SIGMA Assessment Systems
Talent Development

How to Develop Large Groups on a Small Budget Using the LSP-R™

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"The growth and development of people is the highest calling of leadership."
— Harvey S. Firestone, *Founder Firestone Tire and Rubber Company*

Most organizations understand the importance of talent development. And yet, more often than not, leaders struggle to take time to invest in their employees. Budgets are another barrier. Very few companies are willing (or able) to set aside the financial resources required to build a robust talent development process from scratch. Most also don't have staff who would be equipped and available to do so. What's the solution? How can organizations make talent development a priority without sacrificing too much of their budget or human resources to do so?

SIGMA can help. In this guide we will walk you through how you can develop large groups on a small budget. The key lies in using a robust leadership assessment and guiding your team through a standardized development process. We'll show you how you can do both using SIGMA's Leadership Skills Profile – Revised™ (LSP-R™).

The Benefit of Talent Assessments

If you are developing large groups on a small budget, talent assessments are your friend. The primary benefit of assessments is that they provide structure and standardization to the development process. Countless studies have demonstrated the particular benefit this can have for talent development. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that careful talent assessment results in significant productivity increases, cost savings and decreased attrition.[1] Online assessments in particular, have become an industry standard, because they reduce costs and decrease the time needed for companies to identify, select, and develop talent.[2] Another key benefit of using talent assessments is that it adds objectivity to the process. This helps reduce the impact of personal bias, thereby improving the equity, inclusivity, and diversity of their workplace. Finally, since assessments use a standard format, they can easily be scaled across departments or teams. All this makes assessments particularly helpful for leaders who are trying to develop large groups on a small budget.

Using assessments certainly benefits the talent development process, there are also direct benefits that SIGMA has observed time and time again for both employees and their organizations:

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYEES	BENEFITS FOR BUSINESSES
▪ build self-awareness ▪ learn to play to their strengths ▪ capitalize on development opportunities ▪ support personal and professional (i.e., leadership) development ▪ increase employability	▪ attract and retain talent ▪ develop an internal pool of leaders ▪ improve employee engagement and performance ▪ lay the foundation for a leadership pipeline and succession planning process

Figure 1. Using assessments for talent development has benefits for employees AND businesses

But what makes the LSP-R different? There are a few things that make the LSP-R unique from other leadership assessments. First, the LSP-R assessment is psychometrically sound. It was developed by industrial-organizational (IO) psychologists and validated time and time again in the field. For over 50 years, the LSP-R has proven itself to be a reliable tool for clients of all sizes across North America. Second, the LSP-R comes with a Focus Report that guides employees through their results and includes tools and activities for creating a personalized development plan (see a sample Focus Report). Finally, the LSP-R can be easily administered online, in 25 minutes, and participants automatically receive their report upon completion. This makes the LSP-R a powerful AND practical tool for facilitating talent development, and it can easily be administered and scaled across teams and organizations. Perfect for developing large groups on a small budget.

Getting a Group Through the LSP-R

Are you ready to use the LSP-R with your team? We can help you get it done. Here are five simple steps you can follow to successfully get a group of employees through the LSP-R.

1. Get your assessments. Ordering the LSP-R is a quick and easy process. First, you will have to complete an application form to get approval for your online account. Once approved, you will receive an email with your login information. From there, you may log in, purchase the test, and begin administration.
2. Start by familiarizing yourself with the LSP-R and the Focus Report (view a sample report).
3. Introduce the LSP-R to your employees:
    a. Use an existing meeting, set a new one, or send your team an email
    b. Briefly outline what the LSP-R is and why your company has decided to use it

c. Explain to employees that they will receive a link to take the LSP-R, and should do so before your next meeting (set a date and time)

d. Remind employees to bring their Focus Report to your next meeting and explain that you will be reviewing results and guiding them in creating their own development plan

4. Send all employees an email with the link to take the LSP-R (you will receive this link when you purchase the assessment).

5. Send all employees a calendar invites for the group debrief. Remind everyone that they must have the LSP-R completed beforehand, and that they should bring a copy of their Focus Report to the meeting. We recommend giving employees at least one week to complete the LSP-R.

