HIPOS AS BRAND ADVOCATES
A MISSING LINK

A recent study of Right Management and People Matters reveals the gap between the efforts by employers on creating HiPo programs and leveraging the full potential of high potentials as levers of attraction and retention of top talent

By **Prashant Pandey**

Research suggests that today, HIPO programs are mainstream in many organizations. The Right Management & People Matters Study, *HiPo's - Your Brand Ambassadors Survey 2016,* reveals that 73 percent of companies have a HiPo program. However, the question is how robust these programs are regarding identification, communication, and management - and that is where the real value of these programs lies.

The Study also explores the most commonly used methods for HiPo talent identification. Even today, 73 percent of organizations rely on performance data, and as many as 63 percent rely on manager's recommendation. The Study also reveals that 43 percent of companies use assessment centers as part of HiPo identification. While these inputs are critical for HiPo identification, they are not sufficient. Right Management's 4P approach looks at Personality (essential ingredients such as the drive to grow), Potential (ability to perform at a higher level within a timeline), Performance (from performance data and manager's inputs) and Perception (perception of stakeholders) as a holistic way to identify HiPos. Now in its 4th year, the HIPO Week, which is a running partnership between Right Management and People Matters, focuses on leveraging HIPO programs and HiPos as brand ambassadors. Brand matters and it matters a lot. Employers with strong employment brands see a 43 percent decrease in cost per hire (LinkedIn). According to Glassdoor, 84 percent would consider leaving their current jobs if offered a role with a company that had an excellent reputation. So how can an organization leverage their

CREATING BRAND AMBASSADORS OUT OF HIPOS

Employers that provide career development opportunities are six times more likely to engage their employees than organizations that do not. This establishes a correlation between robust HiPo programs and a top employer brand. And in order to establish this correlation, People Matters, in partnership with Right Management, organized the fourth edition of HiPo week which facilitated knowledge sharing about leveraging HiPos as Brand Ambassadors. of organizations. This Special Story highlights the key takeaways from the HiPo week!

By **People Matters Editorial Team**

HIPO programs and HIPO talent as brand ambassadors?

The Right Management Study reveals that 57 percent of companies perceive that less than 50 percent of their HiPos play the role of brand ambassadors. But 90 percent respondents believe that robust HiPo program translates into a stronger employer brand. Additionally, 79 percent of respondents believe that the quality of candidates referenced from a HiPo is higher than the rest. These are all indications on how participants think that HiPos can play a significant role in enhancing the brand and translating it into attracting more quality talent and higher retention.

The Study exposed that only 46% of companies leverage HiPo's in external forums and only 31 percent in social media. These are the low hanging fruits for the organization to leverage externally as well as creating opportunities for

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this talent pool to become mentors and coaching internally. As part of some other conversations and polls taken during the HiPo week, it was revealed that most organizations are having difficulty in leveraging Hi-Po programs as levers for enhancing their employer brand due to reasons like not being sure about the efficacy of the programs themselves, and the impact it may have on both the HiPos and the larger organization.

The need of the hour is for companies to take more risks with their HIPO

talent. Invest in the foundation of the right selection and management of the HiPo program and provide opportunities for internal and external interactions with HiPo talent which can yield higher engagement, alignment, and pride of belonging to the organization - in turn increasing retention of HiPos.

PRASHANT PANDEY is Country Head at Right Management

(This HiPo Special is compiled from the events that were organized during the HiPo Week)

HIPOS: YOUR BRAND AMBASSADORS
SURVEY 2016 RESULTS
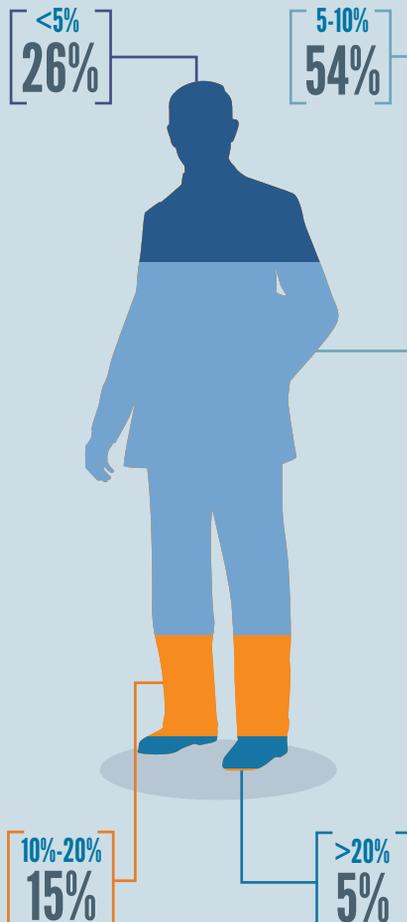
Right Management & People Matters Study

By People Matters Editorial Team

THE KEY FINDINGS

79% of respondents have a High Potential Development program in their organizations

HIPO PROGRAMS
**HOW MATURE ARE THEY?**

HOW MUCH PERCENT OF YOUR TALENT IS HIPO TALENT?

26% of companies have less than 5% of their total workforces as HiPo talent. The majority of organizations stay within the 5 to 10% of the total employee size.

<5%
26%

5-10%
54%

10%-20%
15%

>20%
5%

HOW DO YOU IDENTIFY HIPOs?

