



THE SECOND LINE OF LEADERS DISSEMINATE STRATEGIC CONTEXT AND MESSAGES FROM COMPANY LEADERSHIP TO A LARGER TEAM

# CORE CONSTRUCT

**T**heodore Roosevelt said, "The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done." A sensible and wise leader knows that he can't handle all responsibilities alone, and for ever. Therefore, he always trains talented persons as a second line of leadership. This line is always ready to execute his projects carefully. It is also his mastermind group.

Aditya Arora, COO, Base Batteries, says, "The second line of management allows enough time for the senior management to think on more strategic initiatives/ angles while entrusting the operatives to the A team."

The importance of using assessment for succession planning across organisational levels has increased with the need for every company to have leaders in place, and also have the second line of

leadership ready. Identifying the right talent from early stages, it is essential to groom and train them over a longer time-frame, for the next big role.

This not only involves mapping competencies of the second line of managers but also bringing out their personal characteristics that make them evolve as a leader. Lavanya Rastogi, president, global operations, OSS Cube Solutions, says, "Every good manager/CEO needs to be a talent magnet. He should devote at least 10 per cent of his time in identifying and training the A team. This requires the ability to delegate in iterations and increasing amount of functional responsibilities."

#### KEY ENABLERS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SECOND LINE OF LEADERSHIP:

- Make fast decisions for your second

line of leadership

- Define a fair and transparent reward model, and communicate it clearly
- Spend enough time grooming them else giving responsibility pre-maturely sets them up for a big failure

Chander Agarwal, ED, Transport Corporation of India, says, "A company should also incorporate HR practices which starts gauging and funnelling people right from day one, so that, when the need arise, those handpicked few can be called forward. For this a proper review system of a person's strength and a mentor program is the way forward."

It is this second line of leaders who disseminate the strategic context and messages from company leadership to a larger team. It is they who act as a bridge between the company leadership and people who play important role at the ground level.

While second line of leadership acts as that magic glue which plays a critical role during the tough late early stage of the company, they become your tigers who expand your territories during the scale up phase of the company. They understand the company, its vision, its people, its constraints and what is it that the company is trying to do for its customers.

Managers must put in place a decision matrix so that everyone can operate within the framework of what is acceptable and what is not. This reduces the dependence on individuals and puts the focus on the organisation. As a long-term measure, organisations should regularly encourage cross-functional team work. This supports an organisation-wide culture of exposure to different teams, thought processes and methods of working, while also providing a holistic view of how functions are inter-related.

➤➤ DEVLINA GANGULY

#### PADMAJA ALAGANANDAN,

*executive director, consulting, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) India*

Leadership, defined as the ability to create useful change in an organisational context, requires producing results beyond a sphere one can directly influence. Having a strong pipeline at every level is a defining trait of strong leadership.

#### SHITANSHU JHUNJHUNWALA,

*director, Turtle Limited:*

Delegation of responsibilities have an important effect on second line managers. They would shoulder more responsibilities only with the support of the senior managers.

#### MONISHA TAMBAY,

*vice president, HR, Subex Limited:*

An effective second line of senior managers, who are groomed to take on the leadership role, ensures a smooth transfer of responsibilities, allowing them to quickly assume their more demanding roles.

#### P PADMAKUMAR,

*head of human resources, Saint Gobain Glass India:*

Value chain in management is complete with strong bond between "thinking" and "execution". A second line with functional competency completes the cycle of Thinking — Execution — Feedback — Realignment. It further provides continuity.