

APPRAISALS ARE POPULAR

Senior staff training in companies is the subject of a new report from an East Sussex business.

The study by the Learning Consultancy Partnership in Hove used an online self completion survey to identify senior leader development activities: 604 companies were contacted, and 23 responded. Claire Walsh, managing partner for the limited liability partnership which she began in 2004, said the 3.87% response rate from senior managers was not unusual for the industry.

Over a third (39%) came from the information technology sector and the rest were pretty equally divided between manufacturing, leisure and hospitality, retail/wholesale, professional services (all 13%) and finance/insurance, construction (both 9%) and real estate (4%).

Nearly half (48%) have been in business for over ten years and the rest (52%) have been in business for between two and ten years.

Forty three per cent employ less than 50 people, 22% employ between 50 and 99, 17.5% employ over 500 people and 17.5% employ between 100 and 500 people.

On training and development, the appraisal process was cited as the most popular method for identifying senior leaders' development needs (70%), followed by career development reviews (48%); training needs analysis (39%); succession planning processes (30%) and talent management programmes (26%).

Mentoring was the most popular development activity taking place in over half (56%) of the organizations and industry-specific training was also popular (48%).

Respondents used a mix of training providers. The most popular were external, private providers (70%) and in house training staff (48%). Less popular were colleges and universities (22%) and local enterprise agencies (13%). Over a third (39%), used industry specific training organisations.

The most popular measures for measuring senior leader development on business performance were employee feedback (61%), customer feedback (44%) and turnover (39%). Qualifications were only used as a measure by four per cent. Just over a quarter (26%) had no measures in place.

A total of 64% felt that developing senior leaders improved business performance "to some extent"; 23% answered "significantly" and 14% reported they were "not sure".

Strategy formation was reported as the most important topic for executive development, followed by people development (48%) and leading/facilitating change (44%). Analytical capability (13%) and global knowledge (four per cent) were reported as the least important topics.

The greatest obstacles to undertaking senior leader development were financial cost (70%), and lost working time (48%).

Over half (56%) believed the development needs for senior managers are different from other managers.

Ms Walsh said the research was done to establish whether senior leader development of managing directors, chief executives and senior directors is a "different animal" from normal management development. "The answer is that it is," she said. "Senior leaders perceive their needs as different

because there are not that many of them and because what they are doing in their day to day role is not necessarily the same as what managers in more junior roles are doing. They see themselves as more strategic in terms of leading and managing change.”

The partnership runs coaching and training for growing medium sized businesses and a copy of the report can be requested by visiting www.lcp.org.uk.

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