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The Great Firing: The result of a slapdash workforce planning strategy?



Published on

February 20, 2023

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continue to grow at the Pandemic Pace.

Hence, a hiring spree to service pandemic-level, and possible post-pandemic demand. But now that the dust has settled and a new rhythm and balance has set in, we see the aftermath: The Great Firing. So, it begs the question — were those hiring decisions presumptuous or preemptive?

So what went wrong?

Mass firings are happening across business sectors, even those that did well during the pandemic or that continue to do well even now. The justifications appear just as fast as the firings themselves: the great firing phenomenon is being explained as a shift in post-pandemic business priorities — trimming the fat to direct investment away from unproductive resources, and towards strengthening innovation, or, supporting activities that will make management smarter, or, investing in knowledge and technology that will help the business stay ahead of the curve. Regardless of reason, undoubtedly, resource redirection will impact employment as much as other spending. The result: a freeze on hiring and an increase in firing, as we have witnessed over the last few weeks. Needless to add, the responsibility of forward-thinking workforce planning strategy to curtail mass firing rested then, and as it does now, with business and HR managers.

As providers of talent solutions on an AI talent marketplace platform, we see things from the outside in. So our understanding of what went wrong on the people front relates to an imbalance in business needs and talent hiring strategy: while technological innovation and adoption has grown by leaps and bounds, and while the mindsets on what 'valuable' products and services are has changed drastically in the past three years, strategic workforce planning has, for the most part, not kept pace. The creativity needed to meet business demand during a pandemic required a change not just in the working process, but also in workforce planning itself. The exception is those companies who adopted an integrated workforce strategy.

Would an integrated workforce strategy have prevented The Great Firing?

Firstly, what is an integrated workforce strategy? In the past five years we have seen a huge push for the demand in cost-effective workforce planning from our clients. And with the support of our marketplace platform, one of the ways we protected them from the ups and downs of business was through strategic resource allocation — accounting for the longevity of business planning by employing a hiring mix of permanent, short term, fulltime and part time talent resources rather than merely reacting to market demands; and, balancing people costs in tandem with business development and strategy rather than simply giving in to current market scenarios. So would an integrated workforce strategy have prevented The Great Firing? The answer is a resounding yes! Simply put, integrated workforces are agile, prudent and keep pace with current business needs as well as future strategy. This is primarily because an integrated workforce strategy is founded on the principle of "fix the core and flex the non-core". With a core set of permanent employees that represent the strategy, governance and overall business continuity, the more flexible or less regular tasks are done with a set of non-core specialists who have the talent, expertise and experience to take the business forward, but are not (or may not be) required on a permanent basis. Simple examples of this strategy include annual financial reporting, or payroll accounting: tasks that are fundamental to business but do not require a permanent employee. When applied across functions and across the board, to roles like Part-time CFO for a growth stage company; an interim CHRO to design and implement a people strategy over a 12 month period; [Recruiter on Demand](#) rather than on a permanent role to support surges in hiring. By its very nature, an integrated workforce strategy gives organizations the space to test the waters, challenge needs versus wants, and decide whether they are ready to commit to permanent employment in the space.

Why will an integrated workforce strategy work?

Arguably, the practice of integrated workforces is not new. The hospitality, IT, healthcare sectors, and to an extent, the HR and marketing functions have been using it successfully for a long time under the label of outsourcing. But integrated workforce strategy is about expanding this thinking to technologists, strategists, expensive [domain expert](#) managers and cyclical management activities to all functions within an organization. It takes into consideration the growth stage of an organization, including unexpected circumstances and growth spurts. The key to a successful integrated workforce strategy is to identify what the core and non-core activities are. Essentially, distinguishing between what a business needs from what it wants, and taking a calculated risk on the people front.

From an organizations point of view, it is a cost-effective way to manage talent resources. From an employee's perspective there is a clear indication of what to expect from the type of employment being offered. For both, it provides a strong sense of security and protection: loyalty is harder to question when you know you are in something together. Indeed, perhaps what integrated workforce strategy brings is a more sensitive way to manage employee expectations and morale. And, perhaps our next people management phase will be a Great Redress instead.

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About Author

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