Still performance data and manager recommendation lead the way. Fewer organizations use assessment centers

73%
Use performance data

63%
Consider manager recommendation

40%
Use assessment centres

19%
Consider vintage/tenure
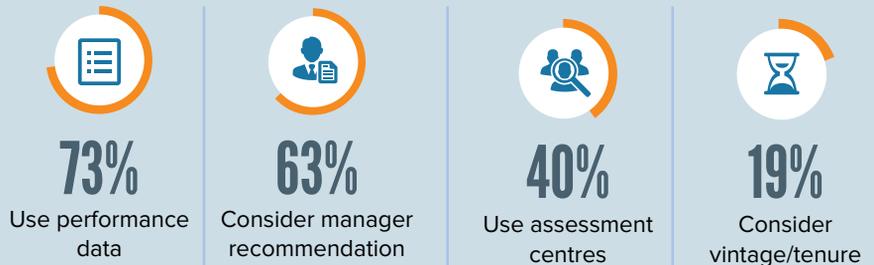
WHAT DO HIPOs WANT?

Interesting work, challenging assignments and fast-track careers tops the charts of what matters to HiPo talent. A well-designed program is not an outcome for HiPos but a means to an end.

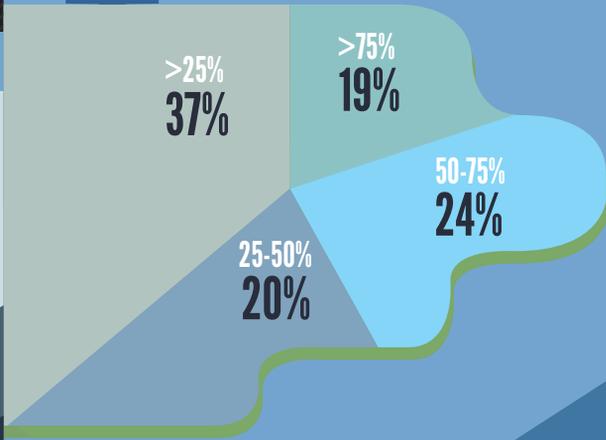Interesting work/ Challenging assignments

Empowerment

A well-designed HiPo program

Fast track career progression

Appreciation and recognition

HIPOs AS BRAND AMBASSADORS, HOW DO COMPANIES FARE?

56% of respondents feel that less than 50% of their HiPo talent plays a role of brand ambassadors for the organization

>25%
37%

>75%
19%

50-75%
24%

25-50%
20%

WHICH PLATFORMS DO COMPANY PROVIDE FOR HIPOs TO BE BRAND AMBASSADORS?

Campus hiring tops the list but still lots to be done to create avenues for HiPo to play the role of ambassadors. 35% of companies nominate for external awards, 31% of organizations leverage their HiPos on social media.

47% Leverage campus hiring process

46% Provide industry forums

35% Nominate for external awards

31% Use social media
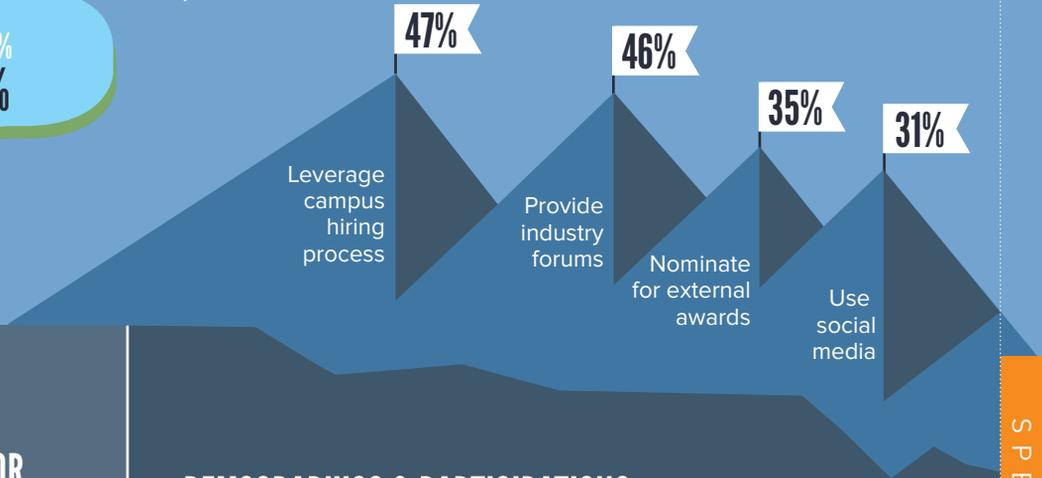
## BUT, YET HIPOS AS BRAND AMBASSADORS HAVE TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL FOR THE ORGANIZATION...

90%
Respondents believe that HiPo's personal brand translates into attraction of talent towards your organization