Facilitating a Group Debrief

Once all employees have completed the LSP-R, you are ready to hold your group debrief (feel free to send a reminder email one or two days before the meeting to ensure everyone has completed their assessment). At the meeting, guide your employees through their Focus Report using the steps below. You may also download SIGMA's administrator's guide, which includes a set of PowerPoint slides you can use to accompany your debrief/presentation.

Download the PPT Slides

Agenda: LSP-R Group Debrief

- **Review and Discuss Results** (20 min)
- 1 **Focus Activity 1** (20 min)
- 2 **Focus Activity 2** (20 min)
- **Creating an Action Plan** (20 min)
- **Next Steps: Outlining the Development Process** (10 min)

Review and Discuss Results (20 min)

1. Turn to pg 3-4. Have employees look at their results, explaining that competencies are ranked from highest to lowest. Note that lower scores do not necessarily indicate a lack of ability, but rather highlight areas may not come easily or naturally.

2. Ask your team to identify strengths and find their myZONE (highlighted in blue). Explain that the competencies shaded in blue are an individual's most immediate opportunity for development. These are areas where the individual already demonstrates some degree of skill, providing a strong foundation for development. Focusing development efforts on these competencies is likely to result in myZONE competencies becoming strengths in the near future.

3. Ask your team (either for discussion or personal reflection), Do these results resonate with you? Is anything surprising to you? Do you notice any patterns or trends? What do these results tell you about yourself as a leader?

Focus Activity 1 (20 min)

After employees have had a chance to review and discuss results, turn to the first Focus Activity on page 5. This activity is intended to help employees identify their top three development opportunities (my3 competencies). Guide employees through this worksheet using the following steps:

1. **Select myFOCUS competencies.** On the left-hand side, under myFOCUS COMPETENCIES, tell employees to write down the myZONE competencies they would be interested in developing (choose at least five).

2. **Get input from colleagues.** After they've selected their myFOCUS competencies, tell your employees to turn to a neighbor and ask them which competencies they also view as important for their job (choose someone they work with on a regular basis). Use the boxes under COLLEAGUES to mark the competencies that were verified as important.

3. **Get input from supervisors.** This might be difficult to do in-person during your meeting. Instead, write down which competencies you feel are important for every employee's job beforehand, and distribute the lists during the meeting. Tell people to use the boxes under SUPERVISORS to mark overlap between the competencies they listed and the ones you verified as important.

4. **Reflect on personal experience.** Tell employees to think of past successes and challenges. What competencies were needed? From which could they benefit in the future? Put a mark beside these under the column labelled EXPEREINCES.

5. **Evaluate.** Tally up the stars for each competency and mark which three received the most. Put a star beside those three competencies in the final column on the right-hand side under the star. Then, write the competencies in the boxes in the bottom right-hand corner. These are your my3 competencies.

6. **Share.** Take a few minutes for employees to share their my3 competencies or ask questions. If you are holding this meeting online, you can use the poll or chat functions to allow participants to share their results.

Focus Activity 2 (20 min)

Once everyone has completed Focus Activity 1, turn to Focus Activity 2 on page 6. Explain that this second activity is intended to help employees narrow their my3 competencies down to a single myFOCUS competency. In the next activity we will create a personalized development plan around that competency.

Have employees start Focus Activity 2 by filling in their my3 competencies in the first row of the table (labeled my3 COMPETENCIES). Next, have them indicate the criteria that are met by each competency. Here's a quick breakdown of what each criterion means:

- Impact – Impact refers to how relevant a competency is to the strategy and operations of your team. Does the competency help you achieve your goals? Your team's goals? The organization's long-term strategy? If it does, then it is an impactful competency.
- Opportunities – Opportunities refers to the chances you will have to develop and use this competency. Are there places where you can demonstrate, practice, or use this new skill? If so, then it is a high-opportunity competency.
- Support – Support refers to the buy-in you have from colleagues and supervisors for developing this competency. Support may come in the form of resources and tools, coaching/mentoring, and feedback processes. If you have all these available to you the competency is well supported.
- Demand – Demand refers to whether there is a need for this competency to be developed. Will it benefit you in your organization? Industry? Profession? If so, then there is demand for that competency.

After employees are done scoring each competency, have them add up their scores and write the total in the boxes at the bottom of each column. Find the competency that scored highest, and write this in the space below, labelled myFOCUS competency. In the third (and final) activity we will create a personalized development plan for that myFOCUS competency.

