
Every Executive Impacts Talent Strategy (Even You)

Insights from every department on how to play a crucial role in your organization's recruiting, retention, and development efforts

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The Talent Challenge

At the core of every successful business is people. Finding—and keeping—the right people with the right capabilities leads to organizational growth, as well as growth for your people.

A recent survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers revealed that only 24 percent of HR teams looked into the long-term future, actively preparing for the potential evolution of their workforce and their industry. At the same time, however, over 50 percent of the ten thousand international professionals surveyed felt that the way they work will be transformed by technological breakthroughs and other innovations in the next five to ten years.

HR professionals are finding obstacles in their way to properly staffing organizations for these upcoming changes. According to a 2016 study by employment information website Glassdoor, the average number of days it takes to fill an open position has risen by about 8 percent since 2011. Additionally, 90 percent of recruiters responded that the market is candidate-driven, citing a shortage of candidates and lengthy hiring practices as obstacles to increasing the headcount at their organizations.

The disconnect between these numbers reveals a great need for better talent strategy. HR executives across the world are making significant impacts on the growth of their organization by formulating a comprehensive, long-term strategy that combats these very concerns. Whether that means identifying strong company core values, better alignment to mission statement, implementing diversity and inclusion practices, or other thoughtful efforts, these executives have learned that a good talent strategy can make a major

impact on thousands of lives—as well as the bottom line.

But HR teams can't do it all on their own. A common trait of companies with robust and effective recruiting and retention efforts is that every person in the C-suite is engaged in the process and sees filling and maintaining the talent pipeline as a vital part of their leadership role. Every executive has the opportunity to identify potential improvements, think strategically, and set the tone from their seat. After all, an executive is only as good as the team that surrounds them.

90%

of job seekers find the employer perspective useful when learning about jobs and companies

Source: Glassdoor for Employers

More Than Money

Finance can go beyond compensation packages to help attract the right candidates

Tim Maly has been the CFO and COO at SurveyMonkey since 2009. While he's responsible for the traditional duties of those roles in finance and operations, he also actively shapes the company's talent pool. In the cutthroat Silicon Valley job market, competitive compensation is a given, but Maly also helps create a working culture that will attract talent for the long-term.

"We look for people who are experienced at working in early-stage companies and who also had big company experience," he says. "We especially want high-caliber, low-ego people."

For a growth company like SurveyMonkey, it's tempting to throw money at the best people and hope they stick around long enough to make an impact. That's not Maly's strategy, though. "Of course we have to be competitive on compensation," Maly says, but also notes that finding people who are interested in the company and its culture is arguably as important. "We set up a culture that fosters transparency. SurveyMonkey is all about using data to inform decision making."

As CFO, Maly is involved with the company's global real estate transactions, which he also views as a tool to attract and retain the best people. "The philosophy is to provide a great working environment where people can be productive and enjoy themselves," he says. Whether he's looking at acquiring or building in Portland, Sydney, or Dublin, the aim is to create an enticing work environment that also fosters collaboration and innovation.

In an industry as competitive as technology or healthcare, recruiting the best talent is a challenge that must be shared by the entire organization—something that **Jennifer Mitzner** of St. Joseph Hoag Health knows quite well. The senior VP and CFO finds that one solution to this high demand can be recruiting outside of the healthcare industry entirely, rather than competing with larger health systems. "Recruiting out of the industry in certain areas gives us the ability to leapfrog a bit, and also have someone at the leadership table to challenge the status quo," she says.

"We look for people who are experienced at working in early-stage companies and who also had big company experience. We especially want high-caliber, low-ego people." Tim Maly, SurveyMonkey

However, that doesn't mean that anyone can be trained to do any job in such a highly specialized field. Mitzner also notes that financial professionals can be helpful in strategically determining the best aspects of the business to infuse with outside talent. "I would say in the area of marketing in particular, recognition that healthcare is increasingly becoming a consumer business—or, at minimum, influenced by more consumer-driven trends—is crucial," she says.

This perspective comes in large part from the CFO's ability to see the business of the industry as a whole, in addition to being able to champion the individual organization's culture. For Mitzner, this has led to new core values that drive St. Joseph Hoag Health. "The business of healthcare is heavily reliant on effective leadership and teamwork," she says.

Mitzner also notes that balancing the demands of business with the organization's mission is critical for CFOs. While this may be obvious for the healthcare industry—and particularly for a faith-based organization—this focus on aligning teams to an organizational mission, culture, or core values will help to recruit, retain, and develop top talent.

