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The Fast-tracking of Top Talent through Organisations -
An Exploratory Study

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I, Lesley Anne de Lange, declare that the contents of this dissertation is my own work.

Miss LA de Lange

ID:

This dissertation is dedicated to my family and special friends who have always believed in me …
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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 BACKGROUND

Employees are young! 42% of the best company employees are under the age of 35 and only 5% are over 55, while 39% have been on the job for less than 2 years (Sunday Times, 2001: 45).

Eli Lilly (Pty) (Ltd) is an international pharmaceutical company which has a strong Sales, Marketing and Research & Development focus. Recently the South African Affiliate has undergone a dramatic change to a performance-based culture, in order to stay on the competitive edge. It has recognised the need to recruit talented individuals and to move them quickly through the organisational divisions and into a position where they can be most productive (effective and efficient) to the company. Lilly’s stated objectives are to grow the skills of its employees by maximising their participation in development programmes, to grow new products, to strengthen the company focus on customers and to maximise the growth of its leading products. The Lilly values and its hiring, developing and retaining the best people, will make this a reality.

The local Lilly affiliate underwent radical changes under the dynamic and aggressive leadership style of Ralph Hofman. A young American graduate followed in his footsteps. Jack Bailey had a leadership style that encouraged accountability, ownership and individual performance. Being the driver that he was, he took the company to be rated the third top South African company to work for in 2000/1 (Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, 2000: 87).

Jack Bailey, General Manager of the South African Affiliate (1998-2000), joined Lilly in 1993 as a sales representative and then underwent a number of assignments until he arrived in South Africa in November 1998 as General Manager. In December 2000 he left the affiliate for yet another assignment. He is an example of fast-tracking of top talent in the organisation.

As organisations face stronger and more agile competition, they are rethinking their business strategies and re-aligning their human resource practices. Progressive human resource practices are aimed at attracting, motivating and retaining highly talented, often younger people.

Intellectual human capital is a good investment for the 21st century and human capital is optimised when there is significant knowledge, motivation and opportunity to perform. Organisations are
encouraging a culture of continuous new learning. To fulfil this commitment to continuous learning, flexible as well as mobile and intelligent individuals are being re-born by a strategy of fast-tracking them through the organisation (Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, 2000: viii).

Fast-tracking is a characteristic of the culture at Eli Lilly, but this is not a practice that is unique. Many organisations are continuously faced with motivating (thus retaining) their top talent, as well as with individuals who aim to move swiftly and aggressively through the organisation to a position where they believe they "would have arrived"!

1.2 AIM

To analyse the behavioural characteristics of top talent in order to ensure the success of these fast-tracking individuals through the organisation.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the behavioural characteristics of fast-trackers.
2. To develop a model for successful fast-tracking of top talent.

1.4 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

Top Talent

This is a unique personality whose talent sets them apart. Someone who challenges the status quo, who believes they have unlimited choices. They have stamina, discipline and the courage to come out on top. They are team players who know instinctively when to obey the rules and when to bend them. In business, patience, honesty, integrity, mental toughness, thoughtfulness, maturity and an eye on the long term are highly prized skills (McCormack, 1989: 93,124).
Fast-tracking

These are people who move from division to division, developing a broad range of talents but never mastering a specific triumph or sticking around long enough to score a corporate triumph they can call their own. They have unlimited possibilities but this may be the greatest liability of all (McCormack, 1989: 93). Fast-trackers are not always big risk takers. On the contrary, sometimes they are “risk averse”. They often jump ship just as their razzle-dazzle ideas are scheduled to pay off or frizzle out. They tend to leave a lot of unfinished business in their glorious wake (McCormack, 1989: 119).

1.5 CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

The following constraints and limitations may have an impact on the research:

- Not all companies practice a culture of fast-tracking. A “high task” orientated company, for example manufacturing and production type companies, would probably have little exposure to fast-tracking and with fewer career-orientated individuals. This may limit the spectrum of the data collected.

- There are a limited number of models and literature reviews on which to base this research. Although fast-tracking has been around for a number of years, it has not really been considered with much interest until recently. This could be due to the old fashioned climbing-the-corporate-ladder-based-on-tenure mentality. For this reason, a number of articles have been used from web-sites and magazines as opposed to books.

- Fast-tracking individuals may also be too busy looking after their careers to answer the questionnaire in a timely and accurate manner.

1.6 VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

This research could certainly be adding value to performance-based companies. If the behavioural characteristics of fast-trackers and the impact of moving talented individuals rapidly through an organisation can be analysed, it may result in a clearer idea both for companies themselves as well as
for the individual. This will assist the organisation in managing individuals, their career development, colleagues and the resources required to fast-track these individuals. Questions like: What type of personalities can constantly undergo career changes and qualify for fast-tracking? How does the rapid promotion of managers affect the stability of the organisation and do the subordinates feel as though they are in a constant flux of insecurity as they continually report to different superiors? Superiors and subordinates have the most influence on fast-trackers and their corporate fortunes (McCormack, 1989: 129).

Each manager is unique in his/her leadership style. If different managers pass through the same job position but manage the same position differently, it may result in a constant state of transition with no stable systems and procedures in place. The Chaos Theory may be a predominant organisational model in this case.

The research will attempt to help companies in identifying Corporate Cowboys and Kamikaze Pilots. It will aim to help prevent companies from becoming a Corporate Zoo by focussing on the eradication of Corporate Malaise, Corporate Obesity and Corporate Myopia. It will help companies to realise that fast-trackers have light-footed benefits and are not just another Corporate Fling.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Primary data will be collected using questionnaires as a data collecting technique. A population of 40 candidates will be selected. These candidates will represent the top talent in an organisation.

The focus will be on service type companies such as those with a strong Sales and Marketing influence, including pharmaceutical companies and companies from other sectors such as Investec Bank. Secondary data will be sourced from newspapers, journals and reference books. Quantitative factors will be considered throughout this research.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Experts in this millennium are looking more carefully at the leadership needs for the 21st century. They are warning of a shrinking in the pool of available managers, escalating costs in recruiting outside talent and a startling lack of attention to developing leaders from within. This myopia towards the leadership gap is forcing Human Resource managers to single out top talent and to fast-track them through the organisation to positions where they can be efficiently and effectively deployed (Grossman, 1999: 1).

For decades organisations have been using Succession Planning, which focuses on defining successors for specific jobs. This approach may have worked when jobs were static and people moved through them on defined career paths. However, in today's world, work is fluid, organisations are flatter, organisational structures frequently change and people make more lateral movements (Grossman, 1999: 2). Succession Management and Personal Career Management, is the answer to the way work has changed.

Fast-tracking is two dimensional. It is likened to Succession Management, which is the responsibility of the organisation, and to Personal Career Management, which the individual takes ownership of. Succession Management and Personal Career Management have their emphasis on ensuring that personal planned training and development actually occurs. It assures that key people in organisations are not just identified but also developed to move into future leadership roles. Succession management means assessing key individuals to identify strengths and skills gaps and then establishing an individually tailored development program for each high potential individual that includes training, job rotation, special assignments and mentoring by more experienced senior executives.

It is important that organisations realise that they cannot fast-track everyone. To be successful, the organisation needs to selectively evaluate top talent. It is far better to focus limited resources on achieving significant developmental gains in a small number of high potential people. Spreading
resources across all individuals only leaves enough resources for cursory overviews that provide little benefit to anyone (ABC Development, nd).

Fast-tracking is the accelerated development of individuals. Fast-tracking strategies target a single goal for a single person. It is a means of accelerating a selected development program for the individual and aided, to an extent, by the organisation. People ideally fast-track themselves — they assemble a team to help them, but if they are mature and able, it is best they manage themselves and develop themselves. In reality, most companies assist fast-trackers to help manage or develop themselves (ABC Development, nd).

2.2 Fast-trackers’ Characteristics

This dissertation identifies the behavioural and other characteristics of talented individuals, as they fast-track through the organisation. By identifying these characteristics, organisations would be able to focus on a select group of high potential candidates.

The following characteristics of fast-trackers have been identified and grouped into six categories:

- **Coping skills** — stress management, individual flexibility, self-monitoring and independence.
- **Leadership Styles** — people orientation and thinking style.
- **Teamwork techniques**.
- **Career orientation** — personal vision and achievement orientation.
- **The Organisational Environment** — organisational flexibility, preference for identifying with a company’s core values and values, organisational attitude towards risk-taking, organisational assistance in the acceleration and facilitation of career progression of high potential fast trackers and monetary value (reward).
- **Networking**.

Each of the above six categories with their relevant subsections are now discussed in the literature review below:
2.2.1 Coping skills

Coping skills are defined in terms of stress levels, individual flexibility, self-monitoring and independence of individuals.

2.2.1.1 Stress management

Stress is a condition where there is uncertainty over an outcome that is important or desirable. Coping, in terms of stress is identified as the ability of fast-trackers to cope with the stress of a fast-paced workplace, high levels of ambiguity, undergoing continual training and development, the pressure they endure in order to be continually perceived as a “top performer” and the need to perform. When a person, over time, is confronted by high demands along with rapidly changing job requirements and responsibilities (especially related to performance, availability and accountability, training and crisis management) and believes he lacks sufficient control, authority or autonomy to deal with such high pitched and fast paced demands the result is predictable - Chronic Stress (Robbins, 2001: 564).

Stress is highest for those individuals who perceive that they are uncertain as to whether they will win or lose and lowest for those individuals who perceive that winning or losing is a certainty. Stress may be experienced by different individuals in different ways. An individual’s different perceptions, job experiences, social support, belief in locus of control and hostility may mean that some individuals cope better with stress than others. Consequences of stress may have different symptoms such as:

- Psychological symptoms-Anxiety, depression and decrease in job satisfaction
- Behavioural symptoms-Lower productivity, increased absenteeism and high turnover rates (Robbins, 2001: 568).

Individuals can take personal responsibility to handle their stress levels. This may include: understanding and utilisation of basic time management principles, non-competitive physical exercise, relaxation techniques (meditation, hypnosis and biofeedback) and reliance on an expansive social support network (Robbins, 2001: 570).

Anthony Ball, author of the book, “The Winning Way”, suggests that individuals should give themselves what he calls “mental space” when trying to master their own destiny and coping
with stress. He suggests that decisions made under high levels of stress will tend to be of a lower quality, and that risk aversion in decision-making tends to rise with rising stress levels. In other words, a person is less likely to make good, balanced decisions when under stress. It is recommended to de-stress, delegate more, allow more personal time and try to make the environment less hurried and more relaxed. Higher quality decisions require a higher level of strategic thinking and more mental space. This is done by either insulating the everyday work environment from daily pressures of operations, or by physically getting away from it all (Ball & Asbury, 1989: 15).

In an article by Mark Gorkin, the following ‘stressors’ were noted: availability and accountability, objectivity, multiple roles, disgruntled colleagues, crisis management, training demands, ever-changing policies as well as reaching out to specialists and consultants (Gorkin, 2000: 1). It will be noted throughout this dissertation that fast-trackers are continually exposed to the above ‘stressors’ but their behavioural characteristics help them to combat the stress that results.

It is postulated that the ability to control and deal with these ‘stressors’ will result in a successful fast-tracker.

2.2.1.2 Individual flexibility and self-monitoring

It is assumed that individual flexibility and self-monitoring are other important coping characteristics of fast-trackers. Fast-tracking individuals need to be able to change easily to changing situations and be adaptable. This does not only apply to those fast-trackers that are committed to teams (ability to adjust to the changing needs of the team) but also as they move from pillar to post in the organisation, they will need to quickly adapt to different management roles and uncertain environments.

Self-monitoring is a behavioural characteristic that may, more accurately, describe individual flexibility. It refers to the ability of individuals to adjust their behaviour to external, situational factors. Individuals high in self-monitoring, have considerable adaptability in adjusting their behaviour to external situational factors. They are extremely sensitive to external cues and can behave differently in different situations. High self-monitors are
capable of presenting striking contradictions between their public persona and their private self (Robbins, 2001: 98).

The research on self-monitoring is in its infancy, so predictions must be guarded. However, preliminary evidence suggests that high self-monitors tend to pay closer attention to the behaviour of others and are more capable of conforming than low self-monitors. In addition, high self-monitoring managers tend to be more mobile in their careers and receive more promotions (both internal and cross-organisational). We might also hypothesise that high self-monitors will be more successful in managerial positions in which individuals are required to play multiple, and even contradictory, roles. The high self-monitor is capable of putting on different “faces” for different audiences (Robbins, 2001: 98).

To be able to adjust to constant change, workers have to develop additional competencies which facilitate adaptation over their entire career or life-span (Wilbert, 1995, cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 11). New types of work and technologies require workers who have more creative minds and more flexible selves (Hage, 1995, cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 11).

Interpretation of different life roles provides different meanings of work and non-work. Individuals have to adapt to find meaning in several roles at the same time, including cultural roles, work roles, leisure roles and emotional roles revolving around family, friends, gender and age. To successfully perform these different roles at the same time requires a high level of flexibility (Hage, 1995, cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 11).

