

Title: Path to Partner: From Confusion to Clarity

Context

Audience: Directors and Senior Managers as Participants, Executive Management as Stakeholders

Business Challenge: This 'Path to Partner' program had been seen as a necessity, but goals, expectations and ownership were ambiguous. Executive Leadership wanted a program, but lacked clarity on what was currently taking place and felt uninvolved with decision making. The program was originally developed to guide high-performing Senior Managers and Directors to becoming Partners in the firm, so the need for Leadership Development was still apparent, but there were many thoughts on what that looked like and how it should be prioritized against the financial requirements of becoming a Partner.

Role

As Learning & Development Manager for our Leadership Programs, it was my responsibility to take ownership of the program, as well as influence Executive Management to make necessary changes to revamp and revitalize the program. I owned all documentation, learning events and processes with input from various stakeholders (Executive Management, Human Resources, Learning & Development).

Approach

1. Assessed Starting Situation
 - Conducted stakeholder interviews to define:
 - Gaps in current program offerings (lessons, trainings, speakers)
 - What success would look like/best case scenarios
 - Determined previous training and offerings to define next steps
 - Noted future improvements for new cohorts
2. Overhauled the Program in Conscious Stages
 - Implemented new trainings, speakers and topics to align with stakeholder feedback and future Partner needs
 - Provided clarity and communication around all aspects of the program to encourage engagement with Executive Management
 - Created new guidelines for candidates to ensure cohorts were compiled of future Partners
3. Integrated Communication, Coaching and Feedback Mechanisms
 - Implemented consistent communications to participants and their sponsors to ensure clear expectations and ongoing feedback

- Embedded 360 feedback into the program, provided at the beginning and end of the cohorts for comparisons and next steps
- Provided Executive Coaching to ensure individual development

Outcomes

- By providing clarity, guidelines and communication, cohorts went from 30+ individuals, to around 20, which:
 - Decreased the number of participants chosen for ‘retention purposes’
 - Updated the cohort graduation rates from around 75% to 100%
 - Increased the number of participants who were promoted to Partner
 - Allowed for more individualized training and development
- With updates and tailored opportunities, the program expanded from 12 months to 18 months and offered four in-person trainings to allow for networking, training and one-on-one meetings with Executive Management
- Over time, participant surveys showed a drastic increase in engagement and approval ratings, citing more engaging speakers and activities, enhanced clarity of Partner expectations and access to organizational Leadership

Reflection

What Worked Well

- By building trust and communication with stakeholders and Executive Management, it was easier to get buy-in for additional changes
- This program provided insight into the needs of our future leaders, allowing for changes and additional opportunities for improvement at lower levels

What I Would Refine

- Include further measurement of leadership effectiveness over time
- Expand the usage of data to connect development to business outcomes