79%
Respondents believe that HiPos refer better performing talent as compared to other employees
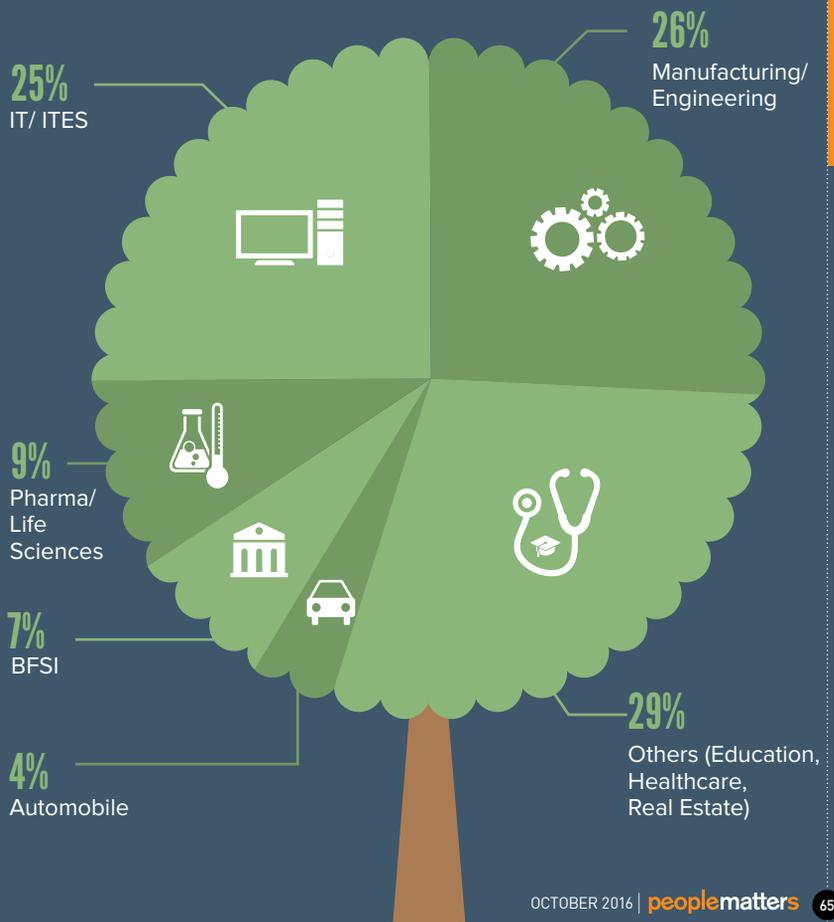
74%
Respondents believe that referrals provided by the HiPos stay in the organization longer as compared to referrals by other employees
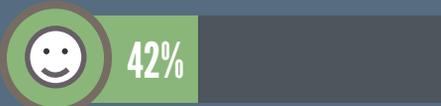
42%
Respondents promote the organizations' HiPo program in the external world to positively impact the Employer Brand

DEMOGRAPHICS & PARTICIPATIONS

From the 120 unique companies participated in this year's study. Both Business and HR leaders across a balanced representation of industries.

26% Manufacturing/ Engineering

25% IT/ ITES

9% Pharma/ Life Sciences

7% BFSI

4% Automobile

29% Others (Education, Healthcare, Real Estate)

BUILDING A ROBUST HIPO PROGRAM

Here are the key questions you must have clear answers to crack a solid HIPO program

Organizations are at different stages when it comes to creating mature High Potential (HiPo) programs, but what is amply clear is that talent differentiation is a necessary evil and getting it right is the key to deriving the benefits from the perspectives of leadership, growth, and innovation. Getting it wrong can be disastrous for any organization; it can lead to the loss of key talent and can instigate politics, confusion, and lack of transparency in the organization. Here are the key questions one must have clear answers to, black and white, with no shades of grey to crack a solid HIPO program.

Who is a HiPo?

Organizations need to define a HiPo in the context of their business. What are the qualities that are most relevant to the firm today and tomorrow that will hatch the next leadership cadre? Many companies use a mix of behaviors to define a HiPo, which includes three elements: firstly, past & present inputs (performance and achievements); secondly, leadership competencies (the fabric and DNA of the individual; and, thirdly, their potential (ability to take on higher roles). Other organizations that are moving away from the performance rating are verging into one single measurement of the individual and incorporating all three in one metric. What is critical is to understand what qualities we are looking for in a HiPo that will change from business to business and are contextual to each organization (stage of maturity, competitive landscape and aspiration of the company).

For example, Ericson takes the vision 2020 and the business strategy as the base to define the kind of leadership they need for 2020. All HiPo programs and leadership development interventions align to achieving that goal. One of the leadership qualities that have been identified as critical for Ericson to reach that target is "entrepreneurial leadership"; and that is what the organizationlooks for in HiPos (among other 10 competencies). The process took over five months to look at the talent pool and identify those HiPos. In different businesses, at Genpact, their CEO, NV Tyagarajan has identified three behaviors that drive the business to the next level: collaboration, digital thinking and being able to move across spectrum from concept to execution. For Genpact, HiPos need to exhibit these three behaviors and the entire selection happens around these competencies.The starting point should become the end in mind: Ascertaining what the organization needs is imperative to achieve the end goal.

How to find your HIPO?

Create a robust and transparent way to identify HiPOs is the next step. It is critical that the process is solid and perceived to be fair by all stakeholders in the organization. Many organizations start with performance (achievements) as 1st level of filtering, then move to the competencies and qualities of the individual – either using leader's council reviews or assessments (or both). This stage assesses for two things: the leadership DNA & alignment with company's requirements, and the ability & aspiration of the individual to grow and take on higher and more challenging roles. Typically, this process happens yearly and reviewed half yearly – while companies are also moving to move regular and on-going reviews.

Eriscsson uses a five-month process to identify HiPos andset up an internal talent council to do the 1st level of screening, followed by a talent
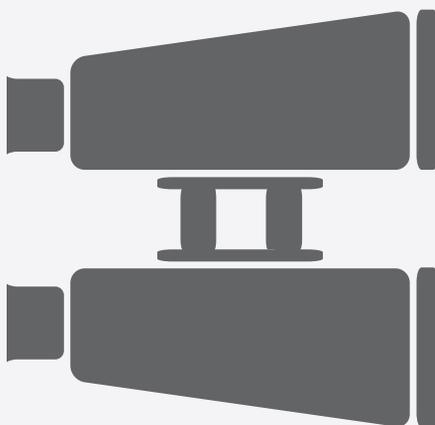
boards to dig deeper into each candidate and finally followed this by an assessment center to validate the competencies with each candidate. In Credit Suisse, the process runs through the organization. After they identify top talent on the basis of performance/achievement/potential ("as is" today), they measure this pool by taking them through the assessment center with the objective of assessing the individual with the competencies required for one level up. This exercise also shows the talent gaps and creates a foundation not only for identification but also for development.

Similarly, at Genpact the whole approach to HIPO process is anchored around development of careers across level. Genpact only uses assessment centers for VPs and above, for the other levels the philosophy is that managers need to take ownership of their judgment. The process is not a one-time exercise. The constant question managers ask themselves is "Are you seeing similar trends being demonstrated cycle after cycle by the individual." There is a lot of focus on consistency of behaviors for talent identification.