Individual flexibility must also be able to “fit” with job flexibility. The concepts of lifelong learning and multiple careers are becoming very important to employees. During his recent visit to South Africa, Professor Wayne Cascio outlined some important changes to occur in the psychological contract act between employers and employees. One of these changes will be the shift from standard to flexible work patterns. Time is employees’ most precious commodity. They want the flexibility to control their own lives - also when, where and how they work. There will be more strife to balance their lives between work and leisure. Another change in the psychological contract is the shift from job security, to employment security, having skills that some employer in the market is willing to pay for. This is why
opportunities for workplace training and continual professional development are prized commodities as employees strive to keep themselves marketable (Cascio, 2001: 5).

The New World of Work will require employees to be and stay flexible, be continually innovative and cope with stress, maintain a sense of responsibility for their own careers, accept that employment continuity, rather than job security means continuous development, retraining and renewal of knowledge. Leadership, people skills, a positive attitude and maturity are critical for personal progress (Horwitz, 2000: 9).

2.2.1.3 Individual independence

Independence is another dimension of a fast-tracker's coping skills. It is assumed that this can be investigated from two angles. Firstly, a fast-tracker requires a sufficient amount of independence. If fast-trackers were to be too dependent on the support, respect and favour of their subordinates, they may not move quickly through the ranks as there will always be the need for recognition and acknowledgement, before moving on. Secondly, for fast-trackers to be successful performers, they will require the support of colleagues and superiors. They will depend on the networking web they have built for themselves and will thus depend on the recognition from their superiors who will have the power to promote them or not.

A balance in-between the two extremes of independence is required for fast-trackers. As discussed previously, in order to lower individual stress levels, a good social support system is necessary. If the fast-tracker proves to be too independent, stress levels may rise. On the other hand, if individual fast-trackers are too dependent on the recognition and support of their subordinates and superiors, then this may act as “hand-break” in the fast forward of their career progression.

2.2.2 Leadership styles

Identifying people orientation and the thinking style of fast-trackers is appropriate because these make up the leadership styles which will, in turn, determine the success or failure of the fast-tracker.
2.2.2.1 People orientation

Leadership styles that emphasise a "respect/concern for people" together with a compelling vision and a high self-knowledge, are found in the literature to be the most important ingredients of successful leaders. Fast-trackers should be successful leaders.

The theory of leadership is extensive and complex. A literature search on behavioural theories of leadership had the following findings:

- Leadership studies at the University of Michigan identified two dimensions of leadership behaviour, Employee-oriented and Production-oriented Leaders. Employee-oriented leaders emphasise interpersonal relations. The conclusions arrived at by the Michigan researchers strongly favoured the leaders who were employee-oriented in behaviour. It stated that these leaders were associated with higher group productivity and higher job satisfaction (Robbins, 2001: 316).

- The Managerial Grid Leadership Theory (a nine-by-nine matrix outlining 81 different leadership styles) is based on styles of "concern for people" and "concern for production". The findings of this study showed that managers performed best under a team management style, that is where there is a high concern for people and a high concern for production, simultaneously (Robbins, 2001: 317).

- The Hersey and Blanchard Situational Leadership Theory focuses on the followers. These theorists believe that successful leadership is achieved by selecting the right leadership style that is contingent on the level of the followers' readiness. The most important intuitive appeal of this theory is that it acknowledges the importance of followers and builds on the logic that leaders can compensate for ability and motivational limitations of followers (Robbins, 2001: 322).

- More recently, neo-charismatic theories are gaining increased acceptance. As more is learnt about the personal characteristics that followers attribute to charismatic leaders (followers make attributions of heroic or extraordinary leadership abilities when they observe certain behaviours) and transformational leaders (leaders who provide individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation, and who possess charisma), so
leaders can better predict when followers will exhibit extraordinary commitment and loyalty to their leaders and those leaders' goals (Robbins, 2001: 326).

It is evident that more is learnt from studying the behaviour of effective leaders than from trying to list their personal qualities. It is in any case easier to modify one's behaviour than to alter one's personality. There is a danger however, in trying to squeeze complex patterns of leader behaviour into "styles" of leadership. There is strong evidence to suggest that it is more important to behave consistently and predictably than it is to adopt a particular style. Leader behaviours which are generally cited as contributing to effectiveness include:

- developing and articulating a vision
- listening
- empowering
- role modelling
- problem solving
- demonstrating confidence
- representing and protecting the group (Sadler, 1998: 151).

At the head of a line of enquiry into behavioural characteristics of leadership was Fred Fiedler whose research seemed to show that leadership effectiveness was influenced by the favourableness of a situation combined with leadership style (Taffinder, 1997: 36).

Fiedler identified many types of leadership styles although the most utilised and widely accepted style models, emphasise styles such as:

- Autocratic and exploitative
- Directive and task-focussed
- Supportive and relationship oriented
- Democratic, participate and empowering
Fiedler concludes that the more favourable the situation the more people-oriented leadership styles (supportive and relationship oriented as well as democratic, participative and empowering) are the most successful. Also, this theory (almost impossibly) expects managers to learn to switch styles according to need.

Warren Bennis is probably the most famous of leadership thinkers. Together with Burt Nanus, they have argued that the best leaders are “ideas” people, people who are visionary and innovative, people who believe that becoming a leader requires self-fulfilment, knowing and becoming yourself. Successful leaders are characterised by four key abilities:

- The management of attention (creating a compelling vision)
- The management of meaning (communicating vision to produce action)
- The management of trust (which demands consistency)
- The management of self (self-understanding, resilience, persistence)

Bennis has made a significant contribution to leadership theory but perhaps more compelling are the studies conducted by Morgan McCall and Michael L. Lombardo who attempted to identify the events that make or break a leader (Taffinder, 1997: 36).

![Diagram: Events that make or break a leader]

**Figure 2.1 : Events that make or break leaders**
Morgan McCall and Michael L. Lombardo (Taffinder, 1997: 165) reported on a study conducted in the US by the Centre for Creative Leadership. They worked with several Fortune 500 corporations to understand why some high-potential people made it to the top and others got close but did not quite make it. Figure 2.1 indicates some events that McCall and Lombardo thought to make or break a leader. The two most appropriate events related to this dissertation include: leaving behind a trail of small problems or bruised people and getting a job when you are not ready for it. Fast-trackers may be exposed to both situations. Due to the fact that they move quickly through job positions, they may leave behind a trail of disarray or they may be placed in job positions when they are not quite ready for it. Both situations may be disastrous for both the fast-tracker and the organisation.

There are small differences between winning leaders and losing leaders. All leaders are generally, very bright, identified early, have an outstanding track record, have very few flaws, are ambitious and have made many sacrifices. However, those leaders that are winners, have more diversity in track records, maintain composure under stress, handle mistakes with poise and grace, focus on problems to solve them and get along with all kinds of people and are outspoken but not offensive (Taffinder, 1997: 166).

An article from Leadership Magazine titled “Lessons in Leadership”, by Ex-South African Meyer Feldberg (2000: 60), discusses the attributes business leaders need to succeed and excel and how these qualities should be nurtured by corporate mentors. Feldberg (who is now Dean of Columbia Business School and sits on some of the most powerful corporates in the United States) takes a look at what it takes to rise above the ranks, what qualities and attributes are required to excel and what goes into the making of a good leader.

Feldberg (2000: 60), lists eight essential attributes anyone aspiring to lead needs to cultivate: relationships, vision, competitiveness, focus, passion, energy, enjoying the success of others and humour. He argues that the most important thing one can do is to establish relationships that will stand one in good stead, they need to be nurtured and cannot be taken for granted. Having family and friends are pivotal to success, and people should want the best for you with no agendas. He urges potential leaders to identify a vision for their lives and careers, plan an executable strategy and follow it through. On competitiveness, Feldberg (2000: 60), says it is not enough to be the best on an ad hoc basis. In order to succeed, you need to compete and compete continuously. He states it is important to learn to deal with pressure,
which does not go away and when something goes wrong, you need to pick yourself up and carry on. Whining is also taboo in his books. He claims that people who whine will do nothing more than suck your energy – you need to stay focussed. Focus on the things that really matter and learn to discipline yourself. What is also emphasised is the importance of staying passionate. If something is not passionate for you, then walk away. He finds many who lose their passion for their work claim to be in a consolidation phase.

Feldberg (2000: 60), believes that anyone who wants to stay in the fast lane at work should exercise and follow a healthy diet. But not only physical energy is required, intellectual energy is just as important to keep yourself on the cutting edge. Emotional energy is also needed to bounce back from personal crisis and moral and ethical energy.

Lastly says Feldberg (2000: 60), you need to have a sense of humour, but more importantly you need to be able to tolerate other people laughing at you, otherwise you end up being a sanctimonious pompous, self-righteous jerk.

In an article published in IMD Perspectives for Managers (2000: 36) titled “Leadership for Extraordinary Performance”, it is noted that fast-tracking of top talent is dependent on the talented individual being a high achiever and a top performer. The high-potential individual must “perform” in their present position before being “promoted”. This performance should be extraordinary. Joseph J DiStefano (2000: 36), IMD Professor of International Business and Organisational Behaviour, says that success depends on extraordinary performance which, in turn, depends on the ability to provide extraordinary leadership.

DiStefano (2000: 36) categorises leadership into three different styles known to have three different effects on performance:

- Transformational (or motivating)
- Transactional (or result orientated)
- Laissez-faire (or avoiding)

The Transformational Leadership style exhibits visionary, inspiring, stimulating, coaching and team building type behaviours. DiStefano (2000: 36) shows an overwhelming support for the power of transformational leadership behaviours in explaining exceptional
performance. As for visionary and inspiring leadership, he notes that a corporate vision is not enough to create exceptional performance. He believes if managers want to generate exceptional performance, they need a vision specific to each task and to their own department. Distefano claims that visionary leadership is a critical success factor of leaders who show extraordinary performance. He believes that followers' behaviour will be more favourable if they consent to "buy-in" of their leader's vision.

The stimulating dimension that Distefano (2000: 36) also explored was that innovation should be part of the culture of an organisation and experimentation should be encouraged. Managers should be involved with prudent risk taking and should be able to make mistakes. There should be no witch hunts and blame-seeking when problems occurred, instead problems should be analysed constructively to develop innovative solutions for the future.

The main implication of this study was clear: Transformational leadership consistently helps executives to work more effectively with people, to reach their objectives and to create exceptional performance.

Leaders of super-performing companies are able to exert an extraordinary focus on activities around them because in their own minds they can actually picture in detail, what it is they are really after (Ball, 1989: 193). There are "driving leaders" in super-performing companies who drive and haul people along with them. They are like shepherds – clearly in control, setting the pace, energy and direction, nudging their flock along with them. It is absolutely clear who is in charge, but people follow because they have been put in a position where they want to go along with them. It does not come easily, but it is very powerful when put into action (Ball, 1989: 187).

Having vision is one thing, but turning it into something that has meaning, something people can put their arms around and cling to, is quite another. It is about making meaning (Ball, 1989: 195).

What of the future for leadership styles? Visionary leadership is vital in the challenging times that lie ahead. In leadership, expect to be confronted by dazzling, exciting, sometimes conflicting array of new ideas and practices. The speed and extent of change and its
acceleration will present great opportunities for those that are nimble and alert. Fast-trackers need to be at the forefront, to attain world class business opportunities (Peters, 2000: 9).

Even though leadership theories are extensive, it is clear that if fast-trackers wish to be super-performers they need to lead with vision, they need to develop a “concern for people” and need to relate to the transformational leadership style.

### 2.2.2.2 Thinking styles

Thinking styles of fast-trackers provide insight into the ways decisions are approached and final choices are made (Rowe and Boulgarides, cited by Robbins, 2001: 140). Rowe and Boulgarides developed a decision-style model, using two cognitive dimensions and it provides a framework to understand individual thinking styles. The basic foundation of the model is the recognition that people differ along two dimensions. The first is their way of thinking. Some people are logical and rational, others are intuitive and creative. The other dimension addresses a person’s tolerance for ambiguity; some people have a high need to structure information in ways that minimises ambiguity, whilst others are able to process thoughts at the same time. When these forms are diagrammed, they form four styles of decision making, that is, directive, analytic, conceptual and behavioural.

![Decision-Style Model](image)

**Figure 2.2 : Decision-Style Model**
a. Directive Style:

These decision-makers have a low tolerance for ambiguity and seek rationality. They are efficient and logical, but their efficiency concerns result in decisions made with minimal information and with few alternatives assessed. Directive types make decisions fast and they focus on the short run.

b. Analytical Styles:

These decision-makers have a greater tolerance for ambiguity and thus desire more information and consider more alternatives when making decisions. Analytical decision-makers would be best characterised as careful decision-makers with the ability to adapt or cope with new situations.

c. Behavioural Style:

Here decision-makers work well with others. They are concerned with the achievement of their peers and those working for them. They are receptive to suggestions from others, relying heavily on meetings for communicating. This type of decision-maker tries to avoid conflict and seeks acceptance.

d. Conceptual Style:

Here decision-makers tend to be very broad in their outlook and consider many alternatives. Their focus is long range and they are very good at finding creative solutions to problems.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the dominant styles of fast-trackers will be gauged based on the typology as identified by Rowe and Boulgarides. However, flexibility of these styles is considered to be most important and the ability to shift depending on the situation will be required (Robbins, 2001: 140-141).

