7 Actions That Drive Consistent High Performance

By David Jardin, CPA

Companies are always looking for ways to improve performance. These talent management best practices can not only drive continuous high performance, they'll also go a long way toward building a high performance culture.

1. **Review and adapt.** The integration of strategy, organization, and talent should be routinely reviewed and adapted with the Board, and during quarterly business reviews. It may need to be done even more often if the pace or scale of change warrants.

2. **Focus intensely on building critical capabilities.** Identifying, measuring, and narrowing critical capability gaps drives consistent high performance.

3. **Remove obstacles.** Identify and fix situations where high potentials are *blocked* in their advancement. Blockers are employees who have occupied a position for a long time and who are not likely to advance. This places limitations on the number of developmental jobs available. There may be circumstances that justify temporarily leaving a Blocker in place.

4. **Prime the pump.** It isn't a natural impulse for most leaders to give up their top talent, especially if they don't have a ready successor. Recognize and reward leaders who let go of high potentials at the right time, and who develop and export top talent consistently.

5. **Invest disproportionately.** Invest more time, money and other resources on individuals who create the most value.

6. **Apply rigor to identify, calibrate, and accelerate development of high potentials.** Expose high potentials to a mix of assignments and experiences that give them a big picture view, the latitude to contribute innovative ideas, and a heavy dose of interaction with company executives and board members.

7. **Ask the right questions often.** Make a habit of asking questions like the ones below at talent reviews, staff meetings, executive offsites, board meetings, town halls, training events, exit interviews, etc. Doing so will reinforce your commitment to talent management and you'll also gather actionable data and insights that help you to accurately diagnose and take actions that will drive consistent high performance.

   - Will we have the talent we need for success in two years? Five years? Beyond?
   - Why do people join our organization? Stay? Leave?
   - What is our Culture? Does it fit with what we say it is?
   - Are our best leaders in the most critical jobs?
   - Do we have enough backups and pipeline for our critical positions? Top talent?
   - Are solid retention plans in place for our top talent?

You're probably doing some of these things already, but consider trying the ones that you aren't doing currently.