may work, but the odds are against it. Trying harder is a bit like pushing rope uphill: a lot of effort and little to show for it. Doing what ought to be done usually means doing things **differently** than we did the first time around. This requires adaptability in thinking.

Doing what ought to be done implies that we actually know what ought to be done. In some cases, we do not know, and so we have to **learn** what ought to be done. Learning to do what ought to be done requires market knowledge, business savvy, and critical thinking skill. If we don't have these things, we need to go out and get them. In other words, we must acquire the resources we need to learn what ought to be done. Otherwise, we may do the wrong thing.

Many times we fail because we do nothing. We succumb to "analysis paralysis." We get one more research study, conduct one more market trial, think about it some more. We debate and try to reach consensus, and table the matter when we cannot get full agreement. Our bias is not for action but for perfection, and so we do nothing. When we do not learn to do what ought to be done we "fail, fail again."

### When It Should Be Done

Timing often determines success or failure in business. Doing things when they should be done requires a bias for action, sense of urgency, and strategic point of view. Is now the best time to change a product, a process, a program? How much change can our company absorb right now? What are the priorities? Are we ready to deal with the consequences of our actions?

Knowing when things should be done also includes knowing when to quit. Opportunities come and go, and so missed opportunities need to be acknowledged as such. In fact, learning when things should be done may require repeated failures before the importance of timing is truly appreciated.

When an opportunity is missed, it is important to study what went wrong, to make changes, and to try again. This requires resilience and a continuous learning spirit so that one can "bounce back." It also may require discernment in evaluating the impact of one's



decisions on the company and on the marketplace. Our best is not good enough when we do not do things when they should be done.

### Whether You Like It or Not

Sometimes we fail because we just don't want to do what needs to be done. For a variety of reasons, we may lack the intestinal fortitude or self-discipline needed to make a decision or carry out an action which will be unpopular, unsympathetic, or harmful to others. At such times, it is valuable to remind oneself of the words of Winston Churchill: "Sometimes doing your best is not enough. Sometimes you must do what is required."

If we cannot bring ourselves to do what is required, it is better to step aside and make room for someone else who can. When our need to be liked outweighs our willingness to do the right thing for our company, our best is not good enough.

### Learn from Failure

While all of us fail in business at one time or another, some of us learn from failure faster than others. The qualities necessary to learn quickly from mistakes are as follows:

- ❖ Critical Thinking Skill
- ❖ Self-discipline
- ❖ Resilience
- ❖ Continuous Learning Spirit
- ❖ Bias for Action
- ❖ Adaptability in Thinking

How can a company know if its management team possesses these qualities? Fortunately, each of these qualities can be measured by the tools of industrial psychology. Through a series of tests and interviews, psychologists can benchmark managers on their ability to learn from failure. Gaps in ability can be identified and then addressed with developmental training or management coaching. By evaluating and increasing each manager's ability to learn from failure, a company can do its best to maximize the likelihood of future success.

# WHAT'S NEW @ PSP

## RESOURCES FOR LEADERS

Effective talent management systems are difficult to design and implement. Marc Effron and Miriam Ort outline a straightforward, easy-to-use process for talent building in **One Page Talent Management**, a useful volume for anyone interested in simplifying and upgrading talent acquisition and development in their company.

In **What Were They Thinking?**, Jeffrey Pfeffer argues in favor of "evidence-based management" and recommends specific steps that leaders can take to avoid making decisions which clash with accepted knowledge about organizations and people.

For executives who want to inspire others, sell their ideas, or communicate better, **Fire Them Up!** By Carmine Gallo is a good read. Full of stories and tactics from more than two dozen of today's most inspiring business leaders, Gallo's book reveals seven secrets which enable leaders to motivate and engage employees with power and charisma.

**Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard** by Chip Heath and Dan Heath is an interesting book on achieving personal and organizational behavioral change, with many useful examples. It is also a lively read.

Learn more about topics related to the articles in this issue of *The Resource* by visiting PSP's website at [www.pspmetrics.com](http://www.pspmetrics.com). Read especially "Hire Right the First Time," "Executive Development: Successful Executives Continue to Grow," "Preventing Hiring Mistakes – Patience Pays," and "Successful Executives are Different."

- ❖ Conducted behavioral interviewing training for management personnel in Houston for an energy manufacturing group.
- ❖ Began profiling power system operators for one of America's premier electric transmission operators.
- ❖ Administered an executive 360 survey and created customized training programs as part of a leadership development program for a well-known food manufacturing company.
- ❖ Customized an applicant screening tool for cognitive and software engineers at a high tech company in Western Pennsylvania.
- ❖ Assisted a not-for-profit organization with redesign of organizational structure and function to facilitate growth and efficiency.
- ❖ Conducted executive assessments for top level positions in international manufacturing and chemicals companies.
- ❖ Conducted 360 surveys for executive development with a regional newspaper management team with customized training plans for development.
- ❖ Profiled Vice President/General Manager candidates for a Japanese electrical hardware manufacturer.



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THE FRICK BUILDING  
437 GRANT STREET SUITE 1900  
PITTSBURGH, PA 15219

412.261.1333 PHONE  
412.261.5014 FAX  
WWW.PSPMETRICS.COM



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