



High potential, high impact:

Insights to build better programs

A research report



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Setting the stage

Successful organizations understand the importance of preparing for the future. Identifying employees who have high potential is a key part of that preparation. It helps ensure pivotal roles are filled with individuals who are primed for success and have the qualities to deliver exceptional results.

When organizations adopt high-potential (HiPo) programs to build critical capabilities across roles, they strengthen their talent pipeline and sustain a competitive edge.

In today's work environment defined by rapid change, evolving skill demands, and increasing role complexity, these programs are more essential than ever for organizations that are seeking to stay ahead. However, identifying, developing, and retaining HiPo talent effectively requires a deliberate, evidence-based strategy. This report examines how organizations respond to this challenge and provides insights into building the most effective HiPo programs.



About this report

In 2025, Talogy embarked on a comprehensive global research study of the present day HiPo landscape. The goal of this research was to discover the key components of effective programs, understand the challenges facing those delivering and participating in these programs, and offer recommendations for sustained success.

This research report breaks down the results from our study into four critical areas of implementing impactful HiPo programs:

- 1 **Defining high potential** – How organizations define and frame high potential
- 2 **Identifying HiPo talent** – The methods used to assess potential and how outcomes are shared
- 3 **Developing and retaining HiPo talent** – Strategies for cultivating and keeping HiPo talent
- 4 **Evaluating HiPo program impact** – Metrics and approaches for assessing program success

Together, these components form the foundation of high-impact HiPo programs that create long-term organizational value. However, it is important to remember that HiPo programs do not automatically achieve successful results. Effective implementation is key. A critical examination of these four components will help map out the features of HiPo programs that enable exceptional results.

We start with a brief introduction to HiPo talent strategies and the potential value they can bring, setting the stage to then present our research methodology and findings on the four components of HiPo programs.



The purpose behind HiPo programs

HiPo programs are designed to create a talent pool of skilled and capable individuals who can step into key positions across various functions. Leadership and senior-executive roles are critical to an organization's long-term health and success – but they're not the only positions where top-tier talent matters.

In addition to succession planning for managerial and executive positions, HiPo programs can also identify individuals with specialized capabilities that drive impact in key business functions or strategic initiatives. Individuals in these types of positions play a vital role in advancing organizational goals and securing a competitive edge. This can include individual contributors or mid-level professionals who have stepped beyond the norm of their role by solving big problems proactively and who possess valuable expertise and capabilities required to drive innovation, operational excellence, and strategic transformation.

The evolution of HiPo programs

While HiPo programs are not a new topic, they have evolved significantly since their inception. We first started to see a steady adoption of formal HiPo programs among corporations in the 1990's, with a growing emphasis emerging around 2010 likely driven in part due to the increasing discussions on the war for talent¹ that surfaced in the early aught's.² More recent research underscores the steadily intensifying focus on employee potential among organizations over the years, with a rise in programs that leverage formal assessment strategies to spot and nurture HiPo employees, from 70% in 2012 to 86%

a decade later.³ These organizations understand that it's not just about acquiring employees with the right skills, but also keeping those with the right skills at the organization long-term *and* upskilling them to make sure they are contributing to their personal and the broader business strategy.

In addition to the increased prevalence of HiPo programs, a more solidified understanding of how best to measure potential has also emerged over the last decade, with a multi-trait, multi-method approach that provides a holistic assessment of an employee's future potential gaining significant traction.^{4,5,6} When multiple, evidence-based assessment tools (e.g. personality assessments, behavioral assessments, interactive simulations) are combined, we can obtain a pattern of scores across various measurement methods, to ultimately provide a comprehensive assessment of a given trait or competency.

Aside from changes to HiPo programs themselves, the landscape surrounding talent management has undergone significant change in recent years, which is likely to continue. The World Economic Forum 2025 Future of Jobs Report⁷ reported that 86% of organizations expect AI to transform their business by 2030. This necessitates a high degree of reskilling. Other factors such as demographic shifts, a drive for sustainable business practices and economic and geopolitical uncertainty are also likely to shape the way we look at high-potential talent going forward. One way these trends are shaping talent management is that there is increased turnover at the top levels of organizations, with Gartner⁸ reporting that more than half of current C-Suite executives are likely to leave their roles in the next two years. This underlines the importance of organizations having effective succession planning strategies for these key positions.



The strategic value of high potential

Before diving into the current research report, it's important to acknowledge the strategic importance of HiPo programs. When implemented effectively, these programs can deliver significant benefits to employees and organizations. For example, employees identified as high potential report enhanced perceptions of distributive justice, increased organizational commitment, stronger retention intentions, and greater engagement with strategic initiatives.^{9,10,11}

Take a look below at some additional benefits that HiPo programs can achieve:

Future-proof leadership

Curate a robust succession pipeline for critical leadership roles

Accelerate business impact

Place top talent in high-impact roles to drive key initiatives and deliver faster, more strategic outcomes

Guarantee knowledge transfer

Ensure smooth transitions and preserve institutional expertise in specialized or hard-to-fill roles

Maintain talent continuity

Secure workforce stability by identifying and developing talent for essential roles

Boost engagement and loyalty

Increase retention and motivation by offering clear development pathways and demonstrating long-term investment in employees

HiPo programs can undoubtedly benefit the organization and their employees. However, it's important to also understand the risks of introducing such programs.

For example, research underscores the possibility for increased stress and burnout once employees are identified as HiPo employees, because of the increased expectations and pressure to perform to an exceptional standard.¹² HiPo employees also report increased frustration due to the often times ambiguous nature of the program details.¹³ These findings further underscore the need to design HiPo programs with care.

In the current research, we explore the key components of truly effective HiPo programs, focusing on the factors that enhance positive outcomes and minimize potential drawbacks.



Our research methodology

In this research report, we wanted to explore the latest thinking and practice in HiPo programs. To ensure a thorough examination of the current HiPo practices from a wide range of perspectives, we employed three methods:

- 1 Rapid evidence assessment of the scientific literature
- 2 Surveys administered to three relevant populations
HR professionals, leaders, and HiPo employees
- 3 Focus groups with subject matter experts at Talogy in the HiPo space



1 Rapid evidence assessment

First, we conducted a rapid evidence assessment (REA). This version of a literature review is a systematic and rigorous approach employed to gather comprehensive information on targeted research topics in an accelerated timeframe. The purpose is to obtain an evidence-based summary of a topic.¹⁴ In our REA, we set out to understand what was known in the scientific literature HiPo programs.

To select studies to be included in the REA, a variety of search terms were entered into two research databases. Search results were screened to confirm the inclusion criteria were met. See [Appendix 1](#) for additional details on the steps of the rapid evidence assessment, the search terms used when searching for studies, and the criteria studies had to meet to be included. The number of studies that met the inclusion criteria was 18. Information on the results yielded from the searches and the final number of articles included after screening can be found in Figure 1 below.

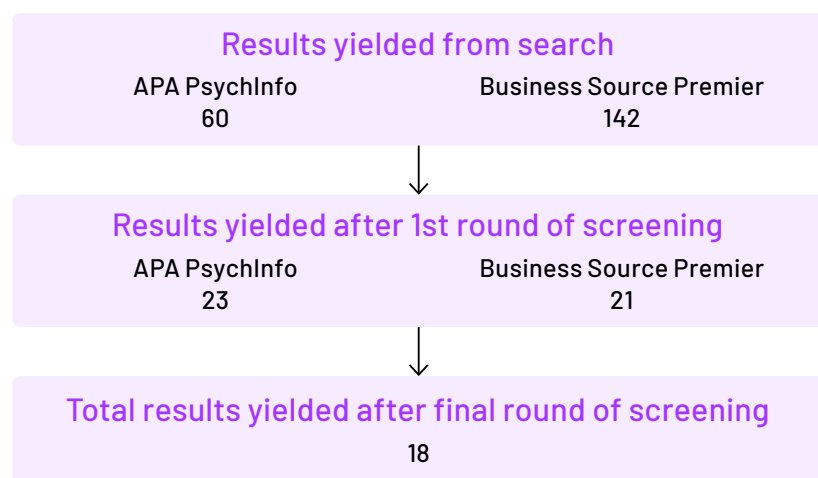


Figure 1 Search results for rapid evidence assessment

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Survey

Second, we administered an international survey designed to capture information on HiPo programs from three different populations and perspectives:

- 1 **Leaders with awareness of or involvement in their organizations' HiPo program, or who manage HiPo individuals.**
 - We surveyed 479 leaders from over 14 industries with previous experience in their organization's high-potential program. The sample included participants from various organizations of different sizes.
- 2 **HR professionals with experience running HiPo programs.**
 - We surveyed 378 HR professionals from over 14 industries with previous experience in their organization's HiPo program. The sample included participants from various organizations of different sizes.
- 3 **Employees who have been formally identified as high potential through a HiPo program at their workplace.**
 - We surveyed 179 employees from over 14 industries who have been formally identified as high potential through their workplace's HiPo program. The sample included participants from various organizations of different sizes.

For full details about the sample demographics, see [Appendix 2](#). The quantitative data from the surveys were analyzed to extract descriptive statistics and the qualitative data from the open-ended questions were summarized using a combination of topic modeling (a type of analysis that uses machine learning to identify clusters or themes within a collection of text) and analysis supported by a large language model (ChatGPT 4o).

3

Focus Groups

Third, we conducted eight focus groups held across six regions: Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Europe, Middle East, UK, and US. Participants were talent management consultants at Talogy with specific expertise in supporting organizations with HiPo identification and/or development. Between two to four participants were included in each focus group, with a total of twenty focus group participants overall. Five structured questions were presented in each of the focus groups for discussion. (See [Appendix 3](#)). Thematic analysis was conducted of the focus group transcripts, assisted by a large language model (ChatGPT 4o).



Defining high potential

A critical first question for HR leaders building and implementing a HiPo strategy within their organization is: “What is high potential?”

This section investigates this key question, exploring how different organizations are thinking about and defining high potential, how it differs from high performance, and what key skills and competencies underpin high potential.

The concept and meaning of ‘high potential’ have been discussed and debated in the HR world and in scientific research for many years.¹⁵ It is generally recognized that the term is broad and there are various ways that it can be defined. Many people may intuitively feel that they ‘know’ what high potential is when they see it, but they may have different assumptions and perspectives based on their own experiences and implicit expectations. Here are three examples of different perspectives on the definition of *potential* or *high potential*:

- 1 “In work environments, potential is rarely used in relation to current work performance but is typically used to suggest that an individual who has the qualities (e.g. characteristics, motivation, skills, abilities, and experiences) to effectively perform and contribute in broader or different roles in the organization at some point in future.”¹⁶
- 2 “In our view, HiPo interventions should focus on predicting who is likely to become a key driver of organizational performance. The people who will consistently generate exorbitant output levels that influence the success of organizations.”¹⁷
- 3 “High potential for leadership, or leadership potential, can ultimately be measured by accelerated advancement and successful performance in higher level leadership positions. Leadership potential is ultimately confirmed as individuals who later become successful organizational leaders.”¹⁸

Ultimately, organizations may vary in their interpretation of ‘high potential’ depending on the goals and strategy of the organization. What is important for any organization is to have an aligned view of what it means for them. Without having a clear answer to this question and shared understanding across the organization, it will not be possible to deliver an effective HiPo program.



How do organizations define high potential?

To understand different approaches that organizations are taking to defining high potential, we first wanted to explore whether organizations are using their own specific or customized definitions within their programs.

According to HR professionals and leaders, the majority of organizations do contextualize their approach to high potential for their organization, with 70% of HR professionals and 61% of leaders agreeing with this statement. This is good practice in terms of being clear about what high potential means in relation to specific organizational expectations and goals of a HiPo strategy and program.

Does your organization define high potential in a specific or customized way in your organization?

