

"American Idol" And 360-Degree Feedback Teach Effective Succession Planning

The meteoric success of TV's "American Idol" has a lot to teach leaders and succession planners. Like the music business, your organization has probably overlooked a multitude of talented people because they are invisible outside the usual channels.

The good news is that there is a process readily available to help you find these future stars. 360° feedback is a succession planner's dream come true. Just as "American Idol" locates talent unknown to the music industry and record companies, 360° feedback can help you find the highly skilled but unrecognized employees in your organization.

It does this by compiling information from your talent scouts. They're the responders to 360° feedback from every corner of your organization, people who know the hidden skills of those they work with.

Your Rising Stars

Is there a woman in your admin pool who is brimming with potential, respected by her colleagues, and over-qualified for her job? Or a brilliant but unrecognized guy in the mail room? Or talented leaders lost in the crowd of middle managers?

We've re-designed our 360° feedback system to find these people. The result is an active investigative approach that spotlights high potentials - including those dispersed or hidden in the organization. Their bosses know how good these people are, but often they're not saying - because they don't want to lose them. So you have to rely on another source.

With the upcoming Boomer retirement crisis and emerging talent crunch, succession planners know that to ignore these future leaders is a recipe for defeat. But they worry that it's hard to identify candidates other than the "usual suspects", a small circle of senior or well-connected individuals who know how to market themselves.

How To Find New 'Idols'

Here's a simple process for organizations that want to run a talent search that's as revealing as "American Idol".

1. Create a 360° questionnaire that covers the competencies most valued in your organization today.
2. Supplement it with additional competencies that will be required for success in the future. (Ability to assimilate new data and deal with complex issues, encouragement of innovation, personal flexibility, integrity, openness to learning, etc.)
3. Spread your 360° net wide, to assess employees in every area of the organization.

4. While your employees are using their feedback to improve their individual performance, generate an aggregate report that covers the entire 360° feedback group.

What You'll Get From An Aggregate Report

Your aggregate report gives you the big picture by combining the results of all the individual 360°s in the project. It lists the highest-rated individuals throughout your organization. Reading it, you will discover unexpected rising stars to introduce to your succession program. And you'll get a different, and perhaps more balanced, view of the people you have already identified.

Aggregate reports also pinpoint the individual development needs of your candidates. Their individual competency profiles can help you get them up to speed for new challenges, with seminars, placements, coaching and mentoring.

Of course you'll want to give them the benefit of 360° feedback on a regular basis.

A bonus is that your aggregate data can help you to fill current vacancies more effectively. It reveals at a glance which individuals are highly-rated in the core competencies required for any given position.

The ROI Is Positive

If expense is a worry, cost it out. How much would you pay a recruiter to locate a handful of new candidates? \$50,000? \$100,000? For that price, you can harvest succession-related data about thousands of individuals each year. Your organization will also enjoy the efficiencies of promoting from within rather than hiring from outside.

In another sense the succession benefit is free, since it rides on the coattails of your existing 360° feedback program. And 360° feedback pays its own way, by guiding your current employees to develop stronger skills.

When it comes to succession planning, a star is born.

Summary

Succession planners can locate unknown talent, like the TV show "American Idol", by using 360° feedback. Users of Panoramic Feedback have found that aggregate reports from 360° feedback are valuable for identifying skilled individuals who are invisible to succession plans because they are outside the 'inner circles'.

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