Best Practices for Building Effective Talent Pools

Towards the creation of a real and sustainable competitive advantage.

Why is Talent Pooling Important?

Shifts in demographics, differing expectations of generations, globalisation, the demand for transparency, and the freedom of choice about where and when to work are just some of the issues forcing organisations to reconsider how they acquire and manage their talent.

As the world becomes a smaller place and as companies continue to expand their global footprint, the need for a global approach to talent acquisition and the ability to access quality local talent is a key success criterion.

Companies now realise that they need to invest in building and managing global talent pools to create a real and sustainable competitive advantage.
More than half the respondents to a recent McKinsey Global Survey expect intensifying competition for talent – and the increasingly global nature of that competition – to have a major effect on their companies over the next several years¹.

According to a recent global trend report from the International Labour Office (ILO), the number of jobless people worldwide reached almost 212 million in 2009, and that number is expected to remain high in 2010².

Unfortunately millions of people being unemployed does not always mean the skills, education and experience that your company requires are readily available. With an increase in candidates applying for each open position, recruiting actually gets harder, not easier. The ability to rapidly sift through the quantity of applications, to find the quality you so desire, is the real challenge.

As baby boomers leave the workforce, knowledge and skills will leave with the retirees and the workforce is expected to steadily decline through 2050³. These demographic changes can impact the availability of a diverse talent pool. Women in general are adding a new dimension to the global talent pool.

According to research from the Center of Work-Life Policy, in emerging markets such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, and the United Arab Emirates women constitute a pool of highly qualified talent just waiting to be tapped⁴.

Contrasts in Age Distribution in 2030

Source: UN Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision
© The Hot Spots Movement 2009

¹ Monthly Labour Review, November 2006
⁴ Center of Work-Life Policy, The Global Talent Pipeline in Emerging Markets, 2010
Building robust ‘live’ talent pools is not a nice to have, but a necessity to create and sustain competitive advantage. How can you start to build the relevant strategies required to ensure that the organisation takes a measured, informed approach to successfully engaging with your current and future talent?

Firstly, what is Talent Pooling?

According to one Internet definition it is: a database consisting of profiles of candidates and employees. This is an instrument of Human Resource Management, which is mainly in the context of staff recruitment and staff development. If companies have to fill a vacancy, they can draw on the talent pool and look for a means of profile-matching appropriate applicants and job opportunities.

We prefer to describe it as:

A community of qualified internal and external candidates who are actively interested in your organisation, your industry and your success and are engaged over time to fill vacancies and refer people they know.
A well implemented talent pooling strategy will take your recruiters from being pure ‘sourcers’ to facilitators and it enables your potential candidates to demonstrate their skills based on the future – not solely on their past experiences. Here are a few questions to ask yourself about your current Talent Pooling strategy.

**Defining Talent**

> Have you spent the right amount of time and energy identifying and understanding what your company means by talent?
> How realistic and open are you to widening the scope of skills and talents you are looking for based on what is actually available?
> Have you identified the critical roles in your organisation and mapped relative skills from differing industries and functions?

**Employer Value Proposition**

> How attractive is your organisation to the talent you need?
> Have you redesigned the way ‘work works’ in your organisation to attract and retain the very best people?
> When did you last re-engineer job responsibilities to reflect the way the world of work now exists and way things get done?
> Have you segmented the different skills, positioned your brand and then targeted the relative people / geographies?

**Transferable Skills**

> Have you recently revisited your Job profiles, Job descriptions and the criteria on these? Do they demand a minimum 5 years experience of x? Why?
> How are you ensuring that you are fairly assessing candidates with comparable skills from other industries?
> Are you widening your search to include the sourcing of candidates from different geographies?

**Potential vs Skills**

> What measures do you have to ensure that you are hiring on attitude, experience, as opposed to skill sets that can be taught?
> Do your competency based assessments correctly prioritise the characteristics most important to be successful in the role?
> Do potential candidates have the opportunity to actively engage on solving problems and demonstrating their experience?
Internal Mobility

> Have you built a culture of Internal Mobility in your organisation? Is it encouraged? Is talent ‘hoarding’ discouraged?
> How are you identifying internal resources you can develop?
> Are you cross training your workforce so they are able to perform a broader variety of tasks?