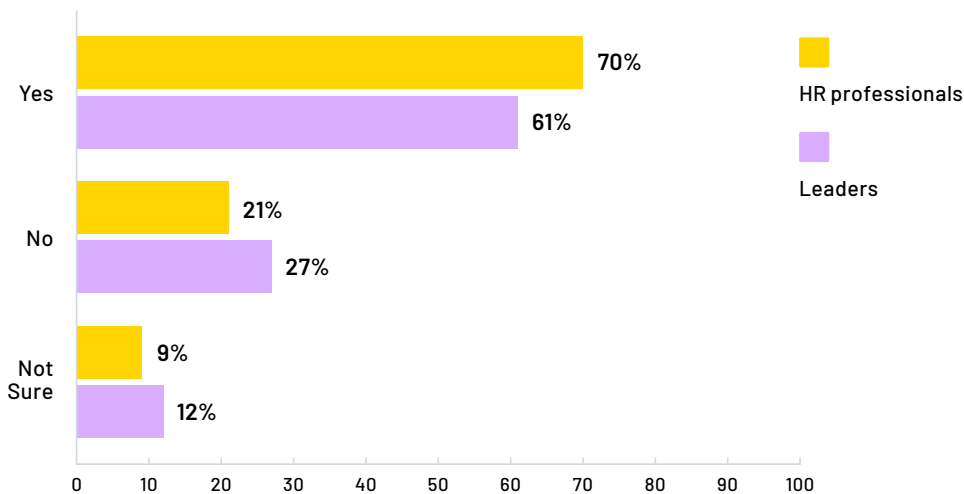


Figure 2 Does your organization define high potential in a specific or customized way?



We also asked HR professionals, leaders and employees to describe in their own words how their organizations defined and recognized high potential. There was a variety of responses, sharing different perspectives and emphasis. These answers covered aspects of both current and anticipated future performance, as well as several key characteristics that are considered markers of high potential. Across the three samples, we identified seven major themes:

1 Consistent high performance in current role

A key foundation is that HiPo employees show a proven track record of high quality, reliable performance in their role and consistently exceed expectations, indicating a mastery of their current work and responsibilities.



Employees who perform to the best of their ability, show high, consistent performance and willing to give a hundred percent in discharging their duties.



2 Readiness to advance into more senior or broader roles

HiPo employees are viewed as having the capacity to progress vertically, typically at least two levels within the organization, or to take on more senior level roles or broader responsibilities. In certain contexts, this may not always be vertical progression but could also refer to moving to different functional areas to fit organizational requirements. Of course, this raises the question of how exactly the judgment of someone's readiness is determined.



The capacity and readiness to take on greater responsibilities and challenges in the future. The ability and willingness to grow, develop new skills and successfully take on other or more complex roles within the organization.



3 Leadership skills

Many HR professionals and leaders highlighted that employees are considered high potential when they demonstrate a readiness to step into leadership and more senior roles, by showing the capability to lead people, influence change and drive results on a broader scale.



My organization defines high potential through a person who is hungry for growth and shows that they want to grow into leadership roles by being team leaders in their current roles.



4 Broad, strategic mindset

To be considered high potential, many HR professionals and leaders referred to the need for HiPo employees to have a broader, longer-term perspective, thinking strategically and showing vision. Alongside this, they need to navigate complex challenges and ambiguity, solving problems proactively.

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They consider someone as high potential when they are forward-thinking and are actively solving problems with initiative, not just waiting for directions.

//

5 Drive, ambition and commitment

HiPo employees are also self-directed, highly motivated, goal focused and eager to take on new challenges and make a broader contribution. They are committed and aligned to the organization's values and objectives, showing initiative and a willingness to take on extra responsibilities.

//

People with drive and ambition and a spark that shows they could develop to be strong contributors to the success of the company.

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6 Learning agility and adaptability

A further hallmark of high potential is when individuals show the ability to learn quickly and be adaptable. They are open to change and feedback, showing a desire to grow and improve.

//

We identify high potential individuals by their ability to learn quickly, adapt to change, and lead others effectively, even without formal authority.

//

7 Emotional intelligence and social skills

To show high potential, individuals are expected to have strong interpersonal skills, such as empathy, communication, relationship building and collaboration. High potential is seen as more than just individual output – it's about how an individual works with others productively across functions and is a positive influence on the organizational climate.

//

They think strategically and contribute to the big picture, aligning with the company's goals and values, while also building strong relationships and fostering teamwork.

//



What is the difference between high potential and high performance?

A common question about HiPo employees is exactly how they differ from high performers within an organization. As already outlined, HiPo employees are also typically expected to excel within their current role, but what separates them from high performers? We explored this differentiation with HR professionals, leaders and employees, who gave open responses to this question. Based on a thematic analysis, the following key areas of contrast were identified high potential with high performance across the groups surveyed.

Contrasting high performers with HiPo employees

Six key contrasts	High performers	High potential
1 Future capacity versus present contribution	Excel in current role and delivering required objectives	Capacity to go beyond current role and grow into broader, more complex and strategic roles
2 Leadership promise versus technical strength	Often demonstrate deep expertise and technical skills in their functional area	Capacity and qualities to lead people, whether in a formal leadership role or through informal influence across teams
3 Agility versus stability	Demonstrate consistency and dependability in their current role	Open to change, able to navigate ambiguity, adapt quickly and show cross-functional versatility
4 Strategic outlook versus task execution	Task-oriented and focused on delivering quality work efficiently	Think beyond the task in hand, looking ahead to the future, by showing enterprise thinking and seeking innovation
5 Organizational influence versus impact in role	Concentrate on their individual objectives and their impact on their own team or function	Show desire and ability to influence across the organization, align to wider goals and contribute to long-term organizational success
6 Stepping out of their comfort zone versus 'staying in lane'	Tend to stick to work and projects they know well, focusing on building depth of mastery in their existing functional skills	Willing to step in to the unknown, take risks and embrace new challenges as a way of stretching themselves and developing

Table 1 Contrasting high performers with HiPo employees

These six contrasts build and expand on many of the areas already identified as hallmarks of high potential. In summary, according to survey respondents, HiPo employees can be differentiated from high performers in terms of their scope, trajectory and appetite for personal growth.

A practical definition of high potential

Based on the thematic review of our survey responses, as well as evidence from our review of the scientific literature, here is a practical definition of high potential:

A HiPo employee demonstrates the capacity, aspiration, agility, and commitment to take on broader responsibilities, advance into more senior or complex roles, and be a significant driver of future organizational success.

This definition is deliberately broad, reflecting the need for the meaning of high potential to be adapted and contextualized within an organization's goals and vision for future success.

What are the top skills and competencies that indicate a HiPo employee?

To identify HiPo employees, it is critical to understand what skills and competencies are likely to be markers that signal that employees have the capability to adapt and take on more significant responsibilities and more complex roles.

To take a fresh look at this critical question, we asked HR professionals, leaders and HiPo employees to review a comprehensive list of 44 skills and competencies from Talogy's global framework (see [Appendix 4](#) for definitions). Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of these skills and competencies for identifying high potential.

Comparing perspectives

There was a high degree of similarity in the top 10 skills and competencies identified by the different groups in the survey, in terms of markers for HiPo employees. However, there were also some differences and nuances between perspectives.



Comparison of top 10 skills and competencies by group

Rank	HR professionals	Leaders	HiPo employees
1	Communication	Strategic Thinking	Integrity
2	Problem Solving	Building Teams	Problem Solving
3	Strategic Thinking	Teamwork	Critical Thinking
4	Critical Thinking	Communication	Accountability
5	Integrity	Integrity	Communication
6	Teamwork	Coaching and Developing	Teamwork
7	Motivating and Engaging	Motivating and Engaging	Strategic Thinking
8	Building Teams	Critical Thinking	Motivating and Engaging
9	Customer Focus	Accountability	Building Teams
10	Drive for Results	Problem Solving	Composure

Table 2 Top 10 skills and competencies by group

Firstly, both Communication and Integrity emerged consistently as top five competencies across all groups, signifying the foundational importance of these two areas. In past research, Integrity has been less commonly highlighted as a key indicator of high potential, but these findings suggest that there may be greater expectations now about HiPo demonstrating honesty, ethics and moral values through their behavior. This may be reflective of evolving societal values and increased scrutiny of organizations, in terms of ethical business practices and corporate social responsibility. The ubiquity of social media now means it is more important than ever to show integrity, as unethical behavior of leaders in visible senior roles can be shared globally in minutes. As HiPo employees are expected to play a key role in the future success of their organization, it is important that they act as role models in demonstrating integrity and principled leadership.

Perhaps reflective of the fact that leaders may think about high potential most of all in terms of ability to advance to very senior, executive leadership roles, the leaders surveyed placed slightly more importance on people leadership skills, such as Building Teams and Coaching and Developing, as well as Strategic Thinking. In comparison, HR professionals and HiPo employees place slightly more emphasis on cognitive skills such as Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, although leadership elements were still represented further down the top 10 list.

What is the overall picture when looking across these groups? Taking the average of the importance ratings from each of these groups, we obtained an overall rank order.

Overall top 10 skills and competencies important for high-potential employees

Rank	Overall average of groups	Ranked in top 10 by:		
		HR professionals	Leaders	HiPo employees
1	Communication	✓	✓	✓
2	Integrity	✓	✓	✓
3	Strategic Thinking	✓	✓	✓
4	Teamwork	✓	✓	✓
5	Critical Thinking	✓	✓	✓
6	Problem Solving	✓	✓	✓
7	Building Teams	✓	✓	✓
8	Motivating and Engaging	✓	✓	✓
9	Accountability		✓	✓
10	Coaching and Developing		✓	

Table 3 Top 10 skills and competencies overall



Eight of the top 10 skills and competencies overall appear in the rankings for all three groups surveyed, indicating these are consistently recognized as important from different perspectives on high potential. This overall top 10 can also be broadly categorized into four main domains of capability which are frequently mentioned in HiPo research literature and models:¹⁹

- 1 **Social skills:** Communication and Teamwork
- 2 **Self-management:** Integrity and Accountability
- 3 **Cognitive capacity:** Strategic Thinking, Critical Thinking, and Problem Solving
- 4 **Leadership skills:** Building Teams, Motivating and Engaging, and Coaching and Developing

Another interesting point to note is that some of the themes called out by respondents when describing how their organization defines high potential are not reflected in the most important skills and competencies. For example, aspects such as drive for results, adaptability and learning agility were not included in the overall top 10. This is also surprising when we consider the scientific research on high potential, where learning agility has featured prominently as a predictor of high potential in relation to the cognitive capacity domain. Learning agility is often referred to as a sort of 'meta-competency' that encompasses other competencies such as mindfulness, self-reflection, and continuous improvement. Studies have demonstrated learning agility's success in predicting high potential.²⁰

In summary, while organizations define high potential in ways that reflect their context, there are also many common themes we identified in our research about what characteristics are needed to demonstrate high potential. Many of the themes identified are supported by previous empirical research, but our survey findings also highlight interesting areas of self-management, such as integrity and accountability, which are less frequently called out. These could benefit from further exploration, to understand the extent of their role and influence on accelerated career advancement and progression to more senior roles.

Key insights

High potential is context-specific

There are various ways of defining high potential, and it is largely up to the organization looking to implement a HiPo program to answer the question “Potential for what?” in their own context. In line with this, our research found the majority of organizations currently do define high potential in a specific or customized way for their purposes.

High performance is not the same as high potential

While HiPo employees often excel in their current role, it's important not to confuse performance with potential. They differ in terms of scope and complexity, with HiPo employees showing standout capability to embrace wider, cross-functional challenges.

Growth and agility are key

HiPo employees show the aspiration and versatility to step outside their comfort zone, take on new challenges, and grow into more complex, demanding and broader roles in future.

HiPo employees possess a broad range of skills

HiPo employees demonstrate notable capability across a variety of areas – interpersonal skills, self-management, cognitive capacity and leadership skills. This broad skillset is necessary for an individual to be successful when working at more senior levels with greater responsibilities.