Knowing the Rules, Impacting Culture

Legal plays a pivotal part in developing a company culture that keeps employees fulfilled

Matt Cooper is the executive VP of legal at Capital One, where he is responsible for most of the company's legal functions—but he considers his top priority to be talent development.

“Throughout my career, I've seen the difference between an employee mentality and ownership mentality play out time and time again,” he says. “I look for as many people as possible who have an ownership mentality, because when you have a majority of those people, they pull the rest along.”

In part because of his own knowledge of the field, Cooper is able to ensure that Capital One can rival private practice in terms of opportunities for attorneys. “We work to create a place that attracts top-level talent, and then we develop and retain that talent,” he explains. To do so, Cooper doesn't wait for open positions to focus on talent; he's constantly networking with potential hires, recruiting from firms, banks, and partners.

In addition, once an employee is onboard, Cooper wants them to feel connected to the higher purpose of working at Capital One, whose mission is to make people's lives better.

“Instead of just talking about who reports to whom and how performance appraisals work,” Cooper says, “we explain our story and tell them why the bank is here and why legal is here.”

That focus on culture is often critical in attracting the right people to an organization. In fact, it was the focus on company culture in his very first job interview with Vail Resorts that impressed the company's now-executive VP, general counsel, and corporate secretary, **David Shapiro**.

In Shapiro's initial ninety-minute discussion with the CEO, legal issues didn't come up once; it was all about the company's culture and whether he'd be a fit. That trend continued as Shapiro met with more members of the executive team. “I found [the emphasis on culture] to be unique, interesting, and

engaging,” he says. “There's a deliberate, thoughtful, authentic commitment to developing a culture for an organization that people want to be a part of. The fact that they focused on that was very attractive to me.”

That kind of focus on culture impacts everyone, including the legal team, and is a crucial element in attracting and retaining the right people who are deemed culture fits from the start.

“It's not window dressing. The people who talk about the culture, they live the culture every day,” Shapiro says.

Just as important as finding the right value fit for new hires is making sure their skills complement and enhance the team already in place.

Lisa McCraw is the assistant general counsel of litigation at Deere & Company. She and her team of attorneys, support staff, and claims professionals defend the company against all types of liability and tort cases, managing risk and adding value to the business. One of the most important aspects of McCraw's role is filling the seats on that team, and one of her secrets of success in that realm is to hire for more than just legal skill and experience.

Two of the attorneys on her team, for example, are trained mechanics; another internal lawyer has an engineer-

87%

of organizations cite culture and engagement as one of their top challenges

50%

call the problem “very important”

Source: Glassdoor for Employers

ing background. “Our team knows and understands how John Deere products work and how our customers use our products,” McCraw explains. “I want people with the skills needed to address the whole scope of issues that a corporate entity like Deere may encounter.” That also includes considering candidates with litigation experience, because they understand how to manage relationships with outside firms.

Hard Numbers on Hiring

\$4,000

the average amount US companies spend to fill an open position

52

the average number of days it takes to fill an open position

67% +

of millennials believe it's management's job to provide accelerated development opportunities to encourage them to stay in a current role

32%

of senior executives say building trust is one of their biggest challenges, second only to expansion and top line growth over the next one to two years

90%

of recruiters say the market was candidate-driven in 2015, up from 54% in the second half of 2011



1 in 2

employees have left their job to get away from their manager at some point in their career



87%

of organizations cite culture and engagement as one of their top challenges



86%

of global HR and business leaders cited leadership as a top issue in 2016



Source: Glassdoor for Employers

Pushing People in the Right Ways

Tech execs take calculated risks when it comes to talent

Perhaps nowhere is the job market more competitive than in technology positions. Recruiting is especially a challenge outside of big tech hubs and cities, which is why [Darryl Maslar](#), the VP of enterprise information systems at Hillenbrand Inc., spends much of his time making his Batesville, Indiana-based offices an attractive destination for promising tech talent.

One way he stays ahead of other Midwest companies' recruiting efforts is to reach out to schools in the region and offer work opportunities and internships to college students. Building those relationships early may pave the way to full-time positions for young talent, though Maslar says it takes a certain amount of risk acceptance to do so.

"It can be difficult to get the timing right between a particularly promising prospect and having the right job opening for them when they graduate," he says. "I decided that if I come across talent with great potential, I'll just offer them a job without knowing exactly what the role will be. I can promise them it will be challenging and they'll know they have a job waiting for them." Sometimes they'll even go as far as covering a senior's final year of tuition and integrating them into the company before they graduate.

