

# ALI SMYTH TALENT AND POTENTIAL CASE STUDY

## NON NHS MODEL ANSWER

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# Ali Smyth

Ali joined Pharmacon (a global pharmaceuticals company) in 2007, and has successfully progressed up to Head of Sales. He sees himself as a high performer, having exceeded both his new business and existing business sales KPIs this year by 4%. Indeed, he has had previous conversations about being in the succession pool for Sales Director roles and General Manager roles in the longer term, so feels very secure that the business value him particularly because he has achieved year on year sales targets in a growth environment in the last 2 years achieving 2 % above target 2 years ago and 5% above target a year ago. He believes that he is very close to progressing to a Sales Director role and expects this to happen at the next salary review. He is happy to move to any of the global offices to make this happen. Ali has always prided himself on moving up the ladder and can already see that he outperforms his line manager (the current Sales Director) in a number of areas. He is excited to have a Board level position where he can be even more influential.

He has achieved his success to date through drawing on both his clinical knowledge and relationships with physicians from his previous clinical role in the NHS. He is extremely customer focused; dedicated to networking with prospective leads and being responsive to any requests/opportunities. He is also very knowledgeable about developments across therapeutic areas with respect to new clinical trials and uses this to stay one step ahead of the competition. He works closely with Marketing to ensure that he is as strategic as possible with respect to who is invited to conferences and ensuring that the focus is on patient care and scientific content that will resonate with attendees. He involves himself in the end-to-end process, identifying leads, building relationships, leading on bids and pitches. Ali is excellent at handling pressure – there has been an increased focus on growth in the last few years with shareholders demanding a greater return on their investment and he has continuously met these targets. Feedback shows that he is an effective decision maker, intuitively knowing when to play “hard ball” in negotiations and when he needs to accept pricing that is lower than he ideally would have liked. He also recently withdrew from an opportunity because of misgivings about the client, which was the right decision given a later scandal involving the client and the successful supplier.

Ali leads a team of five Sales Managers – each of whom are focused on a different therapeutic area e.g. oncology, transplant etc. He has been very clear with the team on his expectations with respect to the growth target and has addressed any underperformance immediately e.g. with Sam Adams who was consistently below target last year. Team performance is ranked on a weekly basis by him to create “healthy competition”. He can sometimes be frustrated with his team as they tend to come to him with questions that he “*would never have dreamed of asking his line manager when he was at their level*”. The last time he took annual leave he was constantly bombarded with questions about what decisions to make which meant that he constantly had to check his phone. Also, Sunita Singh in the HR department kept insisting that the team take part in learning exchange on effective proposal writing. Ali explained that his team did not have time, given this would take them out of client meetings or doing any actual proposal writing, “*if they can’t write proposals at this stage then they shouldn’t be in the role*”. And that he had “*not taken a development day in years, he doesn’t see how his team would have time to do so*”. He was also dissatisfied by a presentation by his Oncology Sales Manager (Pat Wright) at a recent meeting. The CEO mentioned to Ali that Pat seemed ill-prepared and queried whether Ali had supported their preparation. Ali responded that “*he isn’t the type of manager to spoon feed*” his team.

Ali finds it difficult to work with the Manufacturing division as their lead times are “*ridiculous*”. He has also had a number of issues escalated to him from customers with whom he has a personal relationship, that invoices have not been sent on time by Finance or included the correct information. Finance say that the Sales Managers in Ali’s team are refusing to use the agreed template for gathering this information, missing out PO numbers which are holding up invoices. Ali just does not understand why other parts of the business are not as client-focused as he is. While his line manager has referenced some of his relationships in the business as an area that requires focus he feels that it’s them that need to change, not him. His line manager has also suggested that using a coaching style with his team would be beneficial. Ali is not convinced.

## Model of Performance & Potential

Below is PA Consulting's model of Performance and Potential. The combination of the elements help to make judgements on individual's succession potential.



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Performance management, if designed and implemented well, provides an assessment of track record (what people deliver) and behaviour (how they deliver it). Components A and B in the model identify the performance levels of individuals and provide the input to talent management. Components C and D look at an individual's ambition and whether they have the 'Stretch' element to get to a more senior, complex or challenging role.

