



EXECUTIVE DIGEST

The rapid results package: Better performance/stronger managers

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Abstract With the rapid changes taking place in today's world, the new capabilities required of managers are outpacing the capacity of most organizations to respond. Traditional management development has proved incapable of effecting needed changes. The Rapid Results approach, a performance process, has demonstrated that it can play a critical role in responding to this challenge. When crises and 'must-do' situations occur in organizations, managers almost always rise to the occasion and achieve well beyond their regular levels of performance. The Rapid Results approach is designed to generate the same zest by getting teams to strive for and achieve almost impossible goals. They are helped to innovate and to exploit new approaches. And when teams succeed, the fun of evolving new approaches and the reinforcement of success produce managers who are in turn more ready to try their hands at additional, even tougher goals. Thus, management development and heightened achievement are blended into a single process.

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1. Introduction

For at least 20 years organizational leaders have recognized that times are changing, that the old command and control approach is obsolete, and that more flexible and adaptable modes of work are essential to surviving and thriving. Little progress has been made in actually implementing those shifts, however, even as the world has evolved and made them increasingly urgent. Thus, leaders now face a challenge of huge proportions: to develop—at all levels—the skills and mindsets necessary to support this new way of operating. This is a

challenge that traditional management development programs have not proven capable of meeting.

In recent years the Rapid Results approach, which was developed mainly as a performance improvement method, has demonstrated that it could be a key to responding to this challenge. The approach requires managers and frontline staff to work in small teams to accomplish major steps up in performance within very tight deadlines. While this approach consistently yields significant performance gains, it also generates two kinds of management development that are essential to achieving the transformation just described:

1. Team members learn a wide variety of *skills* needed to achieve their goals quickly. They learn how to construct sharp assignments with clear

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accountability. They learn how to conduct low-risk experiments to quickly test possible solutions and discover what works. They learn to spontaneously form effective collaborations—sometimes formal, sometimes informal. They learn how to divide work amongst themselves and move around in their organization to get vital information and to mobilize necessary resources.

2. Team members gain new *confidence* that enables personal and organizational transformation. As they push through to new levels of performance, they discover that dramatically better performance can be realized, not by stress and strain, but by creative innovation. Even when people seem overwhelmed with work and when everyone claims they are already doing their best, a hidden reserve of potential is waiting to be tapped through people's ingenuity. After some successes, employees begin to be less threatened by impossible-sounding demands. This psychological learning encourages them to raise the bar of what they consider possible.

In our experience, these developmental advances can occur only in the cauldron of tough performance improvement successes. It is only by experiencing these new achievements that managers gain the confidence such achievement is possible. Thus, while participating in Rapid Results projects, managers develop the skills needed to achieve their goal. This is the opposite of the usual development paradigm, whereby skills are taught and then 'parked' until some later date when they might be needed.

And so, without diminishing attention to the performance improvement aim of the Rapid Results approach, a number of professionals—us included—began placing increased emphasis on exploiting its developmental possibilities. Thus, what began as a performance improvement method with modest developmental side benefits is now as much a management and organization development process as a productivity program. In this article, we outline the special circumstances that enable rapid development of these specific skills required to operate a nimble, adaptive organization and detail an approach that can be used to methodically create these circumstances in any organization.

2. 'Must-do' situations: Circumstances that enable rapid growth and learning

The Rapid Results approach is based on the same dynamics that enable companies confronted with emergencies or urgent, must-do situations to rise to

the occasion and deliver the needed results, sometimes in breathtaking ways. Famous examples include programmers rewriting software in several days—rather than the typical several months—enabling Apollo XIII's return from its moon mission; the rescue of Chilean miners in just half the time estimated as a best case scenario by experts; and Johnson & Johnson developing safety packaging in weeks—rather than years—after some Tylenol capsules were laced with poison.

In such situations, the challenge to participants to create and implement a workable solution in the face of a compelling challenge creates a strong sense of personal responsibility. This zest enables the actors to break through the forces of inertia that limit progress in most organizations. Conventionally structured organization improvement efforts planned by senior management rarely have any of this spirit.