Aside from creating a fun and relaxed work environment for his team, complete with a Nerf gun arsenal and a remote-controlled mobile robotic iPad platform, Maslar ensures that the rest of the company understands the importance of development for his people. For example, if the company needs to tighten its financial belt, Maslar makes the case against cutting the IT-training budget, and it always remains in place. If his staff doesn't feel that they have opportunities to grow, he says, they may be looking for that elsewhere.

He's also created dual-career paths to give some IT team members both technical and management experience, so they can see several ways they could grow with the company. "At

the end of the day, it is the talent that propels our company and puts us on the map," he says.

Talent is also what can make or break a tough transition for a company. In 2014, PayPal and eBay announced the two companies would be ending a thirteen-year partnership. PayPal CIO [Brad Strock](#) was tasked with splitting applications, building new data centers, and creating a completely new corporate network to support the soon-to-be independent online payment company. Industry experts predicted that would take two years; Strock and his team were given nine months.

The reliance on people and talent became critical for Strock. At such a crucial time, he couldn't afford to lose valuable staff, and had to work doubly hard to make the transition worthwhile and as seamless as possible for them, while pushing them to new limits.

"We gave people more work than they were ready for because we didn't have a choice," Strock says. "We stretched and tested our team, but we trusted them, too. In every case, we supported the people we had in place."

Strock worked hard to anticipate and address people's questions, communicate frequently, and allow people to have a say in building their roles on the

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Brad Strock, PayPal

team. He also recognized the value of a thank you from leadership.

"There's nothing I can do to give back what my team sacrificed, but it's important for each person to know that their work matters, that we see them, and that they are deeply and truly appreciated," Strock says.

Now Strock continues to develop his team by ensuring that they have opportunities to align their passion with their job, something he says helped his own career trajectory. The IT department focuses on helping staff develop skills as well as longer-term career goals.

Making the System Work for the Team

Operations can create programs and structures that get the right people into place

Dan Phillips has been an executive at TiVo since 2006, and spent four years as the chief operating officer. During that time he's been able to retain and develop a talented technical staff in the viciously competitive Silicon Valley job market. One of the reasons he cites for enabling this is TiVo's flat culture that allows any employee to bring new ideas to Phillips and his executive peers. He spends as much time with front-line staff as he does with the company's CEO.

"When we have a big delivery coming, or something special that we're trying to bring to market, I'm sitting next to the engineers," Phillips says. "I might not still be able to code the way I could twenty years ago, but I can go out and get sushi for them while they work their butts off across a holiday weekend."

Though he might not be overseeing the day-to-day work of all of these engineers, as COO, more than 80 percent of the organization's employees report in some way to Phillips. This structure can give an operations officer a unique perspective both on the highly specific details and the overall scope and direction of the business. Another side effect of that structure is an engaged, excited workforce. "In the hottest job market, in the hottest place in the world for engineering talent—and talent in general—we've been able to keep the core talent here motivated, doing interesting and great things," Phillips says. "At the end of the day, that's a big piece of my job, and it's probably the thing I'm most proud of."

NRG Energy Inc. faces its own unique challenge as a Fortune 200 power producer dual-headquartered in Houston, Texas, and Princeton, New Jersey. Not only must the organization attract top talent to fill positions at two offices, but it also needs to have the right tools, processes, and plans in place to manage, assess, and develop all of that talent. Prior to becoming senior VP of administration, **Jennifer Wallace** had been NRG's senior VP of HR, and the two roles fit together to drive success. "We

59%

of employees who are supervised by highly engaged managers are more likely to be engaged than those supervised by actively disengaged managers

Source: Glassdoor for Employers

want to have the best talent across all of our businesses, all of our departments, all of our roles, so that we can deliver the best to our customers and we can continue to lead our industry," she says.

NRG hosts more than sixty interns each summer, their placement spanning across nearly every function and business unit. But it doesn't stop there: the "Power Up" rotation program brings in recent graduates from college who had previously been interns, and allows them to rotate through many different roles within each area, eventually placing them in permanent roles at NRG. The

ability to think big picture and develop unique programs like this has led to an influx of talent who are not only highly skilled, but also well-rounded, happier, more excited individuals. "We like to match the rotations to company needs, but also to the experience, skill set, and education of these rotation associates," Wallace explains. "If the individual is coming to us with a finance degree, the track they pursue might include stops in treasury or commercial finance, and then on to financial planning and analysis."

