



# What Is Your Talent Sweet Spot?

In reaction to any turbulent market scenario, leadership must adapt to the situation and create solutions to ensure the organisation survives the downturn. A key focus is frequently the budget, where the company can cut costs without undermining the business. Too often, the quality of the workforce and/or their output suffers – either because the company is forced to layoff talented and valuable individuals or overwhelmed employees lose their motivation and lower their productivity.

What steps can companies take to identify and maintain a talented workforce while ensuring that future growth remains on the right track? How can leadership find its talent sweet spot – the equilibrium between objective and result?

## **First, Understand Talent Differences**

Skills come in different formats, sizes, and designs – with the unique experience, capability, and personal style of the talented individual. Comprehending how a distinct group of four talent types works can enable leadership to

recognise how they each behave and perform in a given role. In other words, the key point regarding talent involves assessing and knowing what a leader should expect to find in the individual's capacity and ability to work smart and efficiently, as well as lead change when required.

Today's workforce face enormous responsibility, accountability, and pressure to perform at every level. No position is easy these days. The following four talent definitions may help management to understand what to anticipate from an employee's performance within a given organisational context and goals.

### **1) Steady contributor**

This talent type has become the most popular in many companies, primarily because such individuals provide acceptable stable growth and deliver results according to agreed-upon plans and budgets. However, this talent group cannot drastically drive significant transformation or change initiatives, or be expected to far exceed objectives. Acceptable and consistent results will do as long as the

**”Acknowledging and understanding the type of talents the company hires, develops, and retains to operate and grow the business is mission critical to its future success.”**



business moves slowly and steadily upwards year after year. For example, such talent is best used in marketing and selling the company's top-selling brands in appropriate markets, without risking consumer disenchantment by introducing trendy alterations in popular products.

On the other hand, if you want to significantly accelerate your growth, say over the next 18 to 24 months, this talent group is not the one you should tap into to achieve that objective. Therefore, if you are running a relatively large business with pretty much steady and acceptable growth targets, then this group of talented individuals will be your best bet. At the end of the day, leadership should manage a large but steady growth business very differently than a small, but high growth, business. Surprisingly, this distinction still escapes many business leaders today, ultimately having an adverse impact on their financial success, viability, and stakeholder satisfaction.

## 2) Perfectionist

These talents move cautiously because they usually want, for example, to launch the perfect product or service with the perfect design and under perfect market conditions. Or, perhaps, they consider all the innumerable potential

probabilities of impact on a transformation initiative that could change the organisation's direction. They may have difficulties in making up their minds easily, thereby running the risk of staying still and not moving forward without the perfect decision.

On the other hand, perfectionists can be a great asset for an organisation to possess if they are placed in roles and business environments that require extreme attention to detail and scrutiny over security. For example, you would not want to start distributing a medical device without perfectly ensuring that it will do no harm to the end user no matter how long it takes to approve it.

## 3) Quick fixer

This talent type excels in putting out fires and handling short-term crises. They are extremely handy but mostly undervalued and overlooked. Employers consider them to be handy, because their main focus is to drive projects to conclusion without delay, even though they are mostly swamped with many small projects. Such talent is typically undervalued and overlooked, as well; without having the time and perspective to acknowledge the impact of each project, they are left in the dark when it comes to the overall



organisational strategy, goals, and vision. Consequently, key stakeholders are left wondering what results these individuals actually achieve in light of the expenditure of time, money, and resources in the long-term. Every organisation, small or large, needs this talent type.

But if you are embarking on a major transformation project – as, for example, creating a brand new product line – do not overload this type of talent into your project teams during the initial phase of the initiative. In fact, rushing to completion of project stages without paying attention and considering the overall strategic impact of what you are trying to achieve with your transformation is certain to end in mediocre results. This approach normally manifests itself through employee misperception and stakeholder disengagement, because people might think that you are rushing things rather than gaining lasting and sustainable support for real transformational change.

