

Going behind the Corporate Curtain with a *BluePrint* for *Leadership Potential*

An Integrated Framework
for Identifying
High-Potential Talent

By Allan H. Church and Rob Silzer



What is the true definition of “high potential”? How do we identify high-potential talent? Can leadership potential be developed in someone, or is it something that is inherent and pre-determined in an individual? Ask anyone working in talent management or human resources and they will tell you that these questions reflect some of the most intense and ongoing debates in organizations today. Nonetheless, identifying potential is key aspect of an effective talent management system (Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

There are several reasons driving this heightened attention to differentiating potential in organizations. Changing workforce demographics, the impact of globalization and technology, and increased scrutiny from investors and boards of directors have increased the spotlight on the quality of an organization’s leadership talent. In addition, competition for current and future talent remains a critical factor in strategic workforce planning efforts (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). As a result of these trends, the question of “What is potential?” has become a hot topic at numerous professional conferences (e.g., Human Resource Planning Society, Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology, etc.) and consortium meetings (e.g., Conference Board Council of Talent Management, The Mayflower Group).

Understanding Potential

While understanding leadership potential has been of interest to practitioners and organizational psychologists for years, it has not received the level of attention in the formal academic literature that you would expect. Instead, as many chief talent officers and senior vice presidents of talent management will confirm, a profusion of consulting firms and assessment companies all claim to have the “silver bullet” for identifying leadership potential. Interesting, however, their assess-

ment approaches often differ dramatically, and there seems to be limited conceptual agreement regarding the definition of potential among them as well. In addition to this potential source of confusion, there are also many senior executives who continue to assess future potential based on either current performance or their own personal perspective and success story (the “like me” phenomena) which may or may not be grounded in what is needed for the future of the business.

Despite the lack of clarity regarding leadership potential, it has not dampened the rising popularity of high-potential assessment and development efforts in major corporations. In fact, a recent benchmark study (Church & Rotolo, 2013) noted that 70% of 84 “top development” companies are currently using assessments in a variety of forms (e.g., 360 feedback, personality tests, structured interviews, cognitive measures, simulations, etc.) with some vigor, with 90% assessing their senior executives and 75% assessing high-potentials. This result is comparable to another recent study in which 65% of 20 major business corporations reported using assessment tools, beyond manager ratings and reviews, to identify high-potential candidates (Silzer & Church, 2010).

Given the level of effort and resources dedicated to differentiating and building

leadership talent in corporations today, isn’t it time we made progress on helping human resource and talent management practitioners understand the true nature of potential? The purpose of this paper is to do just that. We will describe the *Leadership Potential Blueprint* (the Blueprint), a new integrated framework for thinking about, assessing and developing the most important characteristics and skills of a “high-potential” individual. The Blueprint is based on multiple sources including:

- (a) a review of theory and research in applied psychology and organizational behavior
- (b) data and high-potential frameworks collected from leading consulting firms
- (c) recent benchmark studies of high-potential practices in “top development” companies
- (d) internal models, tools and practices from highly regarded organizations in talent management and learning and development, and
- (d) the combined internal and external experience of the authors in the assessment, staffing and development of individuals, leaders and executives.

The *Leadership Potential Blueprint* is grounded in theory, science and practice. For a comprehensive review, see Silzer & Church, 2009. While most models and assessments of potential are focused on only one or two specific ideas, the Blueprint is a comprehensive, integrated and indeed somewhat *prescriptive* approach to understanding leadership potential. It represents the latest talent management thinking. Perhaps more importantly, the Blueprint is *specifically intended* to help senior leaders, managers, human resource professionals, and chief talent management officers better understand and make critical decisions ►

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regarding high potential identification and leadership development.

The BluePrint is already gaining traction in the business landscape and is currently the underlying framework for integrated leadership potential assessment and development efforts at several major corporations with strong talent management functions such as PepsiCo, Eli Lilly and Citibank. It is also being integrated into various professional models such as the Conference Board's recent report (2013) in conjunction with Right Management on accelerating the leadership development of high potentials in Asia, as well as other consulting firm approaches. The model has both organizational appeal and a rigorous conceptual foundation to make a significant contribution to strategic talent management efforts.

