



# Keeping Your Talent on Top Form



## Executive Summary

Employees are often considered an organisation's best asset, yet many businesses fail to recognise the importance of talent management. In order to continue to grow, businesses need a strong and capable workforce behind them. Therefore it's vital you take care of your talent pipeline. Gone are the days of a job for life, now even your most loyal employees may have their eye on the door. So how can you ensure you have the right talent in place when and where you need it?

In this paper, Judith Leary-Joyce explains why it is important to always be on the lookout for new talent, while also building existing employees' CVs. From recruitment to development to retention and succession planning, Judith explains just how important learning is to every stage of the talent management lifecycle. So get reading quickly because the talent pipeline never stops moving.

## Biography

Judith's 30-year career led her to set up Great Companies Consulting in 2002, to support companies in building workplaces that make a positive contribution to the life of employees, whilst being successful in the market place.

Her commitment to people and workplace culture led Judith to spend a year with Great Place to Work® UK, during the production of the 2002 '100 Best Companies to Work For' list for the Sunday Times, to develop her understanding of what makes a company great. In the course of that work, she visited a number of the great companies in both UK and USA. This experience plus many conversations with a wide range of senior leaders from 'great' to 'difficult' cultures focussed her thinking and led her to set up Great Companies Consulting (GCC).



In order to understand the inputs that produce a great culture, Judith went on to research and write her best selling book, *Becoming an Employer of Choice* (CIPD, 2004). Written in her signature style of simplicity and easy to understand language, the book inspires, whilst providing useful information and ideas for action. Her second book, *Inspirational Manager* (Prentice Hall, 2007), provides a clear and practical guide to being the manager of choice for high performing individuals and organisations. Book three, *The Psychology of Success* (Prentice Hall, 2009), focuses on talent, identifying the best way to manage high performers in the 21st Century.

Prior to founding GCC, Judith had 10 years experience in Leadership/Management Development and Executive Coaching and has coached a wide range of senior leaders in a variety of business settings. As a coach and consultant, she is known for providing strong, rigorous support that includes giving the tough messages. Using her experience of psychology she is able to do this in a way that maintains self-esteem and allows the person to move forward in a positive way.

Her career has taken her to a variety of countries and she has worked with people from many different cultures including Africa, Asia, USA and Europe, both individually and in cross cultural groups. This has given her an understanding of the significance of diversity in the workplace.

Her background is in Gestalt psychology and she was a founder member and Managing Director of the Gestalt Centre from 1979 to 1990, which continues to be one of the prime UK Psychotherapy Training institutes.

Talent continues to be the big buzz word. As the market starts to move forward, having the right people fully engaged with your business is a major key to success.

The recession has spawned many new startups with high energy and a drive to survive. New, nimble competitors are appearing where you least expect them. People are on their metal and doing their best to come out on top. It's a challenging time, exciting and full of promise, as long as you have the best people in the right place with the right attitude.

Some features of talent management remain the same in any market:

- Recruit to your values and culture
- Refine your interviewing so you get it right first time
- Be a learning organisation and attract great talent
- Involve HR in your strategy and include them in business decisions

Then there are new attitudes, required by the time and set to become the new norm, so make sure you are at the forefront:

## Be constantly on the look out for talent

Don't wait for a gap in the company. Be ready with names of high performers who really want to work in your business. More than ever now, we know how life can turn on a sixpence. Over the past five years, even the most successful businesses have run into tough times. Everything we thought was safe and certain has been fundamentally rocked.

So gone are the days when you wait to hear who is planning to leave, then start looking. The six months of unproductive time may be more than the business can bear. To be quick off the mark, know the external people who are tempted by what your company has to offer; be crystal clear about the talent you need now and for the future; be out in the world talking to different high performers, courting them for the future.

Social Media has grown in importance - LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter - all connecting top talent and great workplaces, so if it's a new scene for your company, get practising. And if your business struggles with that approach, go for one of the relationship building recruitment companies and make sure they know your business well.

## Make sure your people are employable

Your new entrants may well have struggled to get that first foothold - or seen their friends struggle. Even when settled in a 'safe' role, they will still be wary. Their experience of business so far indicates that it's a volatile, unstable place to be, so they will look to safeguard against vulnerability.

Unfortunately 'job for life' is not that appealing either. Novelty, values, innovation - all factors that make their work interesting - just may not be possible in the same company. So your high performers will always have one eye on their sale-ability - a great CV will open many doors.

So be the company that makes people highly employable. Help them develop different skills, move them around the business, provide mentors, challenges, projects. Keep their CV front of your mind; give them good reason to stay - for now.

## Accept talented people will move on

Of course, making people employable means they will move on one day. But unless you are fortunate enough to have high performers who are also 'company people', that is inevitable. Life moves so fast that just staying in one place won't provide that endless search for novelty, challenge and personal security.

Accepting that your talented people will go allows you to get the best out of them now. That means putting them where they can add real value; including them in project teams that need new thinking; listening to their bright ideas and giving them room to experiment. It's a heady mix that leads to a powerful paradox - treat high performers as if they have limited time and there is more chance they will stay.

And if they do go - congratulate them on their new role, give them the support they need to make a smooth exit and send them out into the world singing your praises to other high performers. If the 'Friday night in the pub' talk focuses on what a great employer you are, then other high performers will beat a track to your door.

## Make space for entrepreneurs

Internet and the takeover of social media has spawned a new mindset and the entrepreneurial spirit is thriving. That doesn't mean that everyone wants to start their own business, but young hi-pos certainly like to be challenged and think outside the box.

If you don't use it, you will lose it - as they walk out of your door for horizons new. But focus on using what your hi-pos have to give, you could bring a modern approach and style to your business. Don't assume you know how they see the world, make sure you have ample forums where they can throw ideas around and share thinking. Give them space, then stand back and see what emerges - but be sure that you're willing to give some of the ideas a go or they will lose heart.

You may be in for a bit of rollercoaster, but it will be exciting and may just open the door to something new and exciting - and different to your competitors.

## Above all, never forget your managers

It's an old chestnut, but more relevant now than ever - ensure your managers are an inspiration and have their finger on the pulse. They are the ones who will provide the boundaries for your talent; who will support them as they come up with new ideas and learn how to identify the pearls; who can coach, mentor and challenge. Without them you can kiss goodbye to your best people - remember, 70 per cent leave their manager and not the job.



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