Enabling career opportunities - are managers the solution or the problem?
Virtual Roundtable - Wednesday, 16 October 2019

Managers play a vital role in building a culture that unlocks employee potential and delivers future focused career development. However, our Careers of Tomorrow research revealed that they often inhibit, rather than enable career development. This Roundtable focused on what we can do to ensure managers are part of the solution, and not the problem.

PART 1: INSIGHT

Participants shared ways they are rethinking the role of managers, and their approach to career development:

- Influencing senior leaders to role model the desired career culture.
- Releasing talented individuals for cross-organisational moves, and project-based development.
- Achieving more visibility of career opportunities within the organisation.
- Adopting a more proactive and informal approach to career conversations.
- Tuning in to the needs of people at different career stages, and finding ways to release the energy of team members.
- Focusing on mindset shifts as well as skill building in training sessions.
- Promoting continuous learning for all, and recognising that all careers are unique.

PART 2: INNOVATION

Geraldine Percival, chartered occupational psychologist and Head of Talent Development at Asahi Breweries Europe, has adopted a 'systems' approach that asks everyone to consider the role they play and how this drives behaviour. She advocated using an 'Adaptive', as well as the more common 'Technical' approach to personal and organisational development.

At an individual level, the Adaptive process invites individuals to identify and question the biases, assumptions and feelings that inform their current thinking about careers and career growth. Geraldine provided some examples of attitudes that might get in the way of managers being effective career enablers:

- *Development means promotion.*
- *Career development is for high potentials.*
- *It's the employee's problem; I don't have time for it, and nobody's offered me help.*

At an organisational level, Geraldine argued that real change involves more than process re-engineering. Instead, it requires open and honest reflection on what holds the current organisational 'system', in place. Only when senior leaders understand the implicit rules and norms that support the status quo, can they design a tailored and integrated strategy that will build a new career culture.

PART 3: IMPACT

Building on the value of adopting a systemic approach to career development, David North introduced our Career Strategy and Support Model as a means of building a more intentional approach. Our discussion highlighted these take-aways:

- A strategic perspective, and support for individuals need to go hand in hand.
- Career conversation skills training would be enhanced by an 'Adaptive' dimension.
- In a fast-changing world, simplicity, clarity and transparency are more valuable to managers and employees than certainty.
- Defining a set of career principles will support everybody to play their role.
- Careers should be employee-owned, but employer-nurtured.