2.2.3 Teamwork

Professor JJ DiStefano (2000) emphasises teamwork when he refers to the fast-tracking of top talent. He claims that success of a high-achiever or top performer depends on extraordinary performance and that teamwork has become an essential element of extraordinary performance.
within corporate cultures. For teamwork to be effective, careful training, clear individual responsibilities and employer development are required, that is, team-building leads to teamwork.

It is assumed that most successful companies indicate successful cross-functional teamwork to be an attribute of their success, but how does the individual who is fast-pacing him or herself through the organisation fit into committed teamwork?

The evidence suggests that teams typically outperform individuals when the task being done requires multiple skills, judgement and experience (Sadler, 1997: 88). As organisations have restructured themselves to compete more effectively and efficiently, they have turned to teams as a better way to utilise employee talents. However, teamwork is not always the answer. It takes more time and often more resources than individual work. The success of a team requires a great deal of co-ordination between interdependent players. Recent studies have taken what was once a "veritable laundry list of characteristics" and organised them into a relatively focussed model.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK DESIGN</th>
<th>COMPOSITION</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Autonomy</td>
<td>• Ability</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Skill variety</td>
<td>• Personality</td>
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<td>• Task identity</td>
<td>• Roles and diversity</td>
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<td>• Task significance</td>
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<td>• Flexibility</td>
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<td>• Preference for teamwork</td>
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<tr>
<th>CONTEXT</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Adequate resources</td>
<td>• Common purpose</td>
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<td>• Leadership</td>
<td>• Specific goals</td>
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<td>• Performance evaluation and rewards</td>
<td>• Team efficacy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Conflict</td>
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<td>• Social loafing</td>
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Figure 2.3: The Team Effectiveness Model (Sadler, 1997: 89)

The work design characteristics motivate individuals because they increase a member's sense of responsibility and ownership over the work and because they make the work more interesting to perform. The composition of the team is also important as "one bad apple can spoil the barrel" and high-performing teams are usually composed of people who prefer working as part of a group. The
process category is also important. Teams are most effective if they have a meaningful and common purpose that provides direction, momentum and commitment for its members. Successful teams will then translate their common purpose into specific, measurable and realistic performance goals.

Team efficacy means that teams have confidence in themselves and an appropriate level of conflict can also improve team effectiveness. Social loafing is when an individual coasts on group effort, but successful teams will make members individually accountable for the team’s purpose, goals and approach (Sadler, 1997: 89).

Teams are, however, no panacea. This can be best described by taking a critical look at the three assumptions that seem to underlie the team ideology.

- *Mature teams are task orientated and have successfully minimised the negative influences on other group forces.*

Here groups may suffer from in-fighting over assignments and decision outcomes, low participation rates and member apathy are made up of people who place their self-interests first.

- *Individual, group and organisational goals can all be integrated into common team goals.*

Contrary to what team advocates assume, people are not so simply motivated by the sociability and self actualisation supposedly offered by work teams. These teams suffer from competitiveness, conflict and hostility. Contrary to the notion that teams increase job satisfaction, the evidence suggests that individuals experience substantial and continuing stress as team members.

- *The team environment drives out the subversive forces of politics, power and conflict that divert groups from efficiently doing their work.*

Recipes for effective team functioning rates them on the quality of decision making, communication, cohesion, clarity and acceptance of goals, acceptance of minority views and other criteria. Such recipes betray the fact that teams have to make deals, punish enemies, reward favourites and engage in similar behaviours to further those self-interests.
The argument here has been that the team ideology ignores the fact that teams are frequently used to camouflage coercion, under the pretence of maintaining cohesion. Teams do not necessarily provide fulfilment of individual needs, nor do they necessarily contribute to individual satisfaction and performance or organisational effectiveness. On the contrary, it is likely that the infatuation with teams and making every employee part of a team, results in organisations not getting the best performance from many of its members (Sadler, 1997: 90).

In conclusion to the “fit” between the behavioural characteristics of fast-trackers to teamwork, it can be noted that although teamwork does have its advantages, it is not always the solution. It is assumed that fast-trackers are too independent to conform and commit themselves to teams.

2.2.4 Career orientation

In this category the behavioural characteristics of fast-trackers include Personal vision and Achievement orientation (Individual drive).

2.2.4.1 Achievement orientation

The McClelland’s theory of needs describes the achievement need as the inner drive to excel, to achieve in relation to a set of standards, and to succeed. Some people have a compelling drive to excel and succeed. McCelland found that high achievers differentiate themselves from others by their desire to do things better. They seek situations in which they can attain personal responsibilities for finding solutions to problems, can receive rapid feedback on their performance so they can tell easily whether they are improving or not and in which they can set moderately challenging goals. High achievers are not gamblers; they dislike succeeding by chance. They prefer the challenge of working at a problem and accepting personal responsibility for success or failure rather than leaving the outcome to chance or the actions of others. Importantly, they avoid what they perceive to be very easy or very difficult tasks. They want to overcome obstacles, but they want to feel that their success (or failure) is due to their own actions. High achievers perform best when the probability of success is 50-50. They dislike gambling with high odds because they get no satisfaction from happenstance success. Similarly, they dislike low odds (high probability of success) because then there is no challenge to their skills. They like to set goals that require stretching themselves a little.
When there is approximately equal chance of success or failure, there is the optimum opportunity to experience feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction from their efforts. At this point, the third of McClelland's theory of needs may be noted, namely the need for affiliation. The need for affiliation is described as the desire, by individuals, for friendly and close interpersonal relationships. McClelland claims that the best managers are high in their need for power and low in their need for affiliation (Robbins, 2001: 162).

It can be assumed that a fast-tracker, being a high achiever, will have a high need for achievement and success. He or she will work hard to complete a task well and will also take responsibility for the success, or failure, of that task. However, fast-trackers are not gamblers, they will never attempt a task that is too risky. Fast-trackers can also be assumed to be low in their need for affiliation. They will not have the time to develop and nurture close interpersonal relationships with their colleagues — they will be too focussed on the super-highway to the top.

Some theorists have a view that a high achievement need acts as an internal motivator and characterises two cultural characteristics: a willingness to accept a moderate degree of risk and a concern for performance. Robert House developed the Path-Goal Theory which describes an achievement orientated leader (Robbins, 2001: 324).

These achievement orientated leaders that House describes, sets challenging goals and expects followers to perform at their highest level but makes the journey along the path easier by reducing roadblocks. The question could be asked: Is this type of leader a reflection of his own character?

An internal need for achievement in fast-trackers may be intense. They may come from families that have a below than average income and thus have a tremendous need to prove themselves. Their dream is their driving force behind them and money is simply a by-point of their success and not the reason for their achievements (Morrison, 2000: 14).

Ball (1989: 78), explains the need for achievement in terms of setting high expectations of oneself. Playing above yourself is about expectations, that is, the expectations that the organisation has of its people and the expectations that those people have of their own abilities. Managers of super-performing companies constantly manage these expectations by
setting them high. In meeting these expectations, people start playing above themselves and feel part of a winning team.

2.2.5 Personal vision

Personal vision is defined, for the purpose of this research, as individual career planning. Many lessons have been learnt over the past year of aggressive growth and dotcom mania. Employers are now even more adept and strategic in tackling their recruitment and retention challenges. In turn, employees’ career decisions will be driven by opportunities that strengthen the “me brand” and add to their individual asset portfolios (Global Report Back, 2001).

Increasing numbers of individuals are plotting their own career goals and creating strategies to achieve them. The first step in personal career management is the self-assessment of personal interests, aims, skills and abilities. Next is a collection of information about existing and future opportunities in an organisation. The final step is the development of a strategy to achieve career goals. Decisions about such a strategy are often informal, rarely put in writing and subject to considerable adjustment as an employee progresses through a career. The realities of organisational life demand flexible planning, because uncertainties and risk underscore any form of long-range planning (Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 15).

To be effective, career management efforts must strike a workable balance between the organisation’s Human Resource needs and the employee’s career goals. In reality, this balance is difficult to achieve. The dynamic nature of organisational life sometimes makes it extremely difficult for each person to carry out career plans within specific time constraints. In some cases overly optimistic personal career goals may have to be trimmed back. In other cases, the counsellor may suggest opportunities and perhaps alternative career paths to accelerate an employee’s career aims (Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 16).

Research suggests that employees generally pass through four stages. Each stage represents a unique set of opportunities, problems and circumstances, and the needs of employees change as they pass from one stage to the next (Noe et al, 1997).
Figure 2.4: A Model for Career Development

Figure 2.4 presents a career development model that indicates how employees face certain developmental tasks over the course of their careers.

As the figure suggests, it is generally recognised that employees pass through four career stages: exploration, establishment, maintenance and disengagement. Each stage is characterised by developmental tasks, activities and relationships. It also suggests that an employees’ current career stage influences their needs, attitudes and job behaviours. An employee’s age and length of time on the job are believed to be good signals of his/her career stage (Noe et al, 1997: 422).

a. **Exploration.**

At this stage individuals attempt to identify the type of work that interests them. It includes their education up to the time of their first job (mid-teens to mid-twenties). From the company’s perspective, orientation and socialisation activities are necessary to get the employee as comfortable as possible in their new surroundings.
b. Establishment.

Here the employee finds their place in the company, makes an independent contribution, takes on more responsibility, achieves financial success and establishes a desirable life-style. Employees at this stage are interested in being viewed as contributors towards the company's success. They learn from formal interaction from peers and through feedback from performance appraisal systems. Employees at this stage become more actively involved in career planning activities.

c. Maintenance.

People generally achieve their highest advancement during the maintenance stage, devoting a considerable amount of their energies to developing and guiding others with less experience. Employees at this stage have many years of job experience, much job knowledge, and an in-depth understanding of the company business. They usually become policy makers and set strategic company goals.

d. Disengagement.

Here individuals prepare for a change in balance between work and non-work activities. They tend to reduce their number of working hours or may work as a consultant. Companies may be involved in outplacement, retrenchment or retirement activities at this career stage (Noe et al, 1997: 425).

It may be assumed that the fast-tracker will be at the Establishment Stage (30-45 year olds). He may be contributing towards the company and be actively involved in his or her own career planning. An interesting alternative that may also be explored could be the fact that the fast-tracker may experience all four stages during this stage. In each new job position the fast-tracker could identify his new skills or interests (exploration), grow in this position (establishment), mentor others and utilise his skills (maintenance) and then move on (disengagement)!

One of the most significant problems involves the question of employee expectations. Some employees think the organisation should bear the major responsibility for career development (this is true for employment equity and affirmative action, where ultimately it is the responsibility of the organisation to get aligned with equity requirements). But most organisations cannot afford the time and cost of planning the career of each employee and expect employees to assume some responsibility for development. Another problem is the impatience and frustration employees feel
when advancement and opportunities are limited. If individuals are responsible for their own career development then the core values of such career management should be empowerment, multi-skilling, growth and freedom of occupational choice (Carrell, 1998: 351). This can be seen in the context of the Employment Equity Act – where freedom of choice and opportunities for non-designated groups are limited.

A successful career management strategy should incorporate both individual and organisational requirements and should meet the following needs:

- Establish a learning organisation based on the principle of self-development and responsibility for career development.
- Keep high-potential people.
- Use role models.
- Change hierarchical mindsets and create opportunities for flatter organisational structures.
- Focus on a previously disadvantaged individual across various levels.

The objective of such a strategy should be to enable individuals to take responsibility for their own career development, so that they achieve their goals and make a positive contribution to their chosen career and the organisation (Carrell, 1998: 352).

Self-knowledge is a prerequisite for successful career planning. This involves knowledge of one’s interests, skills, values, strengths and weaknesses. An individual who knows himself well can make more rational decisions (Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 15).

In the book “The 59-Second Employee”, Rae & Ward (1984) explains the importance of personal audits. It is vital that time is always taken out for personal audits. An audit of a person’s goals, values and personal achievements should be done periodically. Employees should make time for personal development and ask other people for feedback. They should decide if they are still moving in the direction they want to move in and if they still feel happy with their goals. It is advised that they keep an eye on the bottom line, but not so diligently that they fail to enjoy
themselves along the way. In short, they have to manage themselves, for increased self-respect and growth (Rae & Ward, 1984: 59).

An extract from the book “The Successful bosses first 100 days”, Kock (1994) explains the importance of sketching a game-plan for successful career progression. Unless an individual has strong reasons for variation, a good rule of thumb is to have a fairly detailed game-plan for the next 12 months, plus a looser, sketchier plan, for the next 2 years thereafter.

In complying with an annual game-plan an individual will eventually be putting down crystal clear objectives, which must be of the type that can tell in a year’s time whether or not they have been achieved.

To achieve this, break up the task into intermediate steps, each with its own targets and time-table. Then ensure that there is enough ammunition and resources for the fight. Next communicate what one is attempting to achieve and make the enthusiasm for achievement infectious. Lastly, always keep the objective in the forefront of one’s mind, checking continuously that the objective is still on track (Kock, 1994: 170).