Creating an Action Plan (20 min)

Congratulations! You've reached the final step of your LSP-R group debrief meeting. In this last activity you will walk your team through how to create a development plan for their myFOCUS competency. Before you start this activity, we recommend you take a 5-minute break. This will give your employees (and you) a chance to grab a drink, go to the washroom, and clear your head before diving into the third and final activity.

Ready to go? Start by turning to page 7 in the Focus Report and have employees enter their myFOCUS competency in the top row. Then give a brief overview of the action plan. Employees will brainstorm activities they can STOP, START, and CONTINUE in order to develop their myFOCUS competency. To illustrate, use the following example:

*Meet Henry. Henry is a team lead at an automotive manufacturing firm. He has chosen to work on the leadership competency "Delegation." To do so, Henry is going to **STOP** micromanaging (what) by setting a weekly check-in with his direct reports and allowing them to come to you for additional guidance on a per-need basis (how/when). Henry is also going to **START** looking at his tasks at the beginning of each week and consider whether someone on his team may be available and qualified to complete them. If so, Henry is going to start delegating these tasks (what) individually or at a team meeting at the start of each week (how/when). Finally, Henry is going to **CONTINUE** organizing deliverables himself (what), because he, as the leader, will still be held accountable for all assignments to his team. He will do this by maintaining the checklist of tasks and timelines he has created for himself but will also keep track of ownership for the tasks he chooses to delegate (how). Henry will update this list at the beginning of each week and monitor it throughout (when).*

As the group fills out their action plan, emphasize the importance of setting SMART goals (specific, measurable, actionable, relevant, timely). In particular, tell people to think of practical ideas and set a timeframe within which they will be accomplished.

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Next Steps: Outlining the Development Process (10 min)

Once everyone has finished their development plan, leave some time to discuss the importance of implementation. It's not enough to create action plans. Those plans must also be carried out if you want to see improvement in your team's abilities. We've created another template for that.

Ask the group to turn to page 8 in their Focus Report. This page has a guided reflection activity that can help employees identify what they've learned and how they are going to apply it as they embark along the development process. Encourage employees to set aside half an hour at the end of each month to fill out this template and meet with a manager, supervisor, or mentor. Have them discuss what they are learning and brainstorm new opportunities for ongoing growth and development together. This person can act as a coach to your employees, helping them challenge their thoughts and assumptions, and set SMART goals. Often a coach may be able to facilitate job shadowing, stretch assignments, or share resources your employees may not have otherwise had access too. As a result, studies have shown that coaching makes it significantly more likely that candidates will achieve their development goals.[3] It also increases the likelihood that this behavior change will remain long-term.[4, 5]

Note: If the group you are taking through the LSP-R has no managers, supervisors, or mentors apart from you, and you will not be able to coach them all yourself, SIGMA can help! We offer group and individual coaching sessions and would be happy to support your team as they implement their development plans.

Looking for More?

If you have questions about the LSP-R or your group's development plans, SIGMA is here for you! In addition to our group and individual coaching services, we also offer one-hour Lunch and Learns. These online sessions are convenient, practical, and engaging. If you're interested, give us a call or contact us below! We would love to hear from you.

Glen Harrison

Email

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[1] SHRM. (2016). Choosing Effective Talent Assessments to Strengthen Your Organization. SHRM Foundation's Effective Practice Guideline Series (EPG). Retrieved from https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/special-reports-and-expert-views/documents/effective-talent-assessments.pdf.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Harkin, B., Webb, T. L., Chang, B. P. I., Prestwich, A., Conner, M., Kellar, I., …, & Sheeran, P. (2016). Does monitoring goal progress promote goal attainment? A meta-analysis of the experimental evidence. Psychological Bulletin, 142, 198-229.

[4] Baron, L., & Morin, L. (2010). The impact of executive coaching on self-efficacy related to management soft-skills. Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 31, 18-38.

[5] Sonesh, S. C., Coultas, C. W., Lacerenza, C. N., Marlow, S. L., Benishek, L. E., & Salas, E. (2015). The power of coaching: A meta-analytic investigation. Coaching: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice, 8, 73-95.