Identifying high potential

When it comes to HiPo identification, who you find depends on how you look. Understanding and successfully implementing a HiPo identification process is essential for long-term talent management. Without a clear approach, companies risk underutilizing skilled workers, misallocating resources, and facing leadership gaps at critical moments.

This section explores the operational aspects of identifying HiPo employees. We first examine the identification process – why and how employees are identified, who is responsible for identification, and when identification occurs. Then, we discuss the benefits and risks of informing employees of their HiPo status and consider whether transparency should be part of the identification plan.



Why do organizations have a HiPo identification process?

For many organizations, the purpose of HiPo identification is to build a strong pipeline of future-ready talent. According to leaders, the primary reasons for having an identification process include informing promotion decisions (69%), integrating with performance management processes (66%), allocating learning and development opportunities (60%), and supporting succession planning (56%). HR professionals reported similar priorities, with slightly higher percentages: 71% for promotions, 73% for both performance management and development allocation, and 68% for succession planning.

Fewer leaders and HR professionals cited hiring decisions (50% and 53%, respectively) and compensation decisions (34% and 38%) as top reasons for identifying high potential. These findings suggest that organizations likely see the identification process as a tool for long-term talent growth and sustainability, rather than short-term decision making (Figure 3).

Purpose of identifying HiPo employees

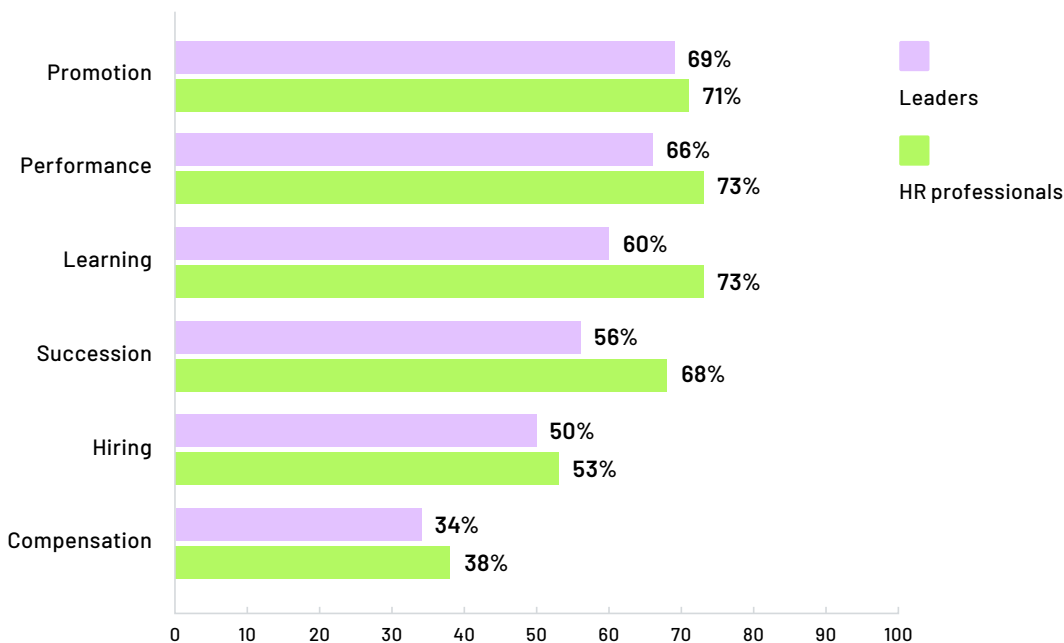


Figure 3 Purpose of identifying HiPo employees



How do organizations identify HiPo employees?

Organizations use a variety of methods to identify HiPo employees, with a strong reliance on past performance and managerial input. Most leaders (86%) and HR professionals (91%) reported using performance ratings and manager recommendations (72% and 73% respectively) as their main sources of information. Formal assessments are used less frequently – only 30% of leaders and 45% of HR professionals reported using psychometric assessments to identify high potential. HiPo employees themselves confirmed this trend: 88% said their performance ratings were used and 67% reported that their manager's recommendation played a role in their identification. However, just 20% recall being evaluated through a formal assessment process (Figure 4).

Relying on performance ratings and manager recommendations to identify HiPo employees may be quicker and more cost-effective than a comprehensive approach with robust assessments, but also more prone to subjectivity. By using a comprehensive approach, organizations could improve the accuracy and fairness of HiPo identification, leading to better quality and more objective decisions that align with business needs.

Forward-thinking organizations with a more structured approach typically use a wide range of psychometric assessments to evaluate HiPo employees. Common methods include 360-degree feedback inventories, personality questionnaires, structured interviews, cognitive ability tests, motivational fit indices, and interactive simulations such as role plays, group discussions, and case studies.²¹

Methods for identifying HiPo employees

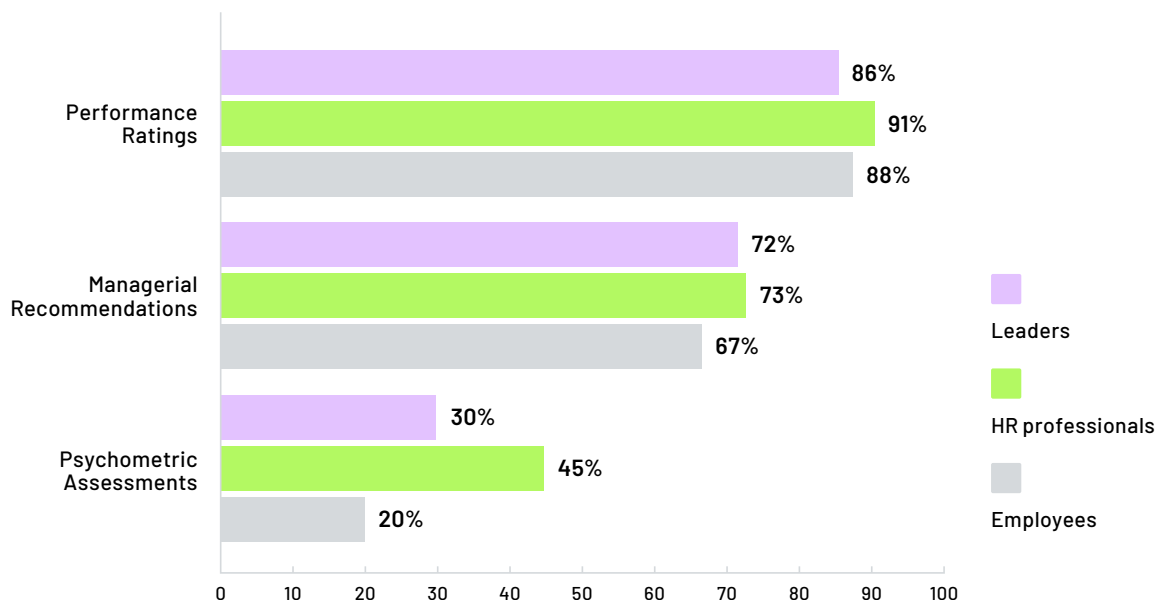


Figure 4 Methods for identifying HiPo employees

Who is responsible for identifying HiPo employees?

Identifying HiPo employees is widely viewed as a collaborative effort involving multiple stakeholders. However, perceptions differ between leaders and HR professionals about who holds the primary responsibility. Leaders most often pointed to senior leadership (66%) and line managers (57%) as the key players, with fewer citing HR (42%). In contrast, HR professionals see themselves as primarily responsible (70%), though they also recognized the roles of senior leadership (64%) and line managers (62%). Both groups agreed that executives are the least involved in the process, with only about a third identifying them as responsible (Figure 5).

Stakeholders responsible for identifying HiPo employees

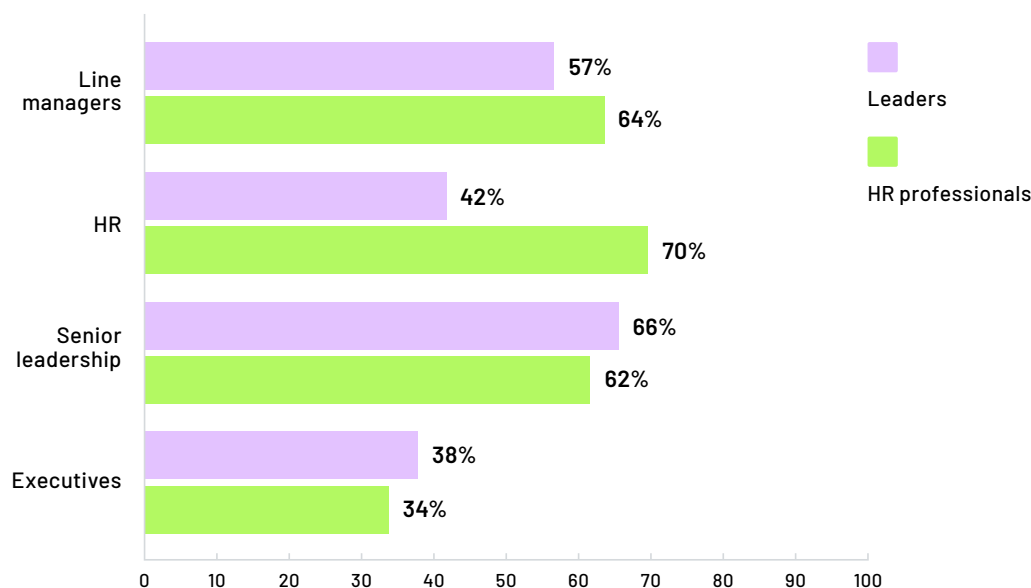


Figure 5 Stakeholders responsible for identifying HiPo employees

When are HiPo employees identified?

According to research literature, high potential is most often identified relatively early in an employee's career, when the person could progress two or more levels beyond their current role.²² Surveyed leaders and HR professionals corroborate this finding. More than 60% of leaders and HR professionals agreed that identification typically takes place when an employee is new to the workforce (with less than five years of experience), an individual contributor, or first-line supervisor with at least five years of experience. They said that identification at the middle management level was less common and, by the time an employee reaches senior management or executive roles, organizations rarely assess them for high-potential status (Figure 6).

Career level for identifying HiPo employees

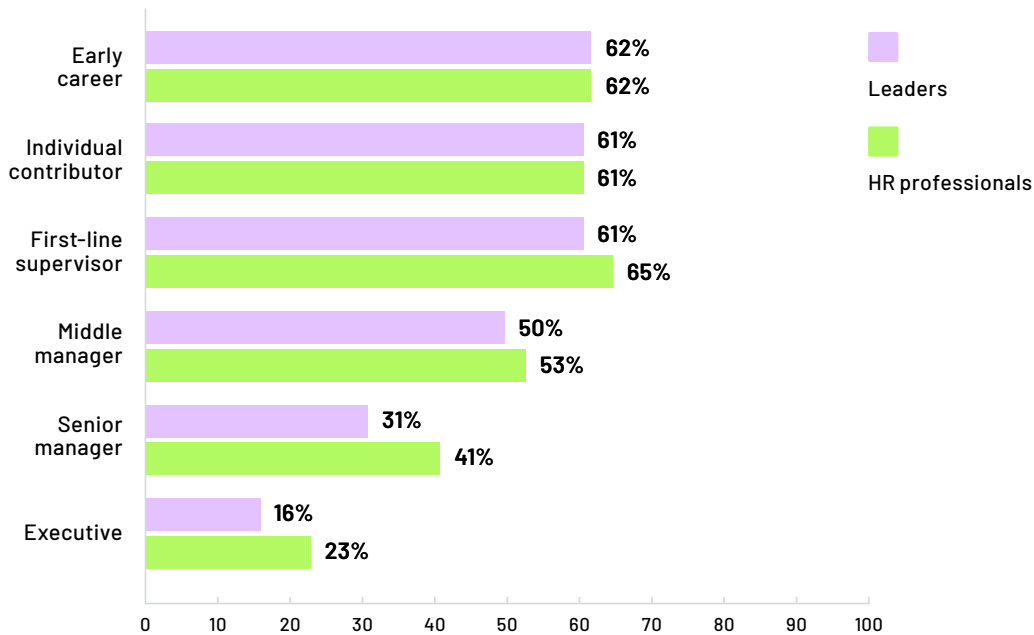


Figure 6 Career level at which HiPo employees are identified

However, focus group participants, who provide expert support organizations with high potential programs, noticed a different trend in practice. From their perspective, high potential is most commonly identified at the first-line supervisor or middle manager level. This may indicate that organizations rely on external support in implementing their HiPo programs at more senior levels, but may internally identify HiPo talent among less senior employees.

