

Stretch Assignments

Definition: A project or task given to employees which is beyond their current knowledge or skills level in order to “stretch” employees developmentally. The stretch assignment challenges employees by placing them into uncomfortable situations in order to learn and grow.

Benefits:

1. **Real-World Opportunities To Lead** – Provide leadership candidates with the real-world opportunities to lead and sends a message to the candidate (and others) that the organization sees them as a leader.
2. **Low-Cost Development** – Stretch assignments are typically cost neutral. The leadership candidate develops skills while adding value to a project that needed the additional resource.
3. **Leadership Tryout** – Stretch assignments can be used to expose the leadership candidate to different areas of the organization as well as potential future roles.

A Simple Approach to Stretch Assignments

Try shifting the responsibility for identifying and selecting the opportunities to the candidates themselves. This will ensure they are motivated to do the work.

Link to Results

It is impossible to overestimate the potential of the right Stretch Assignment to contribute to the development of your leadership candidates. To ensure that potential is realized, any development opportunity (including stretch assignments) should be linked to specific competency improvements.

Defining the expected outcome before beginning a stretch assignment will serve as a way of qualifying opportunities and make it easier to measure the impact on the candidate and the organization.

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Getting Started

Have an objective way to quantify your leadership candidates' strengths and opportunities for development. This data provides a great foundation to help each candidate to:

- Demonstrate a greater degree of self-awareness as it relates to their personal Leadership Skills
- Explore what motivates them
- Prioritize development opportunities with the best chance of success