



# LEADERSHIP: A NEED FOR INTERVENTION

*How effective is the current breed of leadership development programmes in Indian organisations? Is it still a mixture of leadership clichés? Ashish Arora explores*



➤ We're past the age where leadership development was the premier domain of large organisations. Of late in India, almost as a rule, most organisations designate a

part of their 'special budget' for leadership development. So, curiously, what does this 'leadership development' stand for?

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Most organisations, unfortunately, only pay lip service to the cause of leadership development. Many companies will spin off a half-day leadership development programme as a part of a strategy meet. Others will quickly convene a one-day off-site retreat for strategic visioning and leadership development for top executives. Yet, others may launch a seemingly tightly designed in-house leadership development programme, perhaps for a slightly longer duration, but never to be run again in the same year.

The common thread running across these initiatives is that they are lamentably short-sighted and piecemeal. The answer is long-term, continual leadership development and an executive strategy that focuses on each leader's unique leadership make-up and aligns his/her capabilities to the company's business needs.

And there is no way any organisation or its consulting partner can pull this off within a day. Therefore, a complete strategic cycle should continue for at least six months or more with regular reinforcements and feed-forward mechanisms.

Good leadership programmes must spend time understanding the organisation's leaders and followers, and their different needs. Leadership requires that leaders deploy their personal differentiators while keenly tuning into the needs of their followers.

This balancing act requires preparation and practice. And a serious leadership development intervention provides leaders the platform to do these. It mines internal feedback and uses scientific techniques to understand an executive's strengths and focused areas of development in the context of differing situations and the intuitive needs of their followers. It even allows for chaos and conflicts, as leaders grapple with having to morph their fundamental leadership assumptions and ways of working. Leaders also get connected with their coaches and peers who help them sustain their newly triggered personal changes.

Leadership development requires dedicated learning, graded reinforcements and practical exposure – by mandating a planned strategic approach. An abrupt stop-gap programme provides scope for none of

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that. It becomes a chaotic mixture of the latest leadership clichés and novel outdoor exercises. For true impact, a company must design its leadership development programme as a strategic, long-term intervention. The HR leader's imperative is to then correctly position such programmes and the business case before his/her CEO and top leaders to secure their buy-in. A well-designed leadership development programme will ensure continued participation and support.

**- The writer is founder and MD, HR Anexi**