

Management Development as an OD Intervention

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Management Development can be a powerful Organization Development intervention. Whether by building critical communications skills, instilling core company values, or teaching strategic thinking, Management Development programs can make a significant impact on an organization's success as a whole if they are designed and delivered with care. In this paper I will start by looking at the theory of Management Development (MD) programs – why do organizations build them and scholars recommend them? There are a number of reasons, ranging from improving employee performance and increasing retention rates, to adding significantly to an organization's ability to stay competitive in a global market. Next I will examine the theory behind how MD programs are typically developed, including the use of core competencies as a baseline, and the incorporation of critical psychological dimensions that are fundamental to managerial growth and learning. I will also use case studies to show the various ways that MD programs have been built, and the results of each intervention. Companies such as E*Trade Financial, Microsoft and BP are all examples of organizations that created Management Development programs as OD interventions, with the goal of achieving very different aims in each case. I will then look at what organizational factors help contribute to the success of Management Development as an OD intervention, such as organizational support, employee involvement in design and delivery, and personal commitment on behalf of participants. Conversely, I'll also discuss the factors that can contribute to a program's failure, such as an unsupportive organizational environment; an inability to transfer learning from the classroom back to the workplace; and an inflexibility that can lead to a program's going stale and losing its relevance. Finally, using all of this information I will discuss how I would go about creating a Management Development program as an OD intervention, in order to maximize its chances of improving and enhancing organizational effectiveness.

I.

Management Development is broadly defined as “the process of building the current and potential performance capabilities of an organization’s managers”¹. While the value of developing a manager’s individual potential has been recognized as an end unto itself for many years, more often than not, modern organizations now go a step further to acknowledge and foster a connection between MD programs and the organizational context in which they exist. Thus, developing an MD program today is often an OD intervention, as defined by Cummings and Worley, as it focuses on building managerial capability specifically to increase the effectiveness of the larger organization². Theorist Mikko Luoma explains the current thinking as such: “... the question is not merely one of setting up a developmental initiative and selecting the relevant themes to be stressed therein, but rather of seeing MD as one dynamic system within other organizational systems, and in coping with this interconnectedness in an appropriate manner”³.

Thus when Management Development is done as an OD intervention, it helps address major organizational issues. For example, Cummings and Worley cite evidence that training programs aimed at increasing managerial competence can have a direct affect on such problems as high turnover and poor performance: “... developmental training interventions generally are aimed at increasing the organization’s reservoir of skills and knowledge, and can be related to

¹ Flamholtz, Eric G., and Randle, Yvonne. (2000). *Growing Pains: Transitioning from an Entrepreneurship to a Professionally Managed Firm*. San Francisco: Josey Bass. New and Revised ed. p. 205.

² Cummings, Thomas G., and Worley, Christopher G. (2005). *Organization Development and Change*. Mason, OH: Thomson South-Western. Eighth Edition. p. 219

³ Luoma, Mikko. (2006). A Play of Four Arenas: How Complexity Can Serve Management Development. *Management Learning*, Vol. 37 (1), p. 102.

increased retention and performance”⁴. Thus, the more that managers develop their own skills and build their individual competencies, the more the organizational competence rises and employee performance improves. Changes can include a rise in levels of achievement, increased employee motivation, and higher levels of customer service and quality⁵. All of these factors can also have the effect of reducing turnover. For example, in 2001 a Gallup poll of two million employees at 700 companies revealed that “employees’ tenure and productivity at a company are closely related to their relationship with their immediate supervisor”⁶. So the more individual managerial competence rises, the more retention rates rise as well. In an ASTD and SHRM study in 2000 of seven companies who were experiencing lower turnover and higher satisfaction rates than average companies in their respective industries, each one believed that their successes came “in part because of their investment in employees... and their employee growth and career development initiatives”⁷. These companies, such as Dow Chemical, LensCrafters, and Southwest Airlines, all included the development of managers in their employee growth initiatives. In fact, not only does building managerial excellence improve retention rates for these organizations, but it also has other positive effects such “satisfying high performers, building loyalty and motivation, and creating an employer reputation that attracts better employees”⁸.

Another major issue that MD programs can address is an organization’s need to continually stay competitive. When aligned with business strategy, MD programs can help build competencies that can not only bring about better performance in the workplace, but can increase

⁴ Cummings and Worley, p. 408.