Rapid Results projects recreate the dynamics of these must-do events by focusing on the achievement of very tough, critical goals in a short amount of time. Teams have to achieve a specific goal—increasing sales, reducing costs, accelerating the introduction of a new product—using resources and tools already in place or through innovations they create on the move. These projects have been successful in many different kinds of improvement situations in mobilizing energy and achieving results.

In such situations, the nature of the challenge requires fast, dramatic learning. They are experiences in which the results cannot be achieved by doing more of the same; they require innovation, fresh solutions, and development of new skills and confidence. Fortunately, they not only require this development but also enable it.

The power of these experiences is that they propel managers out of their everyday rhythms and patterns of work. This is necessary for adult learning. Leaders can be exposed to tons of leadership development activity, but there is no evidence that they will change as a result. They need to be pushed outside their comfort zones and stretched in order to test new behavior modes.

Leadership development professionals have appreciated this reality for years and have encouraged stretch assignments, case studies, and simulations in place of formal training. But there are limits to the number of career-changing assignments that can be given. And simulations and case studies lack the adrenaline-boosting charge that comes from dealing with real, live experiences in the workplace. Without the reinforcement of delivering important bottom-line benefit to the organization, managers don't get much impact from such experiences.

Rapid Results projects are a powerful alternative: they enable managers to apply theory and practice to real opportunities that have implications for the organization. This drives unparalleled learning.

3. Design of the projects: The critical ingredients

Management researchers who have recognized the power of short-term projects (see Appendix) convey the idea that it is the short deadline that drives results. And to a certain extent, that is true. But to produce both bottom-line results *and* personal and organizational development outcomes, it is necessary to carefully shape each project with a few additional design elements.

We have discovered, over hundreds of trials, that three key ingredients ensure the project will succeed in achieving its goal and participants will learn how to repeat the success. In reading this list, you may say “Of course!” to each of the points. But the absence of any one of them can sabotage a project, and our observations are that only a small minority of projects has all three; they rarely come together in the absence of a uniquely designed effort. These three essential ingredients are summarized below:

- *First, the project must be aimed at something very important.* The topic of the project must be important enough to foster a failure-is-not-an-option mindset on the part of the team. This can be achieved by choosing an opportunity that is critical to the organization and to which leadership is paying attention; or, it could be considered worthwhile because it holds value for the individuals’ departments and work teams. Ideally, the project topic fits both these criteria. Where possible, it is helpful to shape projects that are aimed at goals the team is already responsible for. This way, the effort is framed as a method to enable accelerated achievement of objectives already agreed to—rather than as an extra task beyond participants’ regular jobs—which facilitates a high degree of commitment and accountability amongst team members. When the stakes are high, team members must develop the new skills necessary to succeed.
- *Second, a measurable, ambitious, results-focused goal must be set.* The goal must target an actual outcome and read like: “Reduce the average time from receipt of application to issuance of policy from 8 days to 6 days.” It should not describe an activity like: “Develop a new process for reducing the time for handling applications.”

It must also represent a major step up in performance to a level that seems nearly impossible. A sufficiently challenging goal aimed at a real business outcome is required to inspire team members’ recognition that they will not be successful unless they develop new skills and pioneer better ways of working through rapid innovation. Only through accomplishing something seen as unimaginable will participants discover how much more they are capable of achieving, which makes them confident about taking on the next challenge. In most cases, teams set their own goal, which fosters a sense of accountability and ownership.

- *Third, the goal must be achieved quickly—usually in less than 100 days.* This short timeframe introduces a sense of urgency that stimulates new ways of working and the elimination of time-wasting routines. It forces the team to create disciplined work plans and time schedules detailing how they intend to achieve their goal, and to adjust their plans as they achieve and learn. Development of these execution skills is crucial to organizational success. Moreover, the short timeframe enables the team to keep the effort top-of-mind for the project duration and reduces the risk of sabotage via distractions. Because the project is not a huge, total solution, it is also safer for teams to experiment with new approaches. Those that do not work can be quickly eliminated.

