

Are You a High Potential?

“Keep your eyes on the stars but your feet on the ground.” Theodore Roosevelt

Fundamentals

- A High Potential is a special class of talent with a differentiated character and competency-set
- High Potentials are always proven and sustained high performers
- Intellect, cognitive and technical abilities matter but are insufficient conditions for High Potential
- While IQ and personality are relatively fixed, leaders can learn, grow and sharpen many of the skills, behaviors and habits consistent with High Potential
- High Potentials differentiate themselves around unique and compelling character traits
- In “true” High Potential look for learning agility, emotional maturity and personal adaptability, intellectual curiosity and creativity, advanced determination, and an enduring “will to win”

If you are a High Potential (HiPo) you are the lifeblood of your company - it makes a “big bet” on you becoming a future senior leader, it makes “big investments” in your development and possesses “big expectations” on your performance.

If you are a HiPo you have delivered sustained High Performance while differentiated yourself from your peers through a unique blend of intellectual and technical depth, advanced levels of curiosity, drive and determination and through an ability to spot and exploit opportunities.

In most organizations achieving HiPo status is a critical success factor in reaching the top.

High Potential Definition and Characteristics

Identifying High Potential is a complex process both static – does the employee have the “right stuff” for today? and dynamic – does he have the commitment, determination and learning agility to acquire the “right stuff” for tomorrow.

At OLE Consulting we define High Potential as

“An employee with a sustained track record for performance who stands-out through a differentiated character and competency-set that suggests they will be ready for successive leadership positions within the company”

HiPo employees typically exhibit (comprehensive but not exhaustive):

- A sustained track record for performance (e.g. circa three years of “exceeds objectives” ratings)
- Differentiated Intellectual ability curiosity and creativity and advanced “cognitive bandwidth”
- A self-concept that sees self as an exemplar, in most cases, a Leader
- Proven technical competencies and an ability to sharpen these to “exemplar” standard
- Blended logic and emotional (EI) abilities converted to advanced socio-political acumen and “people smarts”
- Acute “sensors” that enable them to exploit commercial, operational and people opportunities
- Proven learning agility – ability to learn from multiple sources and experiences
- Team-player ethic
- Advanced levels of stoicism, resilience and “bounce-back-ability”
- Personal integrity – the ability and willingness to do the right thing, every time



Becoming a High Potential Primer

Step 1: Understand the Landscape

Use multiple sources to understand your company's vision, strategy and business model and its performance expectations of its high potential employees. Know the sources of competitive advantage and identify the character and competency-set that enables a HiPo employee to help create, sustain and exploit these sources of competitive advantage

Step 2: Set Your Mindset

Accept that being a HiPo is a “contract” between you and your organization – your commitment to delivering exceptional motivation, engagement, performance and results, all the while, committing to continuous personal development and excellence.

Step 3: Master the Fundamentals of Career Planning but With a Bias For the Exceptional

A High performer matches his career and development planning to the intellectual, technical and behavioral imperatives of your company – current and future. A High Potential does that but sharpens his abilities around the differentiated character and competency-sets that will help them stand-out and take the organization forward – leadership, innovation, change.

Step 4: Experiment, Explore, Reflect, Recalibrate, Learn, Progress

HiPos are obsessed with learning and feedback. Commit to rigorous planning for key events, reflect on your experiences and personal performance. Take prudent risks with the assignments you take on (e.g., first-time experiences, stretch assignments, hard-ship scenarios, change mandates). For the HiPo getting the job done, adding value, building relationships and learning are a way of life.

Step 5: Build Your Personal Brand around a Stellar Character

“What got you there, won't take you there”. Ultimately, at the senior levels it is your personal brand and your character that will set you apart. HiPos are calm, polished and poised under pressure, they are determined and resilient, they work hard, make sacrifices and show stamina. They have built the relationships and networks critical for success. Being a HiPo is as much about your standing in the organization and the character you have built than it is about your skills and abilities. Step-up and stand-out.

Bottom-Line

Being a recognized HiPo is both a privilege and a challenge. Being a HiPo means accepting that you are a special talent who has a shot at a more complex, senior and pivotal role. But special talents need special skills – unique and differentiating skill. Master the fundamentals of the high performer and sharpen the skills, behaviors and habits that enables you to make a differentiated contribution, deliver exceptional results and stand out from the crowd.