2.2.5 Organisational environment

In this category the following concepts are explored to help understand the organisational environment in which fast-trackers will excel:

- Organisational flexibility
- Preference for company’s core values and culture
- Risk-taking
- Organisational facilitation and assistance of fast-trackers
- Monetary values

2.2.5.1 Organisational flexibility

Organisational flexibility is the degree to which organisations are able to absorb, cause or respond to strategic changes. Organisations that are flexible are able to quickly change their
strategy or game plans. They are quick on their feet and can rapidly deploy their resources to take advantage of new opportunities and past commitments. In order to stay on the competitive edge, organisations need to rid themselves of Corporate Malaise and Corporate Obesity. To be light on their feet is a prerequisite for all twenty-first century organisations (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 41). This high flexibility does come with a price. It trades off efficiency with organisational structure. A hierarchical organisational structure is very formalised whereas a flatter structure is more flexible, as it rids itself of redundant functions and wasteful slack and it lacks definitive regulations and clear lines of authority (Robbins, 2001: 438).

Athletic flexibility is a new generation term which describes organisational structure and functioning, that permits extraordinary agility of movement. Over the years there has been startling paradigm shifts towards new organisational structures. The so-called amoeba structure is an example of these changes. The concept of the organisation as an amoeba – a living organism in which the component cells (tasks and jobs) grow, adapt or shrink according to environmental conditions and situational demands – has become a major talking point in South African businesses. The amoeba approach implies that there is a great deal of flexibility and horizontal focus in the business and that through multi-skilling, no individual is left to stagnate in any one division or domain. The structure is focussed on the notion of creating knowledge champions throughout the business and multi-skilling is an accepted norm. This creates a host of opportunities in terms of the type of career ladders that now become available to employees (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 43).

2.2.5.2 Preference for company’s core values and culture

Values tend to be relatively stable and enduring. Values are basic convictions that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable, to an opposite or converse mode of conduct, or end-state of existence. Values generally influence attitude and behaviour. Individual values and organisational values must be aligned. Individuals whose values do not align with those of the organisation are likely to be employees who lack motivation and commitment and who are dissatisfied with their jobs and the organisation (Robbins, 2001: 66).
Performance motivated individuals must be employed by organisations where performance-based reward and recognition structures are part of the culture and value system. From organisational values, organisational culture is formed. There are seven primary characteristics that, in aggregate, capture the essence of organisational culture:

- **Innovation and risk-taking.** The degree to which employees are encouraged to be innovative and take risks.

- **Attention to detail.** The degree to which employees are expected to exhibit precision, analysis and attention to detail.

- **Outcome orientation.** The degree to which management focuses on results or outcomes rather than techniques and processes used to achieve these outcomes.

- **People Orientation.** The degree to which management decisions take into consideration the effect of outcomes on people within the organisation.

- **Team orientation.** The degree to which work activities are organised around teams rather than around individuals.

- **Aggressiveness.** The degree to which people are aggressive and competitive rather than easygoing.

- **Stability.** The degree to which organisational activities emphasise maintaining the status quo in contrast to growth.

Each of these characteristics exists on a continuum from low to high. Appraising the organisation on these seven characteristics, gives a composite picture of the organisation's culture. Core values of an organisation are included in the dominant culture of that organisation.

Ball (1989: 212,215,221), shares his views on organisational culture – without exception, the power of corporate culture is like an invisible natural force field which keeps the organisation aligned. Corporate culture, although mainly about values, is also about vision. To be strong, a culture will need to convey a sense of common purpose throughout the organisation, and at the same time, the stronger the culture the more effectively it will serve
as the medium to convey purpose. With increasing environmental turbulence and increasingly rapid change, innovation is becoming ever more important as a component of corporate culture.

It is imperative that the organisational culture fits the concept of accelerated individual career management. For some organisations this means a transition of organisational culture. Hill, Horwitz and Jackson (2001: 50-1) surveyed 280 managers across 19 South African private sector organisations on change, culture and management style. Findings on South Africa's organisational culture indicated:

- Managers view South African companies as being strongly market-related, constrained by government regulations, hierarchical, results orientated and (most strongly) as undergoing rapid change.

- Companies were seen as being particularly low on encouraging diversity of opinions, employee motivation, risk-taking, flexibility and being influenced by family relationships.

- South African organisational culture is commonly viewed as somewhat rigid, directive, task-oriented and low on risk-taking, flexibility and innovation. It has also been viewed as tending towards an external (market) orientation rather than orientated towards the “people needs” of internal stakeholders.

The study found the following results regarding a South African management style

- Managers saw themselves and other managers strongly believing that “anything can be achieved if one is strongly motivated” and eager for opportunities to learn and develop.

- South African managers also see themselves as ones who strongly value job security, are inclined to direct others and are very ambitious. They see themselves in a democratic management style and orientation towards unpredictable work.

- Managers regarded the following as particularly uncharacteristic of themselves: condoning any business practice as long as it meets its objectives, an inclination for working alone, keeping a personal distance from subordinates and basing reward on status.
Managers also perceive themselves and others as proactive and orientated towards self-development: an orientation that appears more aligned with an internal rather than an external locus of control.

The assertion that managers prefer teamwork to working alone, may suggest a willingness to engage with employees at work.

There is support for the idea that South African management is generally seen as more involved than remote, and more directive than participate (certainly in the characterisation of other managers).

Changing landscapes are ahead for South Africa's workforce. Corporate culture will be critical for attracting new talent. The most important factor that job seekers will consider is whether their work will be challenging, salary will be second, followed by opportunities for career development. These opportunities will depend on the organisational culture that companies will adapt (Macdonald, 2000: 2).

It is assumed that a company's culture will reflect the company's preference for core values. The individual's core values should, in-turn, be aligned to the company's core values. If the fast-tracker can thus find the correct “fit” of his internal values to that of the company's, there is a strong probability that his career goals will be realised.

2.2.5.3 Risk-taking

Risk-taking is the degree to which individuals are prepared to take risks and an organisation's culture allows and encourages individuals to take these risks. People differ in their willingness to take risks. This propensity to assume or avoid risk has been shown to have an impact on how long it takes to make a decision and how much information managers require making decisions. While it is generally correct to conclude that managers in organisations are risk averse, there are still individual differences on this dimension. As a result it makes sense to recognise such differences and even aligning risk-taking propensity with specific job demands. For instance, a high risk-taking propensity may lead to more effective performance for a stock-trader in a brokerage firm, because that type of job demands rapid decision-making (Robbins, 2001: 98).
It is assumed that successful fast-trackers may not be reckless, but may take calculated risks. They may have a gut feel that cannot be learnt and they may rarely make serious mistakes.

Do high achievers take high risks? The answer is no. It is a misconception that great leaders take great risks, although in different cultures different managers have different tolerances for risk-taking (Taffinder, 1997: 75). David McClelland, a Harvard psychologist, showed that high and low achievers behave quite differently when taking risks. Low achievers do one of two things: they minimise risk as much as possible or they take wild irrational risks. High achievers, by contrast, typically take moderate risks, but the nub of it is that they calculate risks against circumstances and their own abilities (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 37).

Kock (1984) describes how taking risks add value to self-development. He says there is much to learn from failure and that there is value in setbacks. Failures are the inevitable result of ambitious activity, if you do nothing challenging, you are unlikely to fail. Failure is a vigorous sign of life and its value is rarely understood. There are three reasons why feedback is valuable. Firstly, failure teaches one to contain precious data. Failure puts a person in touch with reality in a way that success rarely does. Negative feedback should be taken seriously and one’s task is to become skilled at interpreting feedback and at training your team to do the same. Secondly, although it is a cliché, failures really do have the potential of character building. Reversals of fortunes put a person in touch with inner reality, the resilience that comes from within, the sense of self-worth, integrity and striving to perform. When things have gone wrong one should make the best of one’s skills and resources. A life of effortlessness breeds complacency, arrogance and superficiality. Thirdly, failures make it easier to win allies. People like to feel that they are dependent on each other. Since corporate life depends more on what others can do for oneself, than on what one can do for oneself, it is not a bad thing to be cast in the role of the gritty underdog, struggling against odds to overtake a better placed rival.

The problem with failure is the stigma attached to it. Denying failure is a mark of weakness, not of strength. People should take pride in their failures and their ability to learn from them (Kock, 1984: 155).

However, Ball claims that intuition and risk should go hand in hand. He claims that one should not trust intuition alone. He warns that intuition is insight without the intervention of
reason and that insight springs subconsciously from experience. In other words, one should trust one’s gut and go the right-brain way - but only if one can speak from experience (Ball, 1989: 112).

According to Ball (1989: 144, 205), part of tolerating failure is allowing people to break the rules occasionally, but thinking things through is the key. Super-performers think things through. They take time to assess the consequences and impact of courses of action. They look at the upside - what will success require of us? They look at the downside - what are the risks here? If the leader does not have a bold attitude towards risk, there will be no ringing in of the new. Innovation will get stifled at the top.

2.2.5.4 Organisational career assistance

Organisational assistance, with regards to individual career development, is defined below. It is suggested that organisations assist fast-trackers’ in their career development. Organisational assistance, in career development of individuals, may be part of the company’s culture. The majority of companies believe that developing their key potential employees is a priority. Training and development of their employees is a strong focus that the book “The best Companies to work for in South Africa, 2000-1” focuses on (Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, 2000).

These companies do however believe that career development is a two-way street. It requires energy and commitment from the individual as well as from the organisation. Companies will do their best to provide an organisation where individuals can study further in their areas of interest, but it is also the responsibility of the individual to take ownership of these opportunities offered to them. Many organisations are moving towards a continuous learning culture - a learning organisation is one in which people at all levels, individuals and collectively, are continuously increasing their capacity to produce results they really care about. The level of performance and improvement needed today requires learning, as there is no clear path to success, to follow. Learning “to do” is enormously rewarding and personally satisfying and the possibility of a win-win is part of the attraction. That is, the possibility of achieving extraordinary performance, together with the satisfaction and fulfilment for the individuals involved. Many companies are recognising this attraction and are investing heavily to support the organisational learning concept. This does mean extra high costs to the
company, both financially and in time, and therefore many companies will only invest in those individuals who take time out to invest in themselves (Karash, 1998: 1).

The question is asked: What of the future? To become distinct in the future, the acquisition of organisational talents is essential. Opportunity is one of many talents. Firms will not manage the careers of employees. They will provide opportunities to enable them to develop identity and adaptability and thus be in charge of their own career. South Africa has a chance to make something interesting of this situation as long as these new participants don’t become bureaucrats (Peters, 2000: 9).

Organisations will need to produce a culture of continuous new learning. They will need to be more selective in their recruitment of individuals who can relate to this culture. It can be assumed that it is this culture that the fast-tracker will thrive. Many leading edge firms will invest heavily in strategically focussed training and development (Horwitz, 2000: 9).

2.2.5.5 Monetary value

Fast-trackers may be likened to entrepreneurs. Real entrepreneurs hate being told what to do. They are sure they can do it better. They have a lonely but tremendously competitive spirit. Their dream is the driving force behind them. Money is simply a by-product of their success, not the reason for their achievement (Morrison, 2000: 14).

However, a company’s most powerful source of a competitive advantage is getting its people in the organisation to a position where work takes on a whole meaning of its own, where people will bust a gut to outperform even their own expectations. These people “make it happen” in the company. Therefore it is close to universal amongst super-performers that they afford top management the opportunity of becoming rich.

Top people are generally the people vested with the greatest freedom to make the bottom line happen, and nothing quite focuses their minds more than having a financial interest in that bottom line (Ball, 1989: 65,82).

Measurement and reward go together in a powerfully motivating two-punch combination. The message is clear from super-performers, that is, measure what you want to happen and reward people when it does. Informal rewards can also be used like awards, citations,
certificates and plaudits. Informal rewards does not mean ad hoc, programmes need to be carefully thought out so that the right behaviour is publicly recognised and encouraged (Ball, 1989: 39).

2.2.6 Networking

Networking is getting out and meeting people, it is your opportunity to get to know influential people and allow them to get to know something about you. Most of all, networking exposes you to the maximum number of job opportunities in the shortest possible time (Spak, 2001: 1).

It is an age of knowledge and change. Knowledge is power. The right information, the best resources and the strongest support are needed to keep focussed. Networking helps gather information, resources and support.

Networking opportunities are being created in many different ways, such as mentor/protégé programs, coalitions, special interest groups, quality circles, sensitivity training, power breakfasts and lunches, ex-employee alumni groups, forums, retreats and computerised network groups (Ray-Johnson, 1990: 3).

The greatest leadership skill is the networking skill. Leadership through networking allows one to:

- Be a futurist – look above, below and across for clues on future change and results.
- Set goals – establish new visions to make use of new opportunities, created by change.
- Empower others – inspire, coach and serve as a resource for others to actualise their potential.
- Lead – build bridges and alliances to make things happen and achieve goals.

To be an effective networker, the following criteria should be considered:

- Set goals – there is little point in developing a network without goals, because goals provide meaning and direction. Analyse the kind of help one would need to achieve these goals and then build a network accordingly.
- Assert oneself positively, it is the first move to get what one wants.
• People generally get what they ask for, so ask good questions. Good questions will lead to good information and good answers.

• Make a commitment to listening fully. Good listeners have good connections – everyone likes a good listener.

• Present oneself attractively –90% of how one presents oneself is done visually (the rest verbally).

• Be viewed as knowledgeable or skilful – effective networkers have niches or areas of excellence.

• Show interest in empowering others – people like people who like them.

• Find a role model, a person one can emulate consciously or unconsciously.

• Mix with people who are mentally challenging. People who play “Devil’s Advocate” force out the best in one. They force one to reconsider ideas and attitudes (Ray-Johnson, 1990: 37).