This model provides flexibility for organisations to adapt it to identify high potential individuals. Tailoring the contents of A and B, allows organisations to reflect their unique history, values and strategy, while tailoring Component D ensures individuals are evaluated against the 'Stretch' elements for a particular talent requirement. How an organisation views an employee's potential differs depending on the specific organisation – what they value, what capabilities they see as strategically important, and what might be hard to find. Potential is about the future, whereas performance is about the past and present. A high potential individual will demonstrate all four components of the model.

# Definitions of Performance & Potential

## Performance Definitions

In this example the behaviours element of Performance is being evaluated as follows however definitions should be tailored for the particular organisation to reflect what is important to them :

Behaviours Definitions	
<b>Strategic</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Balances a focus on the current with looking ahead to the future.</li><li>• Ensures that they are up to date on industry trends to gain competitive advantage</li><li>• Considers the short and long term repercussions of any decisions</li></ul>
<b>Drives Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Creates an environment where there is a focus on results</li><li>• Tackles any underperformance</li><li>• Negotiates effectively to get the best deal for the organisation</li></ul>
<b>Cooperates Transversally</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Works effectively with other functions to achieve shared objectives</li><li>• Shares best practice with other functions</li><li>• Proactively looks for opportunities to collaborate with other functions</li><li>• Balances own needs with needs of other teams</li></ul>
<b>Leads Teams</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is receptive to new ideas and encourages others to share them</li><li>• Shares knowledge and best practice effectively amongst team members</li><li>• Fosters an environment where colleagues are supportive of each other</li></ul>
<b>Developing Capability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Builds capability to enable people to meet future challenges</li><li>• Ensures there is a focus on succession management with in the team</li><li>• Acts as a role model for personal development</li></ul>

## Track Record Definition

This is the record of performance against objectives or KPI's year on year over a period of time. Ideally the track record should span at least three years which provides an indication of the ability to deliver consistently in a range of circumstances and with varying challenges. Where longevity does not exist, current year performance would be assessed.

## Potential Definitions

### Ambition Definition

The individual has the aspiration and motivation to grow, moving upwards or expand their current capability. They take a flexible approach to ensure that this happens. They would be capable of taking on a role requiring very different strengths and demonstrate behaviours required for a more complex role.

### Stretch

In this example the 'Stretch' of potential is defined with the following components however definitions should be tailored for the particular organisation to reflect what is important to them:

Judgement	Learning Approach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Takes a logical and accurate approach to analysing complex information and solving problems</li><li>• Quickly and accurately prioritises risks to focus on the right ones before they become issues</li><li>• Repeatedly demonstrates sound judgement when selecting the right time to make a decision, and when to defer a decision</li><li>• Consistently able to make sound decisions when there is insufficient time for analysis</li><li>• Consistently spots both opportunities for growth and issues before others so that they can be acted upon quickly</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proactively looks for opportunities out of their comfort zone to challenge themselves and develop</li><li>• Transfers experience and expertise to new and challenging situations with ease</li><li>• Actively seeks out objective information to make them think differently</li><li>• Finds people of differing views to their own in order to challenge own thinking</li><li>• Receptive and inquisitive to explore new ideas and test their thinking</li><li>• Invests in their own learning and the learning of others</li></ul>

## Evaluating Performance & Potential

Other sectors are increasingly moving towards replacing their formal performance reviews with ongoing feedback on performance and career conversations with respect to their development. Many are also using descriptions of performance more than numbered rating. In this example, we will use the following example evaluation methods for performance and potential.

Example Performance Evaluation		
Level	Definition	
BELOW	Poor performer	Does not meet performance objectives or display the expected behaviours
	Partially meets expectations	Meets some performance objectives and/or displays the required behaviours however does not do this fully
MEETS	Meets expectations	Meets performance objectives and generally displays the required behaviours to deliver their role
EXCEEDS	High performer	Meets all and exceeds some of the required performance objectives and behaviours
	Outstanding performer	Exceeds all performance objectives and is a role model with regards to the behaviour they demonstrate

Example Potential Evaluation	
Level	Definition
LOW	No positive evidence of the ambition and behavior or skill to stretch to a more complex role. Mainly interested in staying at the same level and not taking on further responsibilities
	Very little evidence of the ambition and behavior or skill to stretch to a more complex role. May be interested in taking on some more responsibility at the same level
MEDIUM	Some positive evidence of the ambition and behavior or skill to stretch to a more complex role or move sideways to learn new skills
	Reasonably strong evidence of the ambition and behavior or skill to stretch to a more complex role
HIGH	The individual demonstrates the ambition and behavior or skill to stretch to a more complex role quite consistency however there is further scope for this to be increased
	The individual demonstrates the ambition and behavior or skill to stretch to a more complex role. Has the flexibility required by the organisation for larger roles