NRG also helps existing employees seek new roles within the company. A video series called "Dig My Gig" features short interviews with employees in which they share their background, what they do, and why they like their job. "It's really been a great tool for us to highlight our employees and to help them see their career opportunities here," Wallace says. Rather than feel constrained in their role or frustrated in their career path, employees are encouraged to find the right gig. This then extends to development and mentorship programs like the "Women in Power" program, which focuses on developing women in the traditionally male-dominated power industry.

Influence from the Top

No role is more impactful for talent than the CEO

The tone for an organizational culture is greatly affected by the CEO. And, as [Ed Wise](#), CDM Group's former CEO of over three decades, attests, the talent is just as influential for the CEO: Without the right talent, he says, neither the company nor the executive could get where they need to go. "Growth is dependent on your ability to hire other equally or more talented people to get you to the next level," Wise says. As he notes, the most brilliant mind in the world couldn't develop an industry-leading organization without an equally brilliant team.

While it's true that a CEO can establish and even embody the ideals of a successful organizational culture, it can be a real challenge to maintain that focus in a dynamic, growing organization. To that end, Wise himself decided to define the organization, to determine its inherent values and mission statement. Then, rather than hire qualified employees and attempt to train the right values into them, Wise led his team to hire individuals with matching values. "I'd much rather hire for behaviors and personality and desire, and then train for skill," he says.

In fact, Wise extended a culture of openness throughout the company, leading by example. He willingly discussed his own weaknesses and goals for improvement with the staff, and encouraged others to do the same. "You can't expect people to believe you're trying to grow as a leader if you act like you're perfect all the time," he says. "We're taught as children that less-than-perfect is bad and exposing yourself and weakness is a bad thing, but we need to change that attitude."

In the last five years, CDM Group has been named among the "Most Popular Places to Work in New York City," and has seen substantial growth in rebound employees, returnees who champion the company culture ardently as their reason for returning to the company. This culture starts from the top, and Wise is proud to have built a culture that excites and attracts talent. "Providing a place that has meaning and has a set of be-

liefs that people feel good about is one of the things that has provided me the greatest reward," he says.

Often people start their own companies or take on the role of CEO because they enjoy making things better and being involved in the nitty-gritty detail as well as visualizing big-picture changes. Though it might not be every CEO's top priority, talent development can benefit greatly from both of those perspectives, and can in turn make a major impact on the business. That's certainly been the case for [Nancy Lakier](#), CEO and managing partner of Novia Strategies. The national healthcare consulting firm maintains a clear, powerful culture by embracing four key tenets.

While Novia faces unique challenges, the lessons learned from installing these tenets can inform CEOs aiming to better define and understand their own corporate cultures. Lakier determined that the organization must first do good work, to ensure that there's a positive outcome for their clients—even potentially at the expense of the bottom line. The second tenet details how putting together teams properly and working egoless can make a big difference. "Not everyone has to know everything, but individuals are going to complement each other," she says. When this leads to success, the third ten-

\$319B+

the amount of money it costs the US economy when managers are actively disengaged.

Source: Glassdoor for Employers

et assures that employees are rewarded for good work, and the fourth is that this success is managed in a fiscally responsible way.

There is a logic to these values, but that's not to say that they are universally applicable. Merely being intentional about the values instilled in the company, as Lakier and Novia are, can make all the difference. As she points out, the organization's success wouldn't be possible without bringing teams together, managing them toward their best work, and listening to good ideas. "It really is the work we do, but also the people in our firm," Lakier says. "We have such great people. I find that I learn from our staff every day."

Advice from the Pros

HR leaders share their best tips for any executive to apply

Lorna Hagen is the senior VP of people operations at OnDeck, an online lending company whose clients are mostly small- to medium-sized businesses. One of her focuses is on diversity training—screening for unconscious bias, for example—but she is hoping that by hiring the right people now, no one will even need that training five or ten years in the future.

“Intellectual capital is the future of work,” she says. “Critical thinkers don’t need [diversity training]. They are simply open to what all people have to offer.”

Awareness of the unique facets of an organization and industry is a valuable outlook emphasized by many HR executives, especially **Sally Buchanan**, the VP of people & workplace at Twitch and former senior VP of HR at Sony. In the video-game industry, she explains, traditional HR pillars can seem overly formal. “Our people strategy needs to be aligned with our brand strategy, which includes our product strategy,” she says of her time at Sony. “We recognized that meant adjusting to fit our environment, so that’s what we did.”

This awareness, of course, couldn’t come out of the blue. Buchanan conducted an internal survey of the HR effectiveness and alignment at Sony, and found that the department needed to be streamlined in order to function efficiently. Once that streamlining was completed, each HR representative was able to communicate clearly to others what their role was and how it aligned to business strategy and brand.