⁵ Pickett, Les. (1998). Competencies and Managerial Effectiveness: Putting Competencies to Work. *Public Personnel Management*, Vol. 27 (1), p. 105-106.

⁶ Emmerich, Roxanne. (2001). Controlling the Costs of Mismanagement and Turnover. *The CPA Journal*, Vol. 71 (10), p. 62.

⁷ Wagner, Stacey. (2001). Retention Update. *Training and Development*, Vol. 55 (8), p. 64.

⁸ Emmerich, p. 62.

a company's marketability and viability. Theorist Sam McClelland describes how more and more organizations are utilizing MD in this capacity:

Many larger, multi-national organizations... [such as] Coca-cola, GE, Xerox, IBM, and Northern Telecom... have instituted long-term management development strategies to enhance their competitive advantage as part of their efforts to maintain, as well as advance, their positions in their respective marketplaces.⁹

MD programs can specifically train and coach managers in competencies such as innovation, creativity, and discernment, that are directly linked to an organization's strategic plan. As Osbaldeston and Barham point out, this also helps make a company into a "learning organization" that can continually grow and change in response to the global marketplace¹⁰ – which is a critical competitive advantage in the ever changing atmosphere of international business.

In looking at the issue of how Management Development programs are built, theorists generally agree that programs should be built on, or at least inspired by, a set of managerial core competencies. These competencies must "reflect the current and projected needs of the organization"¹¹, and are often determined by senior management and/or executives in a company. In addition, managerial competencies are often linked to the core competencies of the organization¹². While it is impossible to generalize about managerial competencies, there are nonetheless similar themes that tend to arise in MD programs across organizations. For example, in a set of research studies conducted in the 1990's, selected companies in America, Europe, and

⁹ McClelland, Sam. (1994). Gaining Competitive Advantage through Strategic Management Development (SMD). *Journal of Management Development* Vol. 13 (5), p. 6.

¹⁰ Osbaldeston, Michael and Barham, Kevin. (1992). Using Management Development for Competitive Advantage. *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 25 (6), p. 19.

¹¹ Pickett, p. 103.

¹² Burack, Hochwarter, and Mathys. (1997). The New Management Development Paradigm. *Human Resource Planning*, Vol. 20 (1), p. 17.

the Pacific Rim revealed a common set of core competencies that were built into their MD programs:

- Management of organizational change and adaptation to unique situations
- Reducing cycle time for virtually every major process and activity
- Promoting continuous learning and improvement
- Introducing and extending quality management principles and practices
- Managing cultural diversity and cross-cultural communications
- Building leadership and relational skills¹³

Common themes in core competencies such as these include interpersonal, leadership, and time management skills. These competencies serve as a foundation for building training courses, and as a basis for organizational coaching. The more they can be tied to actual work objectives for a position, the more successful they can be in helping to guide managerial behavior and create accountability.

Drilling down even further, theorists Eric Flamholtz and Yvonne Randle see core competencies as only one of three critical dimensions of management development. The overarching theme of their theory is that participants in MD programs need to learn “how to behave and think in their roles as managers”¹⁴. This requires that they effectively manage the following three dimensions: “The [manager’s] concept of his or her role; the skills demanded by the role; and certain attitudes or psychological factors”¹⁵. A manager must first understand how his/her role is different from a non-managerial one – i.e. non-managerial roles consist of “doing” work, whereas managerial roles consist of overseeing the work and directing the actions of others. Flamholtz and Randle discuss how managers frequently hold onto the “doing” role, to the extent that their managerial duties are neglected, and their employees are disempowered – so it is critical that they embrace their role as guiding others instead of trying to do all the work

¹³ Burack et al., p. 16

¹⁴ Flamholtz and Randle, p. 205.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 209.

themselves. Secondly, they assert that a manager needs certain skills to succeed – these are the core competencies, fundamentally built on the principle that managers must develop “both the interpersonal and administrative skills required to manage other people” (p. 211). This includes skills much like the common core competencies discussed by Burack et al., namely motivation, communication, and leadership, as well as planning and organization. Finally, the third and perhaps most critical dimension of MD is the development of certain psychological factors that are critical to a manager’s success:

Making the transition [to being a manager] involves learning how to manage three basic needs in ways that are consistent with the manager’s role: how individuals manage their need for control, the source of an individual’s self-esteem, and how the individual manages his or her need to be liked.¹⁶

Flamholtz and Randle believe that MD programs must help participants on a psychological level to let go of the need to control (and be a “doer” as described above), so they can most effectively direct and manage others without doing the work themselves. Furthermore, they must help managers develop the ability to supervise people who may be more highly skilled than they are – and thus they must learn to derive their self-esteem from other sources. As they state, “the best managers understand that their success depends not on their own technical ability but on the abilities of those who work for and with them”¹⁷. Finally, an MD program must help participants manage their psychological need to be liked, and to gain others’ approval – so that the manager can make difficult decisions and resolve conflicts without floundering. Each of these dimensions are the underpinnings of creating an effective Management Development program.

In addition to these theories, which help speak to the questions of why and how the programs are developed, there is also theory behind the way in which Management Development programs are created. In general, MD programs follow the model of: needs assessment; program

¹⁶ Flamholtz and Randle, p. 213.

¹⁷ Ibid.

development and design; delivery; and evaluation¹⁸. In the first stage, there are typically three levels of evaluation: organizational assessment, work assessment, and individual assessment. An organizational assessment determines whether the organization is ready for an MD intervention, by asking questions such as: “Is there organizational support for managers who learn new skills? Will there be opportunities for managers to use the knowledge and training that they learn through the program?” The answers to these questions reveal if the right infrastructure is in place for a Management Development program to be successful. A work assessment helps determine what skills, knowledge and abilities managers need to gain from the MD program. This is when core competencies are often developed – it is the stage that answers the question: “What behaviors should successful managers at this organization be exhibiting, and what should they be accomplishing?” Finally, an individual assessment analyzes the current skill and ability levels of participants who would participate in the management training, to help give more guidance on how the program should be structured to meet immediate needs.

After the needs assessment, the development and design phase begins, where the objectives for the Management Development program are decided and articulated, preferably in a way that is measurable and tied to performance: “[Program] objectives should describe the quality and quantity of performance a participant should be able to demonstrate to be considered competent”¹⁹. Cummings and Worley point out that this can be challenging for MD programs, whose objectives may not be as easily quantifiable; thus they may need to be more general due to the nature of management learning. This is also the stage where program designers decide how to best roll out the MD program, choosing between various tools such as training sessions, one-on-one coaching, online learning, etc. Decisions are also made about whether the MD program is

¹⁸ Cummings and Worley, p. 219.

¹⁹ Ibid.

voluntary or mandatory, and whether a pilot program will be rolled out before a large-scale implementation.

The last two phases of an MD intervention are delivery and evaluation. Delivery is simply the implementation of the MD program as it was designed. After the program is finished, or after the completion of certain phases (in an ongoing program), there are four typical criteria used for evaluation: reaction, learning, behavior and results²⁰. Reaction gauges the participants' response to an MD program, and is often done by written evaluations. This is one of the most common ways organizations judge whether programs are valuable, as managers themselves can attest to whether they felt their training and learning they received was useful. The learning criterion measures how much a manager gained the skills and abilities the program set out to teach, and can be assessed by interview, or sometimes through questionnaires²¹. Finally, the behavior and results criteria can be measured by observation, showing whether or not participants' on the job behaviors and actions have been positively affected by the program as shown in their everyday jobs.

To consider more specifically how Management Development programs are built and whether they bring results, it is helpful to look at some case studies. For example, in 2001, the E*Trade Financial Corporation developed and implemented a good example of a basic, competency-based Management Development program²². In the year 2000, E*Trade was a growing company, with 1000 employees in two corporate branches, one in San Francisco and one in Sacramento. Their infrastructure was expanding, but they had never before done any kind of development of their managers. Their executives realized that, with the company's plans for

²⁰ Cummings and Worley, p. 220.

²¹ Ibid.