The Building Blocks of Potential

It would be nice if there was a simple answer to the question "What is high-potential?", but there is not. One of the reasons that there is so much debate about this question is that "potential" is actually a broad construct. While it can be helpful to ask the key question of "Potential for what?", there often is no clear or specific answer. For example, in education "potential" might mean the ability to learn and be measured by later school achievements. In the military, key predictors might be motivation and commitment and be measured by advancement to officer level or combat leadership effectiveness. At senior levels in organizations, executives who are only a few career moves away from a C-suite leadership role may not be assessed at all for their broad potential but more likely for their degree of "fit" or "stretch" to a specific leadership role such as Chief Financial Officer or GM president.

Given the pressures on companies, however, to deliver sustained business growth, much of the effort and energy in organizations today is focused on development against longer term leadership needs or on identifying "diamonds in the rough." For the purpose of this article, we frame potential at the broadest level in terms of leadership capability and organizational roles. High-potential for leadership, or leadership potential, can ultimately be measured by accelerated advancement and successful performance in higher level leadership positions. Leadership potential is ultimately confirmed as individuals who later

become successful organizational leaders. But the challenging part is to distinguish these individuals earlier in their career based on those abilities, skills, characteristics and behaviors that are reliable predictors of later leadership success.

While some organizations actually use "the ability to perform in leadership positions two levels higher in the organization" as their official definition of potential when classifying talent (Silzer & Church, 2010), this becomes a problem because it only states the desired later outcome but not the early predictors of potential. Typically, it does not indicate what specific skills, abilities or behaviors are required to be successful at

have or demonstrate. There are specific assessment, training and development implications associated with each building block, and different approaches an individual can take to leverage and adapt their skills and abilities in each area to support their leadership success.

Foundational Dimensions

The *foundational dimensions* of potential include two core building blocks: personal characteristics and cognitive capabilities. These are the two most fundamental and stable building blocks of leadership potential and are core variables underlying individual differences in psychology. They

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higher levels, or what factors help individuals to move up the organization more quickly than others. Similarly many other definitions of high potential focus only on the expected later outcomes, but are silent on the skills, abilities, and behaviors that are needed to be successful in those later outcomes and on the current indicators that predict later success (Silzer & Church, 2009; 2010). It would be like defining "sports potential" in college students as having the ability to successfully play in Major League Baseball, but saying nothing about the skills and abilities to scout for now in college students. This is where the BluePrint provides an important and useful framework for thinking about those early predictors of later leadership success.

In particular, the *Leadership Potential BluePrint* outlines an overall framework of three types of dimensions and six building blocks that provide a framework of the skills and abilities that make up leadership potential in total. These building blocks are both additive (they add to the impact of each other), and relatively independent from each other (an individual can be strong in one area and weak in another). They outline key characteristics and skills that an individual may naturally

can directly impact an individual's potential for leadership. Foundational dimensions are relatively stable across situations, experiences and time and are hard to change in an individual. They are unlikely to develop or change much over time without an extraordinary intervention and influence from others. It is possible, however, to help an individual (a) develop workaround strategies that can mitigate some of an individual's deficiencies or derailers, and (b) create complementary work teams that can help to balance out deficiencies and strengths across different people.

Personality Characteristics. Personality characteristics directly impact an individual's success in dealing with and influencing other people. The core personality variables that may be the most relevant to leadership potential (Silzer & Church, 2009) are:

- Social and interpersonal skills
- Assertiveness, dominance
- Maturity, emotional self-control, resilience

These characteristics benefit individuals in leadership roles and are consistent with high-

potential identification decisions in some companies. With focused development work (e.g. extensive assertiveness training or interpersonal skills coaching) some individuals have been able to moderate a deficiency in this area but rarely have been able to turn it into a strength. Although there are many approaches for understanding an individual's personality broadly, the specific characteristics noted here are the ones that are most *directly linked* to long-term leadership potential.

