

The making of a boss: How to get it right

COACHING HEAD HONCHOS Leadership programmes in India at the moment seem to be lamentably short-sighted and piecemeal initiatives by organisations

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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?

My experience leads



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 part of an all-India strategy meet. Others will quickly convene a one/two day offsite retreat for strategic visioning and leadership development for top executives.

Yet others may launch a seemingly tightly designed in-house programme, perhaps for a slightly longer duration, but not to be run again in the same year.

What is obvious is that such programmes are short-sighted and piecemeal initiatives. I have had requests from clients for conducting half or one day programmes to 'emerge' their leadership teams; something that helps them connect with the bigger picture and each other, our clients request. "My leaders are operating in silos; they need to create better peer platforms. They're afraid to let go, but we feel they must coach and bring up their successors," they explain. Hence, our clients want us to 'do something' in a four- to eight-hour window to address these issues.

So, how do you resolve chronic collaboration and 'letting go' issues among leaders in less than a day? You don't, quite simply. You can't.

The answer is long-term, continual leadership development. An executive strategy that focusses on each leader's unique leadership make-up and aligns his 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 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 focussed 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.

In other words, leadership development requires dedicated learning, graded reinforcements and practical exposure – by default mandating a planned strategic approach. An abrupt stopgap programme provides scope for none of that. It becomes almost a jamboree 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 their business case before his or CEO and top leaders to secure their buy in.

Thereafter, the proof should be in the pudding.

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