**Chapter Seven**

**Creating the Right Development Experiences**

Executing business strategies requires having the right people doing the right things in the right way. Maintaining business execution over time requires developing employees to meet changing business demands. This chapter discusses concepts associated with employee development. Emphasis is placed on integrating development methods to maximize business impact and addressing process design andorganizational issues that often limit the effectiveness of development methods.

The term development refers to processes designed to build the capabilities of employees and leaders within the organization. It is a result of giving people experiences that enable them to acquire new skills, knowledge, and insights. It also involves providing tools that help people maximize the learning obtained from these experiences, as well as putting people in roles that expose them to novel tasks and environments, establishing relationships that support learning and development, and providing training and development resources to acquire job-relevant knowledge, skills, and capabilities. Development is also about transfer of training to help people use skills acquired in one setting to address business challenges encountered in a different setting.

**7.1 THE BASIC COMPONENTS OF A DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

The discussion in this chapter is built around understanding four basic components of development and how they interrelate: talent requirements, learning objectives, development methods, and development programs.

* Talent requirements: The term talent requirements is used to describe things employees in the workforce must be able to do in the future that they may not be able to do now. Most business strategies require employees to do things in the future that they have not done in the past such as performing current tasks more effectively and building qualifications to take on new roles and responsibilities. The purpose of development is ultimately to address talent requirements. Talent requirements can be tied to specific operational needs like “train sales employees so they can demo the new mobile product application,” or they can reflect more general workforce capabilities like “maintain a steady supply of internal talentavailable to staff all of our global leadership positions.”
* Learning objectives: Learning objectives describe the attributes employees must develop to meet talent requirements. They define specific types of knowledge, skills, aptitudes, abilities, motives, and interests that influence employee performance now and in the future. Development is used to help employees achieve learning objectives that support the company’s talent requirements. Like talent requirements, learning objectives can be specific or more general—for example, “ensure employees know how to install the mobile product application onto their smart phones” or “educate leaders on methods for managing a virtual workforce.” Learning objectives define what capabilities employees need to develop. Talent requirements define why they need these capabilities.
* Development methods . Development methods are used to achieve learning objectives. There are six primary categories of development methods: succession management, career planning, training resources, social learning, assessment measures, and transition management. All development methods use a combination of three basic techniques to build employee capabilities: giving people roles that expose them to learning experiences, creating relationships that help employees learn from others, and providing resources that support the learning of new skills, knowledge acquisition, and self-insights.
* Development programs . A development program is a process for leveraging one or more developmentmethods in combination with other talent management activities to achieve learning objectives that address a specific set of talent requirements. Companies typically implement development methods in combination with other activities to form integrated development programs.

**7.2 THE SIX PRIMARY DEVELOPMENT METHODS**

summarizes the six methods commonly used to support employee development: succession management, career planning, training resources, social learning, assessment measures, and transition management. The names used for these categories highlight what is unique about each method in terms of its focus and design.

Succession management methods are used to ensure a steady supply of qualified talent for critical job roles. Historically succession management focused on figuring out who would replace top executives. Organizations now usesuccession management for roles across the company, including key individual contributor positions. Succession management in some companies extends all the way to frontline employees. Many tools have been created specifically to support succession management (e.g., nine box talent reviews), but much of succession management is actually about coordinating other talent processes such as workforce planning, staffing, and career planning to forecast, identify, develop, and place talent in critical positions.

Career planning methods help employees define strategies to achieve their career goals. Career planning focuses on acquiring skills and building competencies to take on new roles and responsibilities and improve effectiveness in current roles. Career planning can be thought of as the flip side of succession management. Succession management takes a top-down organization-based approach to ensure a supply of talent for future business demands. In contrast, career planning uses a bottom-up employee-based approach to build individual skills to meet requirements for future jobs or job assignments.

**7.3 APPROACHING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FROM AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE**

Creating an integrated development program requires aligning different development methods so they support one another in a coherent fashion. For example, succession management methods often use assessment measures to identify leadership potential, training resources to developleadership skills, and social learning to establish high-potential mentorships and learning communities. It makes sense to think of succession management, assessment measures, training resources, and social learning as all being components of a single development program. Yet companies do not always think of development this way.

One can argue that companies need separate departmentsfor these methods since each one requires attending to a variety of unique details and logistics. This may be true, but these methods are still fundamentally tied together by a common focus on building employee capabilities. They work best when they are coordinated with each other. The best way to create integrated development programs is to treat all development methods as aspects of the same overall function. People charged with designing and supporting different development methods should be encouraged to work together, leverage common technologies and models, and create direct links between each other’s processes.

Understanding common threads and interdependencies across development methods allows companies to leverage development resources for multiple purposes and avoid duplication of effort. Creating integrated development programs also allows managers and employees to experience development as a coherent sequence of steps rather than a disjointed series of events. It also decreases the risk of creating development methods that conflict with one another, such as encouraging employees to pursue career plans that do not align with the company’s succession management needs.

**7.4 CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT DESIGN QUESTIONS**

There are seven key design questions related to building and deploying integrated development programs: 1. What talent requirements are you addressing? 2. What positions or people do you need to develop? 3. What employee attributes do you need to develop to achieve your learning objectives? 4. How will you build and maintain development methods? 5. How will you administer and support development programs? 6. How will you measure the impact of development programs? 7. How will you create an environment that supports use of development methods? These questions are applicable to the design of any development program regardless of the methods used. The answers to them depend on your company’s particular talent requirements, the nature of its workforce, and existing talent management processes. Failure to address any of these questions adequately can result in a suboptimaldevelopmental program.

**7.5 INCREASING DEVELOPMENT PROCESS MATURITY**

Development is arguably the most complex area of talent management for at least three reasons. First, development encompasses six different methods, each with its own unique set of tools, techniques, and design features. Setting up these methods can be a significant undertaking. This becomes even more complicated when attention is placed on integrating the methods with one other. Second, development programs can be used to improve a range of employee capabilities, each requiring different types of development approaches. The nature of development changes depending on whether thefocus is on building technical skills, leadership potential, career motivation, teamwork, or other attributes. Third, development processes must be able to change based on the learning objectives of employees. The more extensive a development program becomes, the more flexible it needs to be to support career growth across a diverse range of employees. Development programs must support basic training for new employees and career growth for highly experienced leaders and professionals. Achieving high levels of development process maturity is not about creating a single system that does one thing really well; it is about creating a flexible system that can be used to support a range of developmental needs that shift over time.

**7.6 CONCLUSION**

Development can be one of the most rewarding areas of talent management. It provides a means to ensure you have the talent needed to achieve your company’s business goals and is critical to maintaining employee skills and knowledge to meet the changing nature of business. When done exceptionally well, development can even be used to acquire and keep high-performing employees from joining competitors. It achieves all of this through helping employees achieve their potential while supporting the talent requirements of the organization. In this sense, development truly embodies the concept of a win-win partnership between employees and companies.

Development can also be one of the most frustrating areas of strategic HR. It is frustrating because many development programs fail to have a meaningful impact on employee development or business performance. This failure is usually the result of implementing development methods as stand-alone initiatives without adequately linking them to talent requirements and other strategic HR programs. Many faileddevelopment programs are classic examples of good concepts implemented in the wrong place at the wrong time in the wrong way.

This chapter discussed how to approach the design and deployment of development methods in an integrated fashion that will effectively address talent requirements tied directly to business needs. The chapter addressed fundamental concepts and design philosophies that underlie high-impact development programs. Attending to the questions reviewed in this chapter will help ensure that the development methods you build and deploy will be grounded in a robust, well-integrated, and effective overall development program.