

How To Hang On To Your High Potentials

October 01, 2011

In the war for talent, the most effective weapon is the careful management of candidates for top jobs.

Unfortunately, the development of a company's future leaders, or "high potentials," is often haphazard: There are no agreed-on best practices. Selection criteria are confusing; solid contributors are often demoralized by their exclusion from the process; development programs tend to remove promising managers from day-to-day operations.

In a far-reaching research effort, the authors have identified several sets of activities—"emerging" best practices—employed by companies with strong talent programs. They include:

Aligning the programs with corporate strategy, rather than adopting cookie-cutter approaches that seem effective in other organizations.

Choosing candidates carefully, through a combination of nominations and objective assessments, so expensive resources aren't wasted on the wrong people.

Rotating people through jobs that match their developmental goals and experiences.

Communicating honestly. Companies are often reluctant to acknowledge who's made the list, but the only real reason to keep it quiet is that you suspect the process is overly subjective or unfair.

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