Together, these three design criteria create a unique experience for project participants in which achievement and learning are interdependent: the challenging, short-term goal cannot be achieved without learning new skills, and these skills cannot be developed without accomplishing the goal. Many consultants and companies that employ this approach use the ‘Rapid Results’ designation; others have adapted the project design elements but given it different names. The main point is that the adrenaline rush of going after something really hard and really important in a very short period of time is what enables the rapid learning. Even in light of such challenges, team members generally enjoy the experience. After one or two rounds of projects are carried out in a company, people who haven’t been assigned to work on a project often complain about their exclusion. Projects succeed in achieving their goal virtually 100% of the time.

A brief illustration: Some years ago, Avery Dennison used the Rapid Results process to develop the capacity of its management ranks to accelerate growth. Shortly after the process began, the company made a video showing how the first dozen or so

projects went. Participants were enthusiastic. One of the project leaders even remarked: “The learning on this project was faster than anything in my 24 years in the company.”

In addition to new specific skills and abilities, team members—like the Avery Dennison manager just quoted—gain an insight that can only come from experience: that much better results are possible, and that what everyone thought was great performance is not nearly as good as it can be. Once they see what they are capable of accomplishing, they are more willing to tackle the next challenge. In this sense, the achievement is the learning itself.

A quick analogy: Imagine a child standing at the edge of a diving board at a swimming pool, deliberating for many minutes whether or not to jump. After the child finally jumps into the water and enjoys the experience, she gets out of the pool and runs right back to the diving board to take another turn, this time with no hesitation. The initial experience increased her self-efficacy; it changed her perception of what she is capable of. So it is with these projects.

Gary Kaplan, President of the Construction Division of XL Group, described his indoctrination to the Rapid Results method in a previous job:

When I was at Zurich Financial, I ran many Rapid Results projects. We achieved tremendous results and our people grew into stronger leaders. When I came to XL Group, I discovered we had a great deal of data analytics but weren't really using it to improve our underwriting results. To get things going we held a GE-style 'WorkOut' and launched eight projects, one for each business unit, aimed at reducing our loss ratio by 2 points. The projects achieved the result. We followed up with a second GE WorkOut and launched 14 more projects, with half of them focused on growing the portion of the businesses where we had improved the loss ratio and the other half focused on finding more opportunities for 2-point improvement in loss ratio. Most of them produced the targeted results. But beyond getting the results, a great deal of learning came out of it. For example, we hadn't utilized our actuaries effectively as team leaders. But we got them to play a very active lead role in the projects, and now their leadership roles are much stronger in the division.

4. Setting the stage: The launch workshop

Usually, several teams that are about to tackle projects convene for a 1-day launch workshop. A senior

manager, referred to as a 'sponsor,' is responsible for overseeing the teams. The sponsor conveys expectations to the teams and ensures that they choose goals representing major performance steps up, in order to drive rapid skill development; moreover, he/she plays a lead role in the workshop as the teams select their goals and create plans to achieve them. There is also generally a facilitator/trainer who manages the mechanics of the workshop.

The teams begin by playing a game in which they are challenged to pass some balls around in a prescribed fashion in the absolutely minimum time. After various practice runs, most teams get their time down to 10 or 12 seconds and declare: “That's it, the best possible.” When we then tell them that teams with much less education or experience have done it in 2 or 3 seconds, they groan: “Not possible, it can't be done.” We insist that it can. And in every kind of organization around the world, when the teams go back to try it, they invariably succeed within a minute or two.

Running this exercise gives participants an experiential lesson in how successful change and rapid skill development occurs: A random group of people quickly begin acting as a high-performing team; they see how an ambitious goal amps up their problem-solving creativity; they experiment, fail fast, and iterate quickly to solve the challenge; they experience the need for building fun and engagement into work; they see they are capable of much more than they thought. These are all learnings that are leveraged during the projects and then throughout managers' careers.

The exercise serves as a touchstone for the duration of the project. When teams go to work to select their results goals, we tell them to select the equivalent of their 2-second performance rather than their 10- or 12-second performance. No low hanging fruit!

