

INSIGHTS

# 4 Ways to Know If You're a High Potential



By **Carlan Ferguson**  
Tuesday, April 21, 2015



Advertisement

0 Favorites | Bookmark | Share



Most companies like to keep their succession planning a closely held secret. Unfortunately, this results in most employees not knowing whether they are candidates for future promotion.

Sometimes employees have a hint, such as being sent to an advanced training course or brought in to participate on an important task force. **But other times, they just are not sure.** Even when a company has told a person that she

is considered high potential, the reasons may seem vague.

So, how can you know whether you are considered a high-potential employee? And if you are considered to have high potential, how can you know what they saw in you that made you worthy of special focus for future development?

Understanding these four expectations of high-potential employees will give you a foundation for meeting leadership requirements and selection.

## #1: High Potentials Have High Standards

High potentials are not content with average performance. They strive to be the best. They are also realistic that perfection is not possible, so they don't put unrealistic expectations on themselves or others. Instead, high potentials view errors as opportunities to analyze what went wrong and improve.



Advertisement

## #2: High Potentials Don't Overlook Relationships

High Potentials don't let "getting the job done" overshadow the importance of maintaining solid business relationships. They recognize that to create lasting influence, they need to have supporters up, across, and down the organization.

High potentials understand that this means not spending all their lunches connected to their computer, focused on their own work. They find time to get to know others. They eat lunch with peers, so they can understand their perspectives. They set up routine meetings with key stakeholders, so they can focus on how those individuals measure success of the programs and high potential they oversee. They also have routine one-on-one meetings with their manager, so they can concentrate on high-level strategies.

## #3: High Potentials Are Guided by What's Best for the Organization

High potentials are not focused on their own needs. Sure, they have enough "ego" to want to lead others, but they don't let that ego overtake their motives. They are, first and foremost, focused on what is best for the organization. Their actions are guided by doing what is right for the organization and its people—to provide a service or product to others. At their core, they believe in the greater purpose of the company. They aren't there just for the paycheck or next promotion.

#### #4: High Potentials Are Continuous Learners

High potentials are natural continuous learners. They know their leadership path is a journey, not a destination. They are willing to:

- take on added responsibility
- accept a lateral position to learn more about the company
- gain insight from books, blogs, or videos to stretch their thought processes
- talk to others in the company to gain an appreciation of the interdependencies between departments.

Meeting these four expectations will create a foundation to help you advance in leadership. Certainly, they are not the only actions measured by the organization, but they will likely get you noticed and considered for future leadership roles.

If you want to learn more about moving to the next level, join me at the ATD 2015 International Conference & Exposition in Orlando, Florida. I will share insights from 20 years of conducting succession planning for major corporations and smaller businesses during my session, "**What It Really Takes to Advance in Leadership**." Participants will use the "Career Stallers Assessment," which was created from longitudinal research and thousands of observations, to uncover key behaviors that may be standing in the way of their long-term success. They will gain personal insight as well as identify how to improve selection of other future leaders.

Related Tags:

CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

MY CAREER

SELF-ASSESSMENT

SUCCESSION PLANNING

TALENT MANAGEMENT



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

#### Carlann Fergusson

Carlann Fergusson is CEO of Propel Forward LLC, and author of the workbook *Shoots and Ladders: Insights to Advance Your Leadership*. She partners with leaders to gain the insight, capability, and confidence to transform their leadership and their organization. She is a Master Certified Coach, with 25 years of coaching and assessment experience. She also serves on the adjunct faculty for Northwestern University's Leadership Certificate Program, and has been cited in *CBS MoneyWatch*, *International Business Times*, *Newsday*, and *The Boston Globe*.

