



**Alessandra Ginante** argues that companies must do more to meet the personal needs and ambitions of their managers if they expect them to perform effectively

# Learning, development & personal growth

In today's knowledge-based, complex and ever-changing business environment it is paramount for organisations to have highly qualified professionals if they are fully to realise their economic growth opportunities.

Yet the typical corporate environment – full of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity – is gradually becoming a place where less and less people plan to spend their lives and invest their talents.

In Brazil, a recent survey – Cia de Talentos study “Empresa dos Sonhos dos Jovens” (2014) – of over 50,000 students and early career professionals concluded that 46% did not admire any business leader in particular and 42% of them could not nominate a corporation of their dreams.

Moreover, another survey – Telefônica Foundation study “Juventude Conectada” (2014) – of 1,440 Brazilians aged between 16 and 24 revealed that 71% want to start their own business and only 16% of them could see themselves as employees in corporations.

This reveals a change in the wishes and needs of the job market. On Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, individuals nowadays aspire not only to fulfil their basic needs but also their personal growth needs and to make a difference in society as part of the pursuit of their own self-actualisation (defined as the motivation to realise one's own maximum potential and possibilities).

Therefore, they seek to belong to organisations where professionals can achieve such personal growth ambitions while also delivering shareholders' expectations.



*Individuals nowadays aspire not only to fulfil their basic needs but also their personal growth needs and to make a difference in society as part of the pursuit of their own self-actualisation – defined as the motivation to realise one's own maximum potential and possibilities*

In the particular case of Brazil, this might come from the standard of living and working improvements the country has experienced in the last 20 years with, according to Datapopular Institute, around 11 million additional workers – particularly women – who entered the formal job market during the period.

If we then take corporations' perspective on this, the differentiating power of talent in business has never been so evident as a true source of sustainable competitive advantage. We now live in a time where the business tangibles such as products, factories and cash are quickly copied or readily available and business intangibles such as company culture, knowledge, reputation, brand, core competencies – strong drivers of economic value creation – are held mainly by people.

Given these circumstances, it is reasonable that companies that are able to nurture an environment where people can be self-actualised by gaining new talents while pursuing results meaningful to employees will more likely enjoy longer-lasting success.

Hence, organisations have heavily vested interests in becoming places that not only attract, retain and recognise people but also, and more importantly, enable the self-actualisation of their employees.

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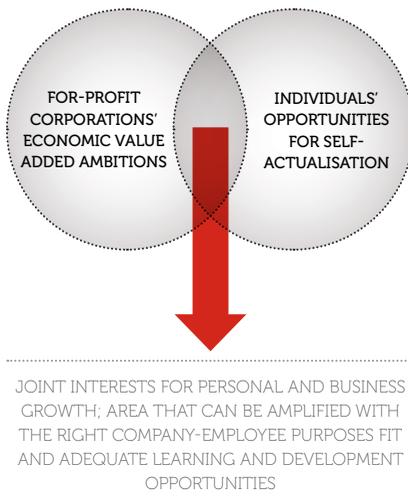
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# 11m

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**FIGURE 1:**  
LINKAGE BETWEEN COMPANIES' AND  
ASSOCIATES' BUSINESS AND PERSONAL GROWTH



*Effective leaders are increasingly required to be very well developed people emotionally speaking and also self-actualised in their needs and fears*

This creates new opportunities for business schools and learning and development professionals within corporations to add value to organisations and individuals.

To fully capitalise on these opportunities, though, companies and business schools should revisit their current approach to executive education so as to increase their contribution to organisations, leaders and associates and, at the same time, enlarge the business opportunities for the sector.

In doing so, they could address current issues related to:

- *narrow and scattered scope of executive education offerings*
- *weak linkages between executive education and the personal and career motives of individuals*
- *lack of disciplined execution of executives' individual development plans*
- *non-existent long-term measurements of personal growth and performance to measure effectiveness of learning and development investments made.*

A new approach could be based on identifying emerging executive education wishes and needs and relating them to long-term effectiveness measurement.

This means learning solutions that are:

**Focused both on extrinsic and intrinsic learning**

In other words, not only delivering knowledge and experiences that make individuals more competent technically and professionally (also important elements given the poor education quality present in some countries, particularly in the emerging economies) but also offering learning approaches that can help people become all that they are capable of becoming in a holistic manner.

Effective leaders are increasingly required to be very well developed people, emotionally speaking, and also self-actualised in their needs and fears. Achieving such results would require exposure to peak experiences with full concentration and total absorption, growth-led (not fear or comfort zone-led) learning choices and the pursuit of self-awareness to help people find out who they are.

**Connected with the individuals' self-actualisation motives and with the purpose and meaning they attribute to their work**

For example, ensuring that the individual's most deeply rooted values are taken into account when designing learning interventions and objectives.

**Integrated with the career ambitions and progress of individuals**

...as they move up and around in their organisation as well as across employers so that the employee's life journey is supported without interruptions.

**Connected to key elements of the associate's lifecycle management, HR/people management programmes already in place**

This is to say, for example, that when certain focus areas arise during recruitment, promotion assessments, performance reviews and succession planning, this information is fully utilised to tailor the future growth actions for the employee.



**FIGURE 2:**  
LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT APPROACH TO SUPPORT INDIVIDUALS' SELF-ACTUALISATION AND CORPORATE SUCCESS



Business schools could also play a proactive role and support a more accurate learning needs assessment by taking the initiative to review an executive's learning track record, performance reviews outcome, succession and career plans, and an individual's motivation and dispositions.

**Portable personal growth files**

These are ideally stored digitally as they are the property of the employee and not of the employer. This would not only avoid interruptions in the development cycle but also potentially save investment in repetitive learning interventions due to lack of historical data.

**Consultative learning and development solutions designed around organisation and individual needs**

Most companies know little about the best way in which adults learn. Therefore they need specialists who can help employees, leaders and HR heads to decide the most effective way to invest resources, including vendors other than the business schools, in developing the learning architecture.

**Built with the right governance and cadence that stimulates execution**

A self-actualisation journey is hard work and plans only change reality when they are implemented but they lose priority over time among the many other topics of day-to-day organisational life.

This type of comprehensive executive education learning solutions would certainly be of interest to CEOs and CHROs who are faced with the challenge of attracting and retaining top talents and need to find more meaningful ways to make people stay and give their best at work while growing and realising their full potential.

Business schools that can effectively fulfil such a business need will substantially increase their customers switching costs by designing and implementing consulting services that are tailor made not only to the corporation but to each one of their executives.



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**ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

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