#### **4) Key influencer**

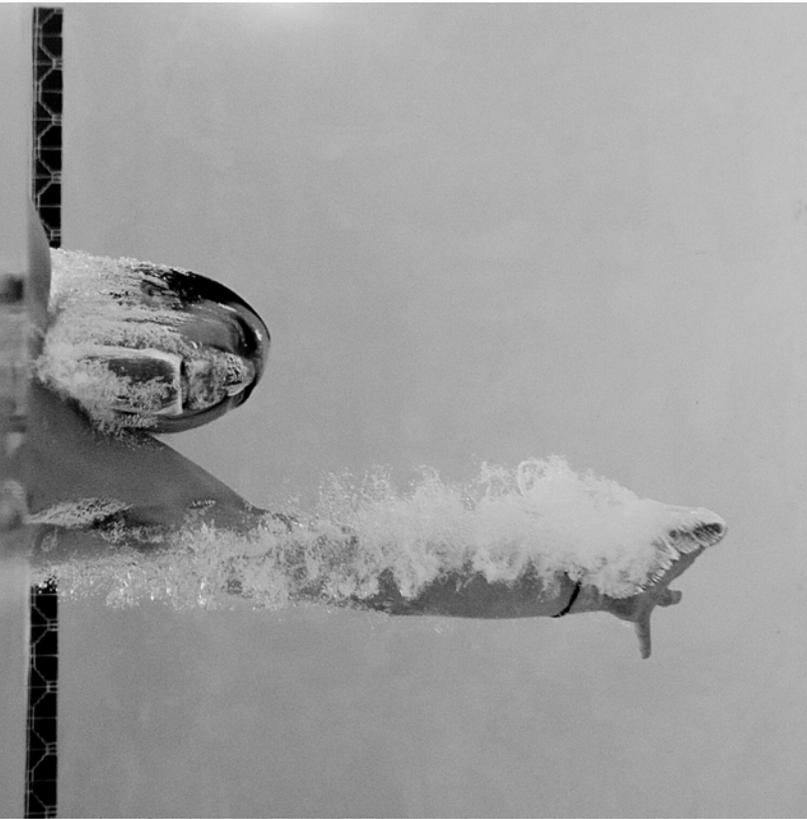
Such individuals can drive major transformational change and innovative initiatives, as well as lead others – not with assumed authority, but rather with their convincing vision and compelling creativity, ideas, and insights about the

business. They are not afraid to fail and will take highly complex, yet calculated, risks – as, for example, reinventing the company culture and public image. Not only are they great listeners, they are also experts on knowing to whom they should listen. They spread wisdom and are champions of knowledge sharing. They move fast, relentlessly, with accurate information on hand and super focus on the best outcome for all stakeholders.

But again, if you place a key influencer in a strictly-defined role that requires slow motion and steady growth, you can be sure that the individual will lose interest and motivation very quickly, resulting in overall disengagement and underperformance.

#### **Next, Align the Right Talent with Organisational Needs**

Acknowledging and understanding the type of talents the company hires, develops, and retains to operate and grow the business is mission critical to its future success. There is no point in putting steady contributors in roles that expect them to significantly transform and develop the business. At the other extreme, placing a key influencer into a position that only requires slow, consistent, acceptable, and stable growth is not an optimal use of talent either. Perfectionists



and quick fixers fall somewhere in between and work best only in environments that value steady growth or short-term planning.

Proper alignment between what the organisation wishes to accomplish with the right talent to achieve those goals will result in finding that sweet spot. The net result provides a number of advantages for the organisation:

- Elimination of mismatched employees who are potentially better suited to working in a different capacity or even another company.
- Focus on nurturing and motivating appropriate talent.
- Avoidance of over- or under-paying individuals who are unsuitable in their present jobs, perhaps due to their own fault, lack of guidance, or erroneous hiring practices.

Finally, the Bottom Line With the appropriate, practical, and truthful optics – in terms of future growth plans and expectations – leadership can create a realistically aligned talent team to drive stakeholder value, productivity, and efficiency according to realistic organisation goals, capacity, and capability. The first critical question to answer is to

understand what exactly the organisation wishes to accomplish, for example:

- Does your organisation want only steady and consistent growth?
- Does your organisation wish to develop the next killer service or product?
- Does your organisation wish only to defend its position in the marketplace?
- Does your organisation need a major transformation to survive?

In the end, all stakeholders – leaders, employees, shareholders, and the community at large – stand to benefit from forward-looking, proactive, and intelligent decisions that may significantly affect all parties. The key is finding the talent sweet spot. In essence, that means placing the right talent in the right job for the right organisation at the right time.



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