The work done by Nomacorc, the largest manufacturer of synthetic wine closures, provides another example of this. Nomacorc used four sales-oriented Rapid Results projects to advance sales and to develop sales management skills. Strong identification of the wine industry (and its customers) with natural cork represents a great marketing challenge, and could easily have provided company teams with a good excuse as to why they couldn't acquire more sales. But in their launch session the teams set themselves tough targets.

One team, for example, undertook the goal of getting purchase commitments from three new wineries in the U.S.—wineries Nomacorc had been trying to penetrate for years without success. This was a particularly difficult challenge since wineries typically take 6–18 months to test any new closure to make sure there are no negative effects on the

wine. The team found a way to accelerate this process, meeting its goal and learning a great deal about team selling to penetrate new markets.

A second team, in Italy, was tasked with launching a new product. The team had to create its own campaign, from the first detail to the last. The campaign was aimed at wineries throughout Italy such that each new customer (i.e., winery) could be the nucleus of sales in a different region. This team sold twice as much in 2014 as had been anticipated and via the process learned how best to plan and launch a new product.

The third team, in France, also had to launch a new product—one different from that in Italy. A variety of market issues affected team morale and customer expectations were especially high. The team stepped up to the challenge and achieved its 100-day volume goals.

Because the three teams had to create and execute marketing plans featuring ambitious goals within short deadlines, members learned how to work together cohesively and how to blow the whistle quickly and un sentimentally when a change of course was called for. They had to be willing to try different approaches until they found the one that worked. And because they were successful, they won the praise of senior management and reinforcement for their successful experimentation.

These experiences are naturally less orderly than participating in structured training sessions. But that is an element of the learning; most major organizational efforts require a tolerance for ambiguity and confidence in one's ability to figure out the way. These skills are critical and participation in these small, low-risk projects is an ideal way to develop them.

5. Setting personal and team developmental goals

At the workshop, while teams are working to define their project's results goal, they are also asked to consider how they might use their projects to experiment with explicit improvements in (1) dimensions of their own managerial functioning and (2) aspects of how they function as a team. Some fairly simple forms guide participants in selecting these developmental goals. Managers perform a number of self-assessments regarding their use and misuse of time: to what extent they give out ambiguous assignments, call meetings without requiring adequate preparation, pursue minor issues at the expense of major jobs they are trying to get done, etc. They may also assess their demand-making skills. They are asked about opportunities for increasing their effectiveness in setting priorities,

ways to encourage open communications, and a number of other aspects of leadership. Each organization is encouraged to add self-assessment items that pertain to issues of current importance to the firm. With these self-assessments freshly in mind, participants design—and discuss with other participants—how they want to use their work on the team's project as a chance to strengthen their own performance.

Participants also spend time discussing how meetings in their organization could be made more effective. Then, they agree on explicit steps they will take in the conduct of their project to put these ideas into practice.

This developmental goal setting reinforces the notion that personal and team growth will occur in real time in the context of working to achieve results goals. Thus, teams formulate both their results goals and their developmental goals during the launch workshop. The sponsor helps them formulate their plans in these areas of improvement so the teams get comfortable with the sponsor who will meet with them weekly or bi-weekly during project implementation.

Ascom—a global, Swiss-based telecommunications company—used Rapid Results projects as an explicit element of its talent development program. In addition to going through traditional elements of leadership development programs, each participant responded to a specific business challenge from an Ascom business leader by designing and carrying out a 100-day results project. Examples of such projects included increasing footprint in the healthcare segment, increasing business through resellers, improving efficiency of TAN product development, and developing a new software package for enhancing mobile phones. In one cohort of 16 participants, rapid-cycle, results-focused projects delivered over 2 million Swiss francs in bottom-line value. More importantly, these projects facilitated the creation of a network of next-generation leaders who have developed key leadership capabilities, inspiring performance and helping teams commit to and achieve accomplishments they did not think possible.

