



# Renewing Talent Development

## Mapping, Profiling and Coaching Critical Talent

The world has changed and talent development needs an upgrade.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has heralded in a world of hyper-connectedness with the pace and volume of information flow growing exponentially every few years. Organisational complexity has dramatically increased in an attempt to control the more volatile and unpredictable marketplaces for products and services.

Organisational leaders are facing intense demands to use their time, skills and minds as productively as possible and many are finding themselves swamped with the realities of operating at breakneck pace. For some, the mental and emotional pressure becomes too great and they suffer stress, burnout or worse. Others try and hold on to familiar patterns of behaviour that worked in less extreme times but find that the new conditions are no longer receptive to these types of behaviours.

A few find ways to grow themselves in the midst of these challenges and develop new capacities to embrace the paradox of needing to deliver certainty in a world of uncertainty.

Our view is that for talent development to be successful, organisations need to answer three core questions:

- what are the *organisational expectations* for leadership roles?
- what shape of *leadership-mind* is needed to fill these roles?
- what *transition support* do leaders need to end their old roles well and start new ones?

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How can you find the successful leaders you need in the midst of these turbulent times?

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## 1. Expectations – Role Mapping

For some years now, there has been a quiet revolution taking place in the field of leadership. At the heart of this revolution is the idea that leadership is not the preserve of the most senior people in the organisation, but is an act people engage in at all levels. Talented individuals can therefore make a significant contribution by being placed in key roles throughout their organisation.

Context, however, is a critical determinant of the shape of leadership that is required for successful outcomes to be generated. For example, the leadership of a department of customer service agents will look substantially different from the leadership of a complex programme to integrate a newly acquired business. Both activities may be critical to the future success of the organisation but the roles will have very different characteristics.

Focusing attention on understanding the organisation's expectations of the role before attempting to fill it avoids many of the 'downstream' issues where the wrong type of leader has been put into a critical role. For example, some roles need to be downward and inward facing, others need to look upwards and outwards, others need to be well bounded, while others need to be more fluid. Each of these different types of role will create a different mix of intellectual, emotional and psycho-social demands on the role holder.

One way we can think about the 'shape' of each role is to qualitatively assess the *organisational expectations* of the level of responsibility and the degree of complexity for the role (see box). A hypothetical organisational talent scenario is illustrated below:

### Role Mapping Example

In our example talent process, we have identified four archetypal roles and mapped them against the organisational expectations of responsibility and complexity:

*A: The Technical Leader:* this role leads a team of technical experts who provide technology maintenance support. The overall impact they have is low and role responsibility is assessed as being low. Whilst the technical demands of the job are high, the management of day-to-day work is straightforward, and role complexity is also mapped as low.

*B: The People Leader:* this role leads a department that includes a range of operational activities. The overall impact of the department is assessed as moderate, and the complexity of the role is also assessed as moderate, because many of the functions can operate relatively independently and the leader has direct authority over resources through the organisational structure.

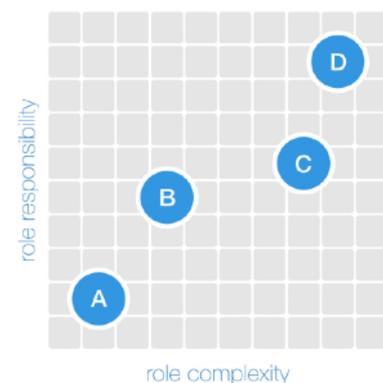
*C: The Strategic Project Leader:* this leader will indirectly influence peers to collaborate around the project design and delivery. High levels of social and relational complexity, coupled with the 'wicked' nature of the strategic work, result in a high rating for the degree of role complexity. Whilst the project could have a high impact, the shared nature of the responsibility makes the role responsibility moderate.

*D: The Systems Leader:* this leadership role will lead a multi-agency partnership to resolve long-standing systemic issues. This carries a high level of responsibility as it has the greatest potential impact on the future success of the organisation. The degree of complexity has been assessed as very high due to the highly interdependent and 'wicked' nature of the work required to transform the system.

### Organisational Expectations

Some inquiry questions that can generate a better understanding of the organisation's expectations of the role include:

- what problems are you expecting the role-holder to solve — operational, strategic, behavioural, cultural?
- how clear or ambiguous are the current challenges and the potential solutions for the role-context?
- how stable or volatile is the role-context — volatile markets, volatile technologies?
- how complex is the role — what level of technical expertise? and / or relational capacity is required to be successful?
- how interdependent is the role — how much partnership working and collaboration across functions is required?
- how autonomous is the role — with regard to structure, function, roles, outcomes, strategy?
- how impactful are the role's outcomes to the future success of the organisation?



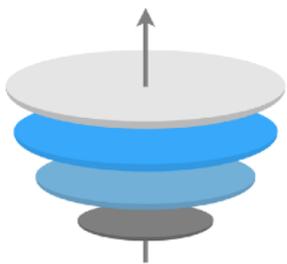
### Horizontal and Vertical

The conventional view of development is that children progress through visible stages where they acquire different intellectual, emotional and behavioural capabilities. Once adulthood is reached, these capabilities can be blended together in varying degrees to help the individual to adapt to various external challenges.

This *horizontal* perspective views adult development as the application of *what we know* (our learnt knowledge and skills) into different domains of expertise.



Further research into adult development has shown that when people encounter significant challenges in their lives, they can shift how they actually view and engage with the world. These *vertical* shifts are about *how we think* about the world — especially how we develop abilities to embrace more complex, ambiguous, systemic and even paradoxical perspectives.



Vertical development has sometimes been referred to as 'growing a bigger mind'.

