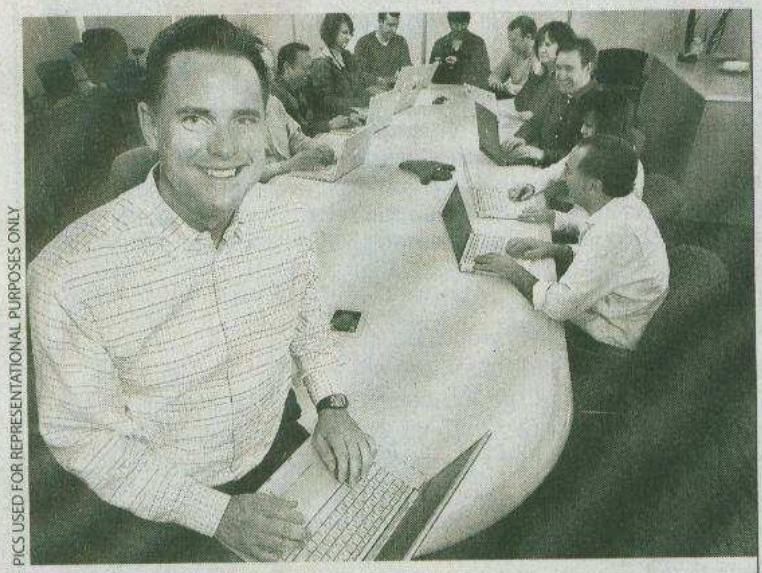
Training at the top

The world is changing rapidly to such an extent that it is becoming crucial for the top level managers to constantly upgrade their skills



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The organisational ladder of positions and designations is a tricky affair. At the bottom, the urge to climb up is so strong that the lessons of the journey are often hurriedly missed. Once up there, the senior managers at their wits' end realise that a lot of these 'missed' lessons could actually solve at least some of their issues. A paradox arises because these are the same lessons that become outdated at the blink of an eye, these days.

Need for training

The top management provides direction to the entire organisation, ensuring smooth sailing through stormy business conditions. Training senior managers in innovation can be the key drive to face challenges of any degree. Dr. Abhijit Bhattacharya, Dean, Globsyn Business School Ahmedabad explains, "In the global knowledge economy, a CEO should strive to create a culture of innovation for the company and ensure that it trickles down to the bottom. Whereas the lower level managers can contribute through incremental innovation in terms of better products and processes, the top management should gear itself up for radical transformations having important consequences for the industry as a whole. Suppose you gain an edge in floppy technology and the next day the pen-drive hits the market. Tackling such business uncertainty requires a CEO to develop an entrepreneurial approach."

He adds, "Someone at the top should also know how to build up a flow of creativity without demanding immediate results. To create a coherent business structure, first balance the right hemisphere of your brain with the left!"

The challenges

It is one thing to teach a beginner and another to teach an achiever already at a certain platform. Challenges of training the higher management differ enormously in terms of content and methods, from those adopted for lower levels. Lekha Sishta, VP - HR and Talent Management, SumTotal Systems explains, "As people grow up the ladder, they need to hone strategic skills such as decision making, influential leadership, working in a global culture and driving change. On the other hand, lead run managers need to be trained in tactical aspects like the process of becoming a manager, handling change, allocating resources or resolving conflicts. Difficulty arises at the top where the managers need to develop holistically, for instance, skills such as the art of delegation. They ultimately propel a company."

The best methods

Lekha explains a three dimensional model of focused training, "Senior managers, especially in the IT sector to avoid getting caught up in the daily grind of technical tasks, require a unique three layer approach combining the self, the peers and the subordinates. At the first layer, the manager requires training in looking inward and developing emotional capabilities. The manager must also gauge what others think and expect of him. At the second stage, the senior managers should develop affinity for cross location, cross cultural and cross team collaboration. For the company's growth, the CEO must be a sharer, not a hoarder. While managing downward, today's young top managers should have an objective view yet not become harsh."

Karthik K S, CEO, 24x7 Learning shares his experience, "As compared to the yester years when the top management would undergo training for one month at a stretch in a B-school, today the CEOs have become busier. At the same time, shelf life of information has come down drastically.

Clearly, the lessons of sound management are like the lessons of life. What you learn or what you miss is only a matter of time, till something more complex and consequential shocks you out of your safety net. After all, there is no safety net.

(To read the full story, log on to www.timesascent.in/hrdownload)

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