One Ascom participant reflected on a key learning related to his management style:

At the start of the project, I underestimated the importance of making sure the rest of the organization, not just our team, knew what we were doing. I did not delegate enough and micromanaged the team too much, which impacted progress when other efforts took my attention away from the project at times. As the project carried on, I was able to become much better at enabling others.

Another experienced first-hand what it takes to drive exceptional team performance: “For motivated people, everything is possible. If you set the stage, explain why, and get buy-in through an agreed-upon goal, results will come.” A third participant observed:

It was surprising to see how strongly people are tied to their current role and reluctant to change. I learned that changing culture and people’s mentality on sharing knowledge with others is extremely challenging, but possible. Commitment comes from a challenging, well-defined goal set with the team and an understanding of business relevance.

Yet another participant articulated how he will use knowledge gained during this experience going forward: “Structure of future projects will be more result orientated and less time will be spent on the planning and coordination of activities. We will set challenging results goals and track progress carefully.”

6. Ideas into action: 100 days of implementation

Immediately following the workshop, team members wake up to the fact that they have committed themselves to a very tough goal that they are as yet uncertain how to achieve—and there are only a couple of months to achieve it. They meet, brainstorm about possible solutions, go off and do some research and digging, and as quickly as possible reach decisions about their plans. Often, there is no clear-cut pathway, so they have to agree on some tentative experimental steps. Consider the following: In a paper mill, one team experimented with changing the heavy rollers on two or three paper machines until it found a way that seemed to work; likewise, the investment office of CalPERS, the California Public Employees’ Retirement System, experimented with different ways of providing notification to independent investment managers interested in selling investment services to the organization.

For many of the participants, it is the first time they have had this kind of responsibility to produce results outside their functional role in the organization and have enjoyed this kind of autonomy to invent and test solutions. Teams are encouraged to meet every week, and at these sessions sponsors review their progress, providing encouragement and advice (e.g., how to overcome barriers and solve difficulties). If a team has internal conflicts regarding how to approach its task, the sponsor helps members find ways to quickly resolve the

issues so as to not delay their progress. If a team needs assistance from a different group in the company and is hitting barriers in trying to get it, the sponsor helps the team think about ways to enlist the needed support. Note, however, that the sponsor does not go and demand that the help be offered, because that would deprive the team of the experience of using its ingenuity to recruit the needed collaboration.

In addition to seeking help from their sponsors, teams are encouraged to consult relevant experts inside—and sometimes even outside—the company. Sometimes teams have to find these experts and recruit them to help; sometimes the experts are asked in advance about their availability to help the team. For example, a team planning to test a change in procurement might consult with purchasing and finance colleagues to better understand the process. In trying to improve bottom-line results, the XL Group teams cited above realized that actuaries could provide necessary help and consequently drew them into the process. Until that point, actuaries had been regarded as a distant, esoteric group. At Cliffs Natural Resources, a team charged with improving quality results in an ore furnace operation had to consult any number of experts in ore treatment, furnace operations, and related issues. Such experiences break down the rigidity of the that’s-not-my-job syndrome. The projects make people learn to move across boundaries to get things done, to collaborate with people in other departments, and to find out about other technologies that impact their jobs.

Thus, teams receive two kinds of guidance: from sponsors regarding the *process* of getting their projects carried forward, and from specialized coaches regarding the *specific technical issues* about which they may need enlightenment. Both types of coaching not only help to achieve the goal, but also provide new information/insight to team members—which, when used right away in the project, becomes reinforced learning.

Responding to major shifts in the way companies were buying technology, Cisco’s Field Marketing Organization for the Americas (FMOA) realized that it had to significantly change its marketing practices. Instead of mainly targeting CIOs, the FMOA needed to learn how to reach business and functional leaders who were increasingly making or influencing technology purchases. This would require enhanced use of data analytics and social media, and less reliance on traditional marketing content, conferences, and collateral. To conceive of these unprecedented changes and then carry them out effectively was going to demand unparalleled amounts of time, energy, and resources despite the fact that budgets were being kept flat or even

reduced. Cisco's marketing leaders had to figure out how to manage their transformation and bring new skills into the organization while sustaining the ongoing work processes, a challenge beyond any they had ever dealt with.