²² All information on the E*Trade Management Development program is from an interview with OD consultant Emily Jarosz, 6/2/06.

future growth, they needed to augment the skills of their managers and to put a development program in place. So they began the assessment phase by determining in-house what competencies were currently missing in the company, and which ones would be needed to accommodate their impending growth. With the help of internal HR practitioners, the leadership team decided to focus on the competencies of performance management and team development. They then hired outside consultants to develop a training program that consisted of modules on each of these competencies, as well as legal issues such as hiring and sexual harassment law. In the end, their MD program contained six components:

1. General Role of the Manager
2. Interviewing
3. Performance Management I – Goal-Setting
4. Performance Management II – Feedback and Coaching
5. Legal Basics
6. Team Development

The program, which was mandatory for all company managers, was rolled out over a six month period, with one half-day session on each module. Participant evaluations of the first program were positive, and E*Trade leadership saw the benefits of the program reflected in managers' performance afterward. After the initial rollout, they repeated the MD program on a yearly basis to accommodate new managers entering the company.

A more advanced example of an Management Development program was carried out recently by Microsoft Corporation. After years of fast-paced growth and the quick promotion of programmers into management roles, Microsoft executives realized that although their young managers were smart, they were “ill prepared to manage strategy, structure, people and change”; and Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer believed that “the speed of change in the software industry demanded leadership from the middle of the organization where people were closest to the

technology and customers”²³. So the company conducted interviews with current and former managers, brought in an OD consultant to do more assessment of the current organization, and Ballmer commissioned the “Management Development Group” (MDG) to design an MD program. The MDG worked together with the OD practitioner to formulate the competencies for their management group, and to design a 2-day MD workshop for all middle managers. The workshop was based on the philosophy of self-management, where participants were assumed to have a baseline set of skills and experience, to which they would add knowledge about strategy and change. It included components on distinctive competencies, goal setting, strategy implementation, and an innovative module on “peer consulting”, where participants would meet with a team of their peers to sketch out a strategic plan for their own units²⁴. Microsoft began by rolling out a pilot program to 20 middle managers in their Redmond, Washington headquarters, collecting feedback, and then rolling out to the entire company. They eventually extended the MD program to their managers around the world in Asia, Canada and Europe, and over 500 managers participated in the program over a two year period. Final evaluations were done after every workshop, and a database of feedback was collected so that the program could be continually improved. A qualitative study was also done a year into the program, that showed considerable benefit to the company in the form of managers who developed and implemented strategic plans that were begun in the program²⁵.

Finally, BP (British Petroleum) provides a large-scale, very innovative case study of an MD program. Early in the year 2000, senior management at BP took a look at their front-line managers and recognized a critical need for change. These managers were vital to the company’s operations – 70 to 80% of BP employees reported to them, and they held enormous day to day

²³ Cummings and Worley, p. 221.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

responsibilities – and yet they were not properly trained. These were the people who “were called upon to prevent small problems from becoming full scale operational disasters”, and whose decisions “made an enormous difference in BP’s turnover, costs, quality, safety, innovation, and environmental performance”, and yet they felt disconnected from the company’s mission and ignored by top management²⁶. So BP Chairman Lord Browne appointed a Learning and Development committee to create a Management Development program for BP. There were unique challenges to consider, such as BP’s vast size and diversity (with managers in different countries across the world); and the fact that many worked in remote sites that did not have advanced technology, which were also far away from any centralized location where they might meet with other managers. Moreover, the assessment phase showed that “these supervisors, team leaders, and other BP managers working on the front lines were unhappy with their own supervisors or their career tracks”²⁷.

So the Learning and Development committee partnered with OD consultants, and decided that the only way to create the unique program they needed was to have a fully participatory design phase. Using “Dialogos” founder William Isaacs’ “generative spiral model”, which posits that organizational change begins with a small group of committed people and slowly expands outward to the entire company²⁸, they gathered together people from each constituency in the company to “get the whole system in the room” for the program planning:

... our design process needed to include representatives from every key constituency – not only the lower-level supervisors we were targeting, but also their managers and direct reports. It needed to include people from all of BP’s businesses; from a range of geographic areas, and from all the organizational heritages.²⁹

²⁶ Priestland, Andreas and Hanig, Robert. (2005). *Developing First-Level Leaders*. Harvard Business Review, Vol. 83 (6), p. 114.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

²⁹ Priestland and Hanig, p. 116.

