BUILD YOUR PIPELINE OF FUTURE LEADERS

The Definitive Guide to High Potential Talent Programs

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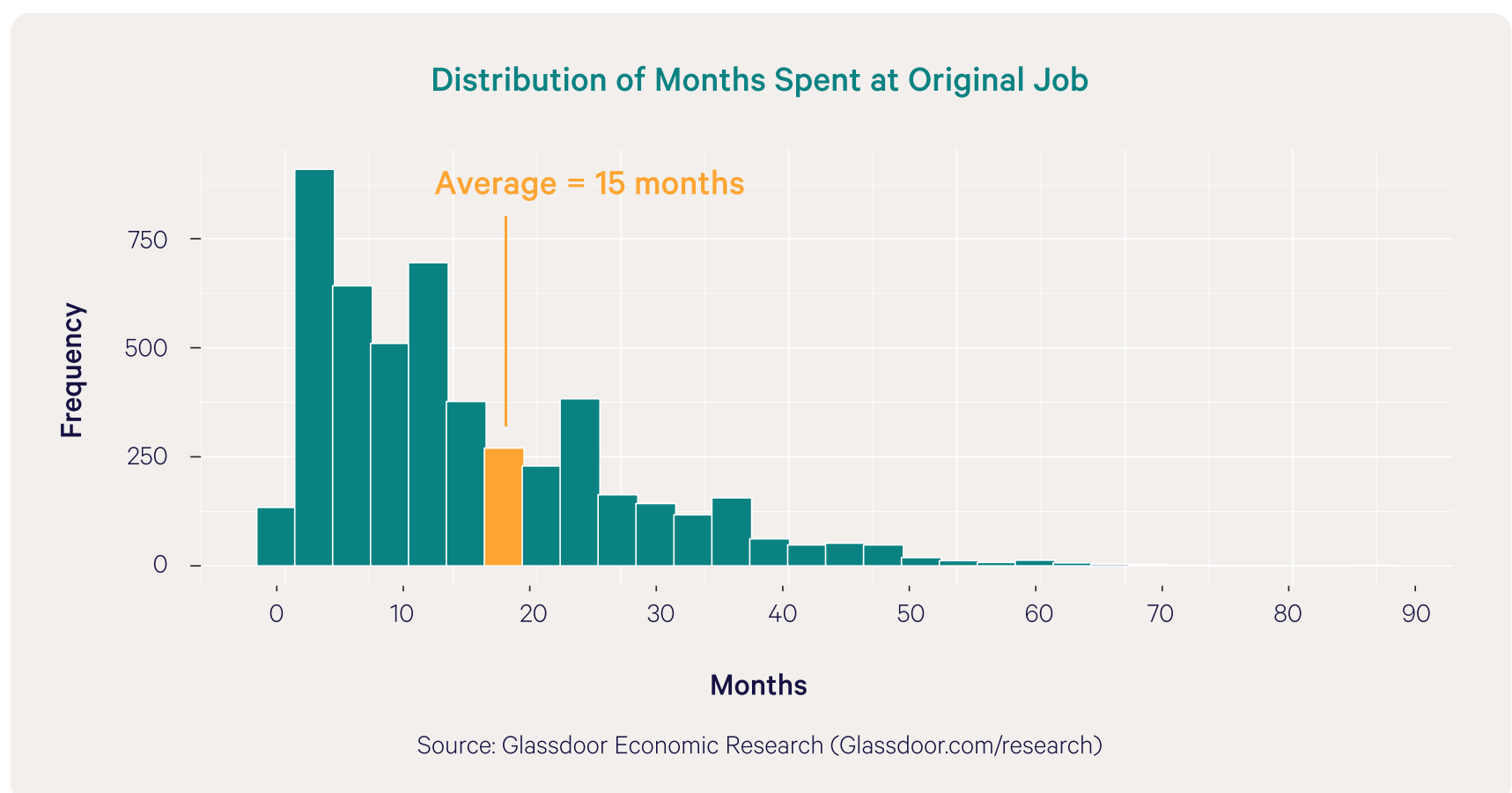an Absorb company

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Why you need a high potential talent program

Your biggest competitive advantage is your people

You might be lucky enough to have a strong recruiting program that funnels in talented junior employees from a number of sources: campuses, competitors, etc. However, Glassdoor's research report on why workers quit found that the average tenure of an employee is just 15 months. The 24 and 36 month marks for an employee are also common spikes in when they start to look for a different position.

