

DIGITAL BEAT

Tools for Talent

By Darin E. Hartley

Talent management. That's the focus of this month's Digital Beat. Specifically, I'll take a look at some of the synonyms and definitions that are currently used for the phrase. I'll also describe some of the major phases of talent management, then take a look at tools and technology that are facilitating this process.

What's in a name?

The phrase *talent management* is used loosely and often interchangeably across a

wide array of terms such as *succession planning*, *human capital management*, *resource planning*, and *employee performance management*. Gather any group of HR professionals in a room and you can be sure to have a plethora of additional terms. For the sake of this article, talent management is the process of recruiting, on-boarding, and developing, as well as the strategies associated with those activities in organizations.

In search of the best employee. Finding

the right people for open positions in your organization is a task not to be taken lightly. You know what it's like when you get the right person: The organization gets better and the person is passionate about what he or she does. That's the most desired state when recruiting people. When you pick the wrong person, there can be lots of implications. The wrong or disgruntled employee can cost an organization in unnecessary training and legal expenses, as well as lost opportunities. The cumulative costs associated with wrong hires can be huge and detrimental to those employees left in their wake.

One might think in this time of high unemployment that the talent pool would be rich and that finding the right employee would be like fishing in a barrel, but that isn't the case. What it means now is that there are, generally, more candidates vying for every position. I recently heard of an opening for a mid-level training manager in a *Fortune* 1000 company that had more than 400 applicants.

So, how do you navigate through the large stacks of résumés to get the right person?

Here are a few suggestions:

- 1 Make sure you have clearly delineated the roles and responsibilities for your position.
- 1 Post the job internally as well as externally (there is some inherent value from hiring inside).
- 1 Identify the core competencies and qualities you must have in the candidate you ultimately hire.
- 1 Create an objective scoring mechanism based on behavioral interview questions, before you start interviewing.
- 1 Use the clearly articulated specifications created to narrow the list of the candidates you have. This is where you can start to use technology-enabled tools and applications to make this process easier. Let's talk about some of them now.

Employing technology

Technology-enabled tools and applications to make talent recruitment easier include Yahoo!© Resumix, Unicru, and Monster.com.

How can tools and technology like those help? One, they can help you create job postings for positions that you have open in your organization. They also can get the job posting to a large number of candidates, allowing you to cast a wide net. With the sea of candidates that you'll potentially have to choose from comes the next challenge: culling the list to a reasonable number so that you can conduct first-cut phone interviews.

Each of the aforementioned products (there are many others out there) allow a hiring manager to create filters for screening. For example, if it's important for you that your applicants all have an MBA for an open requisition, then you can set that up as a filter. If you receive 375 applications for your opening, but only 125 of them have MBAs, you've streamlined the list dramatically. You can, of course, add additional filters to your posting to get the closest ideal candidate possible.

One-stop jobbing

Some talent management applications bundle additional pre-hire screening and related services. There are applications that bundle background checks, behavioral assessments, and the like. The idea is that everything an organization might need to do related to hiring and on-boarding can be done from the same basic tool.

Not only is the process of on-boarding facilitated, but because of the nature of data that is tracked, many of these tools and applications can be used to track the effectiveness of the hiring and recruiting organization. You can track metrics such as time to interview, time to hire, and time to start for new candidates. Trends can be analyzed. Best practices can be captured and shared in the organization, and adjustments can be made to hiring and

on-boarding practices to increase efficiencies and to help reduce attrition.

Keeping them

Once you've found the best candidate, how do you develop and manage the talent in your organization? That's a larger training and development issue, but there are tools out there specifically designed to help develop and up-level your employees and their managers.

TalentSmart offers a variety of products and services related to talent management. One of its most intriguing products is the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal, which is a combination assessment, feedback, and learning tool for individuals and teams. There's also a multirater version that allows a 360 assessment of a person's EI. The premise of this product is that there are additional core skills required for employees to be successful in the workplace. These four core skills were the focus of Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence*. The idea is that when organizations hire only for "technical expertise" or "IQ," they can lose opportunities to hire star performers. I'm working with a client right now that makes most of its hiring decisions based on scores on LSATs and similar tests. We all know people who are technically brilliant but have little or no social or team skills. This tool set helps with that. There's also a behavioral interview guide, a customized report for the individual or team that takes the assessment, and follow-up e-learning for reinforcement.

 talentsmart.com

There's a saying, "People don't leave their jobs; they leave their managers." That's very often the case. One company is leveraging this idea in a suite of offerings to help entire organizations manage their talent better. The company, TalentKeepers, based in Maitland, Florida, offers a range of products, including RetentionWorks, a mixture of e-learning modules, tools, and strategies designed to reduce employee turnover by providing focus on

the relationship between employees and their managers. The approach taken here is a holistic one that is managed across the entire organization at all levels, and that can help make these types of interventions more successful.

talentkeepers.com

Every time I have asked about promotions where I've worked, my managers have always asked, "Who is going to replace you? You can't do anything else until you've found your replacement." That's so very true, and, although it seems fundamental, it's difficult to manage and put into practice. There are many companies that offer products and services related to succession planning:

1. lominger.com; click through to the succession planning products, Choices Architect

1. large ERP systems in organizations such as SAP and Peoplesoft for HR modules designed to assist with succession planning, tapping into the rich data set of the organization.

The key in succession planning is that it is imperative for companies to provide some focus on it. I'm working with a major client right now that's having a tremendous issue with its pipeline from junior staff to supervisory level positions. Its pipeline from supervisor to manager-level positions is actually fat. But because many of these current supervisors don't have people to backfill them, they're stuck in career limbo.

The beat goes on

When you think of talent management, remember that it entails recruiting, onboarding, employee-manager development, and succession planning. And, have you found the person to replace yourself so that you can get promoted?

Darin E. Hartley is director of solutions development at Intrepid Learning Solutions, Lguide Research & Consulting; darin@lguide.com.

Ten Tips Checklist

Here are 10 tips for talent management.

1. Clearly identify the requirements of any job you are trying to fill.
2. Work with HR to ensure that your job posting is appropriate.
3. If you are hiring a person for your team, conduct a mini gap analysis to identify competencies and skills you would like to gain with a hire, in addition to minimum qualifications for the job.
4. Don't make a hiring decision based only on one competency, such as technical skill.
5. Leverage, where possible, existing tools to get the most potential (and qualified) applicants available.
6. Leverage those same tools to filter unqualified people from the hiring process.
7. Provide consistent on-boarding for each new hire.
8. Implement solid leadership training for management in your organization.
9. Provide assessments of competence for employees and managers regularly, with action plans for improvement.
10. Find your replacement. Hire people smarter than yourself. It is the fastest way to make your organization smarter.

Your Input

To suggest new technologies you'd like covered, contact Darin Hartley at darin@lguide.com.