



## Seven battle-grounds to fight and win a new talent war

*“Too many companies are wasting their resources - their people and their financial leverage - by perpetuating outdated approaches to talent management.”*

DeAnne Aguirre, Laird Post & Sylvia Ann Hewett

## Trouble in the world of talent management



March 2010, and the brightest and best in talent management are attending a Conference Board event in California. For delegate [George Ambler](#)<sup>1</sup>, the speakers attempt to project a positive and up-beat message. But the mood among delegates in the coffee breaks is very different. They are discussing the **problem of talent management**.

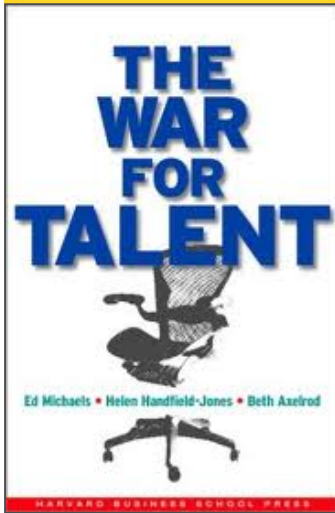
A public sector delegate is concerned that internal talent pipelines keep producing the wrong kind of leader. Someone from a retail firm expresses her frustration that promotion paths are being blocked by mediocre managers. Other delegates share their anxieties that their organisations are struggling to identify genuine talent.

Ambler came away from the event asking some challenging questions:

- do we know what we're looking for? Or are we still in the dark about the concept of talent?
- is talent management simply a slogan? Is anyone putting this stuff into practice to make it stick?
- is anyone tracking what we're doing to see if it works? And do we know what to do to get better?

<sup>1</sup> [http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2010/03/todays\\_biggest\\_talent\\_manageme.html](http://blogs.hbr.org/cs/2010/03/todays_biggest_talent_manageme.html)

## The War For Talent: 10 years ago



Remember “The War for Talent”. In 2001, this was a key book in the evolution of the discipline of talent management. Previously, a mix of activities, everything from recruitment, performance management, career development and succession planning, talent management arrived on the scene with the publication of “The War For Talent”. Business success arises when organisations follow the five tenets of:

- **develop a talent mind set:** building an obsession with people to drive business performance
- **create an employee value proposition:** reviewing current employment practices to create an environment in which talent can flourish
- **rebuild your recruitment strategy:** being proactive in the search for talent at every level
- **accelerate the development of talent:** look for imaginative way to test and stretch emerging talent
- **differentiate and affirm your people:** encouraging honesty in rewarding superior performance and tackling performance problems

## What went wrong

Embarrassingly for the authors, the keenest advocate of the talent prescription had been a company called Enron<sup>1</sup>, an organisation whose financial implosion is now the stuff of business folk lore, who had taken “The War For Talent” seriously, and implemented all five of the talent tenets.

*“We found at Enron, as well as other companies we studied, a pervasive belief that performance and competitiveness are achieved with better talent”*

Ed Michaels et al, 2001 “The War For Talent”

**Developing a talent mind set**, the sensible belief that people make a difference became **an obsession that individual contribution is the driver of business success. For Enron, whatever the “smartest guys in the room” touched would turn to business gold.**

**Creating an employee value proposition** should be the review of current employment practices to build an environment in which talent can flourish. For Enron it created a **“them and us” culture in which the “super stars” flourished and others were ignored.**

**Rebuilding the recruitment strategy** is proactivity in the search for talent at every level. For Enron it was a resourcing plan to **buy in the “best, bright and beautiful” at inflated salaries that undermined continuity of culture and purpose.**

**Accelerating the development of talent** is finding imaginative ways to test and stretch emerging talent. In Enron it resulted in the **over-promotion of inexperienced individuals who got out of their depth and simply weren’t up to the challenge.**

**Differentiate and affirm your people** could have led to greater honesty in rewarding superior performance and tackling performance problems. Instead for Enron it created a **“rank-and-yank” performance management strategy played out in talent reviews that became known as the “pit of vipers”**, fuelling suspicion, self-seeking behaviour, a breakdown of trust and ultimately corruption.