Organizations may prefer to identify high potential at first-line or middle management levels because these employees have a record of performance and accumulated meaningful work experience. Thus, their potential may be easier to accurately assess. Moreover, if employees have several years with the company, they may have a greater understanding of the organization, making them good candidates for leadership pipeline development and succession planning.

Whether an organization identifies HiPo employees early in their career – in entry-level roles up to middle managers – it reflects a clear focus on timely identification as a foundation for long-term development.

Do organizations tell employees they were identified as high potential?

Most organizations choose to inform employees when they have been identified as high potential – 66% of leaders and 71% of HR professionals reported that they communicate this status to employees. According to those surveyed, doing so can boost motivation, engagement, and confidence, which can lead to stronger performance. Communication is also seen as a way to show appreciation, encourage retention, and strengthen employee loyalty and commitment to the organization. Finally, leaders and HR professionals said that sharing this information provides clarity and direction, helping employees align their goals with organizational needs and plan their development.

However, not all organizations agree that sharing HiPo status is beneficial. Some believed it could create entitlement, ego issues, or perceptions of special treatment. Others expressed concern about potential resentment or jealousy among peers, which can harm team cohesion and morale. Additional risks included increased pressure on the employee to meet and exceed high standards of performance, attrition, and dissatisfaction if expectations go unmet or growth opportunities do not materialize.

Indeed, employees identified as high potential often confirm the observations and beliefs shared by leaders and HR professionals. In our survey, HiPo employees reported increased commitment and motivation when asked about their experience post-identification, with quotes like “I became committed to serving the organization to the best of my abilities”, describing it as a “major confidence booster” that pushed them “to keep learning and growing”. However, research also shows that HiPo employees perceived higher expectations and greater scrutiny from leadership after identification, which can lead to increased stress and anxiety.²³

While the benefits of communicating high-potential status seem to outweigh the risks, organizations must carefully consider the implications of sharing this information with employees (Figure 7). This was well summarized by one HR professional:

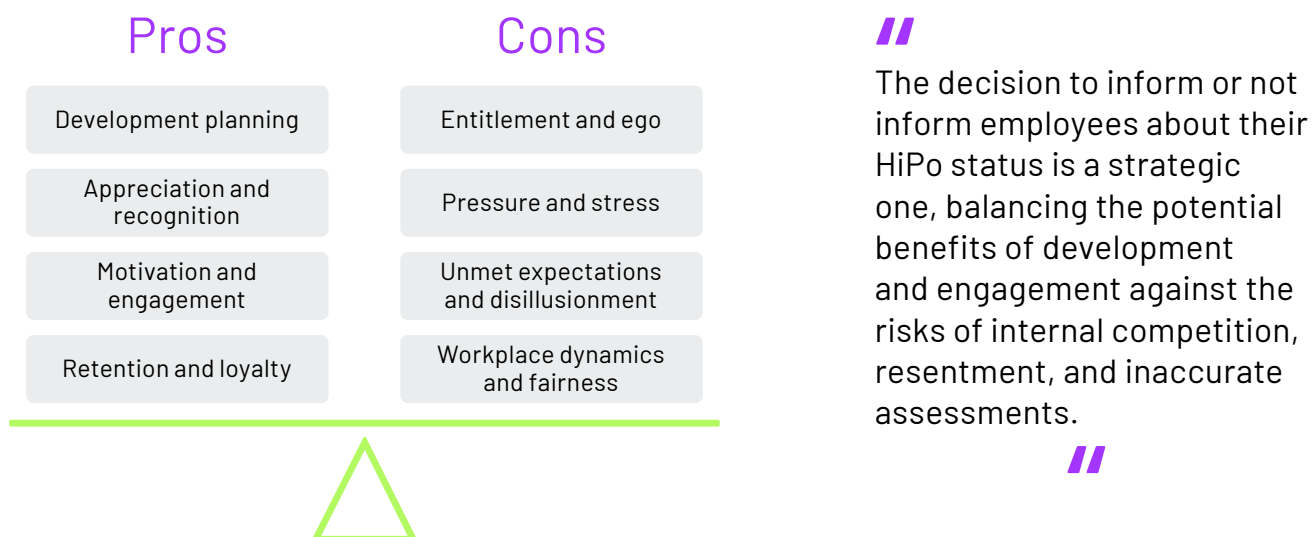


Figure 7 Risks and benefits of communicating HiPo status organized as Pros and Cons respectively

Key insights

Identification processes build talent pipelines

Organizations primarily use HiPo identification to inform long-term talent development efforts, including performance management and succession planning, rather than short-term decisions like hiring or compensation.

Identification is a shared responsibility

The process of identifying HiPo employees involves multiple stakeholders, with direct managers and HR professionals playing key roles in recognizing and evaluating exceptional talent.

Organizations use multiple mixed methods to improve the identification process

While most organizations rely on performance ratings and manager recommendations, a growing number are adopting formal assessments to improve the fairness, consistency, and accuracy of HiPo identification.

Early identification drives future impact

HiPo employees are typically identified early in their careers – often within their first five years – or while in first-line leader roles, allowing organizations to invest in their development and prepare them for future roles.

Identification transparency builds engagement but comes with risks

Most organizations choose to inform employees of their HiPo status to boost performance and retention. However, doing so must be managed carefully to avoid negative consequences such as growth dissatisfaction, peer resentment, and increased pressure to perform.



Developing and retaining HiPo talent

Correctly defining what high potential is to your organization and having a clear plan for identifying it is crucial to any program's success. However, it's only the starting point. It's also crucial to have an effective strategy for what comes after identification: developing and retaining your HiPo talent so that they stay on course for the roles you want to see them grow into.

This section offers insights into the common approaches to developing and retaining HiPo employees and overcoming the associated challenges.



How are HiPo employees developed?

A typical program

In our survey, both leaders and HR professionals were asked what a typical HiPo development program entails. Our results showed that mentoring is the most deployed strategy, with coaching and group workshops also used frequently. E-learning is by far the lowest, at just under 50%. Finally, a small percentage of each group also described other methods they use, including job shadowing and rotations.

Development strategies used

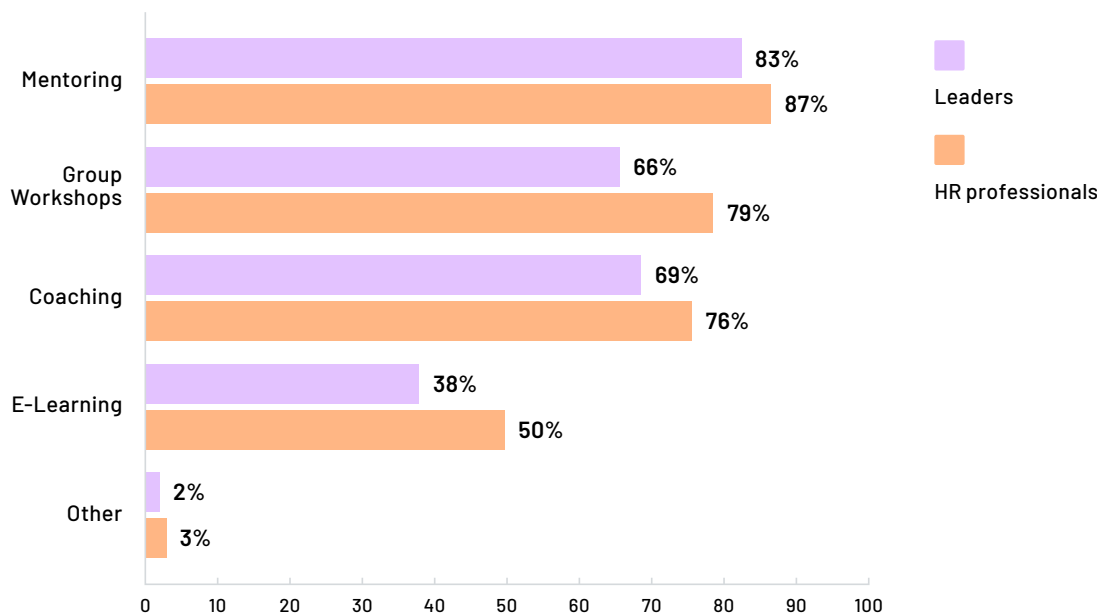


Figure 8 Development strategies used for HiPo programs

Further insights into this were gained from our subject matter experts, indicating that it likely depends on the level of the employees. At the early career or individual contributor level, more cost-effective and scalable methods like e-learning will likely be more common, with coaching often only being provided to more senior levels. They indicated that a typical development program for HiPo employees lasts approximately 6-12 months, but occasionally, when selecting potential future executives, programs can last multiple years.

Challenges to developing high potential

Leaders and HR professionals also provided some insight into the challenges they face when trying to develop HiPo employees. Across the two samples, five main themes were identified:

1 Resource constraints

Both groups emphasized that despite wanting to provide meaningful development for HiPo employees, they are often faced with resource constraints, both in terms of time, budget and availability. HR professionals in particular face challenges in making these programs scalable while maintaining the quality and impact.

“My organization faces challenges such as limited resources, time constraints, and balancing development opportunities with day-to-day responsibilities. Additionally, identifying the right development paths and ensuring consistent support across departments can be difficult.”

2 Managerial involvement

Leaders and HR professionals expressed doubts about the capability of managers to support HiPo development. Leaders mentioned that not all are trained to provide quality mentoring and support to HiPo employees. HR professionals observed that managers struggle with the balance between overstretching HiPo employees and not pushing them enough.

“Ensuring consistent mentorship and meaningful feedback throughout their growth can also be difficult, especially in fast-paced environments.”

3 Organizational politics

Creating perceptions of inequity or favoritism was a concern for both groups. Leaders found that cultural elements like resistance to change, low support for innovation and risk taking can hinder HiPo development. HR Professionals stressed the need to balance investing resources in developing HiPo employees with ensuring there is adequate development for all employees.

“It’s so dependent on how they fare against company politics depending on the level and on their supervisor/mentor to develop them successfully and at a good pace.”

4 Creating meaningful development opportunities

Despite the best intentions, it’s not always easy for leaders and HR professionals to find meaningful development opportunities for HiPo employees. Leaders find that identifying opportunities that provide sufficient challenge, for example stretch assignments, is difficult to do without disrupting everyday operations. HR Professionals must work cross-functionally to try to create these opportunities.

“[A] big challenge is balancing their development with their current workload. Finding the right stretch assignments and dedicated mentorship time without overwhelming them or neglecting current needs is tough.”

5 Retention and engagement

Retaining HiPo employees and maintaining their engagement level is a key challenge. Motivation for development can wane if the program is misaligned with career goals or lacks real challenge.

“Retention of employees at all levels is the biggest challenge.”



In addition to the above themes, leaders are also concerned that the identification of HiPo employees is not always very objective or transparent, leading to the wrong people receiving development and true potential being overlooked.

Despite the challenges involved in developing HiPo employees 68% felt that being identified as high-potential had a significant or very significant impact in helping them to achieve their career goals. Nevertheless, around 8% felt it had not benefited their career goals significantly.

How helpful was being identified as high potential to your career goals?

