EVERY ORGANISATION, NO matter its size, should have a structured plan in place for leadership continuity. Succession planning is an ongoing task that requires honing in on individuals who have leadership potential and should form an essential component of the organisation’s growth strategy.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Leaders are change agents who play a transformational role in an organisation’s efforts to overcome market challenges; and let’s face it, the root of every successful business is timely decision-making — if you don’t have the leaders to make such decisions, your business will flounder.

To demonstrate your commitment toward innovation and high-quality products and services, you need leaders who have the authority and credibility to push the workforce towards this goal. Finding leaders from inside your organisation who are well-versed on the processes, systems, structures, and work culture, who are aware of your organisation’s strengths and, perhaps more importantly, its weaknesses, will allow them to make better and informed growth-oriented decisions.

FINDING TOMORROW’S LEADERS TODAY

One of the most valuable assets of any business is its people and one of the most prized traits of good leaders is their ability to recognise tomorrow’s leaders today.

BY GARY EPSTEIN
Focus on potential — not performance

Employee performance defines ability and expertise. While performance is a parameter you must keep in mind, to identify a leader you must look beyond performance. Also consider the employee's aptitude, desire to grow, and overall potential. Some individuals are just not cut out to be leaders. Even if their performance is at the higher end of the scale, they simply don't have the capacity to take up leadership roles and are content to be followers. This is why potential should always outweigh performance as a parameter when zeroing in on possible future leaders.

Note the level of engagement

An individual must feel invested in a company’s goals and should see his professional achievements through the achievement of company growth. If you have an employee who proactively makes suggestions for process improvement, or shows interest in going beyond their brief to achieve results for the business, this employee has the makings of a future leader.

Catalyst or watcher?

Future leaders are the people in your business who make things happen, who are willing to make the decisions that will take projects to their logical conclusion while others prefer to watch and wait. Leaders facilitate project completion by becoming an integral part of the decision-making process.

Observe multitasking abilities

If you think you’ve identified potential leaders among your workforce, give them some extra responsibilities. Throw them in at the deep end and keep tabs on how they swim. Can they handle the extra tasks you’ve assigned, or are they finding it difficult to multitask? The answer to this question is important because all leaders have to perform more than one task at a time, and perform it to the best of their abilities.

Are they accountable?

Leaders are not afraid to hold themselves accountable for failure. Individuals who shy away from taking responsibility for their actions because it might reflect poorly on them, are not leader material.

Evidence of empathy and emotional intelligence

- Is the individual a good team player?
- Are they willing to help others and do they put others before themselves?
- Does the employee take time to interact with fellow employees?
- Does the employee focus on building personal relationships?
- Is the employee a people person?

If the answer to these questions is an unequivocal yes, then you know you’ve identified a selfless person who gives due weight to personal bonding and has the ability to constructively use their understanding of people for the benefit of the business.

Remarkable communication skills

All leaders have extraordinary communication skills and are able to effortlessly communicate their point/position to others. Look for individuals who have the ability to explain ideas in a clear and concise manner; somebody who deals with specifics and who has the ability to listen.

If you are lucky enough to identify an employee who has these qualities and more, you may consider prepping this person for a leadership role in your business.