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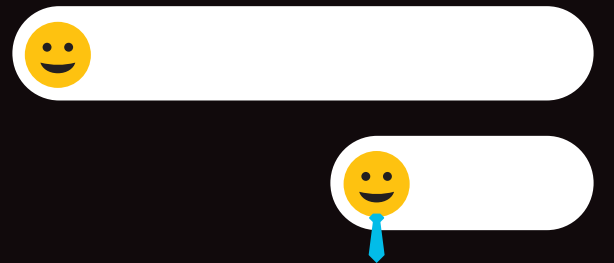
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Planning Your People Needs

by Dwayne Foster Jr. and Will Funderburg

As the labor pool tightens, consider a practical approach to developing and maintaining a hiring strategy by creating a talent roadmap.

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As the economy picks up steam, hiring managers are finding it more difficult to hire top talent at competitive prices. This is mainly because the decreasing unemployment rate creates a smaller labor pool. But companies can better prepare and potentially shield themselves from the worst effects of an improving job market by developing a talent roadmap.

Just as larger organizations develop a strategy and a roadmap to achieve their annual goals, human resources professionals can do the same. They just require a different set of inputs. To develop a roadmap, HR requires a forecast of what work needs to be completed and how many people are needed to complete the work across the organization.

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With a clear understanding of the workload and resource needs, HR can more easily build a talent roadmap to hire, train, and redeploy employees.



If you ask a hiring manager, “When is the best time to identify the need for an open role?” you’ll probably hear answers such as, “as soon as possible,” or “yesterday.” That’s understandable. We know the worst time to identify a need is after you realize you have it. When a need arises suddenly, hiring managers have limited time to fill the role. That means sourcing talent from a limited pool, which reduces negotiating leverage.

This is especially true in today’s market, where top talent is becoming harder to find and more expensive to acquire.

These situations increase the chance of poor hiring decisions. We can likely agree that the more time we have to fill an open role, the better our chances of making great hires. So our challenge is this: How can we increase the time we have to fill open roles?

The answer is a talent roadmap.

What if our HR departments had a talent roadmap from which to execute the year’s talent acquisition and development activities? Might organizations achieve better year-end results by aligning human resources sourcing and development with corporate strategy? We suggest a practical approach to developing and maintaining a talent roadmap.

To understand how to develop that roadmap, let’s work backward. A time-based, detailed understanding of the number of open roles, and the skills they require, will provide the talent acquisition group the data to plan its “recruit, source, select”

activities. To provide that data, an organization must have estimates for its operations activities and the human resources required to support them.

Commonly, organizations or individual business units create annual operating plans as the basis for their budgets. Too often, these plans serve only as an output required to receive budget approval. However, this data is exactly what HR departments need as inputs in defining their talent strategies.

Once budgets are approved, the organization should continuously update a detailed operating plan, estimating the duration of projects and the resources—by role and skill—required to keep all support functions aligned. By comparing that operating plan to basic HR data, hiring managers can estimate the time-based needs of the organization compared to expected talent overages or shortages in the market by resource skill. Additionally, the more dynamic the data within the estimates, the more effective the talent strategy.

Introducing a demand management capability through a demand management model enhances an organization’s ability to forecast for internal projects or operations. An effective demand management model not only needs to assess the demand for services against the current supply of labor, but it should also identify the scope and timing of required supplemental labor.

With this information, business leaders can work with HR to

develop a talent roadmap aligned with their operations or project portfolio.

Before an HR staff can know the type of resources they will need to hire, they need the business to present them with reliable estimates of the workload in coming years. To understand workload better, leaders should:

Understand the business needs.

- How many projects/how much work will need to be completed?
- What skills are required to complete the work?
- How many people does the work require?

Understand key dates.

- When do the projects start?
- How long will they last?
- What key milestone dates must be met?

Understand the current resource pool.

- How many different types or roles?
- How many people per role?
- How many people are internal versus external?
- When do contracts end?
- How many openings exist? Of those, how many are funded?

With a clear understanding of the workload and resource needs, HR can more easily build a talent roadmap to hire, train, and redeploy employees. With information that is as accurate as possible, the HR staff can determine whether they need to hire more resources for a role to match the workload,

while also determining whether those people should be full-time or contract staff.

Sometimes hiring new people is unnecessary. Consider the situation where the organization has a surplus of resources in one role compared to the demand. In those cases, the HR staff could find it acceptable to retrain people and redeploy them to serve in a role where a shortage exists.

Having this roadmap is crucial to shielding the organization from market forces such as a tighter labor market. If hiring managers can more easily identify hard-to-source roles early on, they can devote more time to determining how to quickly bring those resources into the organization, perhaps by refreshing their hiring process or requesting increased funding to attract top talent.

As annual planning becomes ongoing planning, estimates will improve. The organization will gain experience in modeling demand versus supply to plan its talent roadmap. This will increase employee engagement and utilization and, ultimately, enhance the effectiveness and productivity of project portfolios.

Collecting all of this information can be time consuming at first, but it will eventually save time and money. To ensure that the talent roadmap is always accurate, HR and other business units should maintain an ongoing dialogue to see that priorities have not changed and roadmaps look the same. It is better to have estimates and make

ongoing refinements than to lead a rudderless organization. The organization will be prepared to adjust to changing market forces. It will minimize wasted time on late projects and the delayed realization of benefits.

While this may seem like a large undertaking, organizations can take smaller steps to move in the right direction. First, seek to better understand your organization's planning process to determine if it occurs yearly or throughout the year. Also, take stock of the parties involved: Do conversations happen in a silo, or are they more centralized? Is HR involved in any of the key conversations that deal with resources? Does the larger organization have its own strategic priorities or roadmap? As the answers to these questions become clear, it will be easier to determine how to start developing a talent roadmap. 😊

Dwayne Foster Jr.

dwayne.foster@jabian.com

Will Funderburg

will.funderburg@jabian.com