



Building a Leadership Pipeline for the Future

You just learned that a key leader in one of your countries outside the US is taking another position in one month's time. Yes, there are names on her slate; however, none are truly "ready now". Three years ago this role was open with an acting manager for 4 months, and now you fear the situation will be repeated. The role is demanding, making it a challenge to fill either internally or externally. Does this sound familiar?

Challenge

Such leader transitions are pivotal moments. Having strong and ready successors on deck can ensure continuity of business execution and organizational momentum. On the other hand, a poor transition can result in churn: significant uncertainty, performance degradation, lost revenue, and an unwelcome opportunity for competitors to leapfrog. This risk is amplified the more the responsibility. At Microsoft, it was happening all too often.

Since the stakes at transition time are increasingly high, it's imperative that companies be continuously prepared to place the right person, in the right job, at the right time. The challenge? Building an effective process for identifying, assessing and developing a pipeline of talent for these critical roles to ensure swift and smooth leadership transitions.

Capability

At Microsoft they built a leadership pipeline, targeting this new approach for the business critical Marketing & Operations leaders across the globe. They tackled the issue with a two-pronged approach: increasing executive engagement in talent management and creating a program to develop key talent for target roles.

Microsoft worked with Sage Ways to design the integrated program called 'Leader Potential and Development'. The purpose of the program is to determine talent readiness, surface gaps and create a targeted development plan. The future-focused program aligns the key role to the company's business strategy, then provides real-time, relevant data from multiple stakeholders that is totally transparent. The result is a pipeline of talent all being prepared for a similar set of future needs.

The program delivered:

- A consistent approach for evaluating the potential of internal candidates.
- Targeted and accelerated professional development.
- Increased involvement and accountability from senior leadership.



This process accelerates the power and reliability of succession planning by ensuring participants are focusing on the capabilities that will have the most impact.



Sage Ways started by building a **Success Profile** of current and future capabilities required for the target role. The key to the approach is to create a very specific target profile of what “excellence” looks like for the role – consisting of three main parts. The first is **leadership key results and competencies** that are considered critical for any leader at this level of the organization. Secondly, **versatility** looks at the future skills they will be required to balance. For the last part, experiences, is a mapping of all of the business and functional **experiences** that a senior leader has gained in their career.



Change

Close to 50% of key talent from the program have been promoted into the target roles or are making moves into new positions that will give them the experience they need to fill the role in the future.

Both participants and managers alike find the process invaluable:

“This has been one of the most impactful development opportunities that I’ve had. The program helped me structure my development plan in a very meaningful way to prepare myself for the next move and identify very precisely areas of focus, with feedback from different leaders. It helped me put the immediate focus on those areas and start acting concretely.”

Microsoft’s pipeline of ready now leaders for key roles has improved and they expect more talent sharing across geographies as they prepare leaders for the future.



Create the capability to change.

Sage Ways helps people and businesses create a dynamic capability to change, so they can adapt to today’s ever-increasing demands and complexities with ease and creativity.

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