

Unpacking the integrated talent management framework - part 1

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An integrated talent management framework (ITMF) is defined as the methodically organised, strategic process of attracting and retaining the right talent for the right jobs and helping them grow to their optimal capabilities in line with organisational objectives.



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An ITMF consists of the following sub-sections:

- **Talent/workforce planning** - the identification of talent requirements to support the effective achievement and execution of organisational strategies and priorities.
- **Talent assessment** – the comprehensive, objective, and predictive talent assessment data to review internal talent availability, identify critical talent gaps and assess fit to roles.
- **Talent acquisition** – the filling of talent gaps through the acquisition of external talent, assessing the availability of existing talent and putting strategies and plans in place to acquire and promote talent.
- **Talent on-boarding** – introducing new employees to the business through orientation and on-boarding.
- **Performance management** – the comprehensive and holistic process intended to measure, improve, and reward the

performance of employees, aimed at enabling the sustained achievement of organisational objectives and strategy.

- **Talent development** – refers to how talent is grown and developed in the organisation. The intent is to have a strategic and targeted approach to developing current and future talent.
- **Talent development and acceleration (career pathing and succession management)** – the process of working through a career path to grow and develop in one's career and identifying key talent for succession roles.
- **Talent retention** - an organisation's strategy to optimise employee engagement to retain key talent.
- **Talent transition** - refers to effectively managing the transition process of employees exiting the organisation.

In the current world of work, ITMFs are an essential business tool for competing in the global war for talent. A sound and strategic talent management (TM) strategy enables the employer to create a competitive advantage and encourage a culture of innovation, excellence, and collaboration. It builds agility, resilience, and a diverse workforce, necessary for business sustainability.

Challenges

The typical challenges faced by many organisations include the following:

- The lack of long-term workforce planning or anticipation of future talent needs, aligned to a robust long-term organisational design and business strategy. Several reasons exist, including budget constraints, an ever-changing socio-economic and political environment, and a lack of formal talent auditing within many companies. In South Africa, the "brain drain" of professional capacity is of particular concern. This, in turn, inhibits many organisations from identifying future business needs; anticipating or planning changes in structure, roles, and responsibilities; critical role identification based on scarcity and core competencies; managing risks, such as the filling of critical vacancies; unwanted labour turnover; diversity, performance, and anticipation of skills gaps.
- Formal job development and job evaluation processes are not always in place, which may result in outdated job profiles and grading systems, making market-related remuneration and reward more difficult.
- Employee value proposition (EVP) is not a well-understood concept in many organisations, which disadvantages employers in their quest to attract and retain the best talent. It further makes it unlikely to position their organisation as an employer of choice.
- Talent assessment tools are not consistently used or deployed in many organisations. This may be due to cost constraints, lack of awareness of their value or mistrust of the value of such tools. Where assessment tools are implemented, there tends to be more robust testing at leadership levels but less rigorous testing at lower levels within organisations. Where applied appropriately, behavioural and competency assessments can result in significant cost savings for an organisation, as they avoid costly recruitment errors and unnecessary turnover and aid in performance management, succession planning and targeted career and training interventions. It further enables an employer to identify current competence and future potential.
- Many organisations still adopt traditional and cumbersome recruitment processes and tools, which are time-consuming and do not necessarily attract innovative and dynamic employees, especially for scarce and critical positions. This potentially poses a significant business risk.
- Whilst on-boarding is a well-adopted process in most organisations, where this is not formalised, it slows down the speed with which new employees can be productive and make a meaningful impact within a reasonable period. On-boarding is an opportunity to showcase an organisation's accomplishments and, in so doing, reinforce the employees' reason for joining and hopefully remaining for a significant period.

- Most organisations have a formal performance management (PM) system, but the real challenge exists in practical implementation. There is often a lack of buy-in from leadership, little if any emphasis on meaningful engagement between employees and managers, limited transparency, and mistrust in the process to really differentiate between average and excellent performers, and hardly any meaningful addressing of poor performance. This results in a negative impact on the organisation's performance culture. PM is integral to successfully implementing other TM processes, such as opportunities for promotion, improvement of skills, career development and remuneration benefits.
- Talent development programmes are typically well understood within most progressive organisations when it comes to traditional training and development, but less well developed when it comes to leadership and management development or alumni programmes, which link to succession and workforce planning for core and critical skills.
- Career pathing and succession planning appear to be less well established in many organisations. The risk is that employees are denied opportunities for promotion and advancement or are promoted without robust evaluation processes or proper job structures/ organisational design requirements. This may result in inflated salary bills and/or high attrition levels.
- Succession management is not formally or strategically managed in many organisations, posing a significant business and operational continuity risk.
- Employee engagement surveys, to inform EVP and retention strategies, appear to be applied on an ad hoc basis, and the outcomes thereof are equally implemented on an ad hoc basis. This results in survey fatigue and mistrust amongst employees. A recent survey conducted by 21st Century suggests that often, employees do not have a clear understanding of their organisation's culture and values and/or there is a sense that these values are not lived within the organisation. This, in turn, detracts from the EVP.
- Where employers do not engage in regular salary benchmarking exercises, they run the risk of not paying market-related salaries, which increases the risk of losing key talent. It further increases the likelihood of internal and external pay disparities and the risk of unequal pay for work of equal value.
- In line with the above, few organisations seem to adopt a total reward and recognition approach, which is a combination of financial and non-financial rewards.
- Finally, most organisations conduct exit interviews, but few employers appear to use exit data for meaningful decision-making for informed retention strategies.

In the second part of this series, we will explore current trends and future considerations in talent management, shedding light on the ever-evolving nature of this essential business function.

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