**Develop your Foundation**

In today’s competitive environment, the need to identify and retain top talent is more important than ever. In managing your career, your challenge is to be that sought after talent but it will require some work on your part. Going to work every day, doing your job is not enough if you want to be considered a top talent or high potential. It is critical that you focus on your development and not just deliver but excel in every category; accept accountability at a level that others take notice. If you are in a leadership role, you are expected to inspire your team to do the same through action, setting the example and supporting their development.

Essential to your success and that of your team is understanding the very difficult challenge we all face every day and that is managing time, expectations and investment. Time is what it is, make the best use possible. Expectations are set, reset and change often but your ability to manage that change and lead your team will make the difference. Investment can be defined in many ways including communication, innovation or creativity and of course training and education.

However, have you considered what it will take to make the difference for yourself, family and at work lately? All of us have wondered at one time or another what that answer might be and all too often life gets in the way. Jack London once said, “Life is not always about holding good cards, but sometimes playing a poor hand well”. At least for this writer, playing a hand well will always make a difference and how we then follow through will drive the change needed, improve performance and help us rise to the occasion whatever it may be.

So how do you realize your potential? To really succeed, you need to know yourself better than anyone else and to be able to clearly present who you are with confidence. Obvious yes, but if you think about it, not an easy task to do well or in a manner that is engaging to others. It is not easy to realize that with every contact and every action we need to improve upon that which we just achieved. There are many tools available to increase the hard and soft skills that may add to your “value”. However, all the development and tools available will not matter if you do not take stock, leverage your own unique qualities and build a strong realistic foundation for growth. It is critical to spend the time necessary to ensure your foundation is strong although it may not be easy. Regardless of what tools, approach or development path you choose, it is your journey and by owing it you might just win in every category.

Remember always focus on your objective to do your best, be your best and always believe in the value you bring to relationships, work and yourself. Arthur Ashe once said, “Start where you are, use what you have and do what you can”. It is up to you to truly make your own difference!