Anatomy of a High Potential

Jay A. Conger
Center for Effective Organizations
Marshall School
University of Southern California
Some of Jay’s focuses

• Leadership
• Training and development of leaders and managers
• Organizational change
• Boards of directors
Talent Management & Leadership Development Seminars

• Designing and implementing a world-class talent management system is the focus of the Talent Management course.

• Building a highly sophisticated leadership development capability for your organization is the focus of the Leadership Development course.

March 29-31, 2011
Los Angeles
Register/more info: http://ceo.usc.edu
Defined:

High potentials consistently outperform their peer groups in a variety of settings and circumstances. While achieving superior levels of performance, they exhibit behaviors reflecting their company’s culture and values in an exemplary manner. They show a strong capacity to grow and succeed throughout their careers – more quickly and effectively than their peer groups do.
Your Organization:

• What are the criteria you use to assess your high potentials?
• What percentage of your talent pool is classified as high potential? What is the annual turnover rate?
• Do your high potentials know they are on ‘the list’?
• What are typical challenges you face with your organization’s high potential systems?
Research on High Potentials:

- 98% of our sample of 45 global companies
- Typically only 3 to 5% of the talent pool
- 85% tell their employees if they are on the high potentials list
- 5 to 20% drop off annually
- 93% said high potentials are promoted more rapidly
- Yet half the companies said their top teams spend less than 10% of their time devoted to high potentials
High Potential Status: The Baseline Requirements

• Deliver strong results credibly and not at others’ expense

• Master new types of expertise

• Behave in ways consistent with the company’s values and culture
Growth in Performance

Stage 4: Significant contributor in building game-changing organizational and talent capabilities.

Stage 3: Influences broad-based, complex networks to deliver high impact results and bring about large scale change.

Stage 2: Manages teams and relationships to get more complex challenges done.

Stage 1: Acquires and uses expertise to accomplish tasks with excellence.

How You Perform
Growth in Performance & Behavior

How You Perform

Stage 1
Acquires and uses expertise to accomplish tasks with excellence

Stage 2
Manages teams and relationships to get more complex challenges done

Stage 3
Influences broad-based, complex networks to deliver high impact results and bring about large scale change

Stage 4
Significant contributor in building game-changing organizational and talent capabilities

How You Behave

Stage 1
Viewed as being a good fit with company’s culture and values

Stage 2
Lives the values and serves as a positive example to others

Stage 3
Serves as important role model and steward of the company’s culture and values

Stage 4
Actively teaches the organization’s culture and values and challenges employees to become change agents

Career Stages

Strong Indications of a Value Creator
Solid foundation of performance and “fit” with company’s culture and values

Value Creator

Game Changer
The Anatomy of a High-Potential—From Value Creator to Game Changer

How You Perform

Stage 1
Acquires and uses expertise to accomplish tasks with excellence

Stage 2
Manages teams and relationships to get more complex challenges done

Stage 3
Influences broad-based, complex networks to deliver high impact results and bring about large scale change

Stage 4
Significant contributor in building game-changing organizational and talent capabilities

Game Changer

How You Behave

Stage 1
Viewed as being a good fit with company's culture and values

Stage 2
Lives the values and serves as a positive example to others

Stage 3
Serves as important role model and steward of the company's culture and values

Stage 4
Actively teaches the organization's culture and values and challenges employees to become change agents

Game Changer

How You Grow

The X-Factors of High-Potentials

- Driven to Excel
- Catalytic Learning Capability
- Enterprising Spirit
- Dynamic Sensors

Strong Indications of a Value Creator

Solid foundation of performance and "fit" with company's culture and values

Career Stages
Factor #1: A Drive to Excel

High Potentials are:

• Driven to succeed
• Willing to go the extra mile
• People with high expectations for themselves and their organizations
• Often willing to make sacrifices in their personal lives
Factor #2: Catalytic Learning Capability

High Potentials are:

- Relentless learners
- Constantly scan for new ideas, have the cognitive capability to assess
- Quickly translate new learnings into productive action for their companies.
Factor #3: Enterprising Spirit

High Potentials have:

• They are trail blazers who like to take on challenges which are out of their comfort zone.
• They act, the other X factors keeping them well-informed and grounded.
Factor #4: Dynamic Sensors

High Potentials have:

• A feel for timing, an ability to quickly read situations, and a nose for opportunity.
• What may look like the luck of being in the right place at the right time is often the product of very deliberate thought and action.
Implications

It may be time to reconsider . . .
• Identification of high potentials
• Development of high potentials
• Retention of high potentials