## 2. Leadership Minds — People Profiling

The second part of the quiet revolution that is underway within the leadership community is a growing understanding of how adults can develop their capability to think about the world. This is described as 'vertical' development and is about growing a bigger mind, one that is able to think about and engage in the world in more complex, systemic, strategic and collaborative ways.

It is critical that talent development professionals understand how adults develop so that the right type of leadership mind is placed into the right role (see *Horizontal and Vertical* box). This helps avoid situations where people are appointed into roles and quickly find themselves 'in over their heads'.

There are a variety of vertical development frameworks that can be used to effectively profile the developmental stage of individuals.<sup>1</sup> They offer a highly validated tool that can qualitatively assess the way an individual thinks about the world.

The profile offers valuable insights to both the leader and the organisation into the type of mind that the individual possesses and helps to answer some critical talent questions:

- what types of organisational environments would this individual be best able to lead in?
- how would they react under conditions of high ambiguity, uncertainty and volatility?
- what would be some ways to support this leader in productively exiting their old role and transitioning into the new?

## 3. Transitions — Talent Coaching

One of the most critical periods of time for a leader and their teams is the transition into a new leadership role. When leaders transition it is critical that they are supported to both end and start their role well.

When leaders exit a role badly, they can leave chaos in their wake. Bad endings can take many forms and will severely impact the ability of the incoming leader to create a positive environment with their team. Even well-intentioned efforts can create significant challenges for a new leader to deal with. For example, research into Fortune 500 companies showed that external CEOs recruited to replace a retiring CEO almost always failed. The reasons boiled down to a single issue — staff sabotaging the new CEOs efforts.<sup>2</sup>

Supporting talented leaders with individual coaching can help them work through their own frustrations and offer different perspectives on how to engage the team. Team coaching can offer a channel for any frustrations and unmet needs of the team to be attended to, so that unfinished business can be worked through in healthy ways.

Sometimes leaders are deliberately placed into a role that requires a developmental upshift in thinking, feeling and acting. In these cases, individual support is critical to aid the orientation and transition. For example, leaders with a high drive for achievement in a role that requires higher levels of interpersonal skills may benefit from emotional and relational coaching to avoid struggling

with the emotional demands of the role. And individuals who are expected to lead wide-scale organisational changes may benefit from systemic and transformational coaching to support their shift to the required later stages of development.<sup>3</sup>

### A Vertical Lens on Talent

We believe that organisations can develop a vibrant and sustainable talent ecosystem by placing their attention on:

- the expectations of the role,
- the capacities of the individual,
- the way leaders transition into and out of roles.

Vertical development frameworks offer a useful approach for mapping roles, profiling leadership capacity and for developing bespoke interventions that can help the individual and the organisation to flourish.

To learn more about how we can support your talent development efforts, please contact us at [growth@renewal-org.uk](mailto:growth@renewal-org.uk).

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The development of a vibrant and sustainable talent ecosystem is a real possibility.

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### Notes

1. We are accredited to work with 3 of the main vertical development frameworks (LDF, GLP and STAGES).
2. Nohria, N, and Khurana, R. *"The Effects of CEO Turnover in Large Industrial Corporations: A Study of the Fortune 200 From 1978 - 1993 (Revised)."* Harvard Business School Working Paper, No. 96-056, December 1997.
3. Rooke, D. *"Organisational Transformation Requires the Presence of Leaders who are Strategists and Alchemists."* First published in *Organisations and People* 4.3 (1997). Amended October 2001.

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At **renewal**, we are passionate about helping individuals, leaders and organisations to learn, grow and transform. We offer talent development services to support the mapping, profiling and coaching of talented individuals in public, private and third sector organisations.

*Jason Harrison* is a coach-consultant who works with individuals, teams and organisations to transform their potential into practice. His career has been a blend of commercial and consulting roles and he has worked at a senior and strategic level with private, public, and third sector organisations. He is an enthusiastic learner, with a Masters degree from Ashridge and postgraduate training in complexity theory, individual and group therapy, systemic coaching, emotional intelligence, integral leadership and vertical development. He supports clients to integrate their personal development practices with the demands of their strategic and operational challenges.

*Sarah Willis* is an executive coach, working with individuals, teams and whole systems to improve their performance. In her previous career, she worked across all three sectors in organisations as diverse as the Home Office and NACRO, and at various levels of seniority including as CEO. Sarah has trained as a Psychotherapist and Organisational Consultant in Transactional Analysis, and as an NLP Practitioner and Executive Coach. Her coaching work is underpinned by a profound understanding of the pressures of senior management and its impact at a psychological level, as well as broad experience of corporate life.

*Anna Heywood* is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist and works as an executive coach and facilitator, specialising in leadership and organisational development. She has previously worked for various organisation development consultancies, including Roffey Park, PB Coaching and OPP Ltd. Anna spends much of her time working with directors, chief executives and their leadership teams across private, public and voluntary sector organisations. She brings a deep appreciation of the psychological and practical business applications to her work and her interests lie in working with leaders and teams to allow them to reach their true potential.

*Simon Cavicchia* is an internationally experienced OD Consultant, Executive Coach, Coach Supervisor, Team Coach, Process Consultant, Facilitator and Lecturer. He draws on his consulting experience, deep human systems understanding and psychology to enable organisations to successfully navigate the complexities of transformational change processes, develop leadership cultures, teams and individuals. He is a Visiting Lecturer at Ashridge Management School on the Masters in Executive Coaching and works in the NHS, University Sector, Media, Retail, Pharmaceuticals Industry, Oil and Gas, Financial Services and a number of Public Sector organisations such as the Probation Service.