

LETTERS

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Use psychology to realise potential

Organisations are now spending more time, energy and resources on management development than ever. However, a large amount of investment in management training could be misdirected because insufficient attention is being paid to the precise cause of managers' development needs.

If an individual is lacking a particular management capability, we need to work out why. There are essentially three areas of capability, each requiring different approaches when it comes to development.

The first area is business acumen – having a sound awareness of what factors are important to

success in different business situations.

The second area of capability relates to the core psychological abilities needed by managers to be successful at their job. These include managing energy, thinking analytically and flexibly and managing social behaviour. A manager with a rounded set of psychological skills has the potential to apply their business know-how to great effect.

The third area is that of inner motivation. This is shaped by how we view ourselves, what we believe we are good at and what we need in order to feel secure.

The key to success in development is to identify why the capability in question is not stronger. For example, if Tom is not good at coaching his team, it could

be he doesn't know how to give people feedback, isn't assertive enough to tell people what they are not doing well, or he may just not be interested in coaching.

Developing psychological skills takes more effort and commitment on the part of the individual than learning business know-how. Some managers may have theories and experience coming out of their ears, but are held back by a 'self-limiting belief', which can constrain people from showing their natural ability.

This self-limiting belief may be based on strong ideas about what you can succeed at and what you can't; or on compelling values about who you are and who you do not want to be, which cause you to avoid certain situations.

Inner motivation patterns

come from life experiences, which is why this area of capability poses the biggest challenge – changing the way a person thinks about themselves in relation to the job they need to perform.

Organisations need to recognise the importance of identifying the cause of the development need as opposed to simply treating the symptom. Development needs are not just about what people do, but also about the way people think.

Development is most effective when tailored to the specific area of capability that is causing the problem, be it know-how, psychological skills or inner motivation. This is where the power of psychology needs to be harnessed to fully release management and leadership potential.

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