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**Sandra Wiley** • Jul. 25, 2013

From the [Bridging the Gap](#) blog.

In recent conversations about leadership training the words “best and brightest” slip off the tongue of firm leaders like a battle cry. We want to teach and motivate our best people to the highest level in the firm and we do not want to lose them to other firms or companies.

We want to develop our identified super stars by teaching them, mentoring them and fast tracking them to higher levels of responsibility at a more rapid rate than has been the case in past experience.

The problem I see with our theory is that we do not analyze who the “best and brightest” really are. We currently identify by looking through the lens that has been formed in our eyes, through our experiences and by the road that we took in our climb to a higher level in our own firms.

At a recent [CEO Advantage](#) meeting I had the privilege of working with 15 Managing Partners who told their stories about how they accomplished their station in life – as a leader in their firm. Nearly 80% of the group started their firm when they hit a ceiling in the firm they were a part of and were not allowed to grow at the rate and in the direction that they wanted to go.

These individuals – who were not allowed to prosper in the firm they were working in – went on to grow their own businesses and became quite successful. The question

that was just begging to be asked – why did their past firms not allow them to be

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current leadership team. If partner A is a really fantastic rainmaker in a particular niche then the person that replaces that partner – or is on the track to grow into a partner – must be like that person. In some cases that might work, but what if the individuals that are growing in the firm have interests in growing a different niche or have talents that don't match identically, do we simply dismiss them and start the downward spiral of finding all the things that are wrong with them, eventually giving them a reason to run for other career paths?

Ask yourself the question, are we identifying the strengths of everyone in our firm and are we applying those strengths to our clients, team and services? Finding and using those talents is not an illusion that you will never figure out, it is a reality that is within your grasp – if you put the time and energy into the process.

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