



Book The Talent Powered Organization

Strategies for Globalization, Talent Management and High Performance

Peter Cheese, Robert J. Thomas and Elizabeth Craig
Kogan Page, 2007

Recommendation

You don't need to be a genius to figure out that your company's performance depends on your employees. But Peter Cheese, Robert J. Thomas and Elizabeth Craig maintain that having the right people is only part of the formula for achieving organizational affluence. They say good companies know how to get the most from their talented people and keep them motivated. The authors discuss the pivotal role of line managers in employee retention, performance and job satisfaction. They offer a thoughtful overview (if less generally original content) covering new findings in the field, including solid case histories and analyses of recent surveys and polls.

BooksInShort believes managers will find value in this thorough exposition of how to recruit, engage, guide and motivate talented staff members.

Take-Aways

- Your organization's prosperity depends on how you target, manage, motivate and develop talented people.
- Highly motivated employees perform 50% better than unmotivated workers.
- Engaged employees are more energetic, focused, fulfilled, trustworthy and secure.
- Younger employees are likely to hold several jobs over their careers. They tend to be more demanding and less loyal than baby boomers.
- Line managers should have primary responsibility for nurturing talent.
- Get the full value from your human resources department by involving it in talent recruitment and development.
- To build a talented workforce, focus on "defining talent needs," "discovering talent sources," "developing talent potential" and "deploying talent strategically."
- To engage employees, provide career advancement, show appreciation, foster work-life balance, and offer consistent internal information about your ideals and ethics.
- Align the learning you offer with your organization's strategic goals.
- Measure the results of learning initiatives.

Summary

Making Talent a Priority

Your organization's long-term growth and prosperity requires identifying the skills and attributes you need your employees to have, and then bringing the right individuals into the fold. Once you master those challenges, you need to take an additional step. Establishing and maintaining a competitive advantage depends on your ability to manage, develop, motivate and deploy your talented people. That is not so easy, especially when you consider how the business world is evolving.

"The way your organization deploys its talent will...have an enormous impact on employee engagement – the secret sauce of talent-powered organizations."

Although the global workforce is diverse and expanding, particularly in China and India, the world's talent pool is shrinking. One study indicates that the U.S. will fall short by 17 million skilled workers over the next 20 years as experienced baby boomers leave the workplace. The battle for talent is fierce and complicated. Younger employees can be more selective about their prospective employers. They can demand higher salaries, better benefits and an improved work-life balance. At the same time, they are less loyal and more likely to take advantage of the next great opportunity, even just a couple of years down the line.

“The task of finding and managing talent has become more complex, turbulent and contradictory than ever before.”

Although a recent Gallup poll indicated that the majority of young Chinese prioritize “working hard and getting rich,” their counterparts in America and Europe focus more on achieving a work-life balance. While U.S. baby boomers valued stability and structure, Generation X desires flexibility and freedom. Employees now younger than 35 may end up working for a handful of companies during their lifetimes and even change careers a couple of times. Technology expands workers’ opportunities, including the ability to telecommute or to become Internet entrepreneurs.

You Need Talent to Develop Talent

Various business studies reveal two interesting phenomena: Executives believe that their companies are underperforming and they agree that “human capital” is the primary factor in organizational performance. However, developing talented employees requires an honest assessment of your organization’s strengths and weaknesses, financial resources, and leadership capabilities and potential. If you are determined to cultivate and sustain a talent-based workforce, focus on four strategic areas:

1. **“Defining talent needs”** – Evaluate your current employees’ talents in light of your strategic objectives and your future personnel needs. Simply put, you need to be sure you can put the right people in the right places.
2. **“Discovering talent sources”** – Leave no stone unturned. Age, nationality and gender should not influence personnel decisions. Your supply chains should be nimble enough to adjust to fluctuating market conditions.
3. **“Developing talent potential”** – Employees, including managers, should have ample opportunities to learn new skills and take on greater responsibilities. Use training programs and special assignments to increase your employees’ competencies.
4. **“Deploying talent strategically”** – Employees should play to their strengths while meeting the company’s daily and long-range needs. Consider asking outstanding employees to serve as troubleshooters outside their departments and spark fresh ideas across the organization.

The Value of Human Resource Departments

Human resource (HR) departments must play an integral role in identifying and cultivating talented people. Progressive organizations have come to view HR as a strategic partner instead of a separate entity focused solely on administrative tasks. But many companies are still reluctant to commit the time, money and effort needed to elevate HR properly. Consequently, organizations often do not tap HR’s full potential for adding value to their business.

“There are two distinct dimensions to the deployment challenge: managing the work and developing talent.”

Streamlining or outsourcing less critical administrative duties is one way of enabling HR personnel to concentrate on strategic concerns. For instance, instead of being bogged down with record keeping, HR staffers can zero in on recruiting and performance management. To fulfill their own talent demands, HR departments will need to hire educated professionals with business know-how who can offer wise counsel to line managers and other corporate leaders.

Finding Talent Requires Talent

Thanks to the Internet, the search for talented people has expanded far beyond traditional resources such as newspaper ads, jobs boards and business schools. Indeed, the best individuals for your firm may be halfway around the world. What’s more, technological advancements may allow them to remain thousands of miles away and still be key performers for your company.

“Devise strategies and options with flexibility to adjust to the needs of different sections of the workforce.”

