



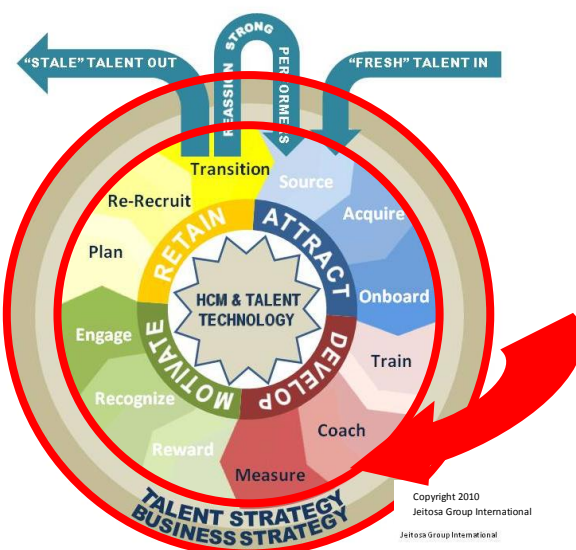
TALENT MANAGEMENT:

Strategy issues

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In prior issues, I have described, in summary, the four phases of the Comprehensive Talent Management (TM) Model. In order to fully understand and implement the model, however, it is important to discuss the other features, namely technology and strategy. In the last issue, I briefly discussed the major technology issues and considerations. This issue will deal with strategy.

As a reminder and for easy reference, the model and its key features are again shown here.



- TM is driven by an overall talent strategy.
- Talent Strategy must, in turn, be determined by, and aligned with, the Business Strategy.
- Good TM is supported by good technology.
- Change is inherent in the system; affirmatively or otherwise, people, programs, funding, priorities, and needs are constantly changing.
- Talent is always moving through the system; sometimes in ways the company wishes and plans for, sometimes not.
- The four phases and 12 steps are inextricably linked, i.e. steps may be emphasized or de-emphasized, but skipping any step disrupts the entire system and weakens all other steps.

Let's start with the basics: What is a strategy? Strategy is generally defined as an action or set of actions, chosen from multiple alternatives, designed to achieve a specific goal or solution. In a business situation, it is important to talk about strategy before discussing the details of the model. Strategy shapes how the model (and its component phases and steps) are interpreted, shaped and implemented. Strategy is the structure which underpins talent management (and other aspects of HR and the business). It determines what is included and excluded and what is prioritized or posteriorized (as Peter Drucker was fond of saying).

In the model above, the Talent Strategy determines how the phases are implemented, i.e. what specific sourcing steps will be taken, what training will be delivered or what metrics will be compiled. The Talent Strategy is determined by the broader Business Strategy. The Business Strategy is, in turn, determined by the Business Goals. Of course, the whole Strategic Planning Cycle starts with the highest and broadest level and moves downward through multiple levels of specificity. At the lowest level, each agreed action or part of an action is assigned to a specific individual with appropriate metrics. Each individual has clear line of sight as to how his or her actions support the Talent Strategy, the Business Strategy and ultimately the success of the business.

Terminology, of course, varies from organization to organization. What's called a strategy in one place may be an action plan elsewhere. A Talent Strategy may be one set of actions aimed at a single goal or the Talent Strategy may be composed of multiple sets of actions aimed at different talent objectives. And, in many cases, Talent Strategy may be just a part of a larger HR Strategy or People Strategy. The goals, end results or solutions may be incorporated into the Talent Strategy. In other organizations, the goals may be a separate document or the goals may be incorporated into the Business "Strategy." The important thing is to make sure that whatever the document is called, when it's finished and approved, the end result will describe a clear roadmap for those who have to implement the ultimate actions. It should provide them with a clear vision of where the organization and the department are headed and why they are doing what is planned. It should also define how the organization will get there, how progress will be measured, what success looks like and how they can contribute to that success.

Let's take an example to help make this concrete. A typical Business Goal might be to increase sales by XX% over the next year. The strategy to achieve that typically has multiple parts, including new products, acquisitions, increased marketing, etc. One of the Business Strategies supporting that goal ought to be something like "increasing the fully productive sales force." The Talent Strategy to support that should also be multi-faceted and might include "improve the hiring, development and retention of sales reps." Turning to the model above, that Talent Strategy gets defined more clearly and specifically by reference to the various phases of the Talent Management Model.

The actions agreed upon to implement this Talent Strategy might include, for example:

- Source – Utilize social media to locate at least 25 experienced sales rep candidates
- Acquire – No new action
- Onboard – Incorporate one-on-one with VP, Sales to motivate new sales hires
- Train – Incorporate more observation of experienced sales reps into sales training
- Coach – No new action
- Measure – Refine sales tracking to incorporate partial credit for sales involving multiple reps
- Reward – No new action
- Recognize – Highlight rep who closes a new sale on home page of employee portal
- Engage – No new action
- Plan – No new action
- Re-Recruit – Schedule Director, Field Sales to personally interview each new hire after one year to determine what is going well, what improvements are needed and what motivates that rep.
- Transition – Formally review all sales reps annually, with Director and VP, to determine next step

Of course, the fact that some steps are not included in the plan for this particular Talent Strategy does not mean that they are not being utilized by the organization. HR should be administering each of these steps someplace in the organization, at some times, in some locations if they have a truly comprehensive talent management function.

It's also important to note that there are typically multiple Talent Management Strategies running simultaneously in the organization. In addition to this strategy on sales rep talent, there might be a current strategy on overall retention management, one on campus recruiting, one for developing accountants into finance professionals and one for implementing an executive coaching program. Each of these strategies will have its own distinct steps from among the twelve steps defined in the model.

Note also that not every step needs to have an action specified in the plan to implement this Talent Strategy. Every step, however, has been considered to insure that no critical steps have been overlooked. Even though every step does not need to be incorporated into every talent management situation or discussion, consideration of every step insures that a comprehensive view is taken each time, and steps are only eliminated by affirmative discussion and agreement. This is the most valuable use of the model. 🌐

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