



CASE STUDY

Merging Succession Planning and Career Development to Increase Retention and Development at a Large Pharmaceutical Company

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Business Challenge

Rapid growth and sales force expansion in recent years had provided sales professionals at all levels with opportunities for promotion and increased responsibility. During this expansion, the organization struggled to identify internal candidates to assume management positions and had to quickly prepare newly promoted managers to move the organization forward.

As organizational growth slowed and the size of the sales force stabilized, organizational leaders were concerned about the retention of sales professionals and leaders in a highly competitive marketplace. The sales force had become accustomed to rapid advancement and continued to seek the dwindling number of promotional opportunities. Leaders feared that professionals would choose to leave if they were not provided with a clear path for career development, appropriate rewards to recognize performance improvement and career progress, and a consistent and objective process for promotions from within.

Solution

viaPeople partnered with the sales leadership and Human Resources teams to implement a Succession Planning and Career Pathing solution that:

- identified and tracked the progress of high potentials and management successors,
- promoted and rewarded high performers for continued growth and contribution, and
- managed the career development process across the sales organization.

Step 1: Identified the Current and Future Talent Requirements for the Entire Sales Force

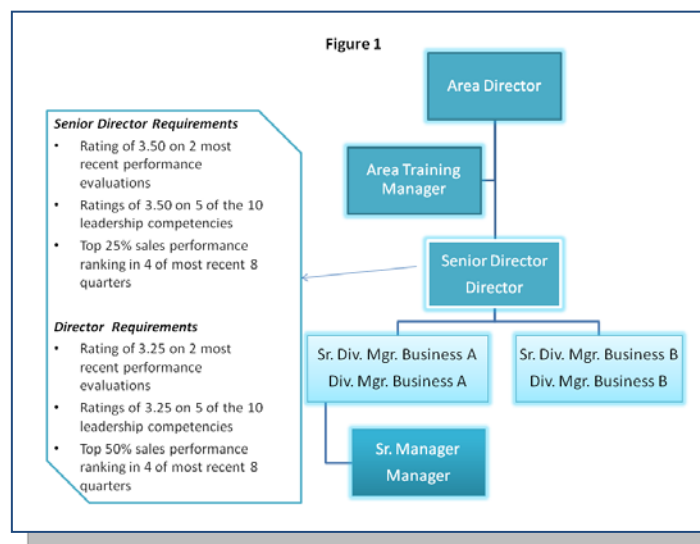
- Critical positions within the sales force were identified, as well as the detailed skill, performance, and experience requirements for those positions.
- Position requirements were translated into criteria and business rules that would be used for selection and promotion into each role.
- Lastly, developmental career paths were created that clearly defined the steps recommended for achieving each critical position. For example, *Figure 1* displays the suggested career path for sales managers seeking to achieve an Area Director position.

Step 2: Developed Robust Talent Database

viaPeople developed a comprehensive database by integrating information from multiple internal systems, including:

- quantitative and qualitative performance data,
- competency ratings,
- training information, and
- employee relations data.

This talent database was updated on a regular basis via seamless data file transfers and periodic talent assessments to gather critical information that was not stored in other systems. Data on the performance and development of the entire sales force now resides in one easy-to-access place.



Step 3: Employed Powerful Talent Search and Reporting

The talent requirements for all critical positions were translated into business rules and algorithms that were used to mine the talent database. The powerful features of viaPeople's Succession Planning solution:

- automatically identifies all individuals eligible for career promotion on a quarterly basis and determines bonus and other incentives,
- facilitates the approval of all promotions and the payout of bonuses through multiple levels,
- provides employees with clear insight into the requirements of all sales positions and how they stack up against those requirements,
- allows management to search for internal candidates who meet unique requirements for new or temporary developmental positions, and
- manages the individual development plans for participants identified as high potential.

Results

The implementation of the viaPeople solution has allowed the organization to offer a performance-based success planning and career development system that no other pharmaceutical firm offers to its sales force. Within one year of implementation, the organization has recognized some powerful outcomes, including:

- Turnover has slowed,
- Employees perceive the promotion process to be valid, fair and transparent, and
- External candidates view the development opportunities provided by the organization as an attractive benefit.

Furthermore, the organization has been able to confidently continue their philosophy of promotion from within during several recent growth initiatives. The Succession Planning and Career Pathing program has prepared the sales force for the future: the organization can readily fill positions that arise from new product growth and acquisitions with in-house talent.

About viaPeople, Inc.

viaPeople, Inc. is a performance and talent management software and consulting services company. By combining the science of Industrial Organizational Psychology and an advanced, fully integrated technology platform, viaPeople, Inc. offers the time savings and cost efficiency of online implementation, the flexibility to customize to a client's specific needs, and the domain knowledge to help clients measure and improve the return on their investment in human capital. Visit viaPeople, Inc. at <http://www.viapeople.com>.