

## **Development: The Ultimate Perk**

*“Development is the ultimate perk...it can’t be taken back once given, and it leads to other benefits.”* So say Ram Charan, Stephen Drotter and James Noel in “The Leadership Pipeline,” (Jossey-Bass, 2001, pg. 163). We would go one step further, and argue that leadership development can indeed be a potent retention strategy.

Today’s business press is full of admonitions that talent retention is once again ripe to become an overriding corporate challenge, across industries as well as across geographies. We hear about lots of expensive perks and golden handcuffs, yet in many cases, this one is there for the asking. So many organizations have environments rich with development opportunities, yet not enough are focused on making sure that the right people are getting them at the right time in their careers, and that they get the maximum learning from them.

In his book “High Flyers,” Morgan McCall asserts that *“development is not so much about building new systems (the inundation-in-bureaucracy approach) as it is about using what already happens in a wiser manner.”* (Harvard Business School Press, 1998, pg. 79). We couldn’t agree more. Research has consistently shown that the most significant development comes from challenging experiences on the job, starting with the original AT&T studies and confirmed by long term studies at the Center for Creative Leadership. The organizations that prevail in the next “War for Talent” will be those who focus on managing assignments as a development strategy, who take some risks with “stretch assignments,” and who view occasional mistakes as an investment in development. In short, they will be the ones who succeed in creating a development culture.