How to communicate?

Here, the process starts to get tricky. If you have walked the path one step at a time and have a solid framework on who a HiPo is and how to be a HiPo, then why should one worry about communicating? Or creating differentiated pay? Organizations struggle to come to terms with the consequences of communication and differentiating both ways: scared to tell a HiPo that he/she is the one (fear of losing the person) and scared to tell the 'solid citizens' that they are not happy (and fear to demotivate and again losing them). No easy answers.

In some organizations, communication happens very formally (like an event) where the leadership team communicates one-to-one and creates an opportunity to build connect and commitment. Others don't communicate at all. But does the sheer fact that as an individual,one is chosen to be part of projects and trainings, it is understood that one is a HIPO and hence the organizations is indirectly telling by showing commitment and investments?

Leaders fear that this can create a divide in culture. The 'You' vs. 'Me' and 'Have' vs. 'Have not'. Additionally, there is also the context of talent demand and supply and it really depends from industry to industry and also the stage of maturity of the organization and other talent-related processes. What is important is that it should align with your management philosophy and should be consistent with the culture and values of the organization.

The next step in the decision ladder is whether to differentially pay HiPos or not. Again, if there is clarity on 1, 2, 3 steps, the answers of 4 emerges automatically. Some companies give differentiated cash compensation linked to being identified as a HIPO automatically, and some don't. What seems to be common is of course access to critical roles, funding of external education in premier institutes, projects and international mobility as part of the non-monetary benefits. But many organizations do not differentiate in cash from day one, it is the emergence of career opportunities, new projects etc. that lead to promotion and hence compensation change – but not the HiPo program itself.

> What is critical is to understand what qualities we are looking for in a HiPo that will change from business to business and are contextual to each organization (stage of maturity, competitive landscape and aspiration of the company)

How to measure the success of a HiPo program?

HiPo programs should have a clear objective that is defined and measurable and is linked to the mid to long-term vision of the organization and creating leaders for the future. It is critical that it is articulated and defined by the leadership team and also has measured KPIs that provides milestones on the direction of the program and its effectiveness. The most commonly used KPIs are the number of positions taken internally by HIPOs (instead of lateral hires), retention and engagement levels of top talent. There are other interesting KPIs like 'risk-taking' from HIPO pool – that is, how many HiPos have taken roles outside their natural domain. The important thing about KPIs is to pick the ones that will be most meaningful for what the organization is trying to drive and achieve.

This is a fascinating theme that keeps many CEOs and CHROs up at night, more so, with the changing paradigms of performance management philosophies, evolving demographics and millennials coming in and with more and more volatility in business. 🅿ⓜ

(As told by Deepa Chadha, CHRO, Jabong)

HIPOS – INVEST INSIDE, HARVEST OUTSIDE

HCL Technologies is empowering its high potentials with skills & an environment which gives them a sense of purpose

HiPos are critical for organizations to succeed and if I talk about how we, at HCL, look at high potentials, we may be one of the few organizations today that carries out a potential assessment of its workforce across all levels with 100 % coverage every year. And as a part of Performance Management, we require our People Managers to identify and categorize their team members in the following 9 categories:

- Proven high performance
- Effective, driven and responsible
- Accept changing roles
- Committed to organization
- Productive and efficient
- Seek information and see a broader view
- Synthesize data for decisions
- Have integrity and authenticity

The reason for this is that while we believe that high performance is crucial and a desired objective, it is important to understand as to who has the depth, skills, attitude and mindset to look at and take the next level of progression & responsibility. The imperative for us is to discover how we can make employees more productive and effective as we look at their careers going forward. Who has the ability to take an enterprise view rather than just a line of business, and has the authenticity, integrity and commitment to go beyond for the organization. This gives us rich insights into the talent pool that we have.

HiPos as brand ambassadors

When we talk about a 'brand', for us as an employer, our brand talks about our identity, beliefs, intentions, the promises we make in terms of the experience people will have when they come and build a career here. Organizations talk about this as Employee Value Proposition, and at HCL, we are looking at creating a reason for people to strive to do better and in turn help us achieve our people agenda to attract the right people and to be considered as "an employer of choice for the employees of choice that we want". When you put these things together, the high potential talent segment gives us a pool of people who can truly help us take the message across as brand ambassadors. High potentials are considered as 'Culture Champions' within HCL who take our story to the key audiences and be career coaches, mentors and counselors to the larger workforce.

Let us see how this plays out in reality. HiPos are looked at as models or examples by the workforce of individuals who have beliefs that are similar to HCL's value system. We profile our high potentials as 'Ideapreneures' who demonstrate HCL's culture of living and add value by seeding, nurturing and harvesting ideas and being the 'Culture Champions' of the organization. We recently launched a program called "Inspire" where we looked at many of these high potentials to work with their colleagues, team members and friends to cascade such beliefs and behaviors down throughout the organization. We believe that a culture not only gets created top-down but is sustained if kept alive bottom-up.

High potentials at HCL are members of the "Employee First Councils" and provide inputs on whether we as an organization are really delivering on the Employee Value Proposition, the promises that we have made around building a culture or environment where they would want to work. That's how we make an Employee Value Proposition and a promise about an experience which delivers. The best testimonials through which this can be demonstrated specially when one is looking at attracting talent is by having people to go out and talk about their journey, by either showcasing the organizational methodologies or by going and meeting other people, learning from them, bringing back the new ideas, introducing & sharing our best practices.

