



Client Story

Extending Leadership Talent

The oil and gas industry is highly competitive and nowhere is this more keenly felt than in the contest to recruit and retain capable leaders with a technical background and the ability to lead organisational culture in transformation.

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Extending the leadership talent pool in an oil and gas exploration company

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**Transforming
Leadership**

Transforming
Teams

Transforming
Strategy

Demerged from a larger organisation in 1997, and with operations in more than 20 countries, our client was keenly aware that future success depended on identifying and supporting individuals who were currently in the 'talent pool'. The organisation's aim was to identify and develop diverse leadership capabilities, including those whose 'out-of-the box' approach might put them at the margins of the talent pool.

In a unique programme, which included country managers and technical leaders, the Leadership Development Framework was used to simultaneously identify and develop leadership capability. Specifically, our role was to make visible, both to the organisation and to the individual, qualities of leadership that were in danger of being missed due to conventional preconceptions of the meaning of 'potential'.

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As the company was already engaged in a standard assessment process with two well known assessment companies our task was to look for the 'gap' to question traditional assessments of business and management competence.

Working in tandem with the other agencies, we looked for difference in the managers – for the often elusive qualities that set the rare leaders apart from the majority. Qualities such as the emergent ability to think systemically; to work effectively in complex technical and social situations, to observe and influence organisational networks, to engage adeptly in complex political environments – and to be able to do so whilst not losing sight of bottom line imperatives.

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A starting point was to profile managers in the target population using the assessment tool, the Leadership Development Profile. This well validated methodology clarifies the ‘action logic’ of a person; i.e. the complexity with which they interpret their surroundings, their techniques of problem solving, negotiating and their use of power. Using the profile, Harthill consultants paint a picture of a manager’s ‘action logic’, (Opportunist, Diplomat, Expert, Achiever, Individualist, Strategist and Alchemist). It is the starting point for an intense developmental inquiry into the leadership capabilities of each person and forms the basis for a mutually agreed developmental programme and career plan.

Benefits to the client organisation

There are direct benefits to the organisation in the identification and retention of ‘unseen talent’. The profiling of one senior manager demonstrated that she consistently reasoned with Strategist action logic. Strategists are rare – less than 4% of leaders profile at this stage. She had successfully led a start-up venture with a company that was being sold. Yet the organisation had not fully recognised how her extensive talents for adept negotiation and sensitive diplomacy could be used outside of the start-up environment. We were able to point out the extensive and transferable capabilities of this manager, prompting the organisation to rethink its assumptions and look afresh at her unique leadership capabilities.

The Leadership Development Framework

identifies, what we describe as post-conventional leadership capability. Its aim is to make visible this 'out of the ordinary' capability in order to open up the diversity and capability of the leadership pool. Following their participation in this approach, managers whose capabilities have been overlooked, or more often misunderstood, are typically seen in a different light; their creativity and uniqueness acknowledged and better matched to their task.

As a result of the developmental approach potential leaders have been uncovered who have the capacity to work alongside a network of stakeholders, which is vital in this politically sensitive, international business. Identifying such talents is not easy – traditional psychometric tools cannot recognise complexities in action logic and unless colleagues have the capacity to spot 'out-of-the box' thinking then this talent slips by unnoticed – and then leaves.

Using the Leadership Development Framework in this developmental way has led to increased motivation, the engagement of previously unidentified talent at a senior level and lower turnover.

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