To meet this challenge, marketing leadership organized a portfolio of Rapid Results projects. Some of the projects were aimed at 'capacity creation'; that is, freeing up time and resources by stopping or consolidating traditional but now less-valuable work. For example, one project focused on reducing resources devoted to face-to-face customer conferences by 50% in 100 days. This goal forced the team to outsource key tasks, combine responsibilities, and create more disciplined criteria and outcome metrics for participation in these kinds of conferences. As these capacity creation projects succeeded, flexibility was created within the budget to start investing in new skills, such as a data analytics team.

In addition to the capacity creation projects, the leadership team also designed a number of Rapid Results projects aimed at helping them learn how to create value with new and revised approaches to more personalized marketing. One project in the revenue marketing area, for example, had the goal of integrating behavioral data with Web-based inquiries in order to increase customer engagement (interaction with Cisco sales people) by 15% in 60 days. This project, and others like it, not only produced short-term results, but also provided critical learnings about how to leverage the new data analytics capacity.

More importantly, the managers of this marketing function—a group of people who had been very successful in traditional marketing roles—learned what it takes to orchestrate a significant transformation. The process forced them to create a joint vision for the future, redesign and streamline existing workflows, create a more dynamic and flexible staffing process, collaborate with each other and with their sales partners in new ways, and test innovations to make sure they worked. And they had to do all of this very rapidly while maintaining their regular work. As one member of the leadership team put it: "It wasn't only the work that was transformed. We also learned how to do many major new tasks that we never had to do before."

7. Sustaining and expanding achievement and development: Challenge for senior management

As teams demonstrate how to translate latent capability into real performance, senior management has its own learning challenge to face:

- How to make sure that the progress achieved by the initial teams is sustained;
- How to encourage those pioneering units to apply what has been learned and their newly developed skills to broader and more strategic subjects; and
- How to expand outward to other parts of the company and to related operations.

The first step in making progress sustainable entails having initial teams, once their projects are implemented and producing continuous gains, recommend how their innovations can be built into the ongoing systems and processes of the company as permanent aspects of operations. This usually involves the institutionalization of new work processes and behaviors through training, policy and procedure updates, and communications campaigns. Initially, these shifts must be monitored to prevent any backsliding, upon which action must be quickly taken.

Initial teams can then be given a second round of work to advance their original goals even further. For example, a team that worked on accelerating the launch of a new product can undertake to launch a number of other products and demonstrate how products should be launched in the future.

In reflecting on how rapid-cycle, results-focused projects contributed simultaneously to executive development and performance improvement at XL Group, Gary Kaplan said:

We've done about 60 Rapid Results projects over 5 years since I joined XL. During that time our combined ratio has gone down more than 17 points and our volume has doubled—in a very tight, competitive market. That was largely made possible by our people functioning at much higher levels, and I attribute much of that to their experience in the projects.

Perhaps the most powerful approach for expanding the learning entails having initial project participants sponsor, lead, or participate in new project teams launched to tackle other goals. Team members who have developed new skills and experienced the intense gratification of achieving something really difficult often become the most enthusiastic cheerleaders for additional project teams. They are eager to expand their own development by going after more major challenges and also enjoy the prospect of becoming a guru for new teams. When team energy flags, they are the first to share their experience and buck up morale. Through participation in the first projects, they have often built relationships across a variety of units, which can

be leveraged by subsequent teams. Their involvement in the first projects can also help accelerate the take-up of skills by participants in future projects.

