



MEDIA RELEASE

Lack of leadership development opportunities reflected in talent loss...or worse!

Monday February 4, 2013. A regular occurrence in many organisations is the exit of a company's best and brightest young talent in response to business owners waiting far too long to identify, nurture and develop future leaders said founder and principal of international leadership training organisation Kameleons – developing leaders, Mr. Michael Peiniger.

By the time most businesses consider leadership development training, the prospective future manager has left or (a potentially worse scenario) has stayed having developed poor communication skills, values and behaviours that have become ingrained and almost impossible to redress.

A former senior officer in the Australian Air Force, Michael Peiniger says the military has understood for centuries the need to develop leadership early in a career. Peiniger says "Basic military training is far more than the movie stereotype of push-ups, yelling and polishing shoes."

"It is the opportunity to introduce and develop values, traits, conduct and skills that will be utilised for an entire career. Values such as integrity, teamwork and responsibility (similar to values of most businesses) are more than just words. They are discussed, broken down, reinforced through behaviours and practiced constantly."

The same applies to leadership training. For new management appointees to meet the leadership expectations placed upon them, their first leadership experience can't coincide with the appointment. It has to be early in their career.

Michael Peiniger continued, "Some of the best and most respected leaders in the world attest to learning to lead from experience – including the making of mistakes and learning from those events. If young future leaders aren't given the chance to discover these skills in their early years they will be doomed to make big mistakes (involving more money, people and responsibility) later in their careers."

Michael Peiniger recommends businesses adopt 5 approaches to develop their leadership talent early:

1. Praise good behaviour and correct poor performance.

New and junior staff are highly receptive when they join an organisation and if their behaviour is ignored, the opportunity to mould good behaviour and practices is lost.

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In many companies, new staff members are paired with a 'buddy' to help them gain knowledge and adopt appropriate work related skills more quickly than learning on their own.

By extending the program into a long term mentoring relationship that provides feedback and guidance, the ongoing benefits include greater camaraderie, confidence, realization of potential and increased productivity and job satisfaction.

2. Identify leadership potential early.

Leadership should not be a skill that is 'added on' after someone has demonstrated say five years proficiency in a technical specific role. It should be in core tasks as early as possible, so that expectations of responsibility become a normal part of doing business.

In addition, today's young people are not prepared to wait five years for an opportunity to lead. They want to do it now.

The notion that 'you did your apprenticeship' many years ago and then attempt to force this onto today's Gen Y will only result in their early exit.

Michael Peiniger says, "It's easy to identify those members of staff that relish the extra responsibility from leadership development programs. If you don't recognize it early enough, another company will."

3. Provide leadership opportunities.

There is no point identifying your leadership talent and then not getting them to do anything. This could be simple tasks like running a meeting, planning a project; or a larger undertaking such as running a small team.

The important ingredient is guidance – and it is where business differs from the military dramatically.

Leadership roles within the military that require management of staff and budgetary responsibility are provided extensively and often. Candidates are assisted by the guidance and experience of senior personnel that provide a 'well of expertise' to draw upon when situations become difficult or complex.

4. Provide leadership skills training and build relationships.

Again reflecting on his military background, Michael Peiniger says that even after identifying talent and providing opportunity, the military requires all leaders to continue their leadership training as they progress through the ranks.

Leadership training provides not only access to learn new skills and experience best practice, it also provides an opportunity for leaders to network with their peers and build relationships.

"The peer network is one of the most underrated in business today," said Michael Peiniger.

"In my military career, it was my peers that I often turned to for advice, help and suggestions (not my boss) as they were the most effective sounding board with insight into the issues being confronted."

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Your Manager and staff can be a great help, but they also judge you at the same time. Peers are part of your team, not competition.

5. Train for war, not for peace.

“Most businesses train for peace, whereas the military trains for war. In addition, the majority of business leadership training is undertaken when times are good and there is no pressure on sales, revenue, workloads, personnel and resources,” observes Michael Peiniger.

“Immediately, times become tough, the response of far too many business owners is to disarm (cease training and leadership development activities immediately) and retreat, leaving their troops on the front line with little support and guidance to deal with increased competitor focus and threats to market share.”

Michael Peiniger doesn't suggest business should only train when times are bad, but they should train for all situations as the real return to training and developing the skills of a company's leaders is in the difficult times.

By not maintaining training and leadership activities during the hard times, businesses forego an opportunity to prepare the company's future leaders with the experience needed to address similar situations in the future.

“Business cycles of boom and bust are well-known and yet businesses continue to get caught off guard when the answer to a company's long-term success, viability and resilience is within.”

“By identifying a company's future leaders early and then training, nurturing, building and challenging their skills with development and mentoring programs – an internal environment is created that builds a store of leadership talent with attributes to address the economic and marketplace challenges of the future,” concluded Michael Peiniger.

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