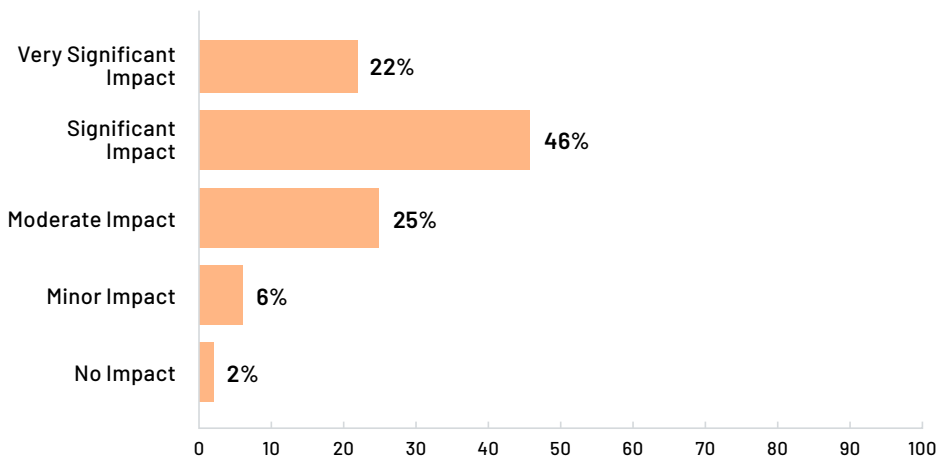


Figure 9 Impact of being identified as high potential on career goals

In addition to this, when we asked HiPo employees to describe what they had experienced after being identified, although many did receive development opportunities and generally had positive experiences, some received very minimal opportunities or support. This led to disappointment and unmet expectations. Others found the increased expectation and responsibility of their HiPo status stressful and challenging to deal with. This further supports the insight of HR professionals that the balance between providing challenge while not overwhelming HiPo employees is sometimes a struggle to manage effectively.

How difficult is it to retain HiPo employees?

As mentioned above, both leaders and HR professionals are concerned about retaining HiPo employees. However, the risk of turnover may be overstated, as our survey results indicate that being identified as high potential typically has a significant impact on employees' commitment to stay with the organization. This is reflected in the finding that 50% stated that it either had a significant or very significant impact for them.

Impact of HiPo status on commitment to organization

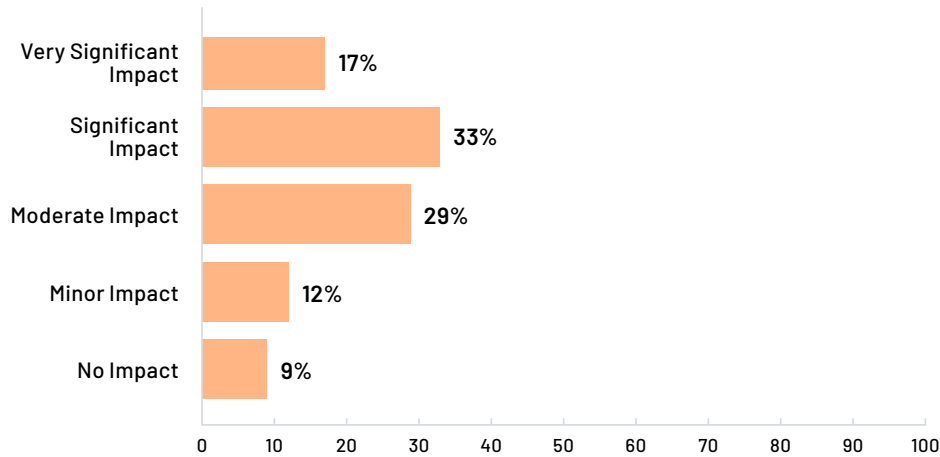


Figure 10 Impact of being identified as high potential on commitment to organization

In fact, as described above, when we asked HiPo employees to describe what happened next after they were identified as high potential, many reported feeling increased motivation, engagement and loyalty to the organization.



Why some HiPo employees leave

Of course, some HiPo employees do leave their organizations after being identified, and we sought to get a better understanding of the reasons why. As the majority of the employees we surveyed felt committed to their organizations, we turned to our leaders and HR professionals to get deeper insights on this topic. They cited the following most common reasons for HiPo employees leaving:

- 1 Lack of career opportunities
- 2 Opportunities elsewhere
- 3 Compensation and reward
- 4 Inadequate recognition
- 5 Burnout and overload
- 6 Misalignment with culture or leadership

These are broadly aligned with the findings in the previous section. The impact of perceived lack of development opportunities is clearly a key factor. In addition, HiPo employees may have a confidence boost and feel more optimistic about their chances of succeeding when looking elsewhere. In addition, if HiPo employees feel their compensation doesn't match their new status, they may seek a better package elsewhere. Insufficient recognition in the form of praise and acknowledgment of contributions can also influence turnover.

Burnout and overload are a key concern that comes with giving HiPo employees more responsibility and stretch assignments. This is also closely aligned with what HiPo employees told us about their experiences post-identification, where some struggled with the increased challenge that came with their status.

Finally, both leaders and HR professionals felt that misalignment with the organizational culture, or their leaders, is a key reason for HiPo employees' departure.

How do organizations seek to retain HiPo employees?

To understand how organizations can tackle the challenge of retaining HiPo employees, we asked leaders and HR professionals for some insights into the strategies they employ. There was consensus between the two groups that it is important to provide:

- 1 Development opportunities
- 2 Clarity around career path
- 3 Compensation
- 4 Recognition
- 5 Engagement
- 6 Supportive culture and leadership

Unsurprisingly, a lot of the strategies taken by organizations to retain HiPo employees directly combat the top reasons for HiPo turnover. Some specific actions mentioned include outlining career paths and required skills and competencies, providing alternative compensation options in addition to salary (e.g. stock options and additional benefits), and ensuring HiPo engagement by involving them in key business decisions.



Key insights

Clear expectations are a necessity

It's important to openly communicate with HiPo employees upfront when there are constraints in what can be provided to them in terms of development and retention incentives, so that they don't end up feeling dissatisfied and seek to leave the organization.

Incorporate job shadowing and/or cross-training opportunities

Core to potential is readiness to take on different roles and responsibilities. To really develop someone's potential, they need to have the opportunity to do so. Despite this, few of the leaders and HR professionals mentioned job shadowing and cross-functional training as being part of their HiPo development offering.

Managers may not always have the capability to develop HiPo employees

Finding time can also be a key challenge. It's crucial to evaluate whether managers have sufficient capacity as well as competence in coaching and development to be able to support HiPo employees effectively. Training for managers may be necessary to ensure HiPo individuals get the support they require.

Balance is key

While proving a significant challenge is important to develop HiPo employees and keep them engaged, it's important to have balance to ensure they are not overwhelmed. Stretch assignments and development activities need to be considered in line with the core responsibilities of their current role.



Evaluating HiPo program impact

Having spent considerable time and effort to identify employees with high potential, and then gone on to invest significantly in their development, it is of course critical to evaluate the outcomes and success of the HiPo program.

This section explores how HiPo programs are as perceived by our three participant groups, how organizations are approaching their evaluation and tracking progress over time.



How do leaders and HR professionals view their HiPo programs?

Evaluating the effectiveness of a HiPo program is essential to ensure that the investment in talent development is delivering meaningful results. These programs are designed to identify and nurture future leaders, so it's important to track whether they are actually helping individuals grow, take on more responsibility, and contribute to the organization's success. Without proper evaluation, it's difficult to know if the program is meeting its goals, supporting the right people, or aligning with business needs. Clear metrics also help refine the program over time, making it more impactful and ensuring that top talent is retained, engaged, and ready to lead.

According to Silzer and Church²⁴, organizations are increasingly interested in evaluating how well they are developing their talent and wanting to track their progress.

Our own research shows that most business leaders rate their HiPo programs to be effective and are satisfied with them. For example, 72% of Leaders and 79% of HR professionals rate their HiPo program to be effective or very effective:

Effectiveness

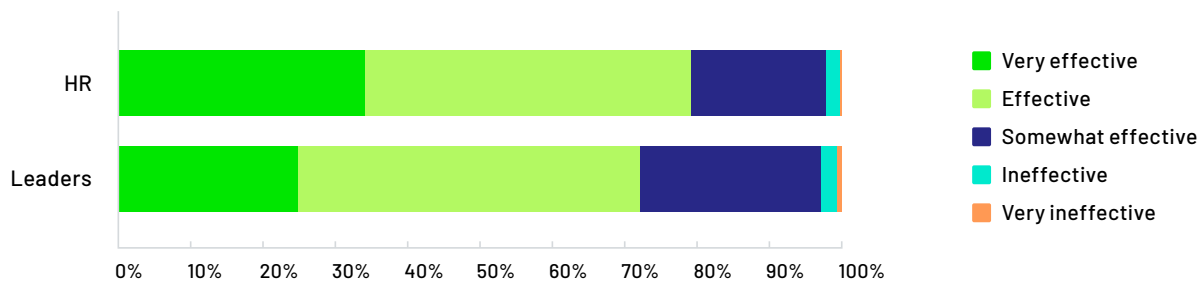


Figure 11 HR and Leaders ratings of program effectiveness

80% of Leaders, 83% of HR professionals and 76% of employees are satisfied or very satisfied with their HiPo program:

Satisfaction

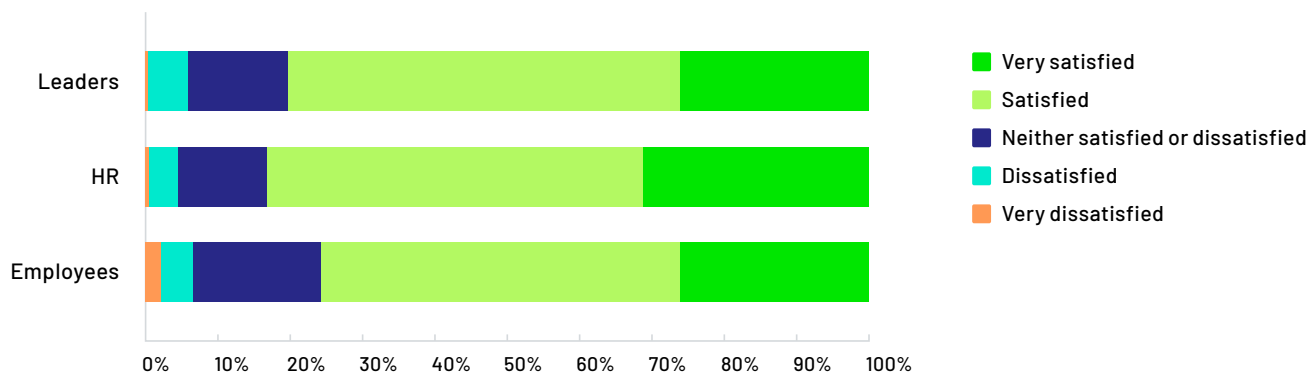


Figure 12 Leader, HR, and employee ratings of satisfaction with the program

These results indicate generally high levels of satisfaction across all three groups. However, it is notable that employees are the least satisfied. This suggests that while those involved in the design and implementation of these programs are generally satisfied, they are not resonating as well with employees.

So, what are the downsides to HiPo programs?

While overall, most leaders, HR professionals and employees are satisfied with their organization's HiPo program, it is still worth noting that almost 30% of leaders consider their programs to be ineffective or very ineffective. Therefore, it's important to examine some of the drawbacks to these programs. HR professionals and leaders were broadly aligned on the downsides they experience:

1 Fairness concerns

If the selection or evaluation process is not transparent or consistent, it can lead to resentment, mistrust, and accusations of bias from employees who are not selected.

//

A formalized high potential process can sometimes lead to perceptions of favoritism or create resentment among employees not identified as HiPo employees. It may also unintentionally limit opportunities for others and discourage collaboration if not managed transparently and inclusively.

