



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

---

13 January 2003

### Acceleration Talent Pools

Organizations are facing a lack of internal executive talent. This is mainly due to the failure of traditional succession planning, which focuses on identifying rather than developing future leaders.

One viable option is the acceleration pool system, which helps organizations ensure that they have the executive talent they will need in the next decade and beyond. Rather than targeting one or two employees for each management position as in succession planning, an acceleration pool develops a group of high potential candidates for undefined jobs at the executive level.

The system of acceleration pools assumes that everyone in the organization has talent and the right to be developed and considered for promotion, but only a few people will be accelerated in their development. As organizational success depends on having the right people for the right jobs at the right time, there's a need to become more proactive in developing internal talent.

The development of pool members is accelerated through "stretch" assignments that offer the best learning and highest visibility opportunities. Pool members spend comparatively less time in assignments and get more training. They attend special developmental experiences such as university executive programs and in-company action learning sessions and receive feedback and coaching.

Employees might be in the pool for 1-15 years, depending on when they enter and their development needs at that time. Pool members have an assigned mentor or a team of two to three executives to aid their development. Each participant's job performance, competency development and job-experience growth are reviewed at least twice a year.

The pool size depends on the number of positions above it and the selection ratio that the organization would like to have in filling target positions. The number of acceleration pools a company has reflects its attitude towards employees and how well it is organized.

Acceleration pools are built around factors that define the characteristics of top managers. Factors like the following help the organization to move forward:

- **Competencies or dimensions:** These are clusters of behavior, knowledge, technical skills and motivations important to success in senior management.
- **Job challenges:** This refers to situations that a person entering into top management should have experienced or at least should have been exposed to.
- **Organizational knowledge:** A senior manager must understand these areas to perform effectively.

Organizations use a combination of job performance, interview and assessment center data to identify high-potential employees and diagnose competency development needs.



## **TenStep Supplemental Paper**

---

Acceleration pool members are not evaluated by completing a training program, but on how they apply the training concepts in a measurable way back on the job.

Acceleration pools are an attractive alternative because they cater to today's young managers. They provide intensive them with self-development, job flexibility and self-management of their careers.