

Talent Management - Evidence Review

What is talent management?

Talent management is based on the idea that organisations need to attract, retain and develop top performers to attain and maintain competitive advantage and that this is best done through a proactive talent-management process. The aim is to create a performance-oriented culture, reduce staff turnover, create high levels of employee satisfaction and generate a cadre of qualified replacements for existing staff. To do this you need to assess the potential of your current staff through performance appraisal, develop measurement scales for performance and potential, describe what people need to be able to do to be good at a job and weigh up the importance of different skills and talents (L. A. Berger, 2004)

Benefits of talent management

High-performing organisations are more than twice as likely to emphasise talent-management measurement as low-performing ones (37% vs 16%) (Pace, 2010).

Höglund (Höglund, 2012) concluded that “the differential treatment of employees based on criteria constituting talent can have positive effects on employee motivation and felt obligations to develop skills and apply those in the service of the organisation.”

Maurya (Maurya & Agarwal, 2018) found that organisational talent management was strongly and positively correlated with perceived employer branding. The aspects of talent management that were most strongly linked to employer branding were: 1) rewards and remunerates fairly 2) manages work-life balance and 3) attracts and recruits talent

How to do talent management successfully

- Don't stand alone from other people-management practices in the organisation (Reilly, 2008)
- Accord with the organisation's psychological contract (Reilly, 2008)
- Have senior managers who are prepared to back it in practice (Reilly, 2008)
- Have skilled senior managers who can deliver on their people-management responsibilities (Reilly, 2008)
- Have a clear strategy for how talent management will contribute to organisational objectives (Garrow & Hirsh, 2008)
- Decide which parts of the organisation and which jobs will be priorities (Garrow & Hirsh, 2008)
- Work out where talent will come from (Garrow & Hirsh, 2008)
- Make sure the talent-management process fits in with the organisation's culture (Garrow & Hirsh, 2008)
- Set up a steering group to define competencies and avoid endless discussions about them (Crisman, 2008)
- ... or use a competency library (Pick & Uhles, 2012)
- **The talent-management practice that delivers the single biggest impact is coaching (Baker, 2009)**

- Be in sync with the organisation's performance-management system (Anonymous, 2010)
- Have the explicit intent of improving employee engagement (Tucker & Williams, 2011)
- Be internally consistent (Stahl et al., 2012)
- Be culturally embedded (Stahl et al., 2012)
- Have a balance of global and local needs (Stahl et al., 2012)
- Be transparent (Couch, 2012)
- Behavioural assessment can have an important role to play (Newhall, 2012)
- Decide whether you think talent is innate or acquired (Meyers, van Woerkom, & Dries, 2013)
- Make the most of your 'talent intelligence' (Kinley & Ben-Hur, 2014)
- Encourage employees to learn and develop (Lawler & Worley, 2014)

Barriers and Scepticism

Hill (Hill, 2008) argued that focusing exclusively on 'top,' talent is potentially divisive and counter-productive.

In 2008 Matthews (Matthews, 2008) found that as many as 75% of UK organisations did not have a clearly-defined talent-management strategy in place. For some firms the problem was one of identification – not knowing what talent they were looking for, nor where to find it in the first place while for others 'talent management,' was simply a corporate cliché. In 2010 Pace also found that only 25% of companies had a systematic talent-management scheme in place (Pace, 2010).

Conrad (Conrad, 2009) outlined some of the barriers to talent management including paper-based systems that make it difficult to integrate data; meaningless or inaccurate appraisals; poor communication from HR about the expectations for the process; poor communication from managers about workers' performance; and poor communication from workers to managers about their aspirations or development needs.

In 2009 Collings (Collings & Mellahi, 2009) argued that talent management "lacks a consistent definition and clear conceptual boundaries," before attempting to provide them.

An article in *Healthcare Executive* in 2010 (Anonymous, 2010) argued that organisations struggle with it because they don't know what successful talent management look like and so don't have a clear idea of what they are aiming for.

Harris (Harris & Foster, 2010) found that implementing talent management presented particular tensions in the public sector in terms of its alignment with equality and diversity policies and managers' own perceptions of fair treatment in the workplace.

Coulson-Thomas (Coulson-Thomas, 2013) concluded that "the evidence and experience examined suggests that many approaches to talent management are costly and doomed to disappoint." Over three-quarters of HR practitioners thought talent management was not delivering and half thought opportunities were being missed.

Thunissen (Thunissen, 2016) found that the two principal agents in talent management – the employer and the worker – have a different perception of the intended and actual value of talent management. The organisation is capable of shaping and implementing a talent-management system that meets its needs, so, from an organisational point of view, talent

management is effective. However, since the needs of talented employees are insufficiently addressed in intended and actual talent-management practices talent-management has less value for them.

In 2018 Garcia (Garcia, 2018) argued that talent management is not about initiating a complex system but about creating a framework where executives can begin to learn to think, understand and talk about talents and their impact on the future of the company. Garcia argues that organisations have become “saturated with HR planning, compensation, recruitment, development, performance and assessment practices,” and that “leaders trust their own biased beliefs in managing talent, to the exclusion of the compelling available science and proven practices that could help them to be more effective.”

Garrad (Garrad, 2018) reports on a common complaint about talent and potential programmes insofar as they direct a disproportionate amount of resources towards a few people.

De Boeck (De Boeck, Meyers, & Dries, 2018) studied employees’ reactions to talent management. Positive reactions were found in terms of affective, cognitive and behavioural employee outcomes but there were also “negative affective reactions in employees identified as talents. Significant differences between talents and non-talents were found for behavioural reactions but not for affective and cognitive reactions.”

Talent management in practice

Cheesman (Cheesman, 2009) discusses the use of “a range of highly-sophisticated online portals,” for talent management at the Department of Work and Pensions. The portal contains a diagnostic tool to enable the DWP’s managers to evaluate their current skill levels and get access to relevant learning materials.

Groves (Groves, 2011) found that exemplary health care organisations use a “multi-phased talent-management system composed of six sequential phases and associated success factors that drive successful implementation.” Groves presented a model of talent-management best practices in health-care organisations.

The US Department of Defense uses a system called Human Capital Management based on skills, knowledge and behaviours measured in a number of different ways (Nagra, 2011)

Haines (Haines, 2013) asked nurses and student nurses to identify their priorities for talent development. They highlighted the importance of strong ward leadership, effective personal appraisal, clearer career pathways, increased staff engagement and involvement in decision making, and a need for greater emphasis on the recognition and reward of nursing achievements.

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