> We profile our high potentials as 'Ideapreneures' who demonstrate HCL's culture of living and add value by seeding, nurturing and harvesting ideas and being the 'Culture Champions' of the organization

Many of our learning programs, specially the external forums in which we invest as a part of our job based curriculum, we encourage our HiPos to participate and engage in what we call "Eco Learning Sessions", where they share what they have seen and experienced in the organization. At the end of the day, if you have a certain experience in an organization, it is not left to you alone, you will share the experience, if it is good, with at least 10 people and if it is bad, possibly with 10 extra people. Word of mouth, in terms of communication and advocacy is more than marketing. We look up to our HiPos as "Proponents of Optimism" because in present uncertain and volatile work environment, it becomes very important that there is a positive voice inside the organization as we go forward.

At HCL, we also have Career Management Processes, where we use a methodology called "Career Connect" which allows the employees to crowdsource ideas from experts about how they can grow in their careers and assume higher levels of responsibilities. This is a great platform for many of these high potentials to play the role of mentors and guides. People can see how they (HiPos) have grown in their careers & have fulfilled their potential and get counseled on how the same can be applied to their careers.

HiPo engagement at HCL

At HCL, we try and make sure that there are distinctive inputs given to the individuals for learning & development by ensuring that they get access to the best learning sources in the world. In terms of our Rewards and Recognition, we have a practice where people with outstanding performance and who come in the top 30% of the organization, are invited to an event called "O infinity", where they celebrate their contributions to the organization with their families. They are recognized not just in the presence of others but are also encouraged to share their stories so that others can learn from them.

We also encourage grass root innovation. Currently we are tracking value of ideas close to 500 million dollars plus per year which is outside of commercial contracts with our clients, and these are ideas that get generated by our employees for their clients. We find that HiPos play the lead in helping others use many of the seed platforms that we have in which people can share their ideas. Talking about Career Progression, we have created a specific developmental program we call "Top Gun" which helps HiPos take accountability for transformational and global strategies. We

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manage their careers across the enterprise and offer positions and roles for new initiative & businesses so that they can truly grow and help the company grow in turn. Last but not the least is anchoring what we called "Passion clubs" or "Employee First Councils", which are employee-led activities and provide high potentials a leadership opportunity to demonstrate their skills and capabilities. By giving them autonomy to drive new ideas & initiatives, we help them to accelerate their careers.

This is the key from our perspective: to give high potentials the autonomy to be the best of what they can be, to give them the skills so that they are ready for the 21st century enterprise of the future and most importantly an environment which gives them a sense of purpose because that really brings out the best in them. **Pm**

(As told by Prithvi Shergill, CHRO, HCL Technologies)

HIPOS AS BRAND AMBASSADORS

Training projects need to be followed up
with actual delivery. That is Mahindra's focus:
Education, Experience and Exposure

To set the context, we can use this small anecdote. There was a colony of frogs like us, with high potentials and low potentials and two frogs were asked to jump in a well. For the colony, one of them was a high performer, the other one was a low performer. They asked both the frogs to jump into the well and started encouraging the high potential one. The HiPo frog kept trying and finally gave up and died. The second got scared of meeting the same fate. The other frogs that were encouraging the HiPo started discouraging this one. This one kept trying, took a huge leap and eventually jumped in! Everybody was shocked. It turned out that the frog was deaf! He thought he was being encouraged, when he finally jumped in. Someone asked a question, "How do you identify a HiPo at the first place?" This example put forth a very clear case of whether we know who is really a HiPo or not? The colony of frog thought this chap is a low potential because he cannot hear. The chap was probably not! All he needed was a little encouragement. So how do we as an organization really identify the HiPo?

40% of organizations today use assessment centers to identify HiPos. I recently went through an Assessment Centre in my organization 3 weeks back. The first question that people ask during these assessments is, "In the next 2 day, you are going to decide what I have done for the last 25 years of my life? You are going to tell me whether I am good or not and what are my areas of improvement." Almost all of us have been to the Assessment Centers, how many of you agree to the report which came? - A little less than 50 percent. Where do organizations go wrong in identifying the high potentials? First, we limit it to one process, in this case the Assessment Center because a lot of money is being spent on it, around 2.5 to 3 lac plus the travel cost. There are organizational competencies which are defined which many a time are unclear to people. At Mahindra, we have 7 leadership competencies, a spider graph which shows what performance level are you expected to perform at and what are you currently at. Based on this you get the report.

I have been with hospitality for most of my career and customer service is engrained in me. When I went through the Assessment Centre for the first time, Customer Orientation came to me as a drastic improvement area. I got a score of 2.5 on 5. At that time I was sent on an international assignment as a GM and I was told, "You need to improve in Customer Orientation." My response was, "I meet almost 100 guests a day from around the world and you are telling me that I need to learn Customer Orientation?" The person gave a standard reply that you can choose to do whatever you want to do with it or you can put it aside. I chose to put it aside. It just ended there. Probably I never got the chance to understand that there really was a developmental need, which I realized around 4-5 years later when I got into technical assessment, that I still do not know how to identify the untapped or unstated needs of the customer. When a customer asked you for something, you go out of your way to deliver that but was that really what Customer Orientation meant from the competency framework's point of view? It didn't, and I didn't know. So one of the things that we do in Mahindra, assessment reports once they are generated, we do not end the process there. First,

do not use only the assessment reports. It is one of the indicators. We also look at recommendation from the Manager. It is a blended approach. The Assessment Centre report has a certain weightage because a lot of time, money and energy are being spent on it and we value that. But we also look at the Manager's recommendations. What we also do is that there are company led programs throughout the year. There are a lot of competitions where employees are given opportunities to step forward and participate. We look at that, what is the participation level of this person in some of these company led programs, how often do they step forward to show interest. We look at this because our High Potential is based on factors like the aspiration of the person and the ability of the person. Just because an individual is a high performer, we do not let people decide he is high potential. The ability comes from the Assessment Centre. One of the most important things that we look at for identifying high potential is engagement. How engaged is this person in his work, in companywide initiatives, in helping and collaborating with other people. There are standard tools that we use to identify this. Till the time we do not see enough action in each of these areas, we don't classify that person as a high performer just based on Assessment Centre reports or previous year's performance. Once the Assessment Centre report comes, they are discussed and validated with the immediate supervisor, the HR SPOC, person responsible for leading the development and the concerned person. So if a person is scoring low in Customer Orientation and the supervisor does not feel the same way, in such case, first we help the person understand that when we talk about Customer Orientation, these are the things, do you think you are doing all of these things? We ask this to both the person and the supervisor. These discussions help us. According to a research data 1 out of 7 people put in a HiPo program are wrongly put in the first place. 55% of people nominated for a HiPo program never see its completion. 55% globally drop out of that program.

