

Building Your Talent Pipeline

How a long term view of talent prevents the creation of Blockers on your team.

Rapid growth. Achieving strategic objectives. Reaching a new phase of success. In high-growth organizations the daily focus is on serving clients and basic blocking and tackling. Leadership development often takes a back seat. And then one day the CEO or Board of Directors realizes that the team that took the business to its current success will have trouble achieving at the next level. The priority was business growth – growing leaders unfortunately was deferred.

Frequently, we encounter clients who overlook leadership development until it becomes a crisis. Feeling threatened by the loss of control in the now larger, matrixed enterprise, a key player on the team begins to subtly block change, slowing the progress of the organization. By then, momentum is lost. In this situation, we have observed two likely outcomes. Both are costly financially and to organizational health. First, we see clients attempt to work around the individual. Out of loyalty for past performance, the CEO does not act and instead attempts to reorganize to minimize impact. But the reality is that a leader in a critical position, who knows the organization well and has broad relationships, can become the regulator for change, hence a Blocker. Organizing around a Blocker never works in the long run. The entire business suffers, agents of positive change become frustrated and the Blocker eventually fails.

Stanton Blackwell's Definition of Blockers

Blockers	Leaders
Shields team from reality	Exposes team to reality
Values experience and continuity	Values change and turnover
Explains "Why it is" (and not very clearly)	Communicates and drives "What it should be"
Maintains status quo	Constantly drives imbalance/positive change
Hides weak players	Exits weak players
Funnels/Filters communications	Connects the right people
Focused on personal silo	Focused on the big picture
Blames others . . . name drops executives for authority	Takes personal responsibility . . . Says, "We need to . . ."
Little hat . . . thoughts constricted by nostalgia	Big Hat . . . clear future vision from clear head

The second outcome that we have observed is that the CEO realizes the leadership team that took him or her to success does not have the capabilities to guide the now more complicated organization. So, the CEO resorts to bringing in external talent. Sometimes this is a good answer, a fresh set of eyes can be quite beneficial. But new talent at a senior level comes with risk. Cultural assimilation is difficult and “tissue rejection” is not uncommon for leaders joining a tight knit, established team from the outside. And when too much talent is recruited externally, existing employees reconsider their own chances for upward mobility. New blood can bring positive energy to an organization but there are tradeoffs.

Our answer to this dilemma is to develop leaders early and often. We recommend that our clients refresh their strategic plan annually. As a follow on, we suggest that our clients complete a talent plan that is aligned to their strategy. Individuals with the potential to grow with the organization and eventually take on larger leadership positions are highlighted. For each of these high potential contributors, development plans are put in place to increase their likelihood of success. Together, we create bench strength in your organization, home grown talent that can grow with the business. We will also help you to take a hard look at the existing members of your leadership team, identify their strengths and opportunities for development. We can even assist you with coaching them to a new level of performance. We have tools that help individual contributors, managers and senior leaders understand what it means to be successful in a dynamic environment.

The essence of talent management is a long-term view of leadership needs. As you execute your vision, make sure that each step of the way you have the leaders to take you to the next level.

Give us a call at (703) 254-7071 or send us an email at info@stantonblackwell.com. We are interested in learning more about your vision.



Contributor: Anne Gehring

Anne Gehring is a Founding Partner of Stanton Blackwell. Throughout her career, Anne has led teams to solve complex problems through collaboration and structured execution. She has a passion for people development and has been a strong advocate for talent diversity since her career began over thirty years ago.

S|B About Stanton Blackwell

Stanton Blackwell is an advisory firm dedicated to the middle market and mission-based sectors. Our professionals provide operational and financial consulting, as well as leadership development, to address issues of business planning, capital adequacy, scalability and efficiency. We work closely with our clients to adapt to an increasingly complex operating environment and to enhance impact and business value.

Please visit our website www.stantonblackwell.com for more information.