

Talent Development 4 – Identify Goals, Gaps, and Opportunities

By Bob Whipple “The Trust Ambassador” MBA CPTD



A major area in talent development is in the area of performance improvement.

Leaders need to hone the skill of performance analysis to identify the goals, gaps, and opportunities that will allow the culture to advance.

I do a lot of leadership development work in organizations of all types and sizes. A typical scenario has me meet with a CEO who laments that things are not going very well.

The organization is lagging behind in performance, and the CEO wants me to come in and train the supervisors and managers on how to do a better job of leading.

I explain that no two of my development efforts are the same. Each one is a custom effort designed to fit this particular situation and group of people.

Many leadership development consultants have their vinyl notebooks already made up when they walk in the door. They offer cookie cutter programs that sort of fit a general population. Unfortunately these are not very effective.

Instead, I sit with several of the leaders and managers as well as some of the front-line workers to get a first hand view of what has been going on. I have them all fill out a questionnaire containing roughly 80 different areas where we might consider some development work.

A few examples of the areas are:

- Reducing conflict
- Negotiation
- Building a culture of trust
- Improving teamwork
- Improved listening skills

Each person has to rate each item on a scale of zero to three. 0 = no need, 1= routine need, 2= important to improve now, and 3= urgent to improve now. The sum of all the opinions gives me a start to know which development areas would be most helpful.

Then I meet with the HR Manager and ask to see any extant data the organization has such as recent quality of worklife surveys, turnover rates, discipline patterns, etc.

In some cases where there appears to be trust issues, I have a separate trust survey that not only tells me the level of trust by area, but also what parts of the trust equation need the most work in each area.

For example, accountability often shows up as an issue that is impacting trust.

I then take all of that data and go back to my office where I have about 120 possible modules of training that could be done. Based on the data I just assembled, I run a comb through all of those modules.

Out pops a subset of gaps and opportunities for improvement efforts. It takes me only a couple hours to do this analysis, and I never charge the customer for this service. I go back with the CEO and show him or her the analysis I just completed.

Then I reveal a program that is designed specifically for that organization and the people in it. By that time, I have a good idea how many sessions will be needed and how much calendar time will be required so I can give a quote for how much it will cost. I share the custom outline of a program with the CEO.

Most times the CEO is flabbergasted with how perfect a fit the development effort is for that particular group. I recall one CEO listening intently as I reviewed a page with seven recommendations for training. He looked at the page and wrote BINGO next to my list.

By this time, the CEO is totally sold on the training, so I give a final quote and begin the specific design work. I customize all the material in the modules for the specific industry so the training is done in their "language."

I design the various experiential activities such as role plays, body sculpture, games, illusions etc. to fit with this specific group (for example, a training program for a hospital will be different from one for a financial service group).

I then get the materials assembled and go back to discuss how to schedule the training to be most user friendly to that group. Then we proceed to do the development program I have designed.

My track record using this method is quite high because I have listened to the client carefully and designed the specific interface that is laser-focused on their needs.

The preceding information was adapted from the book **Leading with Trust is like Sailing Downwind**, by Robert Whipple. It is available on www.leadergrow.com.

Robert Whipple is also the author of **The TRUST Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals**, **Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online**, and **Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change**. Bob consults and speaks on these and other leadership topics. He is CEO of Leadergrow Inc. a company dedicated to growing leaders.