This diverse, inclusive group allowed BP to develop a structure for the program that took into account the needs of employees at multiple levels and locations. Together the group decided to create a global MD program that had common themes but that could tolerate some flexibility in implementation at different sites, in order to account for diverse employees and working conditions. With the help of a group of 15 HR and learning professionals, they also designed a curriculum to be rolled out in six FLL (First Level Leader) courses, with four major components: Supervisory Essentials (legal training for managers); Context and Connections (education on BP's high level strategies); The Leadership Event (a 4-day skill building workshop); and Peer Partnerships (a coaching course that pairs new managers with experienced ones)³⁰. The modules were conducted in a variety of ways, from face-to-face workshops, to web-based courses, to CD-Roms for remote locations without internet access. Over the past four years since the program was rolled out, it has been remarkably successful on a number of levels. Managers who attend rate it very highly, and their bosses rank them consistently higher in performance than managers who do not attend; and more than 8,000 of the 10,000 first level leaders have now attended the trainings. Because of the program's success, BP subsequently created a similar initiative for its 6,000 senior level leaders.³¹

All three of these case studies demonstrate the uniqueness of Management Development programs, both in how they are developed and what they can offer to an organization. Each company took the time to thoroughly assess their current challenges, both internal and external, before designing a program – this was key to making the MD program relevant, and ultimately to contributing to their organization's success.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 119.

³¹ Ibid., p. 120.

II.

There are certain key factors that contribute to the success of a Management Development intervention. The first is a genuine commitment to MD on the part of the organization and its leadership. One way this is shown is by an organization's willingness to commit financial and employee resources to management development – without this, employees are given the message that it is not critical to the business. At the inception of an MD program, it is also imperative for senior management to communicate their enthusiasm, rationale, and support for the initiative. This helps create understanding, receptivity, and even enthusiasm amongst employees before it begins. As some theorists point out, it also helps create a company culture that values staff development and management competencies:

By their actions, [senior] managers show people what is important and valued in the organization. If management development really matters, it should be easy to cite examples – regularly reviewing development plans... time and money set aside for development activities... and the consideration of development as part of the strategic planning process. Management development can and must occur even without the visible support of senior management, but the effectiveness of that process is greatly enhanced if top management plays an active role.³²

When senior managers consciously make management development a part of the company culture, it shows a genuine commitment, and sets the stage for employees to accept and embrace an MD program.

It is equally important for an organization to continue to support management development after an MD program is complete – so that learning may transfer directly to a manager's day to day job. For example, an organization must have ways to hold managers accountable for what they learn in an MD program. In a 2000 Harvard Business Review case

³² Fitzgerald, William K. and Allen, Scott. (2003). Personal Empowerment Key to Manager's [sic] Development. HR Magazine, Vol. 38 (11). p. 86.

study, Thomas J. DeLong, managing director and chief development officer of Morgan Stanley & Company in New York City, suggests that an organization, led by its CEO, must hold managers accountable for what they learn in management development programs, and back it up with performance evaluations tied to compensation³³. It is also important for a company to create an atmosphere where managers can experiment with new skills and behaviors that they learn in an MD program, while receiving receive support from supervisors. These organizational factors have all been shown to contribute to the success of an MD program – conversely, a lack of organizational support, not surprisingly, has been shown to decrease a program’s general effectiveness³⁴.

Another critical factor that contributes to the success of management development programs is staff involvement and input. The BP study shows how remarkably successful an MD program can be if a representative cross-section of an organization’s managers can be brought in to help in the development and design phase – this is perhaps an ideal situation that may not always be possible to replicate. Nevertheless, employee involvement is still critical at the other phases of an MD intervention, such as delivery and evaluation. For example, listening to manager feedback during the evaluation stage and incorporating relevant changes is a significant part of keeping a program relevant and effective. It is crucial that employees feel they are active participants in an MD program – not unwilling recipients who are forced to participate out of obligation. So the more their input can be valued and incorporated, the more ownership they will feel over the program. Some practitioners even solicit feedback mid-way through a program and

³³ Adler, Gordon. (1996). When a New Manager Stumbles, Who’s at Fault? *Harvard Business Review*, Vol. 74 (2), p. 31-32.

³⁴ Belling, Ruth, James, Kim and Ladkin, Donna. (2004). Back to the Workplace: How Organizations can Improve their Support for Management Learning and Development. *The Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 23 (3/4), p. 236.

make design changes on the spot in order to make a class or coaching session more relevant and meaningful.