Cognitive Capabilities. There has been general agreement that senior leadership positions and the complex business challenges faced by senior leaders usually require a minimal level of cognitive abilities. The core cognitive capabilities that may be most relevant to leadership potential (Silzer & Church, 2009) are:

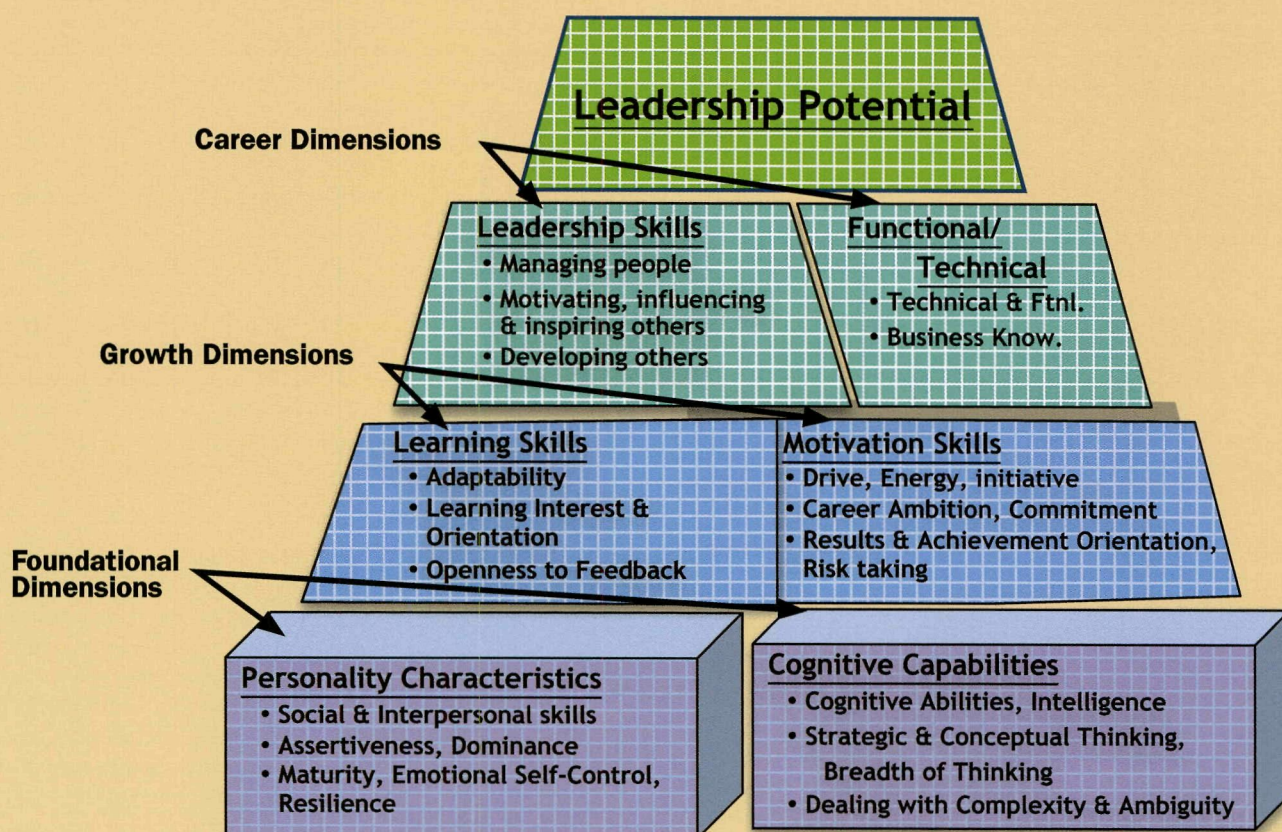
While solid cognitive abilities are often seen as an entry requirement to being a successful organizational leader, there has been increasing attention given to an individual's ability to handle complex and ambiguous issues.

- Cognitive abilities, intelligence
- Strategic and conceptual thinking, breadth of thinking
- Dealing with complexity and ambiguity

While solid cognitive abilities are often seen as an entry requirement to being a successful organizational leader, there has been increasing attention given to an individual's ability

to handle complex and ambiguous issues. In addition, over the last decade many companies have identified strategic thinking as a core leadership competency for C-suite roles in all functions. Cognitive capabilities are very difficult to change, if at all, without an extensive long-term effort. As a result, many practitioners would argue that they are among the best early predictors precisely because they are so stable. Others believe that

FIGURE 1: THE LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL BLUEPRINT



some individuals are able to overcome moderate deficiencies in this area through hard work and determination. We agree that these are very useful early predictors but they should not stand alone since they influence and are influenced by the other building block dimensions.