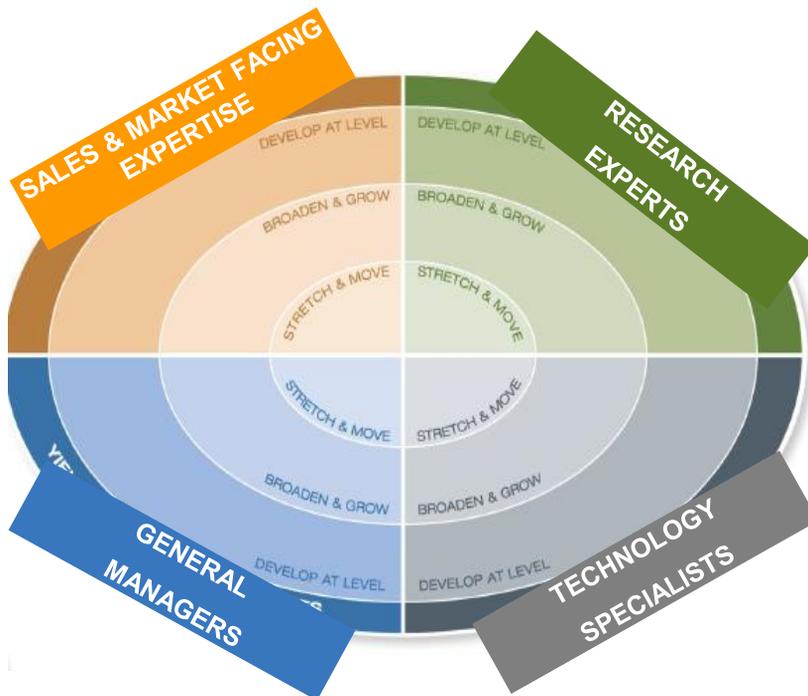
## Talent Pool position (alternative to 9 box grid)

Talent segmentation helps to look beyond just high-potential future leaders as the only focus of talent management activity and to review the capabilities, skills or functions which are core or critical to the organisation. Understanding these talent sources enables organisations to focus talent management processes on identifying, attracting and retaining the talent in these critical pools.

Talent pools can be created in place of succession plans which traditionally determine successors to individual roles. Talent pools provide a format for reviewing the succession depth of an organisation by combining similar roles of similar size and scale. It is based on the premise that there are groups of roles with critical capabilities and common skills around the organisation which will continue to be high in demand as the shape of the business changes in the future. Identifying individuals who have the potential to be part of the pipeline of a talent pool in the short, medium and longer term allows the depth of succession to be clarified.

Talent pools can be preferable to planning succession for specific individual roles which may change and alter, as they reflect the more flexible nature of organisations and are more likely to open up opportunities for cross-border movement.

In this case study we will use the following Talent Pool which is an example used in other sectors.



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## Model Answer

### Performance Evaluation for Ali Smyth Performance = Behaviour and Track Record

Behaviour	Notes	Performance Evaluation
<b>Strategic</b>	Demonstrates an interest in the external market, industry trends and developments. Partners with Marketing to try and get the right people to events and that content is of interest to attendees. Would benefit from removing himself from some of the detail (e.g. client meetings, dealing with issues) and provide his team with the opportunity to develop in these areas. This would enable him to be more future focused.	High Performer
<b>Drives Results</b>	Tackled underperformance issue with Sam. Is clear on his expectations. Effective negotiation. Provides feedback to the team on their performance via weekly ranking (would be helpful to provide qualitative feedback beyond rankings to support performance improvements).	Outstanding performer
<b>Cooperates Transversally</b>	Mixed – works well with Marketing with respect to commercial opportunities, but less well with Finance (invoicing issues), Manufacturing (lead times) and HR.	High Performer
<b>Leads Team</b>	Ranks performance within the team – possibility that this leads to a competitive rather than supportive environment – explore with the team. Is frustrated by questions from team, appears unwilling to share knowledge with them.	Partially meets expectations
<b>Developing capability</b>	Unwilling to let the team attend proposal writing learning sharing events. Did not support Pat with Board presentation preparation. Does not take a coaching approach with team members – provides answers leading to them being dependent on him (see annual leave example). Does not role model commitment to development – does not take development time for himself.	Poor Performer

### Track Record

Notes	Performance Evaluation
Has exceeded new business KPIs this year by 4%; Ali has met the growth targets this year despite pressure in the market from competitors.	High performer
Ali has achieved year on year sales targets in a growth environment in the last 2 years achieving 2 % above target 2 years ago and 5% above target a year ago.	