But how do you execute an actual HiPo program? At Mahindra we use the 3E approach; Education, Experience and Exposure. There are different levels basis what's your current level is at the organization. We have largely kept the hierarchy of these levels very narrow to ensure consistency in what we are delivering. Talking about Education, our key program is called "Mahindra Universe" which is a program in collaboration with Harvard Business School. Every year, 30 employees travel for 7 days along with their spouses. We believe learning is not complete until you have

some important member of the family with you. Harvard has many programs- 15 day, 30 days, 3 months but we kept the program duration at 7 days because this is not a HiPo program but is a part of the education under the HiPo program. The level next to it is GPM which is Global Program for Management Development in partnership with the University of Michigan Law School that happens in Nasik at Mahindra Leadership University.

The next thing is Experience. We have the Talent War Room. One of the reasons why HiPo programs fail because a high performing individual who is recognized for development to the next level is not going to develop enough until we provide multiple exposure to that employee. A HiPo program cannot be taken as a fast track program

According to a research data, 1 out of 7 people put in a HiPo program are wrongly put in the first place. 55% of people nominated for a HiPo program never see its completion. 55% globally drop out of that program

because that's where we are falling into the trap of the Business Leaders who feel that they are going to promote the person anyway. That is not the purpose of a HiPo Program; it is not a fast track program and certainly not training program. We need to brand it much better than what we do already. The experience is very important and that's where the Talent War Room lets people rotate.

The third is the Exposure. In my previous organization one thing that people used to look forward to was international learning missions. The program was for about 10 days, with a group of 10 F&B Managers selected across the country and the training was to stay at different hotels and just experience all the F&B (Food & Beverage) outlets. It did wonders! People came back and said that they have seen some of the best hospitality chains in the world, they learnt about buffet presentations including a lot of things and it took precisely 3 months for each one of them to replicate that in their hotels. So there was input and there is a visible output. Till the time you put anyone through education, experience and exposure, if they are not going to see a visible change or result which they are able to show you,

A HiPo program cannot be taken as a fast track program because that's where we are falling into the trap of the Business Leaders who feel that they are going to promote the person anyway

the program is not successful. We keep on thinking about the HiPo program from our perspective but it's about their perspective. Have they been able to impact the business enough to close the HiPo program?

Some of the things that we do as part of the exposure is something called Shadow Board which is a group of about 10 people in each of the Mahindra companies who are HiPos selected through a process, form the board of the company. They elect the chairperson and are given freedom to choose any process that they want to cause disruption to and change to the company. Anything they want to change or any new business they want to start for the company which is then presented to the board of the company. There is a Shadow Board competition. Many years ago

Mahindra bought Punjab Tractors which are now a part of the Swaraj division. It was the Shadow Board of the automotive sector which recommended the buying of Punjab Tractors. That's the significance because if we are just going to create programs which are not going to have any impact on the business, people are not going to buy it anyways. The Shadow Board process for us is an extremely important process where are actually given full rights and access to information they need as the actual board of the company.

There is something called Fireside Chats. Every quarter there is a group president or CEO and about 25 to 30 High potential people across all sectors who are invited for an hour chat with the CEO to know what he does, how does he do decision making, how does he do execution of tasks at work. Another important thing is any person who goes through any education program, that program is not completed unless there is an action learning live project. If I come back from the Mahindra Universe at the Harvard, I am given a live business project which is not a recommendation, it has to be implemented and I am being tracked on how this project is being implemented. If it is not implemented, the project is scrapped, think of a new project now but something that you will implement is the business and we are very strict about it. Training projects need to be followed up with actual delivery. So that is really the focus: Education, Experience and Exposure.

In most of our sectors it is working extremely well because right from the start we are very clear and jointly sit with the person to discuss and even if a particular competence came up through the Assessment Centers as development, it won't be considered so till the time there is a buy in and the person agrees that yes this is what I think is my development. That is how people start to open up. When we started saying that just because assessment reports say you are low on Customer Orientation doesn't necessarily mean its right till the time it's a mutual discussion and you agree, if you don't agree, we will not spent time, money and energy developing something in you which does not need development. ⓟⓜ

(As told by Prashant Khullar, VP HR, Mahindra Holidays & Resorts India)

HIPOS – CATALYSTS TO EMPLOYER BRANDING

HiPos not just contribute to higher efficiency and productivity, but they act as ambassadors for the organization

There are different stages based on the High Potential (HiPo) maturity model that exist in different organizations. There are organizations that start afresh and they might be at level 0 or 1 and this is the start of the journey! But at the same point of time, in established organizations, it may not be moving right from level 0 to 4 in a progression – a HiPo strategy can be designed depending on the operating environment and can reach any level.

The foundation of the Maturity Model starts right from a 'reactive stage' where organizations are testing waters; there are ad hoc processes which are very much need-based and there may not be a specific HiPo Development Model in the organization but it exists because of some requirement at that point in time. There is a future view of how high potentials can be leveraged and here is where creating a brand for the organization comes into play.