The most important decision to make when using foundational dimensions is determining the personality characteristics and the threshold of cognitive capabilities that are needed in senior leadership positions. If “general leadership potential” is the goal then the full set of personality and cognitive variables that we identified might be needed. Conversely, from a talent planning perspective, if the answer to “potential for what” is a specific target or destination leadership role then a more specific personality and cognitive profile may be required (e.g., for a CFO role someone with high conscientiousness may be needed, or for a Chief Marketing Officer role someone who is inquisitive and creative may be desirable).

Growth Dimensions

The *growth dimensions* are intervening variables to individual learning and can facilitate or hinder an individual’s leadership growth and development. They consist of two building blocks: learning skills and motivation skills. They are key indicators of whether a person will further develop and learn new skills and behaviors whether those are to be

some will try to keep up and some will fall behind. These dimensions can help organizations identify individuals with those different profiles.

These building blocks are likely to be reasonably consistent and stable in an individual, until there is a significant situational change. They tend to get expressed or even get stronger when a person has strong interests in an area, has an opportunity to learn more in an interest area, has a supportive, encouraging environment or is put in an environment that requires them. They can change and develop throughout a career or at specific life-stages.

Learning Skills. Learning skills often distinguish those individuals who step up and succeed at new challenges from others who do not succeed. The core learning skills most relevant to leadership potential (Silzer & Church, 2009) are:

- Adaptability
- Learning interest and orientation
- Openness to feedback

Learning skills have been recognized as being key to an individual’s ability to effectively lead in changing issues, situations and business markets. They are central to learning and development efforts in other areas of potential as well. Other related learning concepts include “having a growth mindset,” demon-

the vine” depending on their openness to learning and changing.

Motivation skills. Motivation skills vary considerably across individuals but often distinguish successful leaders. Most successful leaders in organizations are highly motivated and driven to accomplish work and career goals (for example, “Drive for Results” has been one of PepsiCo’s enduring leadership competencies used to evaluate leadership capability for decades). The core motivation skills most relevant to leadership potential (Silzer & Church, 2009) are:

- Drive, energy, initiative
- Career ambition, organizational commitment
- Results and achievement orientation, risk taking

The focus here is on demonstrated behavior and not just stated views. Stating an ambition to “lead the company” is an often heard, and often hollow, pronouncement that is meaningless unless backed up with initiative and action. However, someone who demonstrates a high level of motivation skills (e.g. taking the initiative to lead a new project or task force over and above their core job responsibilities, or learning an entirely new functional skill area on their own) can substantially change his/her career path and success. These skills often open doors to new challenges and assignments. Career ambition in particular has emerged as a distinguishing skill now that individuals are encouraged, even required, to take control of their own careers. Changing these skills is very possible and usually starts internally with the individual deciding to focus on them. However an encouraging manager or an engaging environment can often prompt an individual to take action.

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gained from new experiences, coaching and feedback or formal training. Individuals, particularly those with moderate to high levels of self-awareness, can leverage these skills and abilities to learn new things. They can have significant impact on whether an individual grows and adapts over time or stays locked into old habits and behaviors. Growth, motivation and learning often go hand-in-hand and reflect the individual’s willingness and energy to learn, adapt, take risks, and try new experiences. As businesses and the world change, some individuals will lead the change,

strating “learning agility,” and “learning from experience” (Dweck, 2006; Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000; McCall, 1998). It is important to recognize that an individual may (or may not) be able to enhance his or her learning skills when put into a new situation with new challenges and given support from others. Sometimes this change may be initially forced from the outside and then later adopted internally in an individual, such as in educational and military settings. In either case people can either be a “late bloomer” and step up to the opportunity or “wither on

These two building blocks, learning and motivation, interact with each other. Learning something new may instill positive energy and drive for pursuing new achievements. Similarly being motivated toward some larger goal can trigger an interest in learning about new topics that come up along the way. But these skills are independent in the sense that it is not uncommon for people to be strong in one area and deficient in the other. In addition, these areas can (and are more likely than foundational skills to) change over time and across situations for an individual. This is good news for talent management professionals who want to

“enhance potential.” However, that means that individuals might also become less motivated and learning oriented in certain situations such as working under a weak leader or poorly defined and structured development assignment. These are areas where human resources and talent management professionals can have a significant impact in identifying people with low learning and motivation skills and working to find a more engaging and stimulating work environment for them.

focus on instilling corporate values, another firm might emphasize manager quality through the development of direct reports. The underlying constructs between different company models are often similar and significantly overlap, but each is chosen to be relevant to a specific organizational culture.