Networking is a highly effective tool to use when looking for job leads. Seven out of ten job leads are found through networking. Employers do not want to hire strangers. In job hunting, visibility is vitally important. Visibility is positioning yourself to be seen favourably by people in your network hub who can refer you to job opportunities (Ray-Johnson, 1990: 13).

Informal networking also has many opportunities, as informal information is carried through “the grapevine”. The grapevine functions to keep one ahead of official information. It provides one with information early enough to be proactive to people, situations and events before they are set in action. It helps one stay ahead of decisions that will affect you (Ray-Johnson, 1990: 25).

In his book, “Leadership”, Philip Sadler (1998: 104) claims that there is evidence that those that get to the top, have wider networks of relationships than others. McCauley (cited by Sadler, 1998: 104) reports a study in which managers in one corporation were asked to identify those aspects of their relationships with peers which they found to be most developmental. The things most often mentioned were:
Sharing information: both technical knowledge and organisational matters.

Comparing career strategies and helping each other learn about career options.

Feedback: helping each other gain insight into strengths and weaknesses

2.3 Theoretical research of fast-tracking

The second part of the Literature review will examine other related issues to fast-tracking such as:

2.3.1 The Chaos Theory.

2.3.2 Training and Development of the fast-tracker.

2.3.3 Retention of the high potential fast-tracker.

2.3.4 Human Resource support of the fast-tracker.

2.3.5 Issues and problems related to the management of the fast-tracker.

2.3.6 Career Management Models and alternatives.

2.3.6.1 Introduction.

2.3.6.2 Twenty-First Century Planning Model.

2.3.6.3 Acceleration Pools and Training Programmes.

2.3.6.4 Growing your own talent.

2.3.6.5 Self-Development.

2.3.7 Conclusion
2.3.1 The Chaos Theory

Fast-tracking of top talent through an organisation brings with it continual change. Human capital will continuously experience change as different leaders enter into different positions and manage different people. This may result in a constant flux of change dynamics, and can be likened to the chaos theory. The chaos theory is not a theory of utter confusion. The patterns are paradoxically regular and irregular. There is a specific behaviour in chaos, which is unpredictable, but there is a quantitative pattern that draws the state into equilibrium. Thus it can be said that the chaos theory symbolises orderly disorder because, as a whole, states seem stable but if each part of a state is examined, chaos would be prevalent. The reason why there is order as an entirety is because the unstable state moves towards a stable state by a process of self-organisation (Stacy, 2000: 256).

The chaos theory can be applied to fast-tracking in an organisation. The reason for this is due to the fact that when a high potential person is ear-marked to progress rapidly through the organisation, he/she is paced through selective positions in which he/she is required to manage various departments, learn as much as possible and then move on. The high-potential individual is required to perform in each department and in order to do this, he/she must manage the subordinates effectively. Each high-potential individual has their own unique style of leadership and management. As the subordinates are exposed to each new management style, they are in a constant state of change as they try and adapt to the leadership style of their new manager. This continual change may result in a state of chaos. Chaos of this type may be disorderly when examined in each department of the organisation. But as a whole the organisation is in a stable state as the sub-ordinates move to a state of self-organisation (Self-organisation is when, for example, people and resources organise and co-ordinate without formal planning and leaders will emerge and recede based on availability and need). Hence, through chaos, some pattern emerges and the system reaches some new form of equilibrium (or order). If decision making is an example of a leadership style at this point, then a few points can be learnt from the chaos theory. Firstly, the outcome of decisions made, according to the chaos theory of dynamic change, cannot be measured and recorded. Secondly, managers cannot rely on, “trial-and-error” as this will also not work as there is no “cause-and-effect” relationship either.

For decisions to be successful, according to the chaos theory, managers need to rely on qualitative patterns to reason by analogy and intuition. “Real-time” learning is predominant, that is, an action is taken and the outcome evaluated, then another action is taken and again the outcome is
evaluated, and so on. Thus it becomes obvious that long-term decisions cannot be made with any accuracy at all and if one makes some tiny error in specification, the system could well amplify this and end up somewhere completely different. One cannot then decide on some future state for the system, and identify the events required to take it there.

In essence, the world has dissolved into a series of events designed to orchestrate chaos and confusion, the consequence being the advent of a new culture of risk in that business outcomes and organisational structures are decaying and are only predictable in the short term.

2.3.2 Training and development of the fast-tracker

Professor Frank M. Horwitz (2000: 4), from the Graduate School of the University of Cape Town, states that in a brave new world, employees, independent knowledge workers and prospective applicants will need to:

- Be flexible and proactive in improving their performance.
- Learn to adapt to change.
- Be innovative and able to cope with stress.
- Balance work and non-work time and interests.
- Maintain a sense of responsibility for one’s own career.
- Adapt to a new psychological contract where life-long employment with one organisation is unlikely.
- Accept that employment continuity, rather than job security, means continuous development, retraining and renewal of knowledge.

The modern organisation is a learning organisation. Its wealth will be judged on how it uses knowledge. Charles Handy (cited by the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, 2000: 6), refers to the Triple I organisation: Intelligence, Information and Ideas. Such organisations are governed by consent and participation, rather than by command. Authority is legitimised and coercion or manipulation is not necessary. People contribute because they identify with core values and exciting work
opportunities. Policies, systems and process design are influenced by organisational culture, which in turn drive behaviour and performance.

For those wanting to advance in flatter more agile organisations, technical skills and financial acumen are not enough. Leadership, people skills, a positive attitude and maturity become critical for personal progress.

Companies will appeal to different people for different reasons, but all companies are focussed on their core business. The companies that invest in intellectual capital, reward people for acquiring knowledge, skills and competencies intrinsic to organisational goals. Critical to success is the linking of pay to performance of individuals, teams and work units. Pay is becoming knowledge and performance driven (Horwitz, cited by the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, 2000-1: 8).

The book, “The Best Companies to work for in South Africa 2000-1”, aims to identify many different micro criteria needed by companies in order to qualify for nominations. The companies finally selected for publication are showcased to be amongst the most innovative and progressive companies in South Africa. The micro criteria that have been chosen to look at for the purpose of this research include: “Career opportunities and development” and “Empowerment and training” – Are people formally assessed/evaluated? How are people developed? What degree of upward mobility is there in the organisation? The companies are rated on these micro criteria by “stars” – a rating of five stars represents excellence.

The following companies all obtained five stars. They were the first five companies that received a 5-star rating and quotes from their respective Human Resource personnel have been quoted below.

- ACSA (Airport Company South Africa), Performance-based culture, “Training budgets have been expanded every year since the company was formed, extending it to every level in the organisation. ACSA invests R5 million a year in skills training and development”

- Alexander Forbes – Competitive, supportive and innovative based culture, “Significant resources are spent on training and the investment pays off amongst those who have been retained by and developed within the organisation. The training is not always management driven, as individuals, in consultation with management, set their own goals and propose their own training programs.”
Andersen Consulting: “In 1999 AC invested some US$640 million on training and professional development. The career path structure substantially enhances Andersen Consulting’s appeal to ambitious employees, precisely the type of employee the group wants to attract and retain.”

BAT (British American Tobacco): “Employee development is a top priority at BAT. We require talented individuals and really want you to succeed. A software programme called Executrack assesses all employees and collects data on employees which is then maintained for future reference.”

COMPAREX – Performance-based culture: “Comparex Africa has set in place a highly structured career development and training framework that enables Comparex Africa employees to realise their potential. Comparex encourages employees in the company to be committed to their careers and assists them by providing a clear path and a framework for feedback on their progress”

Deloitte & Touche: “Dynamic career pathing is aggressively pushed by business units. We are about continuous learning and we believe that people are responsible for their own learning – our role is to provide an enabling environment for this to happen”

The issues that stand out in the above selection of companies are that most are performance-based companies who they are investing huge amounts of financial resources into the training and development of high-potential employees, and employees are encouraged to take ownership of their own career development.

The financial implications for the organisation to thus fast-track high potential candidates must be considerable! Fast-trackers will be in a continual cycle of training and development, which costs the company a substantial proportion of their budgets. The costs include the deployment of training personnel, the costs of external courses as well as the opportunity costs lost, of not having the high-potential individual “out on the floor” where he or she can contribute to the bottom line of the company. This, together with the cost of rewarding the high-potential individual for performance, as most performance-based cultures imply must be a notable financial drain on the company.
2.3.3 Retention and retaining of fast-trackers

In an article from the Executive Business Brief, “Top Guns”, Terry Meyer (2001: 34), who lectures at Wits Business School, attempts to advise on how to get the best from high flyers and how to keep them. The ability to attract, grow, effectively utilise and retain skilled professionals is one of the few competitive advantages which professional firms such as IT companies, accounting firms, consulting engineers, legal practices, can offer their clients and owners. Meyer describes three major strategic HR issues facing an organisation: growing future leadership, life-long skills development and hiring and growing the best employees.

- Growing future leadership – Meyer claims that professional firms, by definition, comprise of functional and technical specialists, many of whom are required to fulfil leadership roles for which they have had little or no training or preparation. Often professional teams have very similar preferred leadership styles, which is counter-productive when increasing diversity can significantly contribute to innovation.

- Life-long skills development – Meyer claims if the competitive advantage of professional firms is their intellectual capital, it follows that this needs to continue to be grown. In addition to culture, life-long skills development is an essential ingredient of most retention strategies. Formal skills development is expensive and personal development plans, linked to career development and the strategy of the organisation, need to be developed and implemented for all staff, if the investment is to be cost effective and provide the expected return. This requires an understanding of the future technical and ‘soft” competencies required by the firm. Strategies such as coaching, mentorship, professional networking and other “non-formal” interventions need to be designed and implemented.

- Hiring and growing the best – Meyer claims small firms have a particular predicament in respect of ensuring effective succession. The shift from detailed succession plans, to the development of high potential talent pools, creates a challenge for businesses with flat structures. However, ignoring succession can expose the firm to high levels of risk if key skills leave. Strategic hiring practices need to be based on the future needs of the organisation to ensure the firm has the talent stock on which growth can be sustained.

Professor Bob Garrett (cited by Meyer, 2001), Head of Global Coaching Partnership in London and author of the best selling book “The Fish Rots from the Head: The crisis in our boardrooms”, says that less than 8% of directors have any kind of training for their jobs. As a result they never
fulfil the directorship function of developing and implementing forward thinking strategies. For most, it is a glorified managerial position that does not prepare the company for future markets and competition.

Internationally, there has been a phenomenal growth in executive business coaching. This coaching is likely to become the most sought after management skill in the next decade. In addition to this, young executives are being promoted rapidly. Frequently this denies them the opportunity to grasp all the required competencies for their new roles. Executive coaching is one solution employed by many multi-nationals to overcome this problem.

Schwartz (2001), claims that it is a collection of knowledge, skills and abilities which employees bring to an organisation that gives the organisation its values. In order to retain the talent within the organisation there, amongst other compensation and benefits, needs to be an advancement track that employees can follow. Many times, employees leave because there is no plan (training, mentoring and coaching) for advancement in the organisation. Studies indicate that within 12 months, 35% of new hires will leave the company due to dissatisfaction with company mentoring procedures and another 41% leave because they are dissatisfied with the companies training. Skill attainment, increased knowledge, training and education are all necessary for current and emerging occupations. Minimally, if a person just wants to keep his or her job, but optimally desires to be a highly productive contributor, then knowledge is power. Therefore, those with current and up to date knowledge, skills and abilities have before them a road paved with gold. Training is no longer about serving up random courses with minimal efficiency. Instead it is demanded that training efforts be targeted and measured against skill gaps with a demonstrable return to the employee as well as to the company. Skilled people will become the only competitive advantage. The ability to obtain knowledge, skills and abilities while helping individuals and organisations move forward in a more productive manner is what the world of business is about now. Optimising intellectual capital helps individuals and companies survive and thrive.

The reality is that true employers of choice will win the battle to attract and retain talented employees. This will be done by adopting a far more strategic approach to workforce management and creating new win-win employment relationships, based on employer needs. Employees in turn, need a far higher level of work-life flexibility, a motivating environment to work in, a link between business success and personal rewards and critically, workplace marketability and employability (Hewton, nd).
2.3.4 Human Resource support of fast-trackers

Fast-tracking requires a Human Resource department “that works”. Rosen, (2001), claims that the SHRM Foundation has found to be redirecting its funding of research towards significant projects that meet its new “LIVE” criteria (Leverage, Impact, Visibility, Enhancing the profession). A study suggests that HR can improve its relationship with line managers by getting out on the floor where “people problems” originate and by better communicating to line managers the big picture – the reasons behind HR policies. Theresa Welbourne, an associate professor in Organisation Behaviour of Human Resource Management at the University of Michigan Business School (cited by Rosen, 2001), has researched many studies which examines the role of HR management, in creating and sustaining an entrepreneurial climate. Seven years of research has taught Welbourne that “there exists good and bad human resource management. Good HR management helps keep the sense of urgency high, and it helps simultaneously to create an environment where employees feel valued. They are valued because the company values roles that go beyond the “job” role. Bad Human Resource Management on the other hand focuses on people on the job and not on values. Bureaucracy and rules guide behaviour. An emphasis on legal regulations becomes more important than an emphasis on values and vision”, according to Welbourne “This type of HR management can kill a firm’s entrepreneurial spirit” (cited by Rosen, 2001).