Distribution of Months Spent at Original Job

Average = 15 months

Frequency

Months

Source: Glassdoor Economic Research (Glassdoor.com/research)

One of the top three reasons (aside from culture and pay) that employees leave their job is role stagnation. This is especially true of your high potential talent (HIPOs) - they need opportunities to stretch their boundaries, fail, and learn. These high performers also want exposure to senior leaders, who can advise them on their career path and give them opportunities in the business to lean in.

Every time you lose a high potential talent (HIPO) individual, you risk losing an employee that is capable of influencing key decisions that will save an entire line of business from failure, or that make-or-break a product launch.

Taking care of your best people is hard, but recruiting is much, much harder.

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Structure your program

What will engage high potentials and keep them around?

✓ Frequency

Start by choosing how often your HIPO group will meet. We recommend either biweekly or monthly - anything less frequent will be less engaging and the topics will not be top-of-mind, which is important for applying them in day-to-day scenarios.

✓ Meeting Structure

We recommend that you blend 1-on-1 mentorship alongside group workshops. Group workshops are a great way to run exercises that connect HIPOs together and take on larger tasks. 1-on-1s with executives give HIPOs a chance to ask questions specific to their situation, and foster deeper relationships with the leaders they look up to.

✓ Meeting Format

For group workshops, we break down content formats into the following:

- Case study / story by executive
- Campfire (each mentee takes a turn)
- Guest speaker
- Executive panel / Q&A
- Presentation round-robin

For 1:1 meetings, formats we recommend are:

- Goal Setting
- Solve a particular situation together
- Shadowing (either join mentor or mentee day-to-day meeting)
- Feedback or work critique
- Lateral mobility discussion

> " **Taking care of your best people is hard, but recruiting is much, much harder.**

How to identify top talent

Participation of mentors and mentees should be from specific parts of the business
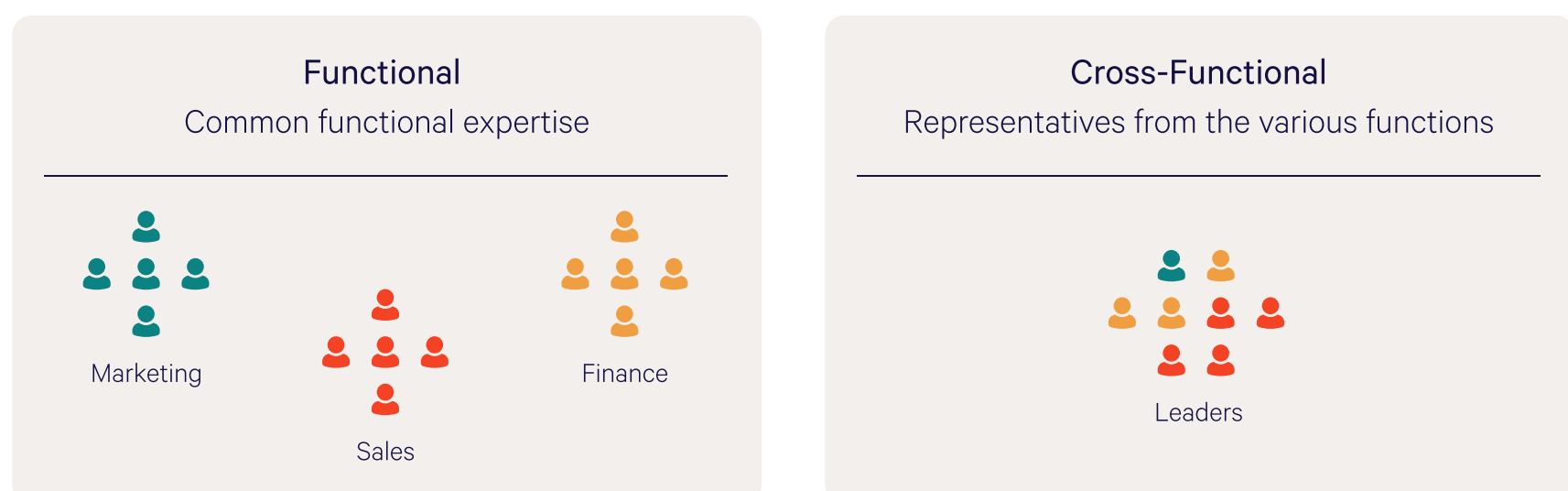
Mentors

When you run your high potential talent program, you must have executives who have committed time to participate in some capacity. A HIPO program without them will fail, because HIPO mentees need the incentive that comes with exercising their intellectual curiosity, and exposing their ability and insights to executives. They know these workshops and mentoring sessions are exclusive opportunities to learn and open doors for interesting roles or projects in the future.