Leadership Skills. These skills are actually very common across organizations, but go

programs. In recent years, they have been more selective in whom they select into the programs in order to make sure the individuals have some clear predisposition to leadership and the company is making wise investments. It is those early cues that need to be more clearly articulated and leveraged. These leadership skills can be taught and modified, provided the individual has acceptable levels of skills on the foundation and growth dimensions (i.e., an example of the additive effect of the three dimensions we mentioned earlier).

Functional/Technical skills. These capabilities operate in the same way as the leadership skills. They focus on the early indicators that an individual has the preliminary skills for a successful leadership career. The two core functional/technical skill dimensions most relevant to leadership potential (Silzer & Church, 2009) are:

- Technical/functional skills in a given area of expertise
- Business knowledge (both company and industry specific as well as broader knowledge)

Skills in these areas are often specific to a particular career, such as a finance leader or a marketing leader. They vary not only across functions but may also vary across companies. This requires answering the question, “potential for what?” (see Church, Haime & Johnson, 2012, for case example in the Finance function at PepsiCo). Business knowledge is typically relevant to most leadership skills, but is particularly important for individuals in general leadership positions where responsibilities span numerous functions. Again we are looking for early indicators that an individual will be able to be effective in a long-term leadership career. For example, what technical skills and knowledge should we look for early in the career of someone who aspires to be a CFO. Are there specific early career knowledge and skill markers in this area that predict later leadership success?

From a development perspective, career dimensions are easier to influence and change in an individual than *any* of the other dimensions of potential, though to state the obvious, accomplishing sustainable behavioral change is never an easy task. Nonetheless, through learning interventions, effective performance management, new assignments, senior leadership modeling, data-driven feedback tools

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Career Dimensions

The third set of critical predictors of potential are the *career dimensions*. The two key building blocks here are leadership skills and functional capabilities. Most talent management, learning and organization development professionals have focused significant efforts in these areas, particularly in developing leadership competencies, programs and models for organizations. There is general agreement that these specific skills (such as leadership and functional skills) are important to being successful in a designated career path, such as a C-suite functional leader, or region or business unit general manager. These skills are the most developable of all the predictors of potential. Usually a focused and extensive individual feedback, learning and development effort is required to enhance skills in these areas.

In our experience, leadership skills and functional capabilities do not differ substantively from company to company at the broadest level. What does significantly differ are the words, labels and behaviors used to define them for a given organizational culture. Different organizations will elevate or minimize various leadership skills and functional capabilities based on their own strategic business and people priorities. So while one company might

by different names. Our interest here is in early career skills, that is, those leadership predispositions that are indicative of later effective leadership. What are the early cues and predictors of leadership? The core leadership skill dimensions that we think are most relevant to leadership potential (Silzer & Church, 2009) are:

- Managing people
- Motivating, influencing and inspiring others
- Developing others

These areas are central to being an effective leader. We are focused on the early indicators in these areas. For example, how well an individual manages a small ad hoc task force, or keeps a team motivated through crises are likely early indicators of later leadership effectiveness with larger teams or whole organizations. This is why it is often helpful to give individuals team assignments early in their career to see how well they perform. These early leadership indicators can also be used to select college graduates into management training programs. The same principle applies when putting people through development assessment centers to gauge their early leadership behaviors.

Of course organizations have heavily invested in leadership training and development

and targeted coaching organizations can enhance leadership potential through a variety of development channels. In the context of development, however, it is important to recognize that there is typically an inverse relationship between the importance of leadership skills and functional/technical skills with respect to future potential and current level in the organization. In most organizations, for example, leadership skills will increase in criticality for succession planning with level of seniority while the degree of functional and technical capability required will likely remain steady or even decrease past a certain level of proficiency.

