

*The approaching millennium prompted us to put pencil to paper and think about the opportunities that lay before us as we transition into the 21st century.*

### **Managers and Developers in the Information Age**

As organizations move toward the new millennium, they are more keenly aware than ever of the primary challenge of our age: mastering "permanent white water" (i.e., change) in order to remain competitive. Key to this challenge is the design of increasingly powerful human performance technologies. One of the most striking examples of these changing technologies is the evolution we're seeing from the **heroic model** of management (which emphasizes planning, motivating, controlling, and coordinating employees) to the **manager-as-developer** model (which stresses empowerment and which is more interpersonally intensive and consultative in nature). The manager-as-developer is counseling team members who are in the process of self-assessment, goal setting, and self-development and is encouraging them to change, instead of just reacting in short intense bursts to "critical incidents" or to a performance appraisal imperative. This is a significantly more leveraged management technology and represents a less active (i.e., less heroic) management style than the reactive, I'm-the-leader-you're-the-follower model of old.

A second human performance technology that is being powerfully impacted is the whole approach to the management development process itself. In the past, the sole function of management development was to facilitate advancement (i.e., "training" prepares people to do their current jobs better, while "development" prepares them for their next job). However, in recent years, management and executive development programs have begun to drive a number of other key business objectives, as well:

#### **Key Objectives For the *Organization***

- ❖ Identify reservoirs of human resource talent and channel them appropriately (career tracking and succession planning)
- ❖ Groom high potentials

- ❖ Help minimize mismatches between what the employee wants and what the company needs
- ❖ Assist employees in developing and increasing their self-awareness and in better understanding their own strengths and limitations
- ❖ Create leaders and increase individual autonomy at lower and lower levels within the company
- ❖ Design, integrate, and implement the HR strategy as a core component of the organization's overall strategic business objectives
- ❖ Train managers to be potent mentors
- ❖ Integrate your approach to management development with other human resource products: performance management, career development, recruiting, transfer/promotion, forecasting, and compensation

**Key Objectives For the *Individual***

- ❖ Be more proactive about self-development
- ❖ Take more control of your own career (i.e., be more questioning; plateau by choice; create more degrees of freedom)
- ❖ Pursue self-development for its own sake and as the motivational driver of goal achievement
- ❖ Participate in an active partnership with your employer
- ❖ Find more varied paths to personal satisfaction
- ❖ "Retool" yourself for the information age: enhance your ability to manage change, take risks, handle ambiguity, exhibit interpersonal finesse, collaborate, build partnerships and teams, and so forth.

Finally, one of the most powerful ways to realize the extraordinary potential of these two new orientations — the manager-as-developer and the broad impact of development experiences — is to integrate managers into the development program of each of their people. This approach yields any number of benefits to both the individual and the organization (and the manager, too), as well as maximizing the changes made by the individual who is participating in the development process. In this way, learning leaves the limiting confines of the classroom and becomes much more like a real apprenticeship experience. Substantive change is much more likely to occur and to be integrated into a person's day-to-day functioning when that change process is both experiential *and* linked to key others in the person's workaday life. Apprenticing is an age-old concept, but it remains a highly potent approach to development.

And, yes, managers will also need to become adept at this new role of partner/coach/advisor/consultant to the "apprentice." But, of course, these are roles that are now increasingly central to the overall successful functioning of the contemporary manager. So, it is striking how *holistic* the new approach to human performance technology is. If this potential for integration and consistency across human resource initiatives is tapped to its fullest, then organizations will have a tremendous opportunity to achieve the kind of key objectives they're striving for in the 90's:

- ❖ **Enhanced competitiveness**
- ❖ Innovation and corporate agility
- ❖ **Ownership and alignment**
- ❖ The attraction and retention of top talent
- ❖ **Quality, value, and service**

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