To properly align initiatives with talent, of course, the executive team must first be sure that the talent fits the organization’s strategy. For the senior VP of HR for Bayer US, **Dick Caldera**, developing and thinking about that strategy is an important first step. However, making sure that strategy is enacted by the right people is essential. “Without that, strategy is just a piece of paper on a shelf,” he says.

Once that has been established, a logical next step is to develop those individuals to the best of their abilities while simultaneously assessing and planning for the organization’s future talent needs. After assessing the state of talent within the company as a whole and designing the process for succession, the

next key step is to keep associates at all levels engaged. “Communicating with them early on will drive needed engagement,” explains **Ann Giambusso**, executive VP of HR at Charmer Sunbelt Group. She also notes that testing and assessing the success of that plan ensures the right decisions continue to be made.

Outside of focusing on strategy in the large-scheme, organizations must ensure that their initiatives are beneficial on the individual level as well. Enabling the right people can lead to company-wide success, as well as meaningful development and success for that employee. While executives may not always be interacting with every employee on a daily basis, providing the tools for success and putting a human face on the business can make a major impact on every member of an organization.

As **Steven Rotman**, chief people officer at Ipswitch, Inc., and former VP of HR at NaviNet Inc., explains, that drive for development and empowerment is essential. When he first joined NaviNet Inc., the nation’s largest healthcare communications platform, his role was mostly tactical, managing benefits and payroll. However, he became a true partner to the business when he focused on the individuals he worked with. “They don’t work here for the Ping-Pong tables, pizza Fridays, or chair massages—though they love all of them; they work here because they feel that they are recognized, given a chance to stretch their intellectual mus-

cles, and the opportunity to contribute in a space where everyone can feel the impact,” he says.

And the word “everyone” is key. Partnering with HR executives on initiatives that value diversity and inclusion can make major impacts on individuals that would otherwise be overlooked, but it can also empower and unlock previously underutilized potential in the workforce. ManPowerGroup’s **Mara Swan** has found success in highlighting women in the organization who had theretofore been overlooked for growth opportunities. “Women are the most underutilized resources worldwide,” she says. As executive vice president of global strategy and talent at the global human resources consulting firm, Swan has been able to work to transform inclusive workforce practices, which in turn have led to greater success for the organization as a whole.

Additionally, this inclusion can take many different forms. “What I’m most passionate about is how you get the best culture and performance out of all people,” Swan says. Across all functions, if an executive wants the best result for their organization, overlooking any potential talent or innovative thought could be a major detriment to success.

Conclusion

Evidence clearly suggests that organizations with cohesive, company-wide talent strategies and alignment yield happier employees, better work, and increased growth.

While in the past the steps to achieve this strategy may have been the exclusive purview of the HR department, the modern workplace has seen great success in sharing this perspective among leadership. The first step, as always, has proven to be preparing for a situation before it even arises. This can mean developing a better understanding of your organization and where it wants to go, gaining buy-in across the industry, or actively recruiting and networking, even when there aren't yet positions to fill.

Another important element of this strategy is implementing it and connecting employees to the higher purpose of the organization. This purpose will typically be identified as fitting the employees' skill sets, needs, and goals, but it will also extend to ensuring that incoming talent will be a value-fit with this new perspective.

Developing that talent is a crucial follow-up. Throughout the organization, leaders have a responsibility to show a path to personal and professional development. Growth opportunities show a real commitment to individuals, and in turn these individuals will feel empowered to make a bigger impact on the organization.

Key to this, as well, is opening those opportunities to employees that may often be overlooked traditionally. Diversity is an important element of a successful office, and executives at all levels and departments are able to impact this by recognizing and utilizing the gems that may otherwise have been passed over.

If every executive in the organization sees the talent strategy as a part of their daily responsibility, that culture will then filter

down to every individual employee. Part of that, notes AstraZeneca senior director of HR [Lynnsie Peterson](#), comes from seeing those employees as more than a number in the list of reports. "To maximize effectiveness, we need employees to be agile, resilient, and able to collaborate and look beyond their own areas of expertise," she says. This, of course, extends to breaking the perceived barriers between the HR office and the other departments. Talent acquisition, management, and development, she notes, is "an integrated and continuous process," and benefits from care and attention throughout the organization—in turn benefitting the organization itself.

26%

greater year-over-year increase in annual company revenue when companies have employee engagement programs

Source: *Glassdoor for Employers*

Attribution

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