Mentees

A common technique to identify HIPOs is manager nomination. Here, you can reach out to business unit or area managers to identify a short-list of individuals. It's not common to take in nominations from direct peers of HIPOs, since your HIPO program may be a desirable and exclusive opportunity. An alternative technique is to pull reports of standout individuals based on scores from your performance review software. HIPOs can nominate other HIPOs too - meeting like-minded people will motivate them. Keep in mind that the 24 and 36 month work anniversaries are extra-high risk for turnover, so you may want to look for employees coming up on that tenure.

Cross-functional or Business Unit-specific?

Depending on the size of your business, you may want to run either a function-specific or crossfunctional program.

Functional	Cross-Functional
Common functional expertise	Representatives from the various functions
Marketing Sales Finance	Leaders

Function-specific

Take marketing as an example. In a marketing-specific program, your executive mentors may be just 1-2 people: executives from the marketing team, such as a VP and/ or CMO. Meanwhile, you can round out your mentee pool based on geography, productline or tenure.

Function-specific HIPO programs typically require your business to have at least 1000 employees, so that the program is large enough (~20+ participants).

Advantages:

Opportunity for highly technical /function-specific exercises

Easier to organize calendars (in case of function-specific seasonality, such as tax season, quarterly business reviews, etc.)

Cross functional

This type of program combines mentees and executive mentors from all functions. When involving mentors, it's common to do a round-robin rotation by conducting a workshop with each executive. In this case, each workshop should highlight a particular function, providing the HIPOs with exposure to different parts of the business, which may turn into lateral mobility opportunities or simply increased business knowledge.

Your exercises should consist of projects that a group can conduct together, for example, "How do we attract millennial customers to our new product-line upon launch?".

Unlike function-specific programs, you only need a company of 200+ employees to have a large enough cohort (~20) to run this program.

Advantages:

Exposure to all parts of the business

Team-building and knowledge sharing

Requires smaller team size

Example exercises

What does a HIPO program look like in practice?

Week	Group Workshops (Cross-Functional)	1 on 1s
1	**Case study:** Why did the business decide to carry out a past merger?	**Goal setting:** Pick a skill or goal you want to work on
3	**Presentation round-robin:** Each mentee presents a strategy to "future proof" the business (communication & executive presence exercise)	**Work critique:** Explain and present a recent project and get critical feedback
5	**Case study:** What was a product line failure in the past? What was learned?	**Solve a particular situation:** Pick a recent failure - big or small - aligned with the goal or skill you're working on. Talk about different ways you could have handled it in retrospect
7	**Panel + Q&A:** How did you learn to lead teams? How do you inspire people and build credibility?	**Shadowing:** Arrange to join either an executive meeting or a mentee meeting
9	**Guest Speaker**	**Networking:** Who else in the business could the mentor introduce you to? Outside the business?
11	**Final presentation round-robin:** Each mentee presents a new strategy for their department to a panel of executives	**Wrap up and reflect:** How much progress did you make on your goal / skill?

Using software to help

Great mentoring software will help you collect feedback, report on ROI, and deliver a better experience for everyone

Launching a HIPO program doesn't have to be hard. It's easy with software that does all the heavy lifting and has all of the best practices baked in.

Structure

Using a mentoring tool like Together Software to pair your executives and mentees gives you structure, guidance and accountability. Without a tool, you'll have to stay on top of all of the pairings and groups.

Content and Agendas

If you found this white-paper useful, you may find additional content useful from a software tool. Together's software sends agendas right into user's inboxes the day before each of their sessions, in a just-in time manner.

Feedback and Surveys

Having built-in surveying tools helps significantly. You can measure the health of your program, understand which sessions were the best, and improve your program for future cohorts.

Reporting & Analytics

What are participants' top goals they're working on? How does your turnover rate decrease when people join the program? Building all of these reports alone can take some expertise.

Executive Assistant Tools

Your executives will love how easy it is to build new mentoring relationships when everything can be managed by their assistant in one place.

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About Together

Together's mentoring software empowers enterprise organizations to drive performance through relationships. Whether you're running traditional 1:1 mentoring programs, peer or group mentoring programs, or just want to connect employees over a cup of coffee, Together matches employees at scale.

Together has consistently been granted the #1 mentorship software award for user experience by G2, the world's leading software review site.

Together Administrators Report...

94%

Improved Employee Skills

95%

A More Connected Company

100%

Improved Inclusion and Support

79%

Improved Retention

Some of our customers include

Crayon

Kellogg's

randstad

Discovery

Teladoc HEALTH

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Book Demo