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# Connecting for a talent-first approach: Nurturing talent amidst a pandemic

What differentiates progressive organizations is their ability to keep talent-first and focus on key talent management, upskilling, performance management revamp, and fit-for-future organizational designs.



The black swan of our living memory brought Human Resources (HR) to the centre stage of every organization's boardroom agenda. In the endeavour to "Respond, Recover, and Thrive", organizations took a broad spectrum of measures, including some that were unprecedented. While some undertook talent investment initiatives, others went the cost containment way, although the latter was proportionately higher. It is noteworthy, however, that some of the many companies we know were born during recessions—one of the well-known ride sharing company (2009), one of the well-known company in the hospitality industry (2007), one of the leading technology companies (1975), a leading automobile player (1908), to name a few.

To identify the secret sauce to "Roar out of Recession,"<sup>1</sup> we carried out multiple research studies. Through our observations we arrived at the conclusion that organizations can be classified into three archetypes:

- **Prevention-focused organizations:** organizations that cut costs faster and deeper than rivals have the lowest probability of pulling ahead of the competition when times get better.
- **Promotion-focused organizations:** organizations that boldly invest more than their rivals during a recession enjoy a low probability of becoming leaders after a downturn.
- **Progressive organizations:** organizations that deploy an ideal combination of defensive and offensive moves have the highest probability of breaking away from the pack.

What differentiates progressive organizations is their ability to keep talent-first and focus on key talent management, upskilling, performance management revamp, and fit-for-future organizational designs.

Deloitte recently collaborated on one such initiative with the Vedanta Group driven by the group's Vice Chairman, Navin Agarwal called V-Reach. The initiative was focused on identifying Vedanta's talent that joined as graduates and had, over time, displayed drive and resilience, along with strong digital and automation capabilities to be presented with elevated responsibilities and perks, thereby boosting their career trajectory. Needless to say, Navin and the leadership's sponsorship and commitment to the initiative was its key success factor.

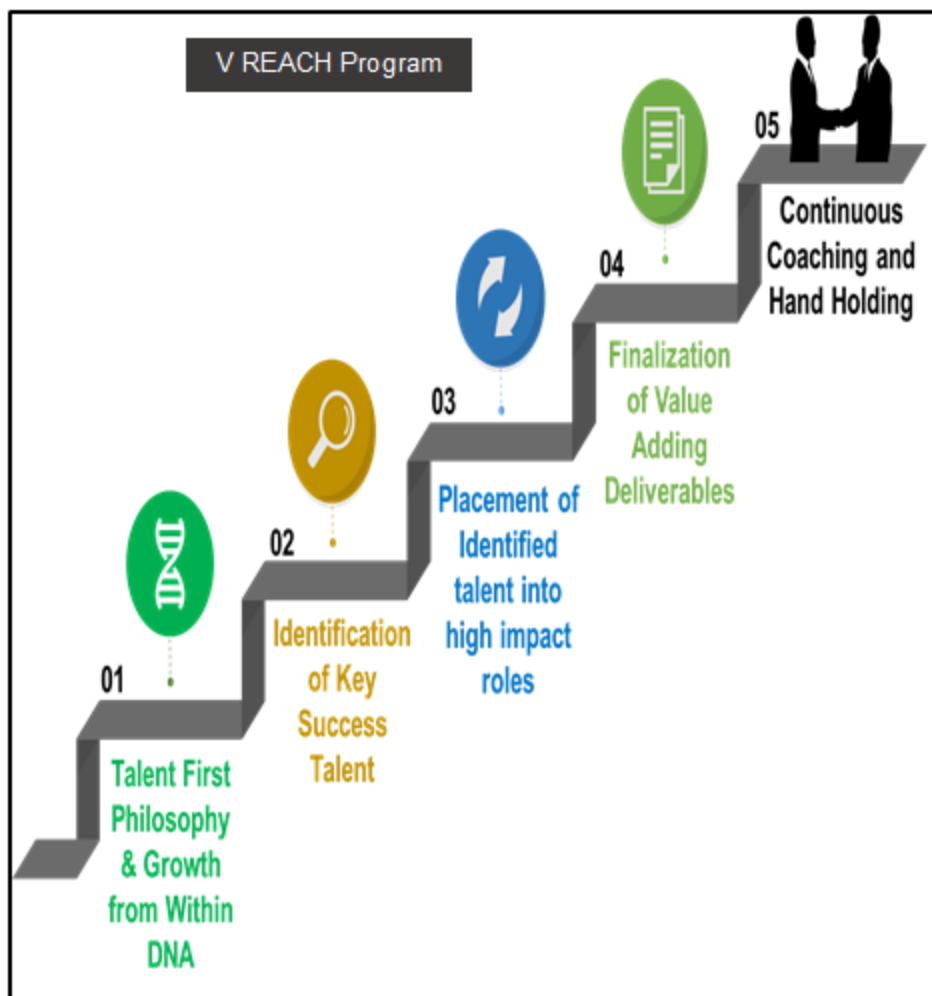
The four-month long selection process was rolled out to 5,000+ employees and involved a comprehensive process of candidate shortlisting to ensure adherence to the set criteria. The initiative operated under three steps:

1. Initial review of potential: A process of shortlisting 5,000 employees to about 500, based on objective parameters
2. A deeper review of talent: Evaluation to shortlist 200 out of 500, based on the statements of purpose and achievements
3. Mapping talent with opportunities: An active process of mapping the shortlisted 200 with larger role vacancies across the Group.

The 200 shortlisted employees demonstrated high-performance as well as potential and displayed, and often recognised for, a strong focus and capability in automation, analytics, and digital tools. Of the Top 200 Talent, 96 percent were rated top 2 during the last three years and about 20 percent of the top talent were women.

As an outcome of the V-Reach programme, internal vacancies at Vedanta were utilised and talent with greater decision-making responsibilities was promoted to significantly higher roles within the organization. During the entire process, Deloitte and Vedanta Group directed special focus on cross-functional, locational movement of talent, as well as on building a pipeline of diversity leaders.

The initiative also helped Vedanta create a central repository of ranked “Top 500 Talent” for businesses to utilise against future vacancies, thereby reducing lateral hiring.



Each of the Top 200 will be mentored by top leaders in the organization to ensure their objectives and individual development goals are achieved. Vedanta will also digitally track the progress and value addition of these selected talent, besides setting up technical deliverable reviews.

We were excited to collaborate with Vedanta to identify leaders, as we believe that actively investing in talent will help organizations adapt to the current economic struggle and come out stronger.

In difficult times, it is rather pleasing to see organizations investing in talent development programs internally to recognize and appreciate the value brought in by them. During a visioning workshop we are presently conducting for a client, we asked them to describe their “People Vision”. Their founders indicated the desire to “hire the best people that are there, put them in the right places, pay them well, and let them do their job”. In closing, we would like to underscore that a “talent-win” approach, such as this, forms the bedrock of making organizations “anti-fragile” and resilient.

*References:*

1. *“How to Survive a Recession and Thrive Afterward”, Harvard Business Review, May–June 2019 Issue*

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