



# THE LEADERSHIP CONTEXT

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From Silo to  
Shared Agenda

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## Background

A pharmaceutical company had invested in developing its leadership team over the previous twenty four months with evident success. The financial results were improving. The organisation was considered to be stable after a period of instability over a number of years. Recent product launches were successful. Staff engagement was on the rise.

## The Challenge

Due to the success of the leadership team and the overall contribution of the Australian affiliate to the Asian region, the Sydney based team was considered to be a source of talent for regional and global positions. Over an eighteen month period, four members of the original team were approached for promotions overseas. Whilst a great success story in itself, it potentially was draining the tacit knowledge that led to the successful turnaround of the business. How should the organisation promote both great people into senior positions and retain the knowledge that they had acquired over the previous years? This was challenging.

*"Four of the original leadership team were approached for promotions in Asian or for global positions."*

## Our Approach

Our experience of assisting the leadership team in its development meant we were already close to them and their learning journey. We suggested that they needed to design a process that enabled the leadership team and the organisation to 'loop and learn'. This is a continuous learning and 'feeding back' to others so that knowledge is captured and integrated into, 'the way we do things around here'.

An active on-boarding process was developed to go beyond the normal on-boarding programs that demonstrate 'the basics' to the new person. Each new hire into the leadership team was buddied up with an existing team member to learn the 'un-saids'. They spent time understanding the processes of how the team worked, the history of the team development and the conversations they had in order to get to this place of success. The rules of engagement were clearly articulated and the expected behaviours of a leader on the team and in the organisation were outlined. Each new hire also spent time with a coach from team to understand the history of the team development from an outside perspective.



This overall process accelerated the on-boarding of new leaders into their role but also with becoming a leader in the organisation. The style of co leadership remained after the original leaders departed.

The second wave of looping and learning was in an organisational wide 'rising star' program. Each program was co facilitated with a leadership team member and a coach from The Leadership Context group. Having the leadership team present in each program ensured that they cascaded learnings down to other levels below the senior leadership team and led by example.

A feedback mechanism was introduced across the organisation to share learnings from the previous month, irrespective of how major or minor they might seem. These were recorded and shared in hard copy on a quarterly basis.

A narrative was created in the organisation stemming from learnings of the leadership team with specific phrases used to describe aspiring behaviours and indeed unwelcome behaviours. Symbols were created to capture the intent behind desired outcomes and they were used as part of key people initiatives such as the talent management process.

## **The Successful Outcomes**

The organisation continues to grow. Of the original eleven team members that existed when the program commenced, seven were promoted to regional or global positions. Internal promotions backfilled many of those vacancies and the developmental culture continues. The organisation evolves and new 'looping and learning' methodologies have emerged. A more robust talent management and succession planning process has been cultivated to ensure that learnings continue from successes.

***"The leadership team was encouraged to loop and learn so that all tacit knowledge was retained."***