Project sponsorship is a particularly unique role that enables development of new skills in the senior manager taking the role and rapidly expanding skills in project team members. The sponsor is a combination demand-maker and coach. She articulates the opportunity the team should tackle and sets parameters for their efforts. For instance, she may insist on a dramatic improvement in manufacturing throughput for a particular line, and with equal or better quality. But then she lets the team set its goal, develop its plan of attack, and adjust its efforts based on what the members achieve and learn. Throughout the project she will simultaneously hold the team accountable for its goal and offer insights and suggestions to help the team succeed, all while letting the team take the initiative to make decisions and carry out its activities. This ability—for a senior manager to lay out assignments, hold people accountable, and coach them through success to enable their development—is one of the most underdeveloped skills in organizations today. Boeing is one of the success stories: the company leverages elements of this model in its Leaders Teaching Leaders program, wherein Boeing leaders serve as coaches and mentors to staff and project teams. Previous project team members are great candidates for taking on the sponsor role. Another expansion strategy is to gradually make certain that every senior leader in the organization plays the role of sponsor in launching projects in her or his areas.

In some organizations, successive rounds of these projects are used repeatedly to stimulate experimental improvement pilot testing in increasing numbers of areas of the business. They are valued for the multi-dimensional improvements they make in both performance and managerial change-leadership capability.

Yet another effective way to expand the adaptive execution capabilities of an organization's people is to identify a cadre of 'change enablers' who function somewhat as internal consultants helping groups exploit the Rapid Results method. This role might be played by staff managers who have change support roles, such as systems engineers and HR trainers. Sometimes line managers play the role as a part-time assignment. In this way, more people are helped to benefit from the approach—and, by supporting the process, the 'enablers' develop considerable skill in the approach. The World Bank has been developing such enablers, called 'Rapid Results Coaches,' from

various countries in Africa (and now other parts of the world). These Rapid Results Coaches take the lead in facilitating projects aimed at developing local capacity to achieve results in education, healthcare, and business success.

Dave Kuzy, President of the 100-year-old specialty chemical company Carus Group, was looking to drive dramatically better performance and make some significant shifts in the organization's culture. He wanted to instill a sense of urgency, for instance, and help staff at all levels take more ownership and accountability in developing innovative solutions for important opportunities.

To make progress on both the performance and developmental objectives, Kuzy commissioned four Rapid Results projects aimed at important business opportunities that involved people from across a variety of units: business development, customer service, operations, manufacturing, sales, marketing, accounting, etc. Three of the teams aimed for revenue growth in different areas; one aimed for improving billing operations.

Each team exceeded its ambitious goal. For example, the team focused on improving the billing process reduced billing errors by over 80%. And the team focused on accelerating growth in a new business area identified nine new high-value prospects and actually closed a sale with one of them, all within 100 days.

More important to Kuzy than the \$500,000 in net benefit that these teams delivered were the skill development and cultural shifts that these projects enabled. Though they had modest expectations at first, Kuzy observed that project participants were delighted and energized by what they achieved. "They are now believers. They see that much better performance is possible and they have the tools and methods to capitalize on this 'hidden reserve.'" He described how the teams built skills in carving off focused efforts aimed at making fast progress on strategic imperatives, mobilizing needed resources, developing disciplined work plans, and experimenting with innovative ideas to pioneer better ways of working. The billing errors team, for instance, quickly recognized that the issues causing errors were more complex than originally thought. They responded by bringing all the key stakeholders together to brainstorm and prioritize solutions, and meticulously and quickly implement them to see what actually moved the needle. The Rapid Results method is now a tool used across the organization to deliver better performance and to continue expanding the learning and cultural shifts initiated through the original four projects.

In making Rapid Results a continuing process, Carus is doing on a small scale what a number of

larger organizations have done; that is, it keeps launching these projects, a few at a time, as a continuing management development and organization performance renewal process. For example, The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation of Ontario does it, as does the aforementioned Investment Office of CalPERS.

8. The reward

Here is a process that enables managers to develop their leadership skills while carrying out beneficial improvements for the company. The Rapid Results approach delivers both bottom-line results and management development results.

Given the rapid pace of change in the world, as well as the expanding need for leadership development to enable organizations to respond to these changes, this results-oriented approach means that management development no longer needs to be a costly activity that pulls people off their jobs every now and then for a fresh refill. Management learning can become a constant, built-in aspect of the quotidian management job: perpetual learning with the achievement of perpetual better results.

Appendix

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