



HR Trend Institute



Ten trends in talent management.

- To a broader definition of talent**

Many organizations have very specific definitions of talent. Example:
"A high potential has a minimum of four years work experience, of which at least two in our organization, with the potential to grow to general management positions, or specific specialized positions in research and development, with at least level A2".

The notion of more diverse talent groups is slowly entering organizations. The wishes and expectations of talent differ, and also change over time.-
Some people are looking for a career in one organization;

 - Some people are looking for a couple of years experience, and their plan is to move on afterwards (although they might not express this when you interview them);
 - Some people are not looking forward to be employed by a big employer, but they like to be involved in challenging complex projects; Organizations that define talent too narrow might miss opportunities to connect talent to their organization.

2. More customized programs

Connected to number 1, you can see a move to more customized programs. The question is: how can you tailor what you want to offer to the talent with individual needs in the market? For some an attractive well-planned trainee program might be a very good solution. For others the opportunity to work in Asia for a couple of years. A highly talented technical student might have other needs. Less standardization, more customization will be the credo.

3. Looking for general profiles

Scientific knowledge is slowly entering the HR arena. Gut feel is no longer trusted, and organizations are looking for people who have traits that have a proven correlation to success in organizations. Intelligence is certainly one element to be looking for. Learning agility another.

4. From secret to transparent

This is often a delicate issue. Do we spoil people if we let them know they are considered high potential? Do we disengage the people who are not part of the talent pool? The overall trend seems to be to more transparency, whether organizations like it or not. It certainly helps to have a broader definition of talent (see 1). It also helps to be clearer about expectations and commitment. If you have a pool with talent for future general management positions, being part of this pool comes with obligations. Like: high performance and international mobility. Sometimes assumptions are not tested, as the conversations with the talent in the pool are too limited and not explicit enough.

5. From general to very specific skill training

We all know the high potential and general management programs, where you have to learn everything you will ever need to know or need to master in one or two weeks. International collaboration. Personal effectiveness. The strategy of the company. Intercultural differences. Managing people in turbulent times. Engaging people, and so on. The (slow) trend is in the direction to more specific skill training, as close as possible to the real work of people. In a certain way going back to old-school training. Define very clearly what skill people have to learn to be successful, and then train, observe, feedback, train, observe, feedback and so on until the skill becomes an acquired skill.

6. The increasing importance of HR analytics

Maybe this trend should be on position number one. 2015 has been described as the breakthrough year for HR analytics and more specifically talent analytics. Current technology and the increased possibilities of big data analysis are important drivers for more objective and scientific research and fact finding in the talent arena. Intuition and gut-feel can now be tested against the facts.

7. From annual to regular maybe even real time feedback

It seems that performance management is changing. Organizations are looking for possibilities to give more regular and more objective feedback to people. [Harvard Business Review](#) recently published a great article on how Deloitte is changing their global performance management process. Very practical and inspirational for other organizations. Elsewhere you see experiments with more frequent feedback, using tools as provided for example by [Impraise](#). People who are very good always want to become better. Most performance management systems today provide helpful feedback for people who are average or below average, but the feedback for top talent is often not so helpful. If you are very good you need more granular feedback than just a subjective rating on a 5-point scale.

8. Gamification everywhere

Gamification is entering the talent management world. In selection where simple games can be used to test cognitive and social capabilities. In recruitment where candidates are able to experience what life is like in an organization by participating in a simulation. In performance management by introducing leader boards, points and badges related to specific desired

behavior. In training, where games and simulations are often far more effective than traditional classroom training.

9. Pay top for the best

Here I want to refer to two excellent articles. Number 1: [“The myth of the bell curve”](#), by Josh Bersin in Fortune (February 2014). Number 2: [“Making star teams out of star players”](#), by Mankins, Bird and Root in Harvard Business Review (January 2013). The key message: performance of people does not follow a normal distribution, but a power distribution. When you can measure performance, the best performers can perform 2x, 5x, 10x and sometimes even more than 10X better than average performers. This has great implications for HR. Laszlo Bock, in [“Work Rules”](#), gives great examples how they deal with this inside Google. Chapter 9 in his book is called “Pay Unfairly”, arguing that when people perform plus 10X better, it does not make sense to only pay them let’s say 20% more than average.

10. From 1:1 succession management to broad talent pools

Especially in fast moving and fast changing organizations 1:1 succession management does not make a lot of sense. HR spends a lot of time making the lists of potential successors for key positions, but when the time comes a position needs to be filled, the organization has changed, the information is outdated and the requirements for the positions have changed as well. Instead of the lists, it makes sense to have a good view on the different talent pools, inside- and outside the organization. More importantly: to have fast processes to be able to mobilize talent quickly when you need it, even if it is not in your database.

Ten trends in talent management. Some of them are maybe more wishful thinking, I have to admit. Not all trends will be visible or applicable everywhere. Some organizations are trying to create or nurture counter trends. Like: all our talent should be inside the organization.