

## A leadership development programme based on inclusive principles

A process for developing tomorrow's leaders is set out below:

### 1 Choosing leadership style and values

The directors of the company (or their equivalents in the public and voluntary sectors) first need to reach consensus as to the style of leadership and related values that they wish to see developed and which they believe will be appropriate to the future needs of the organisation at the most senior levels. There are many models to choose from and, of course, elements from different models can be combined. Some of the most commonly cited models have been reviewed earlier in this paper, for example:

- The learning leader.
- Stewardship.
- Servant leadership.
- Leader as designer, steward and teacher.
- The leader as educator.

### 2 Identification of potential

The next step is to identify those with the potential to develop the ability to provide leadership. The search for these should be cast much wider than the traditional selection of high flyers from an elite group such as graduate management trainees. Tomorrow's organisations will need effective leadership of teams of all kinds - in the research laboratory, on the shop floor, in the sales force - indeed in every situation in which people need to be aligned behind a clear vision and sense of purpose.

#### A FIVE POINT PLAN FOR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- 1 Agree the style of leadership and related values which fit the organisation's tasks and culture; differentiate leadership from management development
- 2 Identify those with potential  
(Motivation, 360 degree profile, Myers Briggs)
- 3 Assign to leadership roles on real, challenging projects and support by: creating action learning sets of four to six participants providing feedback
- 4 Provide coaching and mentoring
- 5 Provide more formal training in:  
listening and communications skills  
public speaking, visioning and creativity

This is, of course, a challenging task and one which inevitably involves a degree of subjective judgement. The degree of subjectivity can, however, be reduced by the deployment of a range of assessment methods including bio-data, employment track record, psychometric tests and various group exercises which provide an opportunity to display leadership qualities.

Recent practice has increasingly involved the use of 360 degree assessment of potential by superiors, peers and subordinates - a process which has a high degree of face validity.

BP is one company which uses this approach. Its senior management has defined nine Leadership Competencies required for leadership success. Following some careful professional/technical work in 1993, a 45-item questionnaire based on these competencies was designed and piloted. This is now used to provide 360 degree assessments for the top 2000 managers. There is no reason, however, why similar techniques could not be applied on a much wider basis.

An important factor to be taken into account is the individual's motivation to lead and the values upon which it is based. This should be explored in the context of providing young people with as deep an understanding as possible of what the leadership role entails in terms of acceptance of responsibility, the restrained use of power, service above privilege and the importance of integrity.

### 3 Selection of assignments

Those selected to participate in the programme should then be given assignments which will constitute the principal means of developing them. These assignments, according to a research group at the Center for Creative Leadership (McCall et al. 1988) should involve five or more of the following challenges:

- Success and failure should be both possible and evident to others.
- The situation should involve the leader being left alone to cope without access to higher authority.
- It should involve working with new people or unusually large numbers of people or people known to be difficult.
- Working under unusually severe pressure, e.g. very tight deadlines or with very substantial cost at risk.
- Having to influence people over whom the leader has no authority.
- Coping with change, uncertainty or ambiguity.
- Performing while being closely watched by people who have the power to influence future career prospects.
- Exercising team leadership in stretching circumstances.
- Handling a task with major strategic implications or which is intellectually stretching.
- Working with a particularly effective or ineffective boss.
- Dealing with a situation in which some key factor is missing e.g. adequate resources or vital information.

The researchers suggest no fewer than 88 specific developmental assignments. These are divided into five groups as follows:

1. Small projects and start-ups which mainly emphasise persuasion, learning new things quickly, working under time pressure and dealing with new people.
2. Small scope "jumps" in responsibility which emphasise team-building, individual responsibility, dealing with the boss and time pressures.
3. Small strategic assignments which emphasise intellectual demands and influencing skills.
4. Course work and coaching assignments which reveal gaps in one's own knowledge or skill.
5. Activities away from work - for example in community service.

These activities should include, wherever possible, opportunities to meet and interact with the organisation's stakeholders.

## 4 Offering Support

Throughout the period of time during which successive developmental assignments are carried out, the participants in the programme should be supported in the following ways:

- By being assigned to action learning groups of four to six persons, meeting perhaps quarterly, to share learning and experience. Each group should have its own learning budget, enabling it to call on outside help if required. If the organisation is an international one, these groups should ideally be cross cultural in composition.

- Each participant should be allocated a mentor. Mentors can be drawn from successful leaders within the organisation, in which case they should be trained for the role and should be appropriate role models in terms of their own leadership style and behaviour. Alternatively, they can be drawn from specialists in mentoring from outside the organisation.
- They should receive regular feedback on their progress. This feedback should review not only what the individual has achieved but also the manner of its achievement and its consistency with the organisation's values. Feedback should be sought from stakeholder groups as well as from peers and line management

## 5 Use of external courses for skills development

External programmes should be used for developing such skills as public speaking, conducting interviews, chairing meetings alongside strangers, so that taking risks, experimenting with different approaches and being prepared to make a fool of oneself can occur without the inhibition of performing in front of one's colleagues.