2.3.5 Issues and problems dealing with the management of fast-trackers

Sadler (1998), expresses a number of issues and problems that management faces when dealing with the management of fast-trackers. Identified below are a number of commonly encountered problems or issues:

- Those who are missed by the system of assessment and not included in the high-flyer group, particularly those who fail only marginally to win inclusion, may become resentful and lose motivation or leave the organisation altogether.

- If the high-flyers are promoted too rapidly they may not stay in any one job long enough for real learning to take place or for valid feedback to become available. It will also be difficult to make a valid assessment of their performance.
• There is a real danger that although high-flyers are deemed to be a corporate resource, local, national or divisional managers may try and hold onto their best talent rather than offer them up to the overall company pool of talent.

• The increasing need for future top managers in international businesses to have had international experience is sometimes difficult to meet in this day and age when managers, whether male or female, have spouses or partners with their own careers with different location requirements.

• Expectations are created which become impossible to fulfil. This tendency was marked in the UK in the early 1990's when, in conditions of severe recession and consequent cutbacks in industry and commerce, it was often impossible for companies to honour promises of exceptional career progress given in the buoyant years of the 1980's.

• Companies often fail to provide adequate routes for young professional, scientific or technical specialists to join high-flyer programmes alongside those who have been recruited specifically as management trainees. A young laboratory worker today would not easily gain access to a high-flyer programme in any major chemical or pharmaceutical company irrespective of his or her potential (Sadler, 1997: 108).

2.3.6 Career management models and other alternatives

2.3.6.1 Introduction

Hall (1976: 201, cited by Swanepoel, 2000) indicates that there are four distinct meanings assigned to the concept of career, namely:

• Career as advancement;

• Career as profession;

• Career as a lifelong sequence of work experiences;

• Career as a lifelong sequence of role-related experiences.
Over the years, the most popular meaning is the first one, namely career advancement. Such a career is evaluated by the number of upward moves (promotions), during an individual’s career life. However, the third meaning, namely that a career is a lifelong sequence of work experiences is a more appropriate definition for the purposes of this dissertation. As organisations are becoming more flexible, introducing fewer structures, contracting out services and using more freelance workers, careers are rather being viewed in terms of lifelong learning than in terms of upward movement. In view of this, a definition of “career” is more suited to these new developments and changing organisations should be formulated. Hall and Mirvis (cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 13) argue that with regard to all these organisational changes, the primary implication for employees is that careers have to become more of a protean.

The term protean is taken from the name of the Greek god Proteus, who could change shape at will (Hall & Mirvis, cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 13). Hall and Mirvis define a protean career as follows:

“The protean career is a process which the person, not the organisation, is managing. It consists of all the person’s varied experiences in education, training, work in several organisations, changes in occupational field, and so forth. The protean career is not what happens to the person in any one organisation.... In short, the protean career is shaped more by the individual than by the organisation and may be redirected from time to time to meet the needs of the person” (201).

In the protean career, performance is defined by the person’s own criteria of good performance (that is, psychological success), whereas in the traditional career, the organisation defines success in the form of a salary and position.

The protean career values freedom and growth and is also characterised by a high degree of mobility (Hall, 1976 cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 14).

The following sections of this chapter will cover an example of a career management model which may be utilised by organisations and fast-tracking employees, as well as other alternatives, that organisations can consider in the development of fast-trackers.
Changes in organisations are a result of external pressures. A survey conducted by Golzen and Garner in 1990 (Steward, 1995, cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 119) on high-flyers in their twenties and thirties, asking them how they envisage the business environment in the year 2000, indicated that it is impossible to predict the future. Changes will ultimately affect the careers of workers and career management in organisations.

The challenge is to remain employable and the individual should regard him or her as an entrepreneur, despite being permanently employed. Hall and Mirvis (cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 119) conclude that “the new career is about experience, skill, flexibility and personal development. It does not involve predefined career paths, routine ticket punching, stability or security.”

A result of these changes could be reduced employee commitment, which is a potential danger for organisations (Clark, cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 120). This can be overcome by rewriting the traditional psychological contract and including opportunities for growth and development rather than the traditional career advancement aspects. The old method of career planning is becoming absolute and a new model is emerging. The twenty-first century model, which is developmental in nature, makes provision for new demands.

This model emphasises the need to experience personal meaning at work and the fact that the individual should strive for this throughout his or her career (Otte & Kahnweiler, 1995 cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 120).

Due to the fact that jobs and organisations change, long-term career planning is seen as concerning the individuals being, that is, finding a purpose in life and finding personal meaning in work. Success is seen as embracing not only traditional terms of economic gain, but also the individual’s spiritual and emotional development. The model is based on personal development, and is facilitated by interaction with factors that are relevant to career planning for the twenty-first century.
The various steps of the above model are discussed below (Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 123).

a. **Quest for personal development**

In planning a career, the focus should be on becoming aware of one’s inner depths, that is, the spiritual and emotional aspects that let us know who we really are and seek vitality and joy in life. Individuals are often not aware of their personal depths because, in the process of learning to adapt to the adult world as society expects, some childlike spontaneity is lost. Being out of touch with one’s deepest feelings may give rise to a sense in midlife “that something is missing”. Finding one’s inner depths may be facilitated by therapy, meditation or dream analysis, or expressing oneself in art, music, craft or other activities. This contributes to career planning as an evolutionary process in which one finds answers in oneself rather than in the outside world. In this process career plans can change. Change does not necessarily mean changing one’s job, but can mean seeing one’s present job in a new way and finding new ways of personal development.
b. Honour resistance

At times individuals tend to get ‘stuck” rather than focus on a quest for development. They may ascribe this to their lacking of willpower or being lazy. Instead of such a self-judgement approach, a more healthy approach would be to attempt to understand the reasons for getting ‘stuck”, i.e. discovering ones resistance to personal growth. It could be due to incompatibility between one’s needs and desires, or to not listening to certain parts of oneself that wants to be expressed or to the fact that one’s plans have become inappropriate to external circumstances. Means of gaining understanding of the reasons for not growing include: talking to a friend or counsellor, revising one’s career plan, or accepting the fact that one can become confused and doubt one’s self-worth.

c. Clarify ideal future

In dreaming of what one wants to be in the future, one should not think in terms of a job title, but rather in terms of an ideal role one would like to be in, in two or three years time. This involves fantasizing about the details of what an ideal workday, workweek or month would constitute. This provides deeper knowledge of oneself, knowing one’s aspirations, desires, fears and doubts. It can also lead to an actual creation of a job that at present does not yet exist!

d. Study self

Deeper self-understanding may be sought by not seeing oneself merely objectively as a configuration of traits, but as being capable of creating meaning. This may be done for example by a counsellor or psychologist who can make recommendations on career issues, taking into account personality traits, personal situations and the willingness to take risks. Another technique that may be used is analysing one’s positive and negative past experiences by thinking of the most rewarding or most dreaded activities, or by drawing up a list of the things one enjoyed doing, looking for common factors such as enjoying solitary activities, social activities, outdoor, physical or mental activities. Friends or colleagues may be asked for feedback on one’s analysis of oneself.
e. Analyse past competencies

All capabilities involved in each previous phase of the individual’s life should be examined. Such soul-searching may result in some surprises, as people often find that they have developed more skills than they had realised, for example, leadership skills.

f. Analyse competencies needed in the future

It is also necessary to analyse the skills that would be required in one’s ideal career, because some of them will have to be acquired. This will determine one’s learning goals, for example goals concerning practical skills in human resource management.

g. Draft tentative plan

Plan learning by writing down a goal, compiling a list of the steps necessary to reach that goal, and deciding what resources and how much time is required.

h. Explore plan with others

Share the results of the above steps with trusted others who are committed to helping, and who can provide some feedback on goals and understand ones fears and aspirations.

i. Execute plan incrementally and reflect on learning’s

As an individual realises that his/her future visions will change with experience, the next step to be taken in ones career involves three guidelines:

- Working on skills required to achieve goals, choosing either the most urgent or those that are the most fun to undertake.

- Making career choices that are on the whole consistent with the future vision.

- Taking time to become aware of feelings towards the activities the individual wants to undertake.
j. Evaluate and reformulate plans

All factors in the plan should be revised at least annually by writing down reflections and discussing results with trusted friends. This will keep the individuals flexible-aware of their feelings and of what they have learnt. This will counteract merely drifting along and facilitate personal planning, growth and change.

This career-planning model is developmental in nature, presents a long-term view, but also makes provision for short-term survival in changing and uncertain times.

The Twenty-first Century model is a thorough example of a career development model. However, another career trend is the trend of a Holistic career focus. Career development is under the ownership of the employee and is becoming more holistic in its focus (Swanepoel, 2000: 436). The new career concept is about experience skill, flexibility and personal development. It does not involve predefined career paths, routine ticket punching, stability or security (Hall and Mervis 1995: 330, cited by Swanepoel, 2000: 436).

2.3.6.3 Acceleration pools and training programmes

Haye (2001), explains how succession planning is becoming a lost art. The resulting death of management talent requires a dynamic new approach to leadership development. Recent trends suggest that acceleration pools may be the best way to grow talent. Bill Byham, author of the newly-published “Grow your own Leaders” (cited by Haye, 2001), says that companies should use acceleration pools to develop and prepare a group of most talented people for the executive level. Byham says this reduces an organisation’s vulnerability to resignations – all eggs are not put in one basket – and provides future executives with the broad experience required to cope in rapidly changing business environments. Jenny Fisher, who heads Deloittes & Touche Human Capital Corporation, executive coaching division in Gauteng, (cited by Haye, 2001) says the system works on a basis that while everyone gets developed, only a company’s best and brightest qualify for accelerated development. “In the acceleration pool candidates will receive challenging assignments, special developmental experience, accelerated growth and educational opportunities. The focus is always on business issues which is critical in optimising the return on investment in personal coaching.
Movement in the acceleration pool is based on performance and demonstrable development. They cannot just serve time.”

The acceleration pool offers no presumption of upward movement or implicit guarantee of promotion. Candidates may remain within the acceleration pool from one to 15 years, depending on their career stage at time of entry, performance and the urgency of the organisations needs.

2.3.6.4 Grow your own talent

“Looking for Talent? Grow your Own”, was an article from HR Future (Hosking, 2000: 4), whereby Dr Byham shares his views on succession management for the 21st century, with editor Alan Hosking.

- Byham attributes the increasing difficulty in filling senior management positions with top quality people, to the general trend that employees are a lot more mobile in their careers. He says that for growing companies, there has been an effort to downsizing middle management and this has resulted in a huge gap between executives and managers, with few “assistant” jobs. Furthermore there has been tremendous underdevelopment of middle management. “Some companies that have done nothing have found that retaining weaker staff has experienced an upward seep of mediocrity and risk the loss of what good talent they might have. This results in lower company value.”

- Byham believes in companies selectively growing their own talent through “acceleration pools”. He believes that people should be identified on good performance, potential and demonstrated commitment to self-development. They must also be given opportunities to develop competencies such as adaptability, strategic relationship building, trust building, change leadership, coaching/teaching, influential communication, customer orientation and learning orientation. It is also very important to help them eliminate what are called “executive derailers” which will prevent them from moving into executive positions. “Executive derailers” are described by Byham to be “personal characteristics such as being aloof, dependent, arrogant, cautious, distrustful, eccentric, having a low tolerance for ambiguity, being melodramatic, mischievous, passive or aggressive, perfectionist or volatile. These characteristics can derail a career.”
Byham goes on to say that promotions must be based on job performance. He says that acceleration pools are simpler, faster and take up less of management’s time. They are more accurate in that they result in the right person for the right job. There is a better diagnosis of needs, a greater focus on skill building and more management support. The pool can be closely linked to the company’s business plan and strategy and also, this way, companies can retain their own best people.

Many programmes offered both in-house and at business schools, are specifically designed for fast-tracking managers and high-flyers. The danger, however, is seen as a rite of passage rather than as a real learning opportunity. Leadership development must start at the point of recruitment. Job experiences, rewards and organisational cultures must be combined with training to foster leadership potential and encourage the acquisition of the requisite skills (Sadler, 1997: 105).

2.3.6.5 Self-development

Increasingly, high-flyers are taking control and charge of their own careers and assuming responsibility for their own development. This can involve, at the extreme, for example, taking a career break to study an MBA degree. Now that few companies can offer a “cradle to the grave” career, high-flyers expect their journey to the top to involve working for several organisations rather than one. Given this prospect they can clearly not just sit around waiting to be developed.

Access to open learning systems has greatly increased the opportunities for self-development. Another factor encouraging young managers to concern themselves with their development is the increasing tendency for organisations to become flatter and reduce the number of levels in the hierarchy (Sadler, 1997: 107).

O’Brien, (2001: 52), explains that at The Integrative Leadership Forum (ILF) this year, a select group of business leaders from around the world, met in Cape Town, to discuss issues of commercial success and social responsibility. Peter Bateson, an international leadership coach, argued that there are clearly identifiable stages of personality development or self-development, which constitute the basic building blocks for successful leadership development. The first in the integration stage was a stage during which individuals learn to
recognise and deal with their own fears of persecution and aggressive impulses. Successful negotiation of this phase promotes the ability to deal with complexity, uncertainty and difference. Failure to develop at this stage will result in polarised thinking, blaming and scape-goating, and the creation of a world of villains and hero's.

