

A Salute to the Talent Champions

By Alan Davis

We hear a lot of talk about leadership development and leadership pipelines for the executive suite. What we don't hear quite so much about, is talent development and building a talent pipeline at all levels of the organization. However, the middle-management and high-value individual contributors in your organization can be equally important in achieving your business goals.

Talent acquisition strategies are becoming more creative and more sophisticated, a recent addition being Competitor Talent Mapping. But developing and hiring the most talented people available, doesn't just happen; the cause needs to be championed and when these Talent Champions step up to the plate, amazing results across the organization are produced.

How Can You Recognize a Talent Champion?

If you can answer yes to the following questions, I would consider you to qualify for the title...

- Do you have a fundamental belief that the success of your organization is predicated more than anything else, on how you deploy the talented people in your workforce?
- Do you think of high-performing candidates as long-term potential assets? (or a short-term solution to filling a position?)
- When you meet very talented candidates, do you explain to them the career paths available to them if they were to join your organization?
- Are you aware of the business risks associated with skill shortages and inadequate succession management?
- Do you understand the concept of employee engagement and do you behave accordingly?
- Do you pass on high-potential candidates to other Hiring Managers in the organization?
- Do you understand that the best candidates have many career choices open to them?
- Do you really believe that in order to hire the best people, you absolutely need to be the best employer?



Who are the Talent Champions?

We have seen examples of Talent Champion behavior in many sectors including the Aerospace, Financial Services, Oil & Gas, Utilities, Mining, Transportation, Pulp & Paper and Pharmaceutical industries. Talent Champions have not only emerged from forward-thinking HR departments (which you might expect); they have also been identified as strategic leaders in many diverse areas of business including Engineering, Manufacturing, Operations, Supply Chain and Risk Management.

What is the Impact of Talent Champions on Your Organization?

In the short term, the main impact of hiring better people, is that they will make an immediate difference to the success of your organization. In the long term, the Talent Champions will build an external talent bench of exceptional quality, thus reducing the time-to-hire and facilitating the filling of gaps in the succession plan. This both creates a business advantage and at the same time, mitigates some aspects of your business risk.

How Do You Become a Talent Champion?

First of all, become aware (if you're not already) of the gravity of the situation. The talent shortage is a worldwide phenomenon, and the war for talent, continues to be waged. There is plenty of material available on the subject to scare you and your senior management team into action.

If you are an HR leader, search out like-minded Hiring Managers and create success stories of winning skirmishes in the talent war. Success breeds success and your ideas will soon catch on, as your intervention makes an ever-growing impact on your organization's success. If you can't find like-minded Hiring Managers, scare them into action by educating them on the problem.

If you are a Hiring Manager, engage your HR leadership in your quest to hire, develop, promote and retain the most talented people in your organization. Demand action and engage and educate your senior management to the cause and effect of talent shortages.

Conclusions

If you are not a Talent Champion, you should be. The future success of your organization depends on it. The winners in the talent wars will succeed by:

- Developing the best internal talent



- Hiring the best external talent
- Retaining your organization's highest value resource...very talented people

Executives should be made accountable for building and retaining the best talent and they should be rewarded accordingly. What do you intend to do to facilitate the process of developing and hiring talented people for the long-term?

There is no down side to becoming a Talent Champion. On the contrary, there is no question that becoming a Talent Champion will raise your profile in the organization.

If you are not currently a Talent Champion, perhaps you should think about becoming one.

The Author:

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