Staff involvement during the delivery phase is also critical. Requiring employees to participate in interactive exercises that bring real-life experiences into management training can mean the difference between a program they forget, and a program that is behavior-changing. Even if it makes a training or coaching session more challenging, incorporating real world examples is critical to sustained learning:

Learning is most enduring when personal experiences are brought into the training room, even if those real-life experiences may be a little messier to deal with than the tidy examples provided in a textbook or handout. In fact, the most effective program is conducted with eight to fifteen managers in roundtable seminar format, which uses the participants' individual management pressures and challenges as material for learning.³⁵

Having managers participate directly in an MD program, and interactively learn new competencies and skills, is one of the best ways to assure that they take their learning outside of the classroom and actually apply it in their jobs. This is also a key factor in getting managers to take responsibility for their own self-development, which further increases the chances for long-term success of a management development initiative. The more managers can see their own development as a personal responsibility, the more they will commit to internalizing all of the skills and learning an MD program has to offer: "Managers responsible for their own development view the organization as the stage for learning. They create a vision of the successful manager and work toward it... these managers create as well as seize learning opportunities"³⁶. Perhaps the ultimate gauge of an MD program's success is whether its effects are felt years after a class is given or after a coaching relationship ends. The more an

³⁵ Schraub, J. Jonathan. (1998). Putting Teeth into Management Training. HR Focus, Vol. 75 (5), p. 14.

³⁶ Fitzgerald and Allen, p. 85.

organization encourages participants to take responsibility for their own managerial learning, the more this kind of enduring change and development becomes a possibility.

On the flip side, the absence of any of these success factors can clearly contribute to the failure of a Management Development program. As noted above, if an organization's top management does not show their support for an MD program, both through their communications and through financial backing, employees in the company receive the tacit message that it is not important. The same message is sent if an organization's structure does not support learning after a training program, as there will be no incentive for employees to try out new skills and behaviors in the workplace. This can set an entire program up for failure before it even begins. Moreover, the absence of employee involvement in the design, and especially the delivery, of training sessions, can also cause employees to perceive a program as useless and ineffective. It is much harder to foster your managers' personal commitment to learning in a program that they do not truly feel a part of.

Another factor that can contribute to the failure of an MD program is an organization's failure to adapt and revise the program to reflect an ever-changing business environment. It is important for practitioners to have their eyes open to changes happening both on an organizational level and in an organization's industry, in order to ensure that a management development program stays relevant and continues to meet the needs of the business: "Those responsible for MD should see how the dynamism in and around organizations redefines their own work and calls for a new logic to be applied if they are to perform their work successfully"³⁷. This new logic is the idea that an MD program should not be static; rather it should be an evolving product that is shaped by its environment. Thus, a factor that could certainly contribute to the failure of an MD program would be an organization's unawareness of

³⁷ Luoma, p. 102.

the need to continually evaluate whether managerial training is both meeting current needs, as well as anticipating future ones.

III.

Given all of the contributing factors, if I were to implement a Management Development program as an OD intervention, I would start by making sure that there was full organizational support. I would do an organizational readiness assessment, to make certain that senior management felt a sense of urgency around the idea of Management Development, understood its implications and possibilities, and gave its full backing to the program. This would set the stage and would ensure that the organization had the right environment to support a successful program.

I would also consider working with the organization to develop a set of core competencies for the MD program. Ideally this would be a participative process that involved managers across the business; at the very least I would include managerial input that I gather during the needs assessment phase. From there, I would develop an MD program that is customized to the organization's current and future needs. If company leaders were looking to use management development as an integral part of their strategic plan, I would recommend a program that taught strategic skills such as market / client thinking, adaptability, and change management. If the organization was more interested in instilling core values and enhancing managerial skills and knowledge, I would advocate a program that offered opportunities for experiential learning in these areas.

I would raise the possibility of beginning with a pilot program, and stress the importance of evaluating and revising the program before it is rolled out on a large scale. Finally, I would emphasize that developing a Management Development program should be a continual learning process. If an organization is looking to implement a program that is truly valuable to their employees and to their business, it is critical that company leaders remain open to reevaluating and changing the program over time, in order to ensure that it stays as relevant and as useful as possible.

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