The second stage of personal development is the consolidation of good authority, without which leaders are unable to deal with matters of conflict, power and ethics.

O'Brien (2001) goes on to say that South Africa, in many ways, offers much of the rest of the world a model for the future. Many of its business leaders offer examples of excellence in leadership personality through the management of differences and the exercise of good authority. These qualities, as well as people development and team-work, are thought by many of the leading global corporate, to be among critical success factors for sustainable business.

2.3.7 Conclusion

The chaos theory teaches that there is order in disorder. Fast-trackers may create a certain amount of disruptions, (as they change processes and influence subordinates to adapt to their particular leadership styles), whilst progressing through the various departments. However, as a whole, the departments move forward as they are in a state of continual learning. The theory does emphasise that the predictability of a positive growth outcome is short-term and that for orderly disorder to be successful from a practical viewpoint, then fast-trackers should be intuitive by nature and focus on "real-time" learning.

In order for companies to survive continual training and development of staff is important. For this reason, companies may encourage the fast-tracking of individuals as it cultivates a culture of continual learning, as fast-trackers are continually striving to acquire new skills as they progress through the organisation. This may, however, prove to be costly, draining the organisation of financial resources. For this reason it then becomes important that the company focuses on the retention and retaining of the fast-tracker as much has been invested in the individual. The fast-tracker on the other hand may have little loyalty to the company and may look for golden opportunities elsewhere. It was recommended, in an attempt to avoid this situation that the Human Resource department be more
interactive with the fast-tracker. To start, they must have developed a plan that is targeted and measured against the skills gap with a demonstrable return to the employee as well as the company. HR should be continuously interactive with their employees with more emphasis on value and vision and less on policies and procedures, which tend to kill the entrepreneurial spirit. The HR department may also consider growing their own talent with the use of Acceleration Pools and Self-development programs. These Acceleration Pools may work in two ways. Firstly, they may be used as a tool to develop fast-trackers, as well as a tool to motivate the individual, in order to retain those individuals that they have invested so heavily in. Secondly, the pools will be a source of upwardly mobile talent that may be tapped into at any time to meet the needs of the organisation.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the fast-tracker to take ownership of his/her career and the success thereof. The Protean career explains that the success of an individual’s career should be more of a psychological success. This psychological success comes with continuous individual self-development. A model, The Twenty-first Century Planning model, may be effectively used by fast-trackers as a tool for self-development. It helps to ensure that fast-trackers will remain employable by accepting the challenge of continual self-development and flexibility.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

The findings of this study are based on exploratory research conducted on a selection of high-potential individuals who completed and returned a 55-question questionnaire.

The questionnaire was completed by 36 respondents across 22 South African Private Sector Companies.

Fast-trackers were identified by the Human Resource Department of Companies and by volunteers who perceived themselves to be fast-trackers.

The questionnaire was structured to cover six pre-identified categories of dominant behavioural characteristics of fast-trackers. The six categories included:

Coping skills – stress, individual flexibility, self-monitoring and independence

Leadership Styles – people orientation and thinking style

Teamwork

Career Orientation – personal vision and achievement orientation

Organisational Environment – organisational flexibility, preference for company’s core values, organisational attitude towards risk-taking, organisational assistance in the acceleration and facilitation of career progression of high potential fast-trackers and monetary value (reward).

Networking
## 3.2 Composition of the sample

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<td>30 – 34 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 39 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 45 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Number of Job Positions:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 29 years</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 34 years</td>
<td>5.78</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 – 39 years</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 45 years</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Period in Single Position:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 6 months</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 11 months</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 – 18 months</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 – 24 months</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 24 months</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Composition of the sample
From the pie chart below, it can be seen that the highest frequency of respondents fell within the 30-34 year category (42%). It can be assumed that this may be due to the fact that most high-flyers are at this stage mature enough to know themselves well enough and have ‘settled’ into an accelerated career “groove”.

![Age Group of Respondents](image)

**Figure 3.1: Age Group of Respondents**

It was noted that at this stage in their lives (30-34 year olds), most fast-trackers had been exposed to at least five (5.8) different job positions.
Figure 3.2: Number of Job Positions versus the Age Groups of Respondents

Most of the respondents remained in the same position for 12-18 months before moving on into their next career assignment.

Figure 3.3: Time Period Respondents spent in a Single Job Position
Thinking Styles of Fast-trackers

Seventy two percent of Fast-trackers believed themselves to be logical, 44% believed themselves to be rational. This means that they have a tendency to process information serially (logical and rational), as compared to perceiving things as a whole (intuitive and creative). This categorises fast-trackers, according to the research (Robbins, 2001: 140-141) to have a decision-making style that is directive by nature.

These directive types make decisions fast and focus on the short term. They, as most respondents replied, also do not enjoy an environment of high ambiguity. This low tolerance for ambiguity, in turn, again confirms the individual’s Directive Style Decision-Making mode.

However, it is interesting to note that most respondents replied to the questionnaire as being analytical by nature (average score of 5). According to the decision-making model (Robbins, 2001: 141) this implies that these analytical type respondents perceive themselves to actually have a higher tolerance for ambiguity, and thus are able to adapt or cope in continuously changing situations.
If we now assume that the fast-tracker is analytical and directive by nature (based on the assumption that fast-trackers believe themselves to be rational and logical) and combine the benefits of these decision-making styles, we can assume that the fast-tracker will make short term, quick and focussed decisions and at the same time be able to readily adapt and cope with the accelerated progression through the organisation.

Figure 3.5 : Lateral Bar Chart indicating the rating score of Fast-trackers’ characteristics (categories)

Figure 3.5 above reflects the seven point rating scale used in the questionnaire, with 1 being low and 7 high. The data was grouped into 6 main categories and sub-categories assumed to be characteristic of the behaviour of fast-trackers.

To best present the findings of this research, the above lateral bar chart is converted into a graph. This graph represents the profile of the behavioural characteristics of the fast-tracker (the respondents). The respondents profile is discussed briefly, followed by a profile of the “ideal” behavioural characteristics and a brief discussion thereof.
The analysis of the profile of the fast-tracker proved to be an effective tool to gauge specific behavioural characteristics of the respondents (Figure 3.6). It was noted that fast-trackers take risks easily. This was the highest scoring category (risk-taking 7). This is contrary to what the literature proposes with regards to fast-trackers and risk. The score of 5.4 suggests a high achievement orientation and may indicate that fast-trackers are high achievers that like to do things right. Stress management also indicated a favourable score of 5.4. This indicated that most respondents coped well under stress and had adequate stress management programs in place.

Teamwork appeared to be a low (3.5) priority, in the assessment of this category, as indicated in figure 8. A deeper insight and analysis into the teamwork category shows that fast-trackers generally agreed that teamwork was a meaningful tool for getting things done, but that they would rather make independent decisions and would not readily “play along” if they found that they did not agree with a group decision.

The other notable shortfall is their concern or respect for people. They do not really consider other people’s feelings when making decisions which may influence the other person. It seems they make
decisions on what needs to be done, with little concern for humanistic factors. Most of the respondents have not yet realised the importance of a secure “people” network strategy which is a critical success factor of the fast-tracker.

Fast-trackers also felt that their rapid progress through the organisation had little impact on their colleagues. This may indicate that successful fast-tracking leaders to have a transformational leadership style. This style shows leaders who lead by creating a shared vision, they are inspirational, motivational and their colleagues support them because they give them something to believe in and cling to.

![Figure 3.7: The Characteristic Profile of a Fast-tracker - Theoretical Ideal](image)

According to Robbins (2001: 564), stress is highest for those individuals who perceive that they are uncertain as to whether they will win or lose and lowest for those individuals who perceive that winning or losing is a certainty. Fast-trackers should therefore be more confident within themselves and should be at a point in their self-development where they know themselves relatively well. Highly effective stress management programs, such as yoga should be in place and the support of family and friends will result in lower stress levels.
An individual flexibility score of 6.5 would indicate an “ideal” score. It is extremely important that fast-trackers remain light-footed and flexible. They must be able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and to the ever changing demands of his/her subordinates and superiors. High self-monitoring is a critical success factor for fast-trackers. High self-monitors will successfully be able to play multiple roles.

Individual independence should ideally show a score of 4 on this profile. This is because of the balance that is required between the two extremes of independence. At one extreme the fast-tracker will require the support of colleagues to help “promote” him/her, but on the other end of the scale, the fast-tracker should not be too dependent on colleagues who may “hold him back”.

Leadership styles that show a “respect for people” and are visionary by nature are proven to be the most effective styles. The literature search shows a preference for Transformational leaders, as it believes that successful leaders will lead with a vision, be high in confidence and have strong convictions. They will be able to give people a dream which they can cling to (find it easy to influence people) and thus motivate them with a compelling vision (Bennis, cited by Taffinder, 1997: 36). Ideally, high score analytical thinking styles should prevail. Analytical styles allow for a high tolerance for ambiguity as well as careful decision making.

Most respondents failed to see the teamwork. They may be a little selfish about sharing recognition with a successful team, or they may need all the recognition for good performance in a performance-based company, in order to get promoted and move ahead. They may also be more individualistic than team-orientated, believing that the team will frustrate their career advancement goals. This aspect should however be investigated more thoroughly in follow-up research.

Due to the fact that teams are no panacea, even though they be viewed by some as a valuable tool for providing adequate resources, it does not require a high score in the profile of the behavioural characteristics of fast-trackers.

Fast-trackers are high achievers that like to do things right. They have a high need to excel but only a moderate need for power. They will accept responsibility of their actions thus exhibit an emotional maturity. These behavioural characteristics will aid the fast-tracker to be capable of extraordinary performance (Robbins, 2001: 162).
They set clear goals for themselves and have a need for feedback and recognition for their performances. They have taken ownership of their personal career management. The high score of 6 suggests high achievement orientation and personal vision are critical success factors of fast-trackers. Organisations should adapt the amoeba approach in terms of their flexibility. If the organisation is not flexible enough (in terms of its policies and procedures) then it will not be able to meet the needs of the fast-tracker. It should however have a framework of guidelines which sets the playing fields for fast-trackers so that they are not left to run amok.

The highest scoring category from the respondents profile was risk-taking (7). This is contrary to what the literature proposes with regards to fast-trackers and risk. High achievers typically take moderate risks against the circumstances and their own abilities (Nasser, 1995: 37). It is imperative that fast-trackers take calculated risks only. The pro’s and con’s of a risk should be well thought out (this should be easily given in that they are highly analytical individuals), so as not to jeopardise their accelerated progress through the organisation.

Monetary rewards are found to be powerful motivational drivers for fast-trackers; after all they contribute a great deal to the bottom line of the company. However, there are also substantial financial costs involved in the continuous training and development of fast-trackers which clearly needs to be considered. For this reason monetary value is given a score of 4.

It is noted regularly throughout the literature review that fast-trackers should take ownership of their own career development. This should be complimented by the assistance of the organisation in planning, implementing and recognising the individual’s career plans. Due to the fact that it is not the sole responsibility of the organisation to fast-track individuals, a score of 4.5 is suggested.

A “people” network strategy is allocated a score of 7. This is a highly effective tool for fast-trackers to rapidly promote themselves through the organisation. A sound network strategy is imperative for the success of a fast-tracker.
According to figure 3.8, seventy five percent of respondents viewed the main characteristic, or their organisation’s culture, to be outcome-orientated. This can be likened to a performance-based culture. Here individuals are promoted or accelerated through the organisation based on the recognition of their performance. This is by far the strongest perception compared to other culture characteristics. It indicates that organisations have recognised the importance of staying on the competitive edge. This competitive edge is indicative of the culture that filters through the organisation. A strong corporate culture is fundamental to winning business performance (Ball 1989: 40). The Outcome or Performance-based culture is of considerable importance to the fast-tracker as it aligns their core values with those of the organisation. This “fit” creates an environment in which the fast-tracker can flourish.

The attention to detail characteristic (42%) may be an indication of the analytical thinking style (average score of 5) of the respondents, again indicating a comfortable fit between the fast-tracker and the organisation.
The people-orientation result (33%) is no surprise, as this means that the organisation has little concern or respect for people and people integrity. This is relevant because it may, to some degree show little assistance to the employees, by the organisation, and individuals are forced to single-handedly manage their own career progression through the organisation. This could be the reason why many fast-trackers take ownership and responsibility for their own careers.

The low Team-orientated cultural characteristic score (22%), may again underscore the lack of team focus by the fast-tracker. It could also be an indication of poor implementation of team orientation by the organisation, failing to show individuals the value of effective teamwork.
CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 Proposed model for fast-tracking individuals

Personal recommendations are presented in the form of a model. This model has been adapted from Holland, Leibowitz et al, Schein and Super (2000).

The model is divided into two dimensions, the opportunity to fast-track, which is the responsibility of the organisation, (that is they have a culture which is either constrained or unconstrained), and the ability to fast-track, which is dependent on the type personality individual, (that is they are either able or unable to fast-track).