The next level or step is termed as "Inconsistent HiPo Identification" where although there is a keen intent and a long-term view, in practice, it becomes manager-specific. At this stage, there might be a broad Talent Management Philosophy but it does not really incorporate the importance of high potential candidates within the organization.

The third level is around how organizations standardize the process of identifying high potentials and leverage them. This stage is typically integrated as a critical part of the talent management process and has executive engagement and a short term planning in picture.

After this comes a transparent HiPo program where one has a long-term plan and a business integrated HiPo strategy. In this, each executive member is committed to this entire play of grooming, capitalizing and further enabling high potential candidates and leveraging their strengths from an organizational perspective. This is fully integrated as a part of not just the talent processes but business impact measurement criteria's as well. The system is transparent and every high potential is aware of where they stand within the organization and from the other side as well. The organization too understands the pipeline of the high potential talent that they are building. There are organizations which jump to level 2 or level 3 and this happens when there has been a late start and focus on this particular aspect in talent management, however at the same time, there is enough focus and commitment on long term strategy play. Most organizations (which are established and have a commitment towards nurturing high potential talent) find themselves in level 2 or level 3. However, not many organizations reach level 4! And there is a reason: our industry (whichever we are in) is transforming very fast. It is very critical for talent management organizations to make sure that not only are they aligning themselves fast but at the same time the business is also leveraging consistently, and the commitment stands not just when the business is stable but also in the transformational time frame.

Building channels for employer brand

Coming to the second critical part of the topic that is about what employer brand is? What are

HiPos in any organizations not just contribute to higher efficiency and productivity, but they act as ambassadors and build a story for the organization

the various channels that employers in today's world leverage to make sure that their brand is visible and known externally and to a large extent internally as well, especially for complex and large organizations. There are 9 channels and they are not exhaustive but they are essentially the critical ones in today's era, which most of the organizations do leverage right from employee referrals (internal/external) to social media (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn), Visual Effects (Pinterest, Instagram, YouTube), Print Media (Newsprint, Magazine, Journals), other websites (Glassdoor/payscale), Brand Ambassadors (Blogger, Spokeperson), Job Boards (Naukri, Headhoncho's), Career Events (Campus Events) and Career Sites (Company Recruitment Portal). Five years back, some of them could have been easily clubbed together, for example print and other websites could have been clubbed together. Visual Effects and Social Media could have been clubbed together but as we progress each day and with the diversification of various channels through which we can communicate internally & externally, each one of them becomes critical and hence the focus on each one of them becomes critical. If you look at what is the lowest common denominator of each of the channels, it is employees, hence, it is imperative to understand that these are just the mediums.

HiPos in any organizations not just contribute to higher efficiency and productivity, but they act as ambassadors and build a story for the organization. And this can be leveraged by an organization by exhibiting best practices and great work done by HiPos through the right channels. To me, it is a very strong linkage between the HiPos and the employer brand specifically in today's environment.

Efficacy of HiPo Programs

Today, the emphasis is increasing on efficacy of HiPo programs. Every organization in different domains and industries has different approaches to such programs. But what cuts across as a common thread is how well is it stitched together and is consistently driven to achieve desirable outcomes that the organization wants from each of these candidates & in bringing to front, the collective success of the organization. At a very high level, the best companies have a common thread of identifying the right set of measures of not just the high potentials' aspiration and ability but also what is desired by the organization, the goals from a two year or a five year stand point. It is about identifying such benchmarks.

The critical part for L&D professionals is in providing structured learning experiences
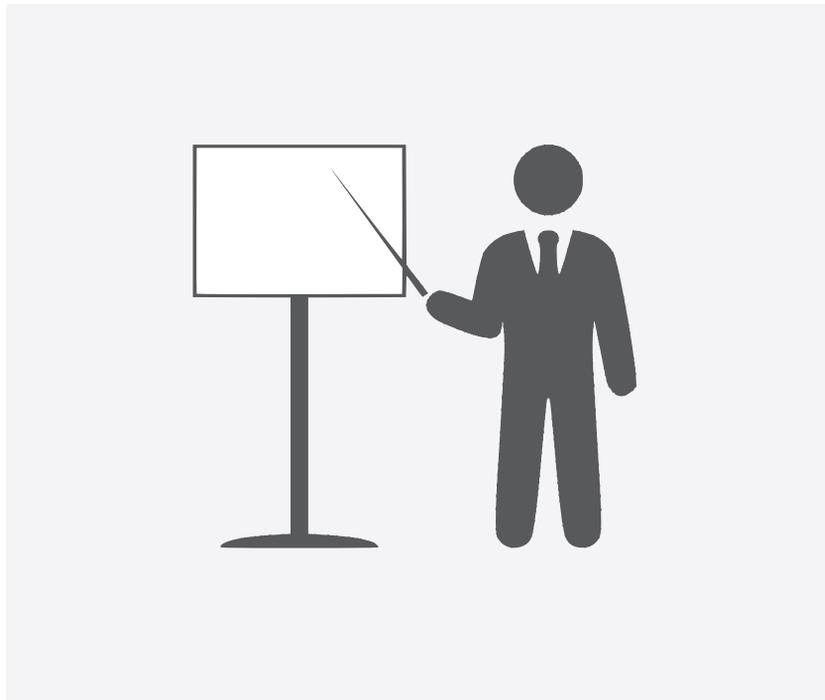
Today, structured learning experiences are no longer restricted to just classroom interventions or virtual sessions, they are a combination of education, exposure and experience

which result in impactful performances. Today, structured learning experiences are no longer restricted to just classroom interventions or virtual sessions,they are a combination of education, exposure and experience. The 3 Es give a consolidated exposure to any individual in an organization right from the base level to the senior level. But when transforming fast, managing becomes a challenge as refreshing concepts, changing the model and making sure that a strategic view is maintained is critical. So it is always the fight against how soon these practices can be deployed and sustained in an ever changing environment. Ⓒⓜ

