## **DEVELOPING TALENT IN A CRISIS**





A crisis is a great context in which to develop managers, deploy talent and utilise your talent framework. As Alan Mumford describes in Making Experience Pay, senior managers often identify a crisis at an early stage in their careers as being a very formative experience in their development. But how do you develop talent during a crisis like coronavirus, when budgets may be minuscule or non-existent? Here, we bring together key insights and ideas from across CRF's expert network.



A crisis often stimulates organisations into doing those things they should be doing anyway. It creates great opportunities for effective talent management, including the opportunity to:

- Ensure that you have your best people in the most important jobs, and that you move out people you should have moved out anyway.
- Use emerging talent to stimulate new, innovative ways of working. This requires asking people their ideas and making sure they have an opportunity to express them.
- **Cut costs** quickly and ruthlessly where possible.



Talent management is a key process in organisation survival. You must **have** a plan and need to communicate it openly and clearly.

- What's going to happen to me?
- What's going to happen to my job?
- What about my development?
- What's the future for me?

These are all fundamental questions to which employees need answers.



Accomplishing all the above requires coordination and planning. Consider organising small task forces on these and other issues; use them as a space where bright, upcoming people can give their views. The organisation will likely benefit as these views can be fresh and informing.

CRF's expert advisors and associates offer the following guidance and suggestions on talent development with low or no budget:



**Reading** – There are fundamental **must-reads for senior managers/ high potentials.** Curate a list and create reading and discussion forums on particular texts to stimulate and inform development. The reading list needs to cover geopolitical, economic, financial and strategic topics rather than the woollier stuff that is often discussed.



Use the HR team to **deliver internal programmes** (probably virtually), e.g.:

- The Employee Relations team can run performance management and handling grievances;
- The Talent Acquisition team can cover assessment and selection (train someone to administer psychometrics to give people self-awareness and so on).

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## (WITHOUT A BUDGET)





Assemble these into an **internal programme that senior managers/high potentials can work through** to give them the leadership basics (it's surprising how even relatively senior people have not really learnt the basics of management.)



- Lunchtime 'brown bag' sessions. Invite guest speakers and senior managers over a sandwich lunch to give a perspective. People, even external speakers, will often do this for nothing.
- Small-team visits to other companies (when permitted of course!). **The concept of home and away days**can be very effective 'we will come to see you and you come to see us'. Home and away days can focus on communications, salaries, development and so on, but an agenda is needed.
- Build and deploy project teams. These need to be realistic, important, taken seriously and require an outcome. If they are well supported by senior management, they can be very effective ways of getting things done and a significant learning opportunity.
- Who in the talent team knows about **action learning** and can run action learning sets? You can run an action learning set on the question of 'how to run talent management without a budget' itself! See page 4 of CRF's Post Meeting Notes: Digital Disruption for the key criteria for doing so.

- Curate development content that is available online, but remember to keep outcomes in mind:
  - What do people need to know?
  - Where do they get it?
  - What objectives are you setting them?
  - Who evaluates and how is it evaluated?
- **Develop facilitation skills** this helps organisations access different perspectives, develop problem-solving skills and empower people. Jay Conger highlighted this as a 'top tip' for leadership development on a recent CRFCast (podcast) listen here.
- Develop and embed organisation purpose. Identify
  a 'north star' and values this is something that
  can be done in-house and is increasingly used to
  effectively support talent and recruitment policies
  and drive consistency. See a case study from
  telecommunications company Ericsson here.
- Establish a Zoom network for talent specialists (not just within your organisation, but with other likeminded companies). This is something that we at CRF are currently experimenting with; contact Melissa Bates, Membership Engagement Manager, at melissa@crforum.co.uk for more information.



Above all, remember that a crisis should not be wasted; it creates huge opportunities for learning, talent movements, talent deployment, and so on.