
Book Review

The Talent Management Handbook

Published by The McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Limited, Third Edition

- Reviewer: Hema Harsha

Irrespective of the timelines and the factors influencing various stages of the Industrial Revolution, people, especially talented and high-performing professionals have remained central to all successful organizations. Talent management has been a constant challenge for both business leaders and HR professionals. Like business strategies and plans, organizations prepare strategies and plans for talent management and today the success of an organization is accorded to effective implementation of talent management practices.

The book, “A Roadmap to Organizational Excellence – The Talent Management Handbook”, Third Edition, published by McGraw Hill Education (India) Private Limited, is a comprehensive compilation of 55 thought-provoking papers on the various facets of Talent Management. The contributors are renowned professionals from various disciplines and functions of management which makes the book an interesting and intellectually stimulating read. The papers have been organized in a finely curated sequence to progressively lead the reader from the fundamentals of talent management in today’s complex business environment to the impact and adoption of highly complex tools like Big Data, and other global trends.

Part 1, consisting of three well-researched papers dwells on how organizations need to plan on leveraging talent to build a high-performance organization. All three authors stress creating a blueprint of the organizational strategy to attract, retain and grow talent in an environment which entices them to partner with the organizations for a long time. The continuous loop of using talent management to build a high-performance workforce, which in turn creates a brand of the employer to attract more talent explains the continuum of efforts and investments in this direction with an action plan to translate strategies to results. With a step-by-step guide on how to implement strategies, this section lays the foundation in the reader's mind on why investing in talent management is a good option.

In Part 2, nine authors discuss about the building blocks of talent management. They weave a story around the various functions of traditional HR – competency assessment, performance appraisals and forecasting and their relevance in creating an environment conducive to nurturing talent in organizations. The authors have highlighted how innovative approaches to these traditional roles of HR can yield amazing results in a short duration. Using the case study of JP Morgan Chase Bank as an example, Roger Ferguson showcases the possibilities of using the concept of the “Big Five” in enhancing the performance management of employees within an organization. This section brings to the fore that a considerable chunk of time is consumed between the line managers who do employee appraisals and the HR department who review these appraisals to plan talent management strategies. A reading of Part 2 highlights the relevance and criticality of the involvement of senior management in driving these

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traditional HR roles which is evolving continuously by the influence of the new ways of working that are being experimented by the functional departments.

While Part 1 and Part 2 sets the tone of the subject from a strategic and planning perspective, it is Part 3 of the book that makes the reading interesting for those who are engaged in developing talent through their daily actions at the workplace. A major chunk of the book, with contributions by 22 authors, keeps the readers engaged with the operational details of how these strategic plans should be translated into operational plans. Four blocks – Talent Positioning, Talent Enhancement, Talent Mobility and Compensation, covers the entire spectrum of the Talent Management programs that organizations need to explore and exploit for unleashing the potential of their employee. This section discusses practical and hands-on strategies which provoke the thoughts of practitioners of all line functions.

Eight scholars discuss the role of Organizational Culture being a catalyst for enhanced talent management in Part 4 of the book. The workplace has undergone a sea change with traditional management styles being replaced with flexible and adaptive styles of management. Their contributions of effort and intellectual prowess being guaranteed for organizational growth, and the spectrum of expectations of the employees has spread out far beyond the remuneration part. Organizations have a new challenge of systematically creating a culture which engages a workforce which comprises of Gen X to the Millennials and assures them that their expectations are part of the organizational growth strategies. This section highlights the painstaking efforts that need to be put in by all stakeholders and the consistency of actions in demonstrating that values are embedded in the DNA of the entire hierarchy of governance and management levels. With women making up for a considerable chunk of the workforce, the views of Nila G Betof and Molly Dickinson bring to the fore the necessity of a special focus on promoting diversity as part of the organisational culture. Data-driven arguments justify their case for creating an inclusive workplace to encourage women to be a part of organisational transformation.

Geographic boundaries no longer being a barrier in the new order of the workplace, acquiring and leveraging talent from all nooks and corners of the world is an option which organizations explore. In Part 5 of the book, two authors dwell on the aspect of Global Talent Management. The movement of employees across countries as a strategy to retain a lean but effective workforce is common amongst companies that have their presence in multiple geographies. Bridging the expectations of employees from different geographies which is influenced by a multitude of factors, comes with a unique set of challenges that needs special attention. Derrick Kon presents a case for the necessity of a special focus on developing competencies of select high-potential employees and enabling them to go global from local.

Data-driven decision-making being the trend with the advent of Machine Language and Artificial Intelligence as an enabler, five authors make a case for adopting Big Data into the talent management function in Part 6 of the book. Though the cases are strong, financial commitments to build the infrastructure for data management are a challenge that organizations will have to overcome. The unbelievable speed at which new technology is penetrating all domains, it is but a matter of time that HR functions also must be enabled to keep pace with other departments of the organisation.

Part 7 of the book singles out the necessity of talent management of the leadership teams and other professionals within the organisation. Three intriguing papers justify why leadership teams need special focus and a different approach to develop and manage talent at this level of organization. Leadership teams being the vital link for channelising the efforts of the masses to achieve organizational goals, strategies need to be more personalised to fuel this community.

In the last section of the book, three authors discuss the latest trends in talent management practices across the world. Jacob Morgan's deep dive into a select list of eight trends summarises the real-world challenges that are universal and impact all organizations without any exceptions.

To sum up, this book is a comprehensive guideline for understanding the theoretical concepts, challenges for Talent management practitioners, and case study discussions on the future of Talent management in the disruptive environment of business. It is a must-read not only for HR practitioners but for all who are responsible for managing teams and individuals interested in building their own capabilities. The COVID pandemic has brought to the fore that effective management of talent is the key even to the very survival of organizations, and talent undisputedly surfaces as the game changer in the quest for the journey of exponential growth.