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FYI: Dr Anton Franckeiss

The three delusions of TM...

To avoid talent management failure and maximise effective resource use, organisations need to avoid three delusions: that talent activities constitute strategy, that identifying talent does not need validation, and that transfer and application practices are an optional 'add-on' activity. Dr Anton Franckeiss, Managing Director ASK Europe, explains.

Talent management, the shepherding and nurturing of human resources to help them and their organisation achieve their full potential, is a complex strand of organisational development with many potential pitfalls. The first challenge, the obviousness of which still manages to elude on occasion, is to align talent management and business strategies. It is the business' future plans that provide the clearest indication of the talents that will be needed, and which therefore need to be developed or brought on board where they are absent: pursuing talent management in a vacuum is a fatuous pastime that can only deliver success by chance. Organisations that act only to identify potential for succession planning should not believe this constitutes strategic talent management, of which is only a single component.

framework, so a winning formula operates in the context of its time and circumstance.

Through informed alignment of talent management strategy with business strategy, organisations can identify the capabilities that are really needed (thus providing a realistic business case for the development investment). Strengthening this business case raises another challenge: developing effective criteria for selecting the right candidates for development and thereby using available resources as effectively as possible to support the maximisation of potential. The common trap here is to base selection on current performance, which is not a reliable indicator of performance in a subsequent role. While line managers and supervisors will have the closest

individual characteristics, proven learning agility, openness to learning, motivation to learn and to improve their performance, pays dividends in terms of the subsequent transfer of new skills, but it is also striking that these are elements of talent development where the trainer, facilitator or coach has least influence.

The second least practiced area, as shown by the survey, relates to the workplace environment, reward and recognition strategies, line manager accountability for performance improvements, and manager and peer support for learning transfer. As with most of the survey's findings, it speaks of a critical disconnection between training and development and daily organisational life, of a scenario in which learning and training are applied indiscriminately and learners subsequently receive little support, and little context, in applying the learning that they have acquired. Organisations achieve and maintain success through the actions of the people, at all levels, that constitute them. By viewing talent management in all its aspects (attracting and retaining, engaging, developing, deploying and supporting) as change management, helping individuals develop into the roles that the changing organisation will require, organisations can ensure their talent management strategy operates at that intersection.

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This first pitfall is closely related to the second, which is perhaps more widespread. Many organisations focus nearly all their efforts on developing the next generation of leaders. While any organisation requires leaders, it will also require a diverse pool of specific talents for the next generation to lead. 'All chiefs and no Indians' is a recipe for a banana republic, not a strong future. Tomorrow's leaders need tomorrow's skills and abilities, not a younger version of today's. It's the wine that most needs to change, not the bottles. Just as talent operates in the content of an organisational

and most accurate view of current performance, this does not automatically translate into a clear view of potential.

In 2010, we conducted the first UK-wide survey of current professional Learning Transfer practice, which clearly showed that the objective selection and assessment of learners for workplace development is a rarity. Learner selection practices accounted for five of the ten least frequently used practices in the survey, none of which respondents claimed to use frequently. Assessment and selection of learners'



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