Meeting the Challenges of Moving through the Leadership Pipeline
Society for Consulting Psychology
Las Vegas, NV, January 28, 2011

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The “leadership pipeline” model assumes that what it takes for managers to succeed is different for jobs at the bottom, middle, and top.
Ambitious, upwardly mobile persons who are perceived to be competent and committed (high potentials or “HiPos”) are confronted by the challenge of negotiating at least four 135-degree shifts in their career progression.

These critical career crossroads consist of unprecedented, discontinuous changes in role responsibilities and accountabilities.

Each level is distinctive and has unique, inherent demand characteristics.

To respond effectively and appropriately to these demands, the HiPo manager-in-transition must be proficient in applying relevant requisite competencies (KSAs):

- Core technologies of the business
- Theory and concepts (mental models)
- Methods and procedures
- Self-reflective awareness & use of self
- Behavioral skills, practices, & aptitude

To negotiate any Crossroad effectively, the ambitious, upwardly-mobile manager-in-transition must:

Shift from Current State:  
PREVIOUS ROLE

Shift to Desired State:  
NEW ROLE

Performance and Role Transformations

At each Crossroad, managers-in-transition must reinvent themselves. They have to assess their current perspectives, priorities, beliefs, attitudes, practices, and routines. Then, they must decide which elements they should ...
Most managers-in-transition approach their new role from the perspective of their previous role rather than specifying and responding to the demand characteristics of the new role.
The Significance of Performing Public Roles

When people achieve tangible, high-quality work results, they earn a sense of pride, self-esteem, and confidence. They feel comfortable with their work roles and with their performance in those roles. They exercise their competence and work with certainty and proficiency (the three Cs).

Pride and self-esteem is enhanced and reinforced by recognition from their stakeholders.

Opportunities for performing public roles constitute a major component of a person’s sense of identity.

(Freedman, 1995b)

Behavioral Addiction

People often addict themselves to whatever behaviors -- as with chemical substances -- result in good feelings.

Through education, training, and developmental experiences, managers-in-transition can learn new, more effective and appropriate behavior patterns.

Under stress -- e.g., unfamiliar, complex, ambiguous, or uncertain circumstances or crisis conditions -- people tend to regress to those behavioral patterns in which they are competent, confident, and comfortable.

Organizations must provide support (e.g., coaching and mentoring) and incentives to minimize regression.

(Freedman, 1995b)
Historic KSAs Become the Default Position for New Managers

Coaches might ask:
- In your new position, for what tasks, activities, and functions (TAFs) are you responsible?
- How are these TAFs aligned with your unit’s strategic goals?
- How are these TAFs different compared with your TAFs in your previous position?
- Which of these TAFs have you mastered?
- For which TAFs must you master new KSAs?
- How will you master these new KSAs?
- How will you prevent yourself from regressing to your default position?

Mentors can help by:
- Providing information about which TAFs the new manager must let go, preserve, and add on.
- Providing information about the new manager’s TAFs.
- Helping the new manager to comprehend how these TAFs contribute to the unit’s strategic goals.
- Identifying the various stakeholders who will have an interest in the new manager’s performance.
- Providing information about the KSAs the new manager needs to master to perform the new TAFs.
- Identifying resources the new manager must access to help in mastering the requisite KSAs.
Future Research

• Determine how longitudinal results differ as a function of the amount of mentoring and coaching received by managers-in-transition.
• Determine how longitudinal results differ as a function of the orientation of mentors and coaches. That is, the extent to which mentors and coaches use the leadership pipeline as a mental model that informs the nature of their interactions with managers-in-transition.

REFERENCES