(As told by Kunal Wali, Associate Director - Talent Development, IBM)

IF YOU DON'T BET ON YOUR OWN PEOPLE, SOMEONE ELSE WILL

Prabir Jha, Global Chief People Officer at Cipla talks about leveraging HiPos as employer brand ambassadors, the 'Type 1' and 'Type 2' errors companies make & how he personally benefitted from a HiPo program

By **Vikas Arora** & **Medha Roy**

In an exclusive conversation with People Matters for a radio show on "Leveraging HiPos as Talent Magnets", Prabir Jha shared his insights on High Potentials. Here are some excerpts from the conversation.

Q Many organizations face the challenge of clearly articulating HiPo programs. In such a scenario, is there an opportunity for organizations to leverage their HiPo programs as an attraction and retention tool?

A I believe that in a socialist structure of an organization, talent always finds a way to define itself. But often, corporate leadership has been found to be a victim of appeasement. A lot of companies shy away from differentiating their their employees as they run the risk of upsetting the other members of the organization. As a consequence, they end up not having an articulated HiPo program.

Organizations are still at a nascent stage when it comes to leveraging HiPos as their employer brand ambassadors. But to reach that stage, companies first need to realize the importance of taking bets with some people; because it is not possible to bet on all of the people at the same time. And if you don't bet on your own people, someone else will. Managing talent, according to me, is fundamentally the art of differentiation and focused effort. And to create a HiPo program, any corporate needs to clear its conscience and belief system.

Q How can organizations leverage high potential talent internally to create a culture that percolates down to the entire organization?

A To begin with, organizations must be clear in their heart and mind that they want to celebrate high potentials. Assuming that this bridge has been crossed, the first step for organizations is to talk about their high potentials publicly so that it gets legitimacy and is not seen as a cloak and dagger operation.

I have myself witnessed HiPos lead organizations and business transformation programs, conceptualized these programs and also helped in their implementation. When you give credit to the people for the work they have done, they become the ambassadors of the organization by default.

Making HiPos mentors is also a good way to give them exposure. I have found that bright young people prefer to be mentored by bright young people instead of average guys or senior guys just for the sake of it. It is of mutual benefit to both the HiPo mentor and the mentee. And overall, the organization benefits when people are mentored early and get inspired.

Organizations can also leverage HiPos to be brand ambassadors both internally and externally. HiPos, for instance, can be made part of recruitment teams and be the representatives of organizations during campus visits. In many instances, people who hire are not always inspiring leaders and that is the reason candidates opt out of an opportunity. A candidate once told me that he loved the job and the opportunity, but he did not like the guy he was supposed to be working with. HiPos, if put as a part of the recruitment effort for an organization, can be strong talent magnets.

Q Externally, what are the areas other than campuses where HiPos can be leveraged as brand ambassadors?

A There is a large opportunity for high potentials to be seen or heard on public platforms and forums. It does not always have to be the CXOs who represent the organization. I receive multiple speaking invites, and it is not possible for me to attend them all. But I leverage all of these opportunities and send HiPos from my team to represent their views and be heard. This adds to the brand ambassadorship of both the HiPo and the organization. That is one way of nurturing and sustaining your HiPos. Even if they fail, it is all about the investment you make in building their confidence. I also encourage High Potentials to write because High Potentials need to be thought leaders and thought shapers.

And when you give them an opportunity to represent the company, you send a message to the external audience that here is an organization whose leader is betting on people to come and articulate their views and ideas.

Q Is there a way to measure the success of a high potential program?

A Measurement of success of any HiPo program involves both quantitative and qualitative measures.

One metric which determines the success of HiPo programs is the degree of success of High Potentials in mission-critical projects. And the more the number of High Potential talent getting deployed for such critical business projects, the greater is the success rate of the HiPo program.

As a program, there are many other dimensions which can be measured. One is, when an organization is promoting people to bigger roles, they should look at the percentage of HiPos that have been promoted. Another metric to judge the success of HiPo programs is the measurement of how long an employee remains a High Potential. No HiPo can retain his/her position for life! If the duration is long, then it implies that the organization spotted them early, moved them fast enough and they continued to remain HiPos for a long time.

Q What are the common traps pertaining to HiPo programs that organizations fall into?

A The first challenge is to get comfortable making Type 1 errors and ensure not to make any Type 2 errors. Type 1 error is related to situations where a few high potentials are left out from being identified as HiPos. Companies should get comfortable with some omissions, because they

are unavoidable to an extent. A common counter argument made to this type 1 error is to not run a HiPo program, which can be suicidal in today's time; because if you don't bet on your people, someone else will. Type 2 error happens when one gets someone in the program because one happens to like that individual. Inclusion of HiPos must be a well-reasoned, fair, mature and a commonly owned process.

Second challenge is to ensure that identifying high potentials is not seen as an act of coronation, but is actually seen as a suggestion or a hint of greater accountability. The third challenge is rotation of HiPos. There are times when HiPos get hijacked by an individual leader, and sometimes companies get over-dependent on keeping certain HiPos in particular roles for a long time. However good they are, HiPos remain HiPos when they

When you give credit to the people for the work they have done, they become the ambassadors of the organization by default

deliver sustained breakthrough impact through different roles, in different contexts. This is another trap that organizations should be very careful of. Lastly, it is also crucial to make sure that if a HiPo is not doing a great job, s(he) has to be taken off the list. You can do it formally or informally.

If companies can be watchful of these four aspects, then I think any HiPo program will help the company directionally at all times. **⦿m**

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