

Creating an In-House Function of Strategic Leaders

A Presentation for Business Lawyers

Ricardo Anzaldúa, Executive VP and General Counsel, MetLife (Retired)

I. The Skills

- Strategically capable teams are populated by professionals with strategic advisory skills
- All are important
 - Depth (subject-matter expertise) and breadth (capability to advise on broad legal principles)
 - Communication – crisp, clear, simple, jargon-free business communication
 - Role clarity –
 - Lawyer: identify and explain legal risks (magnitude and probability)
 - Business: decides to take or avoid them
- Goal for lawyer: become part of strategic decision-making

II. Creating the Team (A. Leadership)

- Management skills (not part of typical lawyer's toolkit)
 - Feedback and coaching
 - Teaching
 - Mentoring
- Leadership skills (more commonly found in lawyers, but still not most)
 - Motivation, inspiration, creating *esprit de corps*
 - Messaging the corporate mission (company and legal organization)
- Career/professional development planning
 - Succession plans for all roles (including managers' roles)
 - Advancement plan for every individual
 - Accept a healthy rate of turnover

II. Creating the Team (B. Talent Acquisition)

- Talent intake should be predominantly junior. Attributes to seek:
 - Intellectual firepower
 - Leadership potential (confidence, communication, curiosity, humility)
 - Ambition
 - Intake of juniors creates greater opportunity for internal advancement (highly motivational)
- Favor internal promotion over lateral hires for mid-level vacancies
- Occasional lateral hires for senior-level vacancies to infuse team with fresh perspectives

II. Creating the Team (C. Talent Stewardship)

- Need a conscious, transparent plan for creating a diverse internal leadership pipeline
 - In addition to mentoring of all talent by all managers, special program for sponsoring high potential talent into future leaders (hard and soft skills, experience, exposure)
 - Selection process should be as objective as possible – qualitative, but not subjective criteria:
 - Ambition, motivation, dedication, alignment with corporate mission, willingness to “pitch in”
 - Attention to one’s own growth and development
 - Intellectual curiosity
 - Due regard for diversity – leadership cohort should reflect diversity attributes of the population
 - No one is ever definitively included in or excluded from the sponsorship opportunity
- Entire program should be transparent to the entire organization

III. Talent Strategy/Philosophy

- Elements of cohesive, integrated talent strategy: advisor/strategist skills, management/ leadership skills, talent acquisition criteria and development/advancement structures
- Fold into a clearly articulated, over-arching construct of self-aware talent development and talent advancement
 - Entire organization should own it
 - Everyone should understand that all professionals are included
 - Everyone should understand that she/he is primarily responsible for her/his own development
 - No one gets any guarantee of any particular career outcome
 - It's all a meritocracy, always a competition, with subject-matter expertise, leadership and management, soft skills (emotional intelligence, confidence, executive presence) – always in play

IV. Conclusion

- Thank you.
- Comments welcome.
- LinkedIn: Ricardo Anzaldúa
- ricardo.Anzaldua@hotmail.com