//

2 Impact on team dynamics

Highlighting some individuals as HiPo employees can cause division among team members, leading to jealousy, competition, or a breakdown in collaboration.

//

Labeling some employees as 'high potential' tends to unintentionally create an 'us vs them' culture in most cases other employees end up feeling demotivated or resentful.

//

3 Pressure and stress for HiPo employees

Being identified as a HiPo can impose excessive expectations, leading to stress, burnout, or performance anxiety.

//

Those identified as high potential might feel increased stress or unrealistic expectations to constantly perform and advance.

//

4 Resource burden

HiPo programs can be resource-intensive, requiring time, systems, and sustained effort to implement effectively. Without clear ROI, such efforts may be seen as distracting or inefficient.

//

...the process can be resource intensive requiring significant time effort and financial investment which may strain smaller organizations.

//

5 Static labeling

Once someone is labeled a HiPo, it may limit future reassessment or create biases in how they are viewed and managed. Others may be overlooked simply because they weren't identified initially, regardless of their growth or evolving performance.

//

A rigid process can also result in the overlooking of valuable talent who may not fit the traditional high potential criteria but still have significant contributions to make. Additionally, an overly formalized approach may limit flexibility in talent development making it difficult to adapt to changing business needs or individual growth trajectories.

//

In addition to these areas, HR professionals also called out the risk of misidentification of HiPo employees and the difficulty of integrating HiPo programs into their organization's culture as key challenges.

How do organizations evaluate the success of their HiPo programs?

Given some of the challenges organizations face in implementing HiPo programs, it's critical to evaluate the success of these programs and ROI. There are many ways in which a HiPo program might be considered a success, so it's important to first clarify up front what the goals of the organization's programs are and plan the evaluation with that in mind.

Previous research conducted in 2010²⁵, found that the methods and metrics utilized for evaluation are generally informal. At that time, it remained difficult to evaluate the impact of HiPo programs on business outcomes directly. Our own research echoes this, as we found that HR and leaders reported various methods of evaluation, but in most cases, it was not systematic. In some cases, organizations are looking at business outcomes such as contribution to team goals, KPI and achievement of targets, but this is still not widespread.

The key evaluation methods reported by HR and leaders included: ►

Method	What it looks like
Program feedback	Whether HiPo employees and other stakeholders provide ratings and comments to support the effectiveness of the program. // In our organization [HiPo] employee engagement surveys help gauge the effectiveness. // As well as: //...feedback from both the high potentials and their managers on the effectiveness of the development and support provided. //
Skill development	Whether HiPo employees are showing an ongoing improvement in skills or competencies. // We have a trial time for employees after reaching their new higher position in which they can show their improved skills. Here we evaluate how they continue their career in the organization. //
Role performance	Whether HiPo employees show measurable output and results, in terms of improvements in meeting goals and objectives. // As a company we evaluate our high potential process by looking at how people are growing, are they taking on more responsibility, and facing new challenges. We also check in on their performance leadership growth and how engaged they are. //
Career progression	Whether HiPo employees are promoted within a certain timeframe, or at a higher rate than those not identified as HiPo employees. // We evaluate the success of our high potential process by looking at how well these individuals progress into key roles over time... //
Employee retention	Whether HiPo employees remain in the organization longer than those not identified as HiPo employees. // Retention of employees who are either laterally moved or upwardly moved into new positions. // As well as: //...retention rates compared to other employee groups... //
Succession pipeline strength	Whether the financial performance of a team or business unit led by a HiPo employee improves, showing the bottom-line return on investing in them. // We evaluate the success of our HiPo process by tracking... business impact of their contributions... //

Considering these methods, there are links back to popular methods for evaluating the success of learning and development interventions – for example, Kirkpatrick’s²⁶ prominent four-level model of reaction (program feedback), learning (skill development), behavior (role performance, employee retention) and results (pipeline strength, business impact). However, from our research it appears that many organizations are not currently evaluating all four levels systematically. Therefore, it may be beneficial to employ this or alternative evaluation models to bring structure to their process.

Interestingly, none of the survey respondents mentioned a formal evaluation of return on investment (ROI).²⁶ This indicates a crucial gap in current HiPo evaluation strategies, and this was echoed in our subject matter expert focus groups. The experts indicated that some effort is made to evaluate programs, through metrics such as retention rates, improvement in development areas, and participant feedback, but rarely are organizations successfully evaluating ROI or long-term impact. This is both surprising and not – one might expect that business leaders would expect this, but, equally, it is understandably challenging to accurately quantify this for many talent initiatives. Organizations may benefit from proactively planning to incorporate ROI into their evaluation, for example, by leveraging Phillip’s ROI model²⁷ which expands Kirkpatrick’s levels to include ROI.

Another point mentioned by a small number of HR professionals was benchmarking and comparison of various metrics such as retention rates, completion of learning activities or promotion, between HiPo employees and other groups. This is typically compared with internal groups of regular employees or, less frequently, against industry standards. This is an interesting point as it makes sense to expect better outcomes from HiPo employees – but it could be difficult to disentangle this comparison from the additional opportunities they were given and the ‘halo effect’ caused by the knowledge of their high potential status. Benchmarking externally against industry standards may be of particular interest to organizations with strong growth objectives or a desire to lead in their field, but availability of data presents a challenge and some consistency between organization’s metrics is needed for this to be a fair comparison.



How do organizations track individual HiPo progress?

As seen above, the majority of the methods used to evaluate HiPo programs relate to tracking an individual's progress over time – this can be in terms of performance, skill development, or progression to roles with greater responsibility.

Our research delved deeper by asking leaders and HR professionals to specify how they are doing this. By far the most popular method is with performance ratings, with promotion following at a close second. Psychometric assessment was much less frequently deployed, which is in line with how often it is used in identification. A small percentage used other methods like observation, interviews or did not track progress at all.

Methods used to track HiPo progress

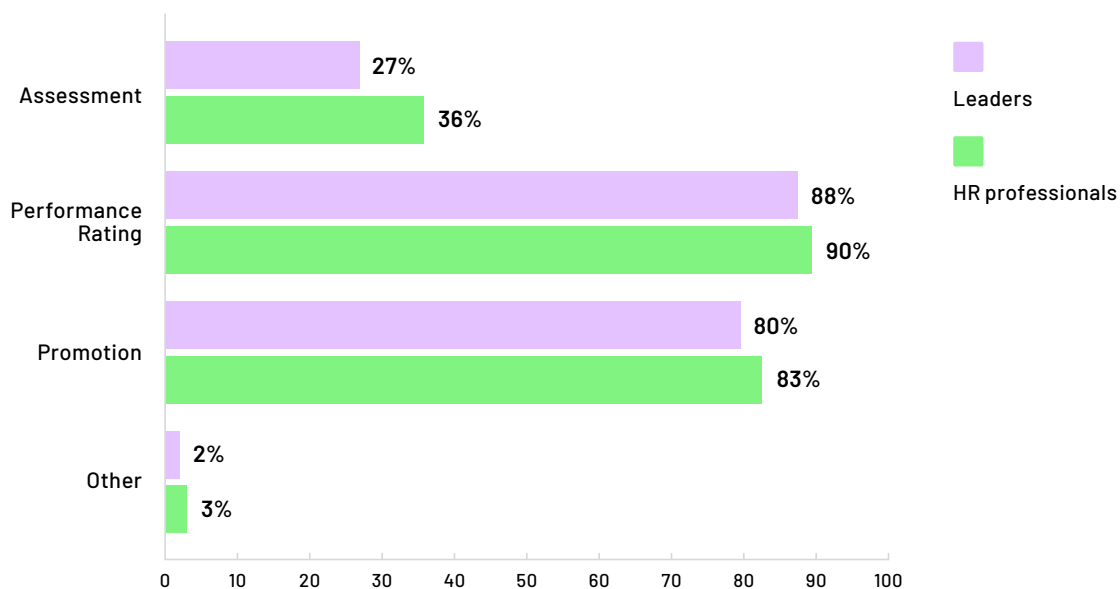


Figure 13 Methods used to track HiPo progress

It makes sense that performance ratings followed by promotions are the most commonly used metrics for tracking HiPo progress. These metrics are likely already available data points in HR systems, which may explain their more frequent use. These metrics are also, however, more prone to bias. Depending on how performance is defined and operationalized at the organization, it may not be the best proxy for potential. As stated earlier in the report, they differ in terms of scope and complexity, with HiPo employees showing a standout capability to embrace wider, cross-functional challenges.

There is also the challenge of attributing cause and effect with promotions. For example, are HiPo employees promoted more readily because they are more ready after their development program? Or because they are expected

to be more ready, as a result of their HiPo status? As previously mentioned, HR professionals and leaders reported that promotions are often leveraged as a strategy to retain HiPo talent, making the issue even more complex.

For this reason, it's important to also track ongoing development and improvement in the skills of HiPo employees – particularly those that differentiate them in terms of their ability to take on broader challenges. A robust approach to tracking individual HiPo progress will ensure that investment in the HiPo individuals leads to long-term and ongoing improvements to the individuals themselves who will be the future leaders of the organization. Proactively implementing a strategy for incorporating psychometric assessment will help to give a more accurate picture of skill development.

Key insights

Organizations find benefits in HiPo programs, but it's important not to overlook the downsides

Responses from leaders and HR people suggest that HiPo programs are generally considered a success in most organizations. However, there are some key challenges that arise from implementing such programs that need to be thoughtfully considered to manage the risk of damage to morale and team dynamics.

A range of different metrics should be considered when evaluating HiPo programs

To properly evaluate the effectiveness of a HiPo program, and ensure that business leaders and HR professionals are satisfied with the outcomes, it is important to use a range of methods and metrics, looking at different levels of evaluation – if possible, including ROI. In combination, these metrics provide a wealth of insight to set up the HiPo individuals and organizations to monitor successes in both the short and long term.

Performance and promotion are the most common ways to track individual progress

While it is of course useful to know if HiPo employees have been promoted, especially into the roles you were seeking to fill, promotion is also often used as a means of retaining HiPo employees. In addition, organizations may not always have roles available to promote the individual into, regardless of their performance. Consider utilizing a 360 feedback questionnaire and/or psychometric assessments to track HiPo employees progress on key development areas and fit for the role you eventually want them to fill.

