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EXECUTIVE COACHING SERIES

Mentoring

White Paper

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Mentoring, executive coaching, succession planning, and performance appraisal receive periodic review and attention in many organizations. Yet recent surveys (Forbes.com staff, 2008) indicate that these issues are fluid and require continuous attention. Mines and Kent (2002) discussed the fundamentals of succession planning which provided a foundation for planning and execution. (The full article can be viewed at http://www.minesandassociates.com/about_staff_publications.htm). Elliot Jaques (2002) added to our understanding of succession planning, mentoring, and performance appraisal, challenging many long-held assumptions. This paper highlights some of the core assumptions for use in executive coaching and mentoring of key employees and executives.

Jaques (2002) reviewed the following constructs in his model: time horizon, individual capability, talent pool, and mentoring. "Time horizon is a measure of individual capability defined as the highest level of work, measured in time-span, that a person could carry out in a role for which that person possessed the necessary knowledge, skills, work experience, and commitment" (Jaques, 2002, p.79). Implied in the construct of time-horizon is the cognitive complexity capability of the individual (Individual Capability). Mines, Hood, King, and Wood (1990) discussed a complimentary model of Reflective Judgment that examines how individuals think about complex questions similar in process to the ill-structured questions that C-level executives address as a part of their job requirements.

From a succession planning perspective, Jaques proposed that a person's current capability and current

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applicable capability be considered along with their potential future capability. In the ongoing management of the talent pool, the assessment of all employees using a projection model to ascertain their future capability is required (Jaques, 2002, p.89).

Jaques challenges the assumptions that all employees are equal. There are clear and well-documented differences in the adult developmental psychology research on variation in cognitive complexity (Mines et al., 1990). Jaques goes further in stating that there is no evidence to support the idea that there is a leadership personality. He argued that all employees need to be able to perform in a functional range across all defined characteristics, exhibiting no dysfunctional excess or shortcomings. Role theory is more predictive of behavior than personality theory. Succession planning is the process of advancing the right person to the right role at the right time; this should occur at all levels and in all functions within the organization.

Mentoring is best handled by the Manager-once-Removed (MoR) (Jaques, 2002). The MoR is simply the employee's supervisor's boss. The MoR, assisted by the employee's direct supervisor, evaluates the time-horizon of the employee he or she is responsible to mentor. Jaques stated that the results of the assessment should be discussed by the employee and their MoR. This serves two purposes: (1) to "preserve a policy of truly open management, people are entitled to know about the judgments that are being made about them; and (2) initiatives of the CEO should be the harbinger of systematic mentoring by the MoR for each and every Subordinate-once-Removed (SoR), bringing into focus the SoR's personal development in relation to opportunities within the organization and possibilities for the future (Jaques, 2002, p.91)."

Given the shared exposure to company product or service, culture, and organizational objectives, a MoR/SoR pairing is an ideal model for effective mentoring. There may, however, be significant reasons to identify and assign an alternative mentor, including; the MoR and SoR demonstrate closely aligned strengths and weaknesses, the number of SoR's the MoR would be accountable to mentor is excessive and prohibitive to the investment of quality time and focus, or a personality or style mismatch that would interfere with the quality of interaction and resultant employee development. Affirmative initial and periodic assessment of the suitability, quality, and the expected and actual results of each mentoring pair should be conducted by an objective third party; the HRO, the CEO, or an assigned Board Member.

The MoR should be aware of the full scope of the SoR's work expectations as well as the direction and higher goals of the organization and therefore be in the best position to mentor that SoR for development in the

organization. The immediate supervisor should be responsible for coaching direct reports in their current role. The MoR's mentoring is related to career and personal development. Ultimately, the employees must be accountable for deciding their own ambitions and aspirations. The employee should also seek and find the best opportunities to do so (Jaques, 2002).

Other white papers will address the topics of succession planning and performance appraisal.

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