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## Why Leadership Development And Talent Programs Fall Short

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Why are so many leadership development and high potential talent programs continuing to fail, or at the very least, not producing what we hope for? The answer is simple, those at the top of the organization are in denial about their own leadership capability. This is not to point fingers at the top leadership, but rather this should be a call to arms for all of us to take a good look in the mirror and reflect upon our leadership abilities of truly identifying next-generation leadership and how to build programs that stick.



I will throw some analogies at you to help make the point. There is a saying that "if you think you are the smartest person in the room, then you are in the wrong room!" Think about it, a leader should always be in the growth mode and when you catch yourself believing you have "made it" or that those around you can provide no true value, then you need to check yourself. There is a cognitive bias trait called the Dunning-Kruger effect. It basically describes the traits of people who believe they are smarter and more capable than they really are. Dunning suggests that deficits in skill and expertise create a two-pronged problem. First, these deficits cause people to perform poorly in the domain in which they are incompetent. Secondly, their erroneous and deficient knowledge makes them unable to recognize their mistakes.

So why bring this up in the context of leaders? Simple, many leaders think they are better at leading than they really are. Some leaders may be fantastic at running a P&L, marketing or generating sales, but they have no clue how to recognize talent nor develop it. Another chance for an analogy; "great leaders do not know all the answers, however, they do know what questions to ask". The opposite example would then be a poor leader who thinks they have all the answers and never having the ability to critically think and produce deep leadership context.



All of this leads up to my conclusion of why we have had failing leadership programs. Many fall into the trap that they can instinctively identify their replacements and build programs around their own sphere of knowledge. We are at an exciting time in history where there is the next generation of a leader emerging and guess what, they do not look or act like the current top of pyramid team. Today's leaders need to recognize that this is not just a diversity and inclusion discussion, but more importantly, having the ability to identify skill-sets on what demands will be placed on future leaders.

Do I have your attention yet? If you are a leader and not happy with your talent bench (a recent survey found that only 14% of CEO's believe they have the talent to carry out their corporate strategy), then you should look in the mirror and reach out to those who are subject matter experts in helping advise and co-create programs that will truly produce the bench you need to execute your organizational mission. At a minimum, we need to think about the depth and breadth of our talent pools. Leaders need to widen the pool of leader prospects and develop them faster to overcome our failures of the past.

It is time to start the conversation in how we can help— and how to become bold enough to recognize our weaknesses in order to grow and serve our teams like they deserve to be lead.