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Organization: Microsoft in collaboration with Sage Ways Consulting

Program: Microsoft Leadership Potential and Development (LeaderPaD)

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LEAD Award Rank

Best Sales Leadership Program

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LEAD Award Rank

Best Use of Executive Coaching Program

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LEAD Award Rank

Best Global / International Leadership Program

Strengthening the Leadership Pipeline

Our editorial team interviewed **Anita Bhasin, CEO of SageWays Consulting** at the **LEAD2017 Awards** this past February. Here are some excerpts from the exclusive interview.



What is the overall objective of your program?

To improve the quality and reliability of succession for key roles by ensuring an integrated approach to determining readiness, surfacing gaps, and effectively developing potential leaders. The result is an improved internal slate, accelerated talent development and fewer disruptions to the business. **Key benefits of the program include:**

- Increased quality and bench strength
- Higher levels of engagement and retention
- Deeper connection to stakeholders

Who do you impact with your program?

Successors for key roles in global sales and marketing.

What are the lessons you've learned this year from facilitating your program?

Building a pipeline of future leaders requires an integrated approach that engages the business in articulating what future success looks like. This becomes the foundation for a clear, consistent, business-centric definition of success which is used to gather feedforward from the business (proactive development suggestions) and to support coaching for development planning.



The success profile is used to engage business stakeholders and summarizes current and future capabilities required for target roles. The key is to create a very specific profile of what “excellence” looks like for the role – consisting of three main parts.

- 1) **Leadership key results and competencies**, considered critical for any leader at this level of the organization.
- 2) **Versatility**, the future skills they will be required to balance.
- 3) **Experiences**, a mapping of all the business and functional experiences that a senior leader has gained in their career

The Success Profile is the pivot point for other unique benefits:

Transparency. A clear process is critical to employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention. Employees who understand expectations and know where they stand feel inspired and committed to their careers.

Alignment. Connecting talent management to business strategy is crucial. Intentional employee development through this process accelerates employees’ capacity to change around a consistent set of skills.

Real-time & relevant. Providing a level of feedforward that is relevant to the development needs required of critical roles is valuable. These development suggestions ensure development plans are actionable and pipelines predictable.

How do you measure the return on investment and success of the program?

The program delivers:

- A consistent approach for evaluating the potential of internal candidates.

- Targeted and accelerated professional development using the support of executive coaches.
- Increased involvement and accountability from senior leadership.

The future-focused program aligns each 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, in which each individual is being prepared for a similar set of future needs. This process accelerates the power and reliability of succession planning by ensuring participants are focusing on the capabilities that will have the most impact.

Recent results include:

- Increase in ready talent for key roles and accelerated time to fill. 69% of talent moved into key roles.
- Improved diversity focus on succession plans. Gender diversity of the talent pool up by 11%.
- Targeted destination-oriented development planning with 98% coach satisfaction.

What lies ahead for the program and how it will continue to succeed?

Next steps are to re-evaluate the success profile and penetrate deeper into pipeline cultivating successors who may be two moves away from these key roles, allowing us to ensure targeted development and even shorter time to fill for key roles.

Would you like to comment?