Contextual Factors

In addition to the above dimensions there are a number of contextual factors or considerations that can influence an organization's talent classification process rather than an individual's inherent leadership potential. Although these are not part of the BluePrint, they are important to highlight as they can play a role in influencing how leaders think about assessing potential. In fact, many organizations today make the mistake of confusing one or more of these factors with the key dimensions of potential. This can lead to inaccurate (with respect to potential) and even potentially inappropriate models of talent differentiation in their pipelines. These contextual factors include past performance, mobility, background demographics, cultural fit and readiness for a new role. While all of these factors may be important to consider in a *talent planning context*, none of them should be included in a formal definition of potential for conceptual, accuracy, practical and legal reasons (particularly background demographics).

Performance history. Past behavior has historically been considered as the best predictor of future performance in similar situations. However, we now live in a VUCA business environment (i.e., volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) that requires new and different behaviors. The leadership situations faced are very different today so past behavior no longer works as well as a predictor. Unfortunately past performance has often been confused with potential, primarily because performance is so important to short-term success that it is hard to ignore it, particularly in companies focused on the bottom-line. This phenomenon in talent management efforts has been termed the



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“performance-potential paradox” (Church & Wacławski, 2010). A better way to think about performance, is as a gatekeeper measure over time that allows an individual to continue to progress. So many other factors play into a given performance that it is dangerous and misleading to link it to future leadership potential.

Mobility. An individual's mobility status often generates significant debate in talent reviews focused on whether an individual who is not willing to relocate can be considered as having potential. We would argue that while mobility is clearly an important consideration for planning and staffing purposes, it is not and should not be an indicator of leadership potential. Given that someone's mobility status can change quickly and potential should be a relatively stable construct, it makes little

sense and potentially hurts your talent pipeline planning to reduce your high-potential pool simply because someone cannot move right now.

Background demographics. There are some demographic variables such as age, ethnicity, gender, and nationality that might be considered in the talent planning process for a range of reasons such as diversity needs, cultural fit within a given country, or an aging senior leadership pool with high levels of anticipated exodus due to retirement. But we believe that these variables are unrelated to actual leadership potential and should not be used as indicators of such.

Cultural fit. It has become fashionable in some organizations to determine how well an individual fits the specific organizational culture. While we see the need for an individual

to effectively operate within organizational values and behavioral norms, we think cultural fit is only relevant to a specific and well-defined organizational culture, typically based on the past. It does not account for a changing cultural environment whether plan-fully orchestrated or naturally evolving, and may not tolerate a range of leadership approaches; either of these effects can lead to future business failures. It may, however, be a useful factor for short-term considerations, particularly in the context of the requirements for a very senior role, similar to performance, but not as a longer-term predictor of potential.

Readiness. Finally, an important consideration in the talent planning process is how ready the individual is currently for various roles and the expected development progress and readiness for higher-level leadership positions in the future. This “planning horizon” as it is often called, however, should have nothing to do with someone’s inherent leadership potential. Readiness is for succession and talent planning purposes only. Some organizations, however, have mistakenly included readiness as a potential indicator.

Considerations for Assessment & Development

Overall, the *Leadership Potential Blueprint* is an important new integrated framework for defining leadership potential. It helps to answer the questions of “What is a high-potential?” and “Can potential be developed?” While the model is comprehensive, the Foundational, Growth and Career dimensions make intuitive sense and are easy to operationalize at multiple levels of depth.

Table 1 provides some basic questions that can help an organization begin to implement the *Leadership Potential Blueprint* in a talent management and planning context. Although these questions are no substitute for formal and valid assessment measures and tools, they will help leaders, managers, HR and talent management professionals to think more carefully and consistently about what it means to evaluate and identify potential in their organization, and to be more specific in the leadership talent that they are looking for in their leadership succession and planning process.

In general, the ideal high-potential assessment and development talent management process would incorporate a fully validated multi-trait, multi-method approach based on all of the dimensions outlined in the *Leadership Potential Blueprint*. We encourage approaches that take a multi-dimensional approach to leadership potential, which we believe will also improve an organization’s ability to more accurately manage their talent pipeline. In some contexts, it might be most strategic to focus on a subset of dimensions of potential from the model (e.g., personality, learning, leadership skills). In other situations where the focus is on broader talent selection or on identifying “diamonds in the rough,” a more broadly based leadership potential assessment approach would be most appropriate. Let’s take two short examples to

targeted at individuals in certain career stages/levels in the organization. The PepsiCo system leverages a multi-trait, multi-method model beginning at lower levels in the organization with “Checkpoint-0.” This two-hour online measurement process is targeted at identifying future leadership potential based on each of the components of the Blueprint but emphasizing more of the Foundational and Growth areas over Career dimensions at this level. This is followed by higher checkpoints (1, 2, 3, etc.) which go successively deeper in the assessment process moving from core online psychometric tools to more complex custom simulations and situational judgment tests, all the way to full day assessment centers, individualized structured interviews, and deep psychological assessments.