## Evaluation of Potential: Ali Smyth Potential = Aspiration + Stretch

### Ambition

- Does the individual aspire to and have the motivation to succeed to more senior roles at this point in their career?
- Would this individual have an appetite to take on a role requiring very different strengths?
- Do they demonstrate behaviours which align to the requirements of more complex roles?
- Does this individual have the flexibility required by the organisation for larger roles?

#### Notes:

Ali is very ambitious and wants to be in a Sales Director role soon. May have a blind-spot about the need to deliver through people if promoted to a Sales Director role (supporting direct reports to deliver operational work rather than doing so himself). This is similar with respect to how crucial effective cross functional working with others is and will continue to be in a more senior role. Both of these aspects require development at present. Ali is flexible, willing to move anywhere globally for the right role. However it is unclear whether he would be willing to consider a lateral move given that he "prides himself on moving up the ladder."

#### AMBITION SUMMARY: HIGH

Would like upward promotion in the next 12 months and is very ambitious.

### Stretch

#### Judgement

##### Notes:

Can make decisions in spite of a lack of information or time.  
 Showed good judgment in withdrawing from an opportunity which could have affected the Pharmacon brand.  
 Makes good judgements about growth opportunities as demonstrated by his results over the last 3 years.

#### Learning Approach

##### Notes:

Looks externally to learn from competitors and stays up to date with research .  
 Does show ability to transfer learning from clinical context to sales context.  
 However, reacts defensively to feedback (that he didn't support Pat, and needing to see things from the perspective of others).  
 He is not investing time in others learning or his own.  
 He is defensive about learning new behaviours, potentially expecting others to change.  
 Shows unwillingness to be challenged.

#### STRETCH SUMMARY: MEDIUM

Shows good judgement and applies this very well to the current sales role and this would be essential in a more senior role. A promotion to a more complex role would require Ali to learn rapidly and adapt his behaviour and there is less clear evidence of him currently doing that.

## Summary

<p><b>Overall performance evaluation</b></p>	<p><b>Notes:</b> ‘High Performer’ with respect to track record. Overall ‘Partially Meets Expectations’ with respect to behaviour due to the mixed performance</p>	<p><b>Overall potential evaluation</b></p>	<p><b>Notes:</b> ‘Medium’ as he has the potential to progress however not immediately as Ali requires to develop some essential behaviours for a more complex role and must be open to development and investing time in learning.</p>
<p><b>Risk of loss</b></p>	<p><b>Notes:</b> High; he expects to be promoted soon.</p>		
<p><b>Talent pool position</b></p>	<p><b>Notes:</b> Suggested Sales &amp; Marketing Expertise segment in the ‘Broaden and Grow’ pool: Over time, Ali may be considered for the General Management pool.</p>		
<p><b>Comments for talent review</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Notes:</b> Strengths in transferring learning from clinical experience to sales context</li> <li>• Keeps himself up to date on industry trends</li> <li>• Is commercial/strategic – looks to include the right content at conferences and invite the right people</li> <li>• Excellent at handling pressure</li> <li>• Intuitive decision maker – query whether this is always positive though however there is no evidence to suggest his decision making is ineffective</li> <li>• Tackles underperformance e.g. Sam Adams</li> <li>• Very ambitious and motivated</li> <li>• Appears to be very focused on challenging his team without supporting them e.g. Pat Wright presentation</li> <li>• Needs to support team to be more self-reliant – coaching rather than “telling”</li> <li>• Ali is likely to be disappointed with the performance rating as he is more focused on the “what” than the “how”. Important calibration consideration will be how much weighting is given to his negative behaviour vs. his strong KPI performance?</li> <li>• Retention risk; need to support him to understand how to see things from the perspective of others with respect to the feedback but also in regards to cross functional working – his customer focus is admirable but poor cross functional working ultimately results in a negative customer experience.</li> </ul>		