

What happens if you train people and they stay?



Three weeks ago, I was in Saudi Arabia, working with young leaders in a country with enormous ambitions. Attracting HPPs from around the world while developing its own next generation.

This weekend, my thoughts were with them, admiring their energy and determination, and hoping they can continue pursuing their high ambitions.

I remember flying in a hot-air balloon over Al-Ula, as part of a leadership development programme I led. Frightening and thrilling at the same time. Getting into that basket took courage. Trusting the pilot, the crew and the preparation. And doing my part when needed.

Not entirely unlike leadership. Courage alone will not get you airborne. You need preparation, skills, trust and people who know what they are doing.

Filling future leaders with hot air, calling them talent and boosting their ego is not that.

Joining Shell International first in 1997, I experienced the rigour it takes to develop future leaders. The Talent Pipeline Function watched us closely. I was evaluated and assigned a Current Estimated Potential (CEP), mapping my possible journey towards senior leadership. A carefully designed professional journey around the globe.



Four weeks of professional training per year. No classroom entertainment but challenging assignments, exposure, feedback, learning and connections across the organisation.

The growth and retention of high-potential professionals were undeniable.

First, I was scouted for growth. Now, I do the scouting.

Today, as an HPP© and executive coach, I hear firsthand why capable people leave. They feel unseen, lack challenging opportunities, cannot picture their next role. Or do not want to live and manage like their leaders do.

PwC's 2024 Global Workforce Survey found that 28% of employees were very or extremely likely to change employers within a year, up from 19% in 2022. Among those considering leaving, 67% said opportunities to learn new skills would strongly influence their decision.

Especially in uncertain times, investing in people requires conviction.

Let's help people build an Exportable Skillset. Skills, experience and relationships that make them valuable anywhere, not just to their current employer.

That sounds risky. What if they leave?

Well, what if they stay?

Because they feel recognised, see opportunities ahead and belong to a network of professionals who challenge and support one another.

Much of that network is built outside the classroom. Over dinner, through shared challenges and lasting connections. People rise together, creating an upward spiral of development, performance and succession.

Back to Al-Ula. Balloons need energy, preparation and the right conditions to rise.

And once airborne, freedom and good winds to navigate.

Develop people who could leave. Give them reasons to stay.

Less hot air. More substance. More lift.

#AlUla #LeadershipDevelopment #ExportableSkillset #SaudiArabia