TABLE 1: QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN USING THE LEADERSHIP BLUEPRINT

Dimensions	Key Questions
Foundational Dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the few critical personality characteristics that leaders need to have to run our business in the future? • What personality derailers must we avoid in future leaders or to help individuals find “work around” strategies to minimize their impact? • What level of pure “smarts” and strategic/conceptual thinking do we need in our future leadership pool?
Growth Dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of learning orientation, capability for growth, and interest in experiences do our leadership potential talent have today and is there a gap in with what they will need in future roles? • Does our leadership potential talent have the drive, energy and commitment needed to move the company beyond where we are today? Are they ready and willing to make the sacrifices it takes to get to the top of the company?
Career Dimensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we identified, articulated and embedded in our talent, performance and development systems the right leadership behaviors needed for the future? • Do we have the right mix of current and future-oriented functional skills and abilities outlined in our performance and development systems?

describe how the Blueprint can be used as part of a more systemic talent management process.

At PepsiCo, the *Leadership Potential Blueprint* serves as the basis for the organization’s entire multi-tier Leadership Assessment & Development program (LeAD). Developed and launched in 2010, the program provides increasingly intensive integrated assessment and development efforts that are linked to key leadership transitions and

At higher levels the assessment emphasis is generally placed more on the Growth and Career dimensions of the model (except perhaps among individuals where the organization has more limited experience such as new hires). Overall the LeAD program based on the Blueprint has brought a new level of rigor to the potential assessment and development process and has been very well received by candidates, managers and HR leaders alike. There has been considerable pull for the program from the field. ➤

Similarly, Eli Lilly uses the *Leadership Potential Blueprint* as the foundation for its talent identification process. They have an assessment process called the “Talent ID tool.” Alan Colquitt, Director of Global Assessment & Workforce Research at Eli Lilly, describes the process as combining formal psychometric assessment with meetings and discussions to arrive at an overall judgment about a person’s level of potential. The formal tool takes the form of a discussion guide for leaders and HR professionals and the tool is completed in a meeting with the supervisor and other leaders who may know the person, along with the appropriate HR person as the facilitator. This guide is broken into sections aligned with the dimensions of the Blueprint. Each section includes formal assessment evidence relevant to that dimension in addition to discussion questions about the person’s background, experience, etc., leading to a formal rating of each dimension along with an overall potential rating. This process has recently been expanded and tailored for assessing top-level technical potential as well.

Conclusion

Being able to identify talent that has true leadership potential is a critical objective in most organizations (Church & Waclawski, 2010; Silzer & Church, 2010). It is directly linked to the future sustainability and survival of the business whatever the industry or sector. The Blueprint is an intuitive yet powerful framework for defining potential and outlining the core dimensions that need to be considered in a holistic manner. By introducing and using the *Leadership Potential Blueprint* as part of an integrated talent management system, organizations will be significantly better positioned to achieve their long-term strategic human capital strategies by ensuring greater:

- Success in accurately identifying potential in talent to lead the organization in the future
- Consistency in defining and using the term leadership potential across different business sectors, groups and functions in an organization
- Insight and effectiveness in reviewing and understanding the relationships among different dimensions of the Blueprint when assessing leadership potential (e.g., Foundational, Growth, Career)
- Competitive advantage in attracting and

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retaining critical leadership talent through enhanced identification and segmentation of high-potential individuals for accelerated development and succession planning

In sum, the future of organizations and business success is based on outstanding and differentiated leadership. It is critically important then that human resource and talent management practitioners help their senior leaders and managers implement the most effective approach to identifying future leadership potential and making strategic talent placement decisions based on that data. Building talent management efforts on a rigorous and consistent model of potential will help avoid confusion, inaccuracy and poor decision making over time. We think the *Leadership Potential Blueprint* shows them the way forward. The Blueprint represents a significant new approach to any talent management process at any level of implementation. **P&S**

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