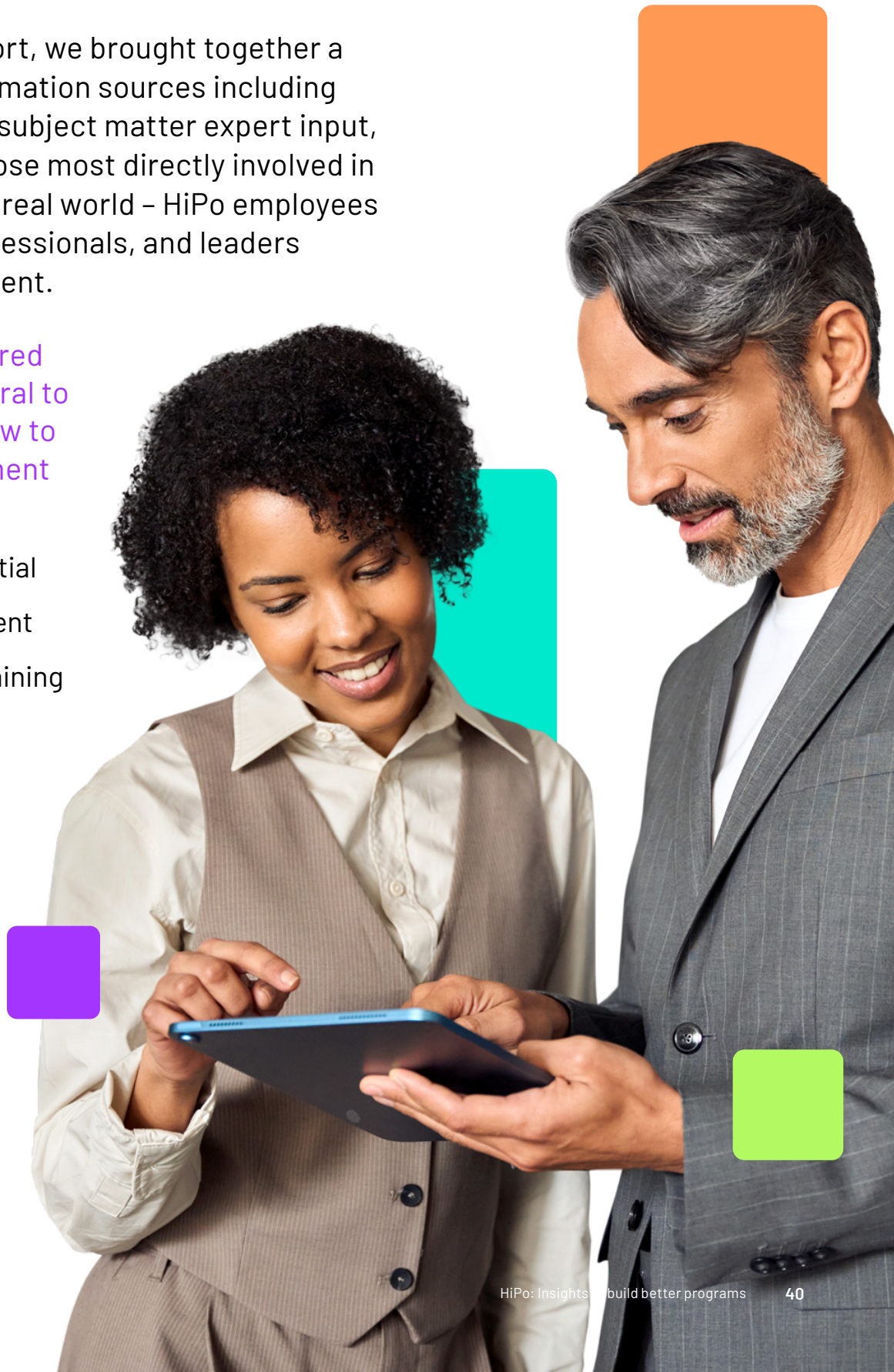


Concluding thoughts

In this research report, we brought together a wide variety of information sources including scientific research, subject matter expert input, and the voices of those most directly involved in high potential in the real world – HiPo employees themselves, HR professionals, and leaders with direct involvement.

In doing so, we covered the core topics central to the discussion of how to successfully implement a HiPo program:

- Defining high potential
- Identifying HiPo talent
- Developing and retaining HiPo talent
- Evaluating HiPo program impact





Across these areas, some key themes emerged:

1 Strategic importance of HiPo programs

HiPo programs remain essential for future-proofing leadership pipelines and sustaining competitive advantage in a rapidly evolving business landscape.

2 Clarity and consistency in definition and identification

Organizations benefit from clearly defining what 'high potential' means in their context and using structured, multi-method approaches to identify HiPo employees.

3 Communication and transparency are double-edged swords

Informing employees of their HiPo status can boost engagement, but must be managed carefully to avoid stress, resentment, or unmet expectations.

4 Development must be meaningful and balanced

Effective HiPo development requires thoughtful design, balancing stretch opportunities with support to avoid burnout and disengagement.

5 Evaluation is critical but often lacking

While many organizations rate their programs as effective, evaluation methods are often informal. A more robust, multi-metric approach can enhance program impact and accountability.

When successfully executed, HiPo programs can deliver significant benefits for both organizations and individuals. However, as our research has highlighted, creating and implementing a successful HiPo program is not simple. It requires thorough consideration and effective practices in terms of HiPo definition, identification, communication, development, and evaluation.

Organizations that get this right will be well-placed to succeed, with a strong talent and leadership pipeline capable of meeting the organizational challenges and demands of the future.

Appendix 1

Additional details on the rapid evidence assessment

A rapid evidence assessment (REA) was conducted to obtain an evidence-based summary of the scientific research literature available on HiPo talent. Additional details on the methodology of this approach are provided below.

In our REA, we set out to understand what was known in the scientific literature about the following questions related to HiPo programs:

- Generally, what are some key research findings on HiPo employee identification programs?
- What individual characteristics predict identification as a HiPo employee?
- How have HiPo programs (including how high potential is defined, measured, and developed) changed since their origin? What has remained constant in these programs since their inception.

Search terms

A variety of search terms were used in two research databases: APA PsychNet's PsycInfo and Business Premier Source. Additional details on the specific search strings used are presented below.

APA PsycInfo search string:

Any Field: "high potential identification" *OR Any Field:* "high potential skills" *OR Any Field:* "high potential competencies" *OR Any Field:* "high potential abilities" *OR Any Field:* "performance growth trajectories" *OR Any Field:* "predict performance long term" *OR Any Field:* "predict performance longitudinally" *OR Any Field:* "employee potential" *OR Any Field:* "high potential employee selection" *OR Any Field:* "leadership potential" *OR Any Field:* "predict high potential" *OR Any Field:* "high potential employee" *OR Any Field:* "high potential talent" *OR Any Field:* "high potential leader" *OR Any Field:* "identify high potential" *OR Any Field:* "develop high potential" *OR Any Field:* "predict career success" *OR Any Field:* "predict career acceleration" *OR Any Field:* "predict career growth" *OR Any Field:* "predict employee promotion" *OR Any Field:* "predict employee growth" *OR Any Field:* "hipo trait" *OR Any Field:* "hipo identification" *OR Any Field:* "hipo skills" *OR Any Field:* "hipo competencies" *OR Any Field:* "hipo abilities" *OR Any Field:* "hipo employee selection" *OR Any Field:* "predict hipo" *OR Any Field:* "hipo employee" *OR Any Field:* "hipo talent" *OR Any Field:* "hipo leader" *OR Any Field:* "identify hipo" *OR Any Field:* "develop hipo" *OR Any Field:* "hipo" *OR Any Field:* "high potential" *AND* APA Full-Text Only *AND* Peer-Reviewed Journals only *AND* Year: 2005 To 2025.

Business Source Premier search string:

XB ("high potential identification" OR "high potential skills" OR "high potential competencies" OR "high potential abilities" OR "performance growth trajectories" OR "predict performance long term" OR "predict performance longitudinally" OR "employee potential" OR "high potential employee selection" OR "leadership potential" OR "predict high potential" OR "high potential employee" OR "high potential talent" OR "high potential leader" OR "identify high potential" OR "develop high potential" OR "predict career success" OR "predict career acceleration" OR "predict career growth" OR "predict employee promotion" OR "predict employee growth" OR "hipo trait" OR "hipo identification" OR "hipo skills" OR "hipo competencies" OR "hipo abilities" OR "hipo employee selection" OR "predict hipo" OR "hipo employee" OR "hipo talent" OR "hipo leader" OR "identify hipo" OR "develop hipo" OR "hipo" OR "high potential")

OR KW ("high potential identification" OR "high potential skills" OR "high potential competencies" OR "high potential abilities" OR "performance growth trajectories" OR "predict performance long term" OR "predict performance longitudinally" OR "employee potential" OR "high potential employee selection" OR "leadership potential" OR "predict high potential" OR "high potential employee" OR "high potential talent" OR "high potential leader" OR "identify high potential" OR "develop high potential" OR "predict career success" OR "predict career acceleration" OR "predict career growth" OR "predict employee promotion" OR "predict employee growth" OR "hipo trait" OR "hipo identification" OR "hipo skills" OR "hipo competencies" OR "hipo abilities" OR "hipo employee selection" OR "predict hipo" OR "hipo employee" OR "hipo talent" OR "hipo leader" OR "identify hipo" OR "develop hipo" OR "hipo" OR "high potential")

Business Premier filters:

- Full Text
- Peer Reviewed
- Publication date 2005 to 2025
- English language

330 articles were identified from the initial searches.

They were then restricted further based on subject: thesaurus term field, to focus on subjects relevant to High Potential within organizational contexts.

- leadership
- personnel management
- management
- innovations in business
- talent management
- career development
- executives
- entrepreneurship
- business planning
- industrial management
- leaders
- work environment
- business enterprises
- decision making
- employment
- human capital
- employee selection
- labor market
- management styles
- psychologists
- public sector
- regression analysis
- benchmarking (management)
- businesspeople
- data analysis
- employee recruitment
- executive ability (management)
- human resources departments
- knowledge management
- labor supply
- mergers & acquisitions
- questionnaires
- stakeholders

- associations, institutions, etc
- business
- business development
- business success
- chief executive officers
- databases
- emerging markets
- employee motivation
- employee reviews
- industry 4.0
- international business enterprises
- job creation
- management science
- qualitative research
- social networks
- statistics
- succession planning
- supervisors
- teams in the workplace
- women's employment

Excluded following subject:
thesaurus terms

- investors
- descriptive statistics
- new product development
- technological innovations
- economic development
- economics
- infrastructure (economics)
- manufacturing processes
- consumer behavior
- consumers
- cost effectiveness
- covid-19 pandemic
- finance
- financial performance
- foreign investments
- income
- international economic relations
- marketing
- marketing research
- mathematical optimization
- medical care
- sustainable development

- accounting education
- business revenue
- construction industry
- consumption (economics)
- crowdsourcing
- customer services
- economic expansion
- economic impact
- economic policy
- energy consumption
- exports
- financial crises
- food industry
- international relations
- investments
- marketing management
- marketing strategy
- mathematical models
- quality control
- research funding
- tourism
- valuation
- wages
- accountants



Inclusion criteria

To be included in the rapid evidence assessment, studies appearing in the search results had to meet a strict set of criteria. The study must have been published within the last 20 years, be peer-reviewed, and in English. Non-empirical articles were excluded.

Studies that met criteria also included at least one measurement of a stable individual characteristic (e.g. competency, skill, ability, motivational driver) and at least one measure of employee potential (e.g. career growth/acceleration, promotions). Some studies did not include an explicit measure of employee potential but did include a measure of an individual characteristic theorized to be predictive of HiPo employees. These studies were included when the purpose was clearly related to high potential identification and sufficient evidence for the theorized relationship with potential was provided.

Studies with participants from any industry and any career, role, or position level were included. Participants coming from organizations in both the private and public sector were included. Studies conducted in the context of any organization size, in either the selection or development context, and with a focus on both general or specific (e.g. leadership or key contributor) high potential were included. Only organizational studies were included (i.e. health psychology, academic psychology, sport psychology studies were excluded).

The general steps to find and screen articles, as well as to review each article, are described below:

Rapid evidence assessment steps

- 1 Define main research questions and purpose of rapid evidence assessment
- 2 Define article inclusion criteria
 - Define search terms and search databases to use
- 3 Search specified terms on specified database(s)
 - Duplicates removed across databases search results
- 4 Initial screen based on the title, abstract, and journal to confirm it is relevant and meets inclusion criteria (in case of doubt, articles were included at this phase)
- 5 Review remaining articles in full and remove any that do not meet criteria
- 6 Extract key information (e.g. sample information, research design, measures used, results, characteristics defined as predictive of HiPo) from each article to help form evidence-based summary of the literature
- 7 Summarize key points in each included article
- 8 Use steps 6 and 7 to develop final findings and takeaways to be presented in research report

The number of articles in our searches that met inclusion criteria was 18. In addition to the review of the 18 articles that met inclusion criteria, we also explored a selection of review-style articles on the topic of HiPo employees. While these articles did not meet our specified criteria to be included in the REA, they did provide thorough synopses of various topics related to HiPo employees over the years and were therefore incorporated into our final findings to ensure a comprehensive assessment.

