

# 20 Ways HR Managers Can Identify and Develop Talent

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The success and sustainability of any organization rely on the ability to identify and nurture emerging talent who will lead the company forward. That's why one of the most important tasks for HR managers is spotting and fostering these future leaders within their organization.

To that end, 20 Forbes Human Resources Council members share some proven strategies and techniques to identify, nurture and develop the next generation of leaders. Read on to explore how HR leaders can build a robust leadership pipeline to meet their companies' future needs.

## 1. Focus On Skills

Focusing on skills allows leaders to focus on North-South career growth, and see East-West too. Leaders can give non-traditional opportunities to people who may not have been obvious leaders in the past, growing new leaders in uncommon ways. Use AI-powered talent platforms, confirming each person has the right skills for a role. Leaders, AI tech and motivated teams are a great combination. - Jess Elmquist, Phenom

## 2. Utilize High-Potential Mentorship Programs

HiPo (high-potential) mentorship programs effectively promote internal mobility and develop future leaders within your organization. Developing and retaining top talent is a priority for every HR leader. Identify and connect high-potential employees with mentors within the organization to chart out personalized career paths. This way, you build a leadership pipeline and retain your top talent. - Matthew Reeves, Together Software

## 3. Leverage Your Recognition Platform

I would look to your recognition platform for a couple of reasons. Employees who recognize their colleagues display a key leadership attribute of acknowledging progress and performance. If those same individuals are often recognized themselves, you have insight into the skills their peers believe they have. - David Bator, Achievers

## 4. Develop A Coaching-Based Leadership Development Program

Implement a coaching-based leadership development program that utilizes psychometric assessment. By doing so, individuals will gain heightened self-awareness and a clear roadmap for self-improvement. - Reema Akhtar, Seer Solutions

## 5. Give Credit Where Credit Is Due

Spot and reward good listeners. Great managers pay attention to what their reports say and do—and it's frankly harder, as well as more valuable than ever, in a hybrid work environment. Who are the employees who ask good questions, genuinely hear their teammates and give thoughtful, actionable feedback? Watch for them, elevate them and establish active listening as a best practice. - Graham Glass, CYPHER LEARNING

## 6. Create An Effective Assessment Center

Implement an effective assessment center. This allows observing and measuring targeted leadership behaviors in a fair, competitive environment. By involving high performers in business simulation exercises and group activities, HR managers can discern skills and behaviors essential for senior leadership roles. The practice also enhances the fairness and credibility of selection processes. - Joseph Soares, IBPROM Corp.

## 7. Help Employees Apply For Open Internal Roles

HR managers must be proactive about internal mobility and career development strategies. In the face of economic uncertainty, this is a clear retention approach. By helping employees explore and apply to open roles internally, expand their skill sets, take on new projects and build their career path, HR managers can nurture the next generation of leaders and retain their winning teams. - Laura Coccaro, iCIMS

## 8. Give A Challenging Project To Those With Potential

Give potential leaders opportunities to work on challenging, cross-functional projects. This exposes them to different aspects of the business, broadens their experience and enhances their understanding of the organization as a whole. - Britton Bloch, Navy Federal

## 9. Train And Support Managers On How To Work With Direct Reports

Train and support managers on how to work with each direct report to understand what growth means for each person. Once that is known, partner with managers on ongoing performance management to help develop each person in the areas of interest, project opportunities, collaboration and exposure, and send them to conferences and networking events. Make it personal and aligned with individual goals. - Oksana Lukash, Avid Bioservices

## 10. Analyze Unique Performance Metrics Like Cross-Team Collaboration

Data sources can unlock unique insights into future leadership potential. Go beyond traditional performance metrics to analyze unique indicators—such as internal network strength, cross-team collaboration intensity and sentiment analysis—to surface leaders that exhibit important skills, such as relationship-building, influence and team development. - McCree Lake, Magic Leap

## 11. Collaborate With Managers To Determine Leadership Qualities

The first step in creating a comprehensive leadership program is that HR managers and managers should collaborate to determine organization-wide leadership competencies and qualities. Next, managers will identify team members who demonstrate potential leadership qualities. Finally, managers should develop career development plans outlining goals, milestones, training and development opportunities. - Carolyn Mathis, Shondaland, Inc.

## 12. Create A Culture That Values Innovation And Strategic Risk-Taking

I believe in cultivating future leaders by instilling ownership, encouraging fast-fail attitudes and teaching them to be business partners. This involves taking initiative, embracing and learning from failures and understanding the business deeply to align actions with company goals. It's crucial to create a culture that values innovation and strategic risk-taking, supported by regular feedback. - Kshitij Jain, Joveo

## 13. Encourage Frontline Managers To Give Their Employees Growth Opportunities

HR managers should encourage frontline managers to give their employees growth opportunities. Frontline managers need to give junior employees the opportunity to challenge themselves, even if they do not ask directly. Just because an employee does not see themselves as a future leader, does not mean they do not have the capability to contribute great things to the organization. - Niki Jorgensen, Insperity

## 14. Look At Current Brand Ambassadors

A first step for determining future leaders within an organization is to look at current brand ambassadors. Which employees are making time to promote the company's employer brand on social media rather than just using it for personal use? These people are already prioritizing the

organization in ways that leaders should, which is a good indicator of their future success in a leadership role. - John Feldmann, Insperity

#### 15. Implement A Mentorship Program

Implementing mentorship programs is a key HR practice to identify and nurture future leaders. Pairing emerging talents with seasoned leaders fosters skill development, knowledge transfer, business acumen and a clear path for growth, ensuring a robust leadership pipeline of capable and inspired individuals within the organization. - Katrina Jones, Acacia Network

#### 16. Look For High-Potential Behaviors

Look for high-potential behaviors. HR managers should identify talent within their organization with the underlying skills essential in leadership: curiosity, learning ability, grit, resilience and adaptability. These attributes are critical to developing and excelling as a leader, more so than any job-specific skill or technical expertise. - Casey Huebsch, South End Partners

#### 17. Conduct Regular Talent Reviews

Regularly conduct talent reviews to evaluate, discuss and plan for the development, performance and potential of employees. The process is typically confidential with the goal of fostering open and honest discussion about employees' capabilities and future within the organization. - Lisa Shuster, iHire

#### 18. Implement Cross-Training Within The Organization

HR managers should implement cross-training within the organization to allow team members to learn about the various facets of the company as well as how all the talent works together. Doing so helps identify potential leaders in specific areas. It also allows employees to learn and excel in areas they may not have originally had access to in their hiring position. - Laura Spawn, Virtual Vocations, Inc.

#### 19. Be A Talent Magnet For Senior Leaders

Attracting and retaining top-performing senior leadership talent to your organization can no longer be solely entrusted to leaders with transactional industry skills and financial acumen. To truly unlock your full potential, companies must prioritize becoming a talent magnet for senior leaders who possess a brand recognized for exceptional social skills and a deep understanding of the theory of mind. - Michael D. Brown, Global Recruiters of Buckhead