



# LEADERS

Leaders in the top tier of their organisation ought to set a good example to employees. So how can these high-level executives develop their own skillsets? **HRM** finds out

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**O**rganisations today have lavished time and money on improving the capabilities of managers in an effort to nurture new leaders.

US companies alone spend nearly US\$14 billion annually on leadership development, a recent McKinsey & Company report found.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents to its survey indicated leadership development was both a current and ongoing priority at their organisation.

A leader's skillset also has a big impact on long-term business success and overall team performance.

Approximately 30% of US companies in the McKinsey research admitted that they had failed to fully exploit their international business opportunities because of a lack of leaders with the right capabilities.

Often, leaders get to where they are because of the results they have delivered to shareholders.

In order to lead their teams to repeat those results for the next three to five years, they need to enhance their skills and continuously improve their capabilities. This is according to

Alex Butt, Managing Partner of Glides Consulting Partners.

He explains that one of the traits of a great leader is that they are open to learning new things.

As leaders often have many priorities and limited time and resources, their skills upgrading programmes must be customised and catered to their needs and schedules.

"A leader who stops upgrading cannot sustain consistency to deliver results," Butt adds.

"However, a leader who keeps learning

and investing in skills for higher sustainability becomes more capable of leading their team towards the future."

According to Kelvin Lim, Founder of Executive Coach International and Southeast Asia's Pioneer Master Coach, leadership skills are essentially universal and perennial.

At the same time, leaders ought to be able to adapt these skillsets into the changing market environment.

"As we are going to have different generations of people coming in, gaps will appear," Lim shares.

## Are your firm's leadership development programmes up to par?

**Leadership** is viewed as the highest priority issue among businesses, according to a survey by Deloitte University Press.

Eighty percent of its respondents rated their leadership bench strength as "urgent" or "important".

Yet, not all companies feel they are meeting the challenge. Only 13% of firms rated themselves "excellent" in providing leadership programmes at all levels.

A further 66% believed that they were "weak" in their ability to develop millennial leaders, while five percent rated themselves as "excellent".

“Different cultural gaps, multinational gaps, and technology gaps will start to appear and these will disrupt the workplace.”

As things change quickly in the workforce, he stresses the importance for an individual to be able to create bridges between these gaps.

Leaders should be able to continue asserting their influence in those areas to maintain their positions at the top tier of the organisation, Lim says.

### Is it a necessity?

Leadership programmes are the most difficult to implement as they encompass all skills as well as technical and management aspects.

Butt emphasises that all companies should have a development programme for leaders, managers and individual contributors.

“Leadership programmes are 20% skills training, 50% will (coaching of mind-sets and beliefs), and 30% ‘spills’(learning through networking, interactions, industry involvement),” he explains.

On the other hand, Lim advises firms to also have a general leadership plan to engage people, and to revise leadership concepts and adopt new ways of dealing with teams and motivating others.

“We are looking at different leaders who encounter specific situations, where they need something that is more tailored to their needs,” he says.

### Catering to the right audience

Executive Coach International provides a specific scheme, the “Leadership Coach Training Programme” designed for HR personnel and coaching specialists.

The programme trains the major domains that coaching professionals have to deal with.

This includes their individual behaviour and their own personal mastery and ability to inspire people.

Glides, however, takes another

## What areas have leadership gaps?

A robust leadership pipeline is critical to drive strategy and growth so organisations can achieve their goals.

While many have devoted considerable resources to development, some organisations have a limited number of leaders who are ready to take on new responsibilities.

Respondents from the 2015 Korn Ferry Real World Leadership Survey collectively listed the leadership gaps in their workforce.

They are:

- Ability to manage through strategic change: (48% of respondents cited this as a concern)
- Broad general management capabilities: (20%)
- Specific critical skill sets: (20%)
- Gender and generational diversity: (10%)

approach to nurturing leaders.

Its services are centered upon the “big T”, which stands for transformational changes that apply throughout an organisation, as Butt puts it.

It also focuses on the “small t”, which translates to trainings and workshops to start bigger T process.

For transformational work, Glides introduces methodologies for teams to implement a structural process that will align the entire organisation towards achieving results.

Still, some organisations will only want training for their team to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to implement in-house systems.

Currently, Glides also partners with companies, individuals and teams within an organisation to deliver key results through its “Three Tracks to Creating Greater Accountability” programme.

### Bottom-line impact

A study by talent firm Development Dimensions International showed that the leadership impact on an organisation’s bottom-line can be significant.

In key metrics like financial performance, firms with the highest quality leaders were 13 times more likely to outperform their industry competitors, the analysis found.

Organisations with higher quality leadership also reported higher employee retention and engagement rates.

As Lim suggests, leaders contribute to the bottom-line through their reputation in the market. A positive reputation attracts more and better types of business and clients.

“The best strategy will allow the company to engage in a market that has higher returns on investments, and a more effectively chosen market,” he shares.

“This will in turn translate into results and performance for the company and rewards for the individual employees.”

“Leaders essentially inspire confidence, engage systems, and motivate their employees to affect the bottom-line.”

Yet, Butt believes that the bottom-line is impacted by a number of factors, only one of which is a leaders’ skillset.

He says the agility of a leader to adapt to changing conditions and their resilience to recover from mistakes are also key to sustaining financial results.

Building agility and resilience typically requires one to tap the beliefs and mindsets of individuals in the organisation.

“When leaders create the right experiences in the organisation, the right culture will drive towards the organisation’s goals,” he adds.

“And if the goal is the bottom-line, then it will have a direct impact.”