Appendix 2

Survey sample descriptions

Leader

Nationality	Percentage
Australia	1.69%
Austria	0.21%
Bangladesh	0.21%
Cameroon	0.21%
Canada	0.21%
Cyprus	0.21%
France	0.63%
Germany	2.11%
Hungary	0.21%
India	0.42%
Ireland	1.06%
Italy	0.21%
Kenya	0.21%
Malaysia	0.21%
Netherlands	0.85%
Nigeria	1.48%
Norway	0.21%
Poland	0.21%
Portugal	0.21%
Romania	0.42%
Russian Federation	0.21%
Spain	0.63%
Sweden	0.42%
Turkey	0.63%
United Kingdom	21.99%
United States	59.20%
Prefer not to say	5.71%

Industry	Percentage
Agriculture and fishing	0.88%
Banking and finance	15.57%
Business services	7.02%
Government and public services	8.11%
Information technology	18.86%
Manufacturing	11.40%
Media	0.88%
Oil, gas and mining	0.44%
Other	0.44%
Pharmaceuticals and healthcare	9.65%
Retail and leisure	9.87%
Telecommunication	1.54%
Transport and distribution	4.39%
Utilities	0.44%
Other	10.53%

Organization size	Percentage
1 to 49	13.15%
250 to 999	23.03%
50 to 249	31.80%
1000+	32.02%

Work arrangement	Percentage
Fully onsite	41.45%
Fully remote	6.58%
Hybrid (average of 2 days or less onsite)	23.25%
Hybrid (average of 3 days or more onsite)	28.73%

Leadership level	Percentage
Executive (C-suite)	6.36%
Senior Manager	26.75%
Middle Manager	49.12%
First line	17.32%
Prefer not to say	0.22%
Other	0.22%

Team size (total number of direct and indirect reports)	Percentage
1 to 5	17.11%
6 to 10	29.61%
11 to 20	20.61%
21 to 50	15.13%
51 to 100	5.92%
101 to 250	3.51%
251 to 1000	3.73%
1001+	4.39%



HR

Nationality	Percentage
Australia	0.91%
Brazil	0.30%
Canada	0.91%
Chile	0.30%
China	0.61%
Estonia	0.30%
Germany	0.91%
Hungary	0.30%
India	0.30%
Ireland	0.61%
Kenya	0.91%
Mexico	1.22%
Netherlands	0.61%
Nigeria	1.52%
Portugal	0.61%
Slovakia	0.30%
Slovenia	0.30%
South Africa	14.63%
Spain	0.61%
United Kingdom	9.45%
United States	22.56%
Zimbabwe	0.91%
Prefer not to say	40.24%

Industry	Percentage
Agriculture and fishing	4.62%
Banking and finance	7.07%
Business services	10.60%
Government and public services	11.41%
Information technology	19.02%
Manufacturing	12.77%
Media	0.82%
Oil, gas and mining	0.54%
Other	10.05%
Pharmaceuticals and healthcare	7.61%
Retail and leisure	8.42%
Telecommunication	2.17%
Transport and distribution	4.62%
Utilities	0.27%

Organization size	Percentage
1 to 49	2.99%
50-249	37.50%
250 to 999	28.26%
1000+	31.25%

Work arrangement	Percentage
Fully onsite	38.59%
Fully remote	5.71%
Hybrid (average of 2 days or less onsite)	22.55%
Hybrid (average of 3 days or more onsite)	33.15%

HiPo employee

Nationality	Percentage
Australia	2.27%
Bangladesh	0.57%
Brazil	1.14%
Bulgaria	0.57%
Canada	13.07%
China	0.57%
Greece	0.57%
India	2.27%
Indonesia	0.57%
Iran	0.57%
Ireland	0.57%
Italy	1.14%
Kenya	1.70%
Mexico	1.70%
Netherlands	1.70%
Nigeria	1.70%
Pakistan	0.57%
Philippines	1.14%
Poland	2.27%
Portugal	0.57%
Romania	0.57%
South Africa	13.64%
Spain	1.14%
Sweden	0.57%
Turkey	0.57%
United Kingdom	26.70%
United States	20.45%
Vietnam	0.57%
Zimbabwe	0.57%

Industry	Percentage
Agriculture and fishing	0.55%
Banking and finance	7.73%
Business services	8.29%
Conglomerate	0.55%
Government and public services	14.92%
Information technology	11.05%
Manufacturing	8.84%
Oil, gas and mining	0.55%
Other	17.13%
Pharmaceuticals and healthcare	9.39%
Prefer not to say	1.10%
Retail and leisure	11.05%
Telecommunication	4.42%
Transport and distribution	3.87%
Utilities	0.55%

Organization size	Percentage
1 to 49	19.89%
50 to 249	22.65%
250 to 999	19.34%
1000+	38.12%



Work arrangement	Percentage
Fully onsite	43.65%
Fully remote	11.05%
Hybrid (average of 2 days or less onsite)	22.10%
Hybrid (average of 3 days or more onsite)	23.20%

Career level	Percentage
Early Career <5 years	17.68%
Individual contributor 5+ years	15.47%
First line Manager or Supervisor	21.55%
Middle Manager	20.44%
Senior Manager	19.34%
Executive C-suite	3.87%
Other	1.10%
Prefer not to say	0.55%



Appendix 3

Focus group question guide



1 What is potential?

- Potential for what?
- What skills or competencies underpin high potential?

2 How do clients assess for potential

- Methods: psychometrics/interview/simulations/case studies
- Level: entry/associate/leadership
- What elements are most important or impactful?

3 What does a typical program look like?

- Content, activities, length
- Follow-up
- What elements are most important or impactful?

4 What are the challenges?

- Finding HiPo employees?
- Positioning and retaining HiPo employees in the organization?
- Getting value out of HiPo employees/HiPo programs?

5 What do clients do well?

- Finding HiPo employees?
- Positioning and retaining HiPo employees in the organization?
- Getting value out of HiPo employees/HiPo programs?

Appendix 4

Talogy Competency Framework and definitions

Competency	Definition
Relating and Collaborating	
Building Relationships	Connects easily with others, gains trust quickly, and builds and maintains effective relationships.
Concern for Others	Strives to understand others' feelings, shows genuine concern and empathy for people, and treats others with care, compassion, and respect.
Embracing Diversity	Respects and appreciates individual differences, cultures, lifestyles, and traditions, actively includes diverse individuals and perspectives, and treats people fairly, regardless of background.
Teamwork	Proactively shares useful information with others and cooperates effectively in the pursuit of common goals.
Integrity	Is open and honest with others while respecting confidentiality, seeks to do what is right and keeps to their promises.
Customer Focus	Actively seeks to understand customer needs, appreciates the customer perspective, and strives to provide a positive customer experience.
Communicating and Influencing	
Communication	Communicates information in a clear and concise manner, tailors the message and approach to the purpose, context, and audience, and checks understanding.
Demonstrating Confidence	Demonstrates presence and credibility, commands attention, and talks with energy and enthusiasm.
Influencing	Expresses views assertively, presents compelling arguments that appeal to stakeholder interests, and handles objections effectively.
Negotiating	Recognizes the needs and objectives of different parties, looks for common ground, identifies bargaining points, and seeks solutions that satisfies all parties.
Organizational Agility	Identifies key decision makers and influencers, successfully navigates the organization's structure and communication channels, and leverages relationships across levels to achieve goals.

Competency	Definition
Leading and Inspiring	
Directing and Guiding	Provides clear focus and direction, turns strategies into action, and coordinates resources and activities to accomplish goals.
Delegating and Empowering	Allocates tasks and responsibilities to others based on the different talents of team members, and trusts others to make appropriate decisions and work towards goals.
Motivating and Engaging	Conveys a sense of purpose and enthusiasm that engages others, adapts approach based on what motivates different individuals, and creates an environment where people are inspired to do their best.
Coaching and Developing	Shares experience, provides constructive feedback, and encourages reflection to maximize performance and realize potential.
Building Teams	Encourages and builds mutual trust, respect, and cooperation among team members, and fosters a high performance, supportive team culture.
Courage	Forges the way and takes thoughtful, intentional action that needs to be taken even when the best path is unclear, or challenge is likely.
Leading Change	Creates a compelling vision for change, engages others in implementing change processes, and fosters an agile, innovative working environment.
Managing Conflict	Creates an environment that allows for the constructive handling of disagreements.
Analyzing and Exploring	
Breadth of Perspective	Considers the bigger picture, makes connections between different information, and develops theories, concepts, and models to explain complex issues.
Creativity and Innovation	Identifies imaginative ways of approaching problems or tasks, challenges convention, generates a breadth of ideas and alternatives, and develops novel solutions.
Strategic Thinking	Builds a clear long-term vision of what could be achieved, formulates strategies to achieve the vision, and thinks broadly and with a future orientation.
Business Sense	Understands business and the marketplace and recognizes business opportunities and ways to enhance competitive advantage.
Critical Thinking	Gathers and appraises information from a range of sources, identifies relevant from irrelevant information, and actively and objectively questions ideas, conclusions, and assumptions.
Problem Solving	Uses logic and systematic analysis to interpret underlying trends, core issues, and root causes, and identifies pragmatic and effective solutions.
Judgment	Evaluates data and courses of action using an unbiased and rational approach and makes decisions that are well-reasoned and effective.
Decisiveness	Makes timely decisions with conviction and takes calculated risks, even when situations are ambiguous, or information is limited.
Learning Agility	Critically evaluates experiences, learns quickly from outcomes and feedback, and applies this learning in new situations to determine better approaches.

Competency	Definition
Delivering and Executing	
Accountability	Readily takes on ownership of tasks and objectives, takes obligations seriously, and takes responsibility for own actions, decisions and results.
Initiating Action	Proactively grasps opportunities and influences events.
Prioritizing and Planning	Identifies priorities, creates plans, and organizes processes and resources to accomplish goals in a logical and efficient way.
Organizational Commitment	Places the organization's goals ahead of individual or team interest, acts in line with organization's values and expectations, and goes above and beyond their formal job remit to support the organization's success.
Drive for Results	Demonstrates determination, persistence, and focus on producing exceptional results.
Digital Dexterity	Rapidly adopts new technologies, either through adeptly grasping their usage (where needed) or through understanding their impact and empowering others to use them as needed.
Quality Focus	Follows best practice and ensures all aspects of work, no matter how small, are completed to a high standard of excellence.
Compliance	Attends to relevant rules, policies, and procedures, and adheres consistently to formal codes of conduct and informal, yet widely accepted, social standards.
Safety Focus	Follows current safety procedures and standards rigorously, stays vigilant to potential hazards and risk and deals with incidents promptly.
Adapting and Developing	
Change Orientation	Maintains a positive attitude toward change and appreciates the opportunities that change presents.
Composure	Keeps calm and positive when dealing with challenging demands and situations, and demonstrates clear thinking and restraint under pressure.
Self-Awareness	Understands own strengths and limitations and consciously considers own thoughts and feelings.
Adaptability	Modifies behavior and attitude to best meet the demands of a given situation.
Resilience	Bounces back from setbacks, disappointments, and criticism.
Self-Sufficiency	Works alone comfortably, makes independent decisions when required and appropriate, and only consults or seeks help if it is necessary to complete objectives or obtain preferred outcomes.
Personal Development	Looks for opportunities to develop skills and competency and actively seeks feedback and opportunities for self-enhancement.

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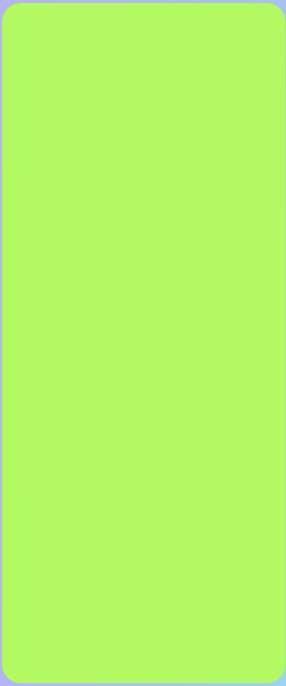
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