Make Diversity a Priority

> What is being done to encourage and celebrate diversity of thought within the organisation?
> Does the company’s culture enable diverse employees to thrive?
> Are you proactively targeting your recruitment activities to diverse communities?

Building Talent Pipelines

> What are you doing to establish and build relationships with candidates whose skills align with your future needs?
> What are you doing to ensure that you are capturing talent in a way that allows you to quickly find that talent quickly when you need it in the future?

Building Talent Communities

> Have you set up the talent pools so that they have ability to build self generating communities – giving them the ability to communicate with each other, invite people to join and participate?
> Are you able to monitor and report on social metrics real-time?
> Have you established policies for social recruiting and engagement?
> Are you offering people in the communities added value, such as; online assessments, training courses etc?
So, What Does Best Practice Look Like?

Firstly, define exactly what talent you will need in the foreseeable future. We recommend taking an annual view and project what skill sets you will need based on predictable attrition and business strategy.

Once, you have defined the talent required you need to understand the talent landscape, in other words where is this talent now, how much is already in the business, how much talent is currently working for somebody else (or themselves).

When deciding on the talent landscape, first think about what needs to get done as opposed to what types of people you think you'll need. Think about the best way to get these tasks completed. I.e. do you need to hire permanent skills, are there projects with an end date that would be better served by a contract arrangement or even through an external consultancy or statement of works. With 20% of the workforce already outside of a traditional employer/employee relationship you need to be thinking of new ways to engage the skills you need.

Now you have scoped the talent landscape it is time to get your Employer Value Proposition (EVP) out to the market. And by market we mean passive and proactive candidates.

Utilising the very latest technology such as; Jobs2Web and TalentSeekr to post your opportunities and scrape the web (which is a whole subject on its own) will pay big dividends in finding and attracting candidates towards your company.
Example

This diagram shows a ‘typical’ workflow for the attraction, acquisition and pooling of talent.

The key to the success of this model is as follows:

> Leading edge recruitment marketing platform that has the ability to communicate the value proposition of the job opportunity through a diverse range of mediums. Namely, search engines, aggregators, social media, talent communities and job boards.

> Real-Time Reporting capability to switch on and switch off channels based on levels and quality of response.

> Candidate Relationship Management technology that allows you to micro-segment candidates by skill set, level, geography and motivations.

> Combined technology workflow and interface that creates the platform for talent within the pools to build their own communities to move away from monologue and dialogue to multilogue.

Remember, if you are going to be attracting talent and what them to take an interest in your company and the career opportunities there – you need to be ready for them. Once you have the candidate’s attention it is time to start the conversation, the advent of social media is changing the world of recruitment and the way you can now engage with candidates before and when they are in your talent pool is the biggest change of all. It’s a good job because candidates now see this as the norm not the exception.
A Couple of Examples

‘Reveal by L’OREAL’ makes available to the Participants the internet tools available on Web 2.0. The Competition is based on an evaluation of the managerial and technical abilities of the Participants.

‘Deloitte Insiders’ is a podcast series that explores why Deloitte is a great place to work. The content for each episode is driven by questions submitted by candidates via their Facebook page.

What Not To Do:

> Invite and attract people to your talent pool without a communication and engagement plan in place. You only get one chance to make an impression and without robust communication and engagement, people will opt out.

> Avoid one-way communication that just talks about your organisation. Ask questions, find out about the skills in the talent pool, engage on a deeper level and ask questions that focus on the future – not just what has happened in their previous roles.

> Don’t do it on your own. Invite Marketing, Sales, and people from the business to engage and provide input into engaging with the talent pools.

> Don’t do it without the commitment from the Board and the CEO – if they are actively engaged and visible, you will reap the rewards.

> Don’t hide success. When you are able to rapidly deploy people from the talent pools, make sure the success is communicated across the whole business.
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