

Talent Management

HR Business Partnering

There was a small gathering at the September HR Networking Luncheon. We had representatives from the legal profession and the energy sector. Two topics were discussed; Talent Management and HR Business Partnering.

Talent Management

“Few organisations do more than pay lip service to talent management”

Talent management is not new. The idea has been around for some years since McKinsey coined the phrase ‘the war for talent’. In many organisations different people management processes have been developed to manage talent - recruitment and selection, learning and development, succession planning, performance management, reward and recognition - but few organisations have brought all these together to gain total management of the talent pool.

One of the discussion participants has an on line talent management system to try and capture a wide range of information about the talent resource within the firm.

There was general agreement that talent management risked focusing on the high potential ‘stars’ of the organisation and ignoring what one person termed ‘mid layer deliverers’, those people who are less visible but nonetheless significant contributors to the success of the business.

The discussion moved on to entrepreneurial talent and how important this was to identify and nurture in the organisation. Those from the legal profession said that this talent was increasingly important at partner level and below. It is no longer enough to be an expert lawyer. More commercial business development skills are being required broadly among fee earners.

An important consideration for fostering entrepreneurial talent or flair is having a culture that encourages this talent to flourish and supports people who take steps to be entrepreneurial. It also requires a new mind set for many people. An interesting point was made by one

organisation that is a merger of two large organisations but with quite different cultures. One part has an entrepreneurial culture and the other part has a strong process culture and this latter culture is stifling the entrepreneurship in the former.

One organisation said it uses a three part classification to pinpoint entrepreneurial talent

- Motivated, successful and special
- Motivated and successful
- Motivated

HR Business Partnering

Here to stay or gone tomorrow?

Most of the organisations represented have an HR business partnering model in place and could not see a reason to change existing practice.

Although it is seen as a successful model, there are some limitations

- HR business partnering doesn't work in all contexts such as in remote locations where line managers need to be able to deal with people management issues since there is no local HR presence or where time differences can make central support difficult.
- Cross border business partnering is less effective as it is very difficult for a central shared service support centre to be sufficiently expert on the employment framework in all countries where an international organisation has operations.

Introducing business partnering requires considerable line manager education and HR process design

- Line managers need considerable education to adapt to the new model and to feel comfortable using a central shared service unit rather than their local HR team for 'first level support'.

- The HR community needs to make a big shift a different levels of HR expertise are required in different parts of the partnering model – this may require considerable re-skilling.
- HR systems need to be well designed so there is a seamless delivery between the central units and local experts.

Dave Ulrich, who developed the concept of HR business partnering, developed the following model and it is possible to see how the principal components of HR business partnering (shared services, centres of excellence and strategic partners) need to establish their capability in order to deliver against the model.