![Figure 4.1: A model identifying the behaviour characteristics of the fast-tracker](image-url)

Figure 4.1 : A model identifying the behaviour characteristics of the fast-tracker
There are four types of individuals that are recognised here; The Conformist, The Inhibited Progressor, The Plateaued Performer and The Fast-Tracker.

4.1.1.1 TYPE 1 - CONFORMIST

This person neither has the personal characteristics of the “high-flying” fast-tracker, nor the organisational opportunities which facilitate rapid career advancement. The individual sees himself as conforming and orderly and prefers working in an environment dominated by convention (Holland, 1973).

4.1.1.2 TYPE 2 - PLATEAUED PERFORMER

The plateaued performer has the talents and abilities for career advancement, but finds him/herself in a situation where there is no longer opportunity to progress in the organisational hierarchy. Four kinds of plateaued performers are identified, namely productively, partially, pleasantly and passively plateaued types (Leibowitz, Kayle & Farren, 1990).

Productively plateaued: These employees experience job satisfaction because they have achieved their ambitions. They are loyal to the company who they feel has given them sufficient recognition; they are high performers but sometimes lack motivation.

Partially Plateaued: These people have specialised in a certain field, but feel that their jobs lack excitement and the organisation does not support them enough in acquiring new skills.

Pleasantly Plateaued: These employees do not aim for promotion and change, they are unlikely to be innovative and usually stay in one organisation.

Passively Plateaued: These employees have been in their jobs too long and know them too well. They lack challenge and feel unable to change the situation.

4.1.1.3 TYPE 3 - INHIBITED PROGRESSOR

Numerous career opportunities exist in the organisation for advancement, but this type of person is inhibited by personal characteristics to exploit opportunities.
4.1.1.4 TYPE 4 – FAST-TRACKER

The champion career mover, who exploits opportunities in the organisation by having a well-defined career vision, has well developed stress management skills, is achievement orientated, flexible, a moderate risk-taker and a master networker. The fast-tracker typically would move fast through the establishment career stage (Super, 1992).

Types 1 to 3 individuals are recognised as being complacent, less innovative and intuitive.

Type 4 individuals, on the other hand, show a picture of an energetic emergent group of future employees. They are young, competitive and high risk-takers. They are focussed, fiercely ambitious, keen decision-makers and prepared to take ownership of their own career management.

4.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations can be made to individuals who would like to fast-track themselves and to organisations who would like to fast-track individuals:

■ First priority is to set practical goals for the individual. One should avoid coming up with goals that are too nebulous to be of use. To be beneficial, a goal should be sufficiently clear and strong to establish a set of priorities that provide both direction and enthusiasm. These goals should reflect the individual’s values and interests. Values need to be given high priority because when they are compatible with a career choice, the individual will be happy with that particular career choice.

■ It can be assumed from this dissertation that fast-trackers are responsible goal setters. These goals should be documented. Using the Holistic Career Development model discussed earlier in the literature review the individual’s personal career management program should be formulised. This should be kept simple and continually reviewed. The continuous Plan-Do-Review Process is extremely important.

■ Next, the individuals coping skills must be assessed. Time management and stress management programmes must be in place. External courses may aid in the time management process and it is recommended that the individual finds an “outside” interest like yoga or participating in a running
club. The individual should be sure that they have the support of his/her family and that there is "buy-in" from the family of the career development program.

- Individual Flexibility is a skill that will need to be developed. Fast-trackers will need to be light on their feet and be able to adapt quickly to the continuously changing environment around them, as they move quickly from one job position to the next. They will need to continuously change to the changing personalities of their peers and subordinates. They will often be facing situations of high ambiguity. To master flexibility, fast-tracking individuals should focus on speed, simplicity and self-confidence. Sometimes a more simplistic approach to situations may result in more innovation and flexibility of the individual.

- The organisation itself also needs to be flexible and adapt to the fast-tracking employee. It can do this in a number of ways including:

✓ Improve the level of understanding of the requirements for real success in high-level jobs.

✓ Improve the ability of organisations to assess and develop the competencies, skills or other attributes that match these requirements.

✓ Create an environment in which learning is taken seriously.

✓ Provide more support and counselling when managers reach critical points in their careers.

✓ Plan career development to avoid late surprises.

✓ The Organisation should take cognisance of the fact that they need to stay flexible to the individual needs of the fast-tracker. This would mean pushing decision-making to the individual thus empowering the individual to make decisions. As this literature review suggests, fast-trackers have a high need for achievement and thus are careful decision-makers and will not take decisions that are too risky and might jeopardise their performance. They will also, if by chance they fail in their decisions made, take full responsibility of this failure. Organisations should be aware of this and use it to their advantage.

✓ There must be an adequate performance review process in place in the organisation. Each individual performance appraisal processes should be reviewed regularly so that the fast-tracker is always fully aware of his/her progress and expectations of performance level. The
fast-trackers should continuously be up to speed with the needs of the organisation, always dancing on the competitive edge!

- Another lack of focus that was founded in the results of this exploratory study was the limited “people” network that the fast-trackers have developed for themselves. Fast-trackers should be more aware of the abundance of rich resources that would be available to them, if they had an effective network strategy in place.

- Fast-trackers should be serious about getting to the top of the corporate ladder and it’s not all about qualifications. A likeable personality is even more important than qualifications when getting ahead (Bennett, 2001: 1). Employees who are seen as trustworthy, motivated, serious, decisive and hard-working are recommended for fast-track promotions and generous pay rises. It is important that fast-trackers have genuine interpersonal skills and have learnt the rewards that come with “being nice”.

- Last but not least, it is the responsibility of the organisation to correctly identify the competencies of fast-tracking individuals. These competencies then should be nurtured and developed by the organisation so that these fast-trackers can be utilised as a cadre of high performance fast-trackers of the future.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4.2 : Developing high Performance fast-trackers**
4.3 Conclusion

Fast-tracking is a new mindset for a new future, as indicated in this exploratory study. The people of an organisation provide the turbo-boost and the key to meaningful progress lies in changing potentially dysfunctional mindsets. This needs to occur at an organisational as well as personal level, with leaders at all levels during the initiative. The mindset needs a shift from: “waiting to be taught” to “continuously seeking learning”.

Our future prosperity will depend on winning over hearts and minds of all economically active citizens to take full responsibility for their own growth and development and not wait for others to provide it for them. The truth is, no organisation, given the pace and volume of change, can provide all the teaching that is required, when it is required.

Employees should take the responsibility of avoiding the risk of drifting down a mental (and developmental) cul-de-sac. For when change becomes driven by attitudes of entitlement and enforced legislative compliance, the focus is shifted away from people taking individual responsibility for making constructive contribution or striving for excellence.

To compete in the fast changing global economy will ultimately depend on each person’s ability to achieve meaningful goals and by not allowing the victim mentality or by sitting back and waiting for others to provide redress.

Empowered Learning – learning how to learn – has become an essential life skill. Individuals must learn to take full responsibility for their ongoing development. They need to be helped more on the growth and success of “Me (Pty) Ltd”- the one-person business that has constantly to stay relevant. Learning is probably the most crucial investment one can make in oneself today – too important to leave to others to initiate and stimulate.

Organisations and their leaders, also have a major role to play. They need to support and facilitate this change of culture by making available attractive opportunities to build personal skills required, as well as easy-to-use practical skills to help sustain this effort. This too, is an enabling investment, without which other training spend will have limited value.

The challenge is for organisations and individuals to collaborate to a fast-track mindset.
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- **Performance-based culture**

  The purpose of a performance-based system is to relate employees' pay directly to their performance. In this way employees are more likely to be more highly motivated. The setback with this culture is that a proper analysis of performance problems is a critical managerial skill. Identifying causes of poor performance is crucial (Carrell, et al 1998: 500).

- **Corporate Cowboys**

  Managers who display a pioneering spirit which disregards the subtleties of sophisticated corporate life and conventions, and who prefer a problem solving style (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 152).

- **Corporate Malaise**

  A state of smugness or comfort or complacency with current performance which has serious complications for competitive agility (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 153).

- **Corporate Obesity**

  When an organisation becomes too "fat" in terms of its structure and staff resulting in the development of a lethargic way of doing things (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 153).

- **Corporate Zoo**

  An organisational structure along the lines of the animal kingdom where the survival of the fittest is the order of the day (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 153).

- **Strategic Fling**

  A short-lived excursion into new ventures, acquisitions or new product developments, which fail to achieve long term results due to a lack of commitment from the leadership (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 158).
- **Corporate Myopia**

  Refers to the tunnel vision created by an endless exposure to a particular way of doing things without any effort to break out of the conventional wisdom (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 154).

- **Kamikaze Pilots**

  Managers driven by their egos who tend to take high flying risks without taking cognisance of the full implications to the organisation (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 155).

- **Light on the Feet**

  Organisational and individual ability to move swiftly, respond quickly and act decisively (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 156).

- **Organisational Culture of Continuous Learning**

  This is a desire, of an organisation, to constantly explore new processes and implement new work methods (Carrell, et al 1998: 178).

- **Career Management**

  Human Resource Managers are giving increasing attention to processes, activities and decision-making that enhances career advancement and solve problems employees encounter along their career paths. Implementation of tools, support of goals, plans and strategies by the Human Resources Department, allow individuals to plan and achieve their career objectives. These programmes tend to satisfy employee needs and enhance motivation (Carrell, et al 1998: 347).

- **Career Development**

  This is defined as an “ongoing process by which individuals progress through a series of stages, each of which is characterised by a relatively unique set of issues, themes or tasks” (Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994: 7, cited by Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 16).
Career Planning

Career planning is described as "the process by which employees obtain knowledge about themselves (their values, personality, preferences, interests, abilities) and information about the working environment, and then making an effort to achieve a proper match" (Schreuder & Theron, 1997: 15).

Ownership and Accountability

This is taking of responsibility of one’s actions and the outcomes thereof.

Organisational Values, Individual Values and their Fit

Professor Ian C. MacMillan coined the term “Corporate Ideology” whereby organisations are nurturing a climate in which values are debated, interpreted and where necessary, changed in order to meet the challenges of the future (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 113). Research conducted by Nasser & Vivier (1995) indicates that the most dynamic and aggressive companies are able to generate and sustain a powerful and commonly held set of fundamental beliefs, that can shape and guide the behaviour of company management and its employees. The underlying philosophy of Corporate Ideology is to create an ideology simple enough for everyone to “know the rules”. Once the key principles are internalised, the autonomous decisions made in response to competitive or environmental challenges will reflect desired mission-supporting behaviour of employees. Individual values must “fit” into organisational values in order to build a strong corporate ideology. Some of these specifics may include: style of management, business ethics, attitude to risk-taking, attitude to competition and self-image about destiny (Nasser & Vivier, 1995: 115).

Motivation

Motivation is the result of the interaction of the individual and the situation. It can be defined as the willingness to exert high levels of effort towards organisational goals, conditioned by the effort’s ability to satisfy some individual need (Robbins, 2001: 212).
**Stress**

Stress is tension, pressure and strain. When a person, over time, is confronted by high demands along with rapidly changing requirements and responsibilities and one believes that one lacks sufficient control, authority and autonomy to deal with such high pitched and fast paced demands the result is usually chronic stress (Robbins, 2001: 563).

**Individual Flexibility**

Individual flexibility is one’s ability to bend easily, to be adaptable and to be able to be changed to the circumstances around one (Robbins, 2001: 266).

**Independence**

Independence is when an individual is not dependent on or not controlled by another person or thing (Oxford English Mini-dictionary, 1995).

**People Orientation**

This can simply be defined as respect for people. A people orientated person is one whom considers the feelings of others in their decisions and actions. They value continual feedback from others and thrive in teams (Robbins, 2001: 265).

**Thinking Style**

Thinking styles may be logical, rational, intuitive or creative. Thinking styles will tie into decision making and will be observed in either a directive, analytical, conceptual or behavioural style of individuals (Robbins, 2001: 140).

**Teamwork**

Teamwork is an interaction amongst individuals whereby each person is working individually but towards a common goal. A group whose individual efforts result in a performance that is greater than the sum of individual inputs (Robbins, 2001: 258).
**Personal Vision**

Personal vision refers to the ability of individuals to have a vision for themselves with respect to who they are and where they are going in their careers. They set goals for themselves and strategies on how to achieve these goals.

**Achievement Orientation**

Achievement orientation is best described as an achievement need. This need may be a need to drive or to excel, to achieve in relation to a set of standards and a striving to succeed (Robbins, 2001: 162).

**Networking**

Networking is a formal individual interaction with a variety and diversified group of people with which connections are made, information is obtained and knowledge is managed, in order to build up a formal network of people that an individual can turn to, when the occasion arises (Robbins, 2001: 5).

**Organisational Flexibility**

Organisational flexibility is the degree to which organisations are able to absorb, cause or respond to strategic change. It is the degree to which rules, routines and procedures are flexible enough to be adapted and "bent" when the circumstances arise (Robbins, 2001: 438).

**Organisational Core Values**

The core values of an organisation are those primary or dominant values that are accepted throughout the organisation (Robbins, 2001: 67).

**Risk Taking**

Risk taking is the degree to which individuals take risks (expose themselves to a chance or a loss) and the degree to which organisational culture allows and encourages individuals to take these risks (Robbins, 2001: 98).
Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring refers to an individual's ability to adjust his or her behaviour to external, situational factors (Robbins, 2001: 98).
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