The first step is determining the type of talent you need. A professional football coach would never participate in the college draft without knowing what positions he had to fill on his team. Once you decide, for example, that your IT department requires additional help, make a list of the skills, knowledge and behaviors required of potential candidates. Companies with strong brand identification have a better chance of attracting outstanding employees. People want to work for Google or Apple or Bristol-Myers. Google’s management also works hard to make the company a great place to work, with an emphasis on how fulfilling it is to serve so many people worldwide. Employee perks range from on-site doctors, dentists and daycare nurseries, to free food, yoga, running trails and career-building classes. Google stresses fun, cooperation and innovation, plus solid 401 (K) plans other benefits.

“Traditional organizations often lag far behind the changes in the way people want to work.”

To find talented people, maximize your company’s online presence. An attractive and informative Web site actually can be your most effective recruiting tool. Send a positive message that promotes your company. Many companies now outsource recruitment. That’s fine, as long as you carefully monitor the results. The outsourcing firm must know exactly which sorts of people you are seeking and should be able to deliver viable candidates.

The Critical Role of Training and Teaching

Successful organizations adapt to changing conditions and demands. Rapid evolution in the business world, spurred by extraordinary technological advances, has forced companies to adapt or fall by the wayside. Knowledge is at a premium. One study suggests that in the next decade at least three-quarters of today’s American workforce will require retraining. Employees need to adjust to new technologies, work efficiently in team settings, solve new problems and learn to innovate. The ability to acquire fresh skills may be as important as job performance. Moreover, many executives believe their employees severely underperform in critical areas, such as sales, customer service and finance. That is a clear call for specific supplemental training.

“A human capital strategy is essential to support your organization’s strategic goals.”

Organizations must cultivate learning cultures where employees exchange ideas, share information and benefit from each other’s experience as a matter of course. Companies should not limit learning to training classes, seminars or workshops. Organizations that are committed to building learning cultures provide ongoing

leadership training for their executives and career development for their employees. In fact, many executives learn to conduct training sessions for midlevel managers and line workers. Individuals who have spent time in the trenches are typically best suited to guide less experienced professionals and to serve as mentors.

“High-performance learning organizations understand [the] growing importance of offering learning programs across a company’s value chain.”

Align the content that your organization teaches with its strategic goals. Measure what your employees have learned to be sure that they retain their new knowledge, demonstrate higher levels of competency and find greater job satisfaction. Are they more responsive to leadership? Does customer feedback indicate that your service or products have improved? Have sales increased? Are profits up? The bottom line can reveal a lot about the merit of your learning initiatives.

Get Involved

Employee engagement is a big challenge. Training programs, attractive salaries, comprehensive benefits and flexible work schedules are important in luring and retaining top-level talent. But incentives do not necessarily provide that special spark that motivates employees to strive for excellence and exceed expectations. Employee engagement can make the difference between a profitable company and one that barely stays afloat.

“E-learning has really come of age, and has shown many advantages when used effectively.”

According to a 2006 study, “organizations with highly engaged workforces performed up to 50% better than those with low-engagement” employees. Not surprisingly, the companies that show up frequently on “best-places-to-work” lists are also among the most profitable.

Research has determined that engaged employees share some pivotal traits. They are:

- **Physically more alert, enthusiastic and energetic** – Setbacks don’t discourage them from pursuing their objectives.
- **Absorbed and fulfilled by their work** – Unlike those who count the minutes until quitting time, engaged employees pay little attention to the clock.
- **Proud of their accomplishments** – They welcome additional responsibilities and embrace opportunities to contribute to the organization’s overall purpose.
- **Secure in their relationships with colleagues and bosses** – They feel comfortable offering suggestions and input.
- **Trustworthy and sincere** – They do not violate confidences, or take inappropriate advantage of situations or relationships.
- **Confident about assessment** – They aren’t threatened by evaluations and feedback.

“Technology can provide many advantages for work and life flexibility, but it is also easy to abuse and therefore create more stress.”

Organizations with engaged employees also have certain characteristics in common. They generally:

- **Provide opportunities for career advancement** – Encourage supervisors to cross-train by working in different departments.
- **Convey a consistent internal message** – Ensure that line managers transmit accurate messages about the organization’s ethics, ideals and objectives.
- **Care about work-life balance** – Understand that this is a priority for many employees and foster their goals.
- **Show appreciation** – Use bonuses, incentive programs or simple thank-you notes to show that you appreciate your employees’ efforts.

Managing Responsibilities

Having line managers bear much of the responsibility for talent management makes sense. After all, they are the ones who are most involved with employees’ daily activities. Yet many line managers find that they are too busy to supervise employees or to spend time interacting. They may be overburdened with administrative tasks, or so focused on bottom-line results that they regard employees merely as performance mechanisms and not as human beings.

“If the recruitment process fails to discover the talent you need, your company will wither.”

Managers should be involved with their staff members on a daily basis, providing feedback, guidance and encouragement. Managers should know every worker’s career goals and help staffers reach their objectives. Train your managers to resist the temptation to focus all their attention on top performers or potential superstars. They should make every employee feel valuable. And all staff members – not just future leaders – deserve assignments that challenge their skills and build their knowledge.

“Discovering and recruiting talent is becoming a lot harder.”

Line managers also need reassurance and recognition when they do their jobs well. Upper-level executives should maintain open lines of communication with their line managers. Many companies provide incentives, such as pay increases, bonuses and promotions, for managers who discover, develop and inspire talented people. Rewards are powerful motivational tools – especially for those who may feel underappreciated.

“People need physical, intellectual and emotional resources to engage at work.”

Think carefully about the individuals you move into management positions. For example, a crackerjack salesperson who consistently beats the company’s quotas will not necessarily make an effective administrator. Managing people requires patience, diplomacy and decisiveness – skills that even the best employees may lack. Placing the wrong person in a position of authority can severely damage a department.

About the Authors

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