<sup>1</sup> [The Talent Myth](#) Malcolm Gladwell



# Best practice surveys and research reports

The talent management industry - that grouping of business schools, think tanks and consultancy practices - generate 100's of reports each year.

Some are obvious marketing wheezes positioned to promote a particular message: the announcement of new software kit, a show stopping assessment method for talent identification, or a new technique in leadership development.

Others, based on a misunderstanding of success<sup>1</sup>, recycle the practices and processes of companies who have wrongly been judged to be “best practice”. As the Deloitte<sup>2</sup> research team point out in “A Random Search for Excellence”, the “great company” analysis delivers “fables not facts”. Here we follow a narrow set of show case firms, successful only by virtue of short-term luck rather than by any enduring set of successful practices. Remember that Enron won Fortune magazine’s Most Admired Company award in 2001.

Fortunately other research, drawing on evidence-based practice, pinpoints key themes (e.g. the re-emergence of work force planning, the inter-play of talent and diversity, and alternative ways of defining talent and the tactics for high impact talent reviews) in how the talent war is changing and what progressive organisations are doing to rethink their battle plan.



<sup>1</sup> [The Halo Effect](#)

<sup>2</sup> [A Random Search For Excellence](#)

## Challenges for the future talent war

The latest reviews and surveys in the “world of talent management” make it clear that talent management is set to remain on the corporate agenda. In the 2010 [State of Talent Management survey](#), 72% of talent management professionals see the war continuing, anticipating difficulties in filling critical vacancies with high quality talent.

Notwithstanding the recent economic down turn, organisations recognise that:

- expertise, know-how and skill are increasingly important to competitive success
- the quirky laws of supply and demand of bio-demographics within the business landscape mean these talents won't be accessed easily



Talent wars continue. The issue is: are we fighting old battles or preparing for a new war? Here is our take on the seven battle grounds that will identify who wins and loses the war.

*“Organize as if the company's survival depends on talent management. It does!”*

**Boston Consulting Group**

# Seven battle grounds for the future talent war

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- 1. Create a new blue print of success.** The conventional competency listing of 10-15 dimensions has well and truly been tested, as has the performance-potential 9 box grid. They haven't fully worked. Are there alternative ways to think about talent?
- 2. Rethink how we assess talent.** When a meta analysis of assessment centres - the supposed gold standard of assessment - shows a major decline in predictive validity<sup>1</sup>, we need to review how we assess emerging professionals, managers and leaders.
- 3. Accelerate leadership development.** The last decade saw a major upsurge in development activity, and the implementation of a range of different philosophies, frameworks and techniques. What should we do to ensure our development tactics go beyond what Dave Ulrich describes as the "frou frou trap" - "the cute, popular and faddish trends that don't add up to long-term value" - to ensure we make a positive impact?
- 4. Simplicity of process to focus on the fundamentals.** Most sensible line managers want to manage talent; they know it drives their business area forward. But they don't want to wade through treacle to do it. How do we eliminate the "complexity of stuff" to make it easy to manage talent without resorting to simplistic solutions?
- 5. Integration of activity to coordinate effort.** This is talent management guided by a well understood business strategy, shared philosophy, operating ground rules and a coherent framework to ensure that different practices - from front line recruitment to Board succession - are "joined up" rather than a series of ad hoc activities.
- 6. Clarifying accountabilities for action planning and discipline in the follow through.** Sustainable talent management practice needs to be embedded within the organisation as "the way we do business". This is talent management as a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities to achieve consistency of long-term effort. This is the battle ground in which talent management is more about critical conversations and robust metrics than any new process initiative.
- 7. Proactivity about diversity.** This is going beyond the debate "do we have sufficient representation of specific demographic groups at senior levels?" important though the debate is. It is positioning diversity as a key element within an overall talent management game-plan. Currently "fear is in the driving seat" in discussions about diversity. We need to move to greater confidence to harness its gains<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>[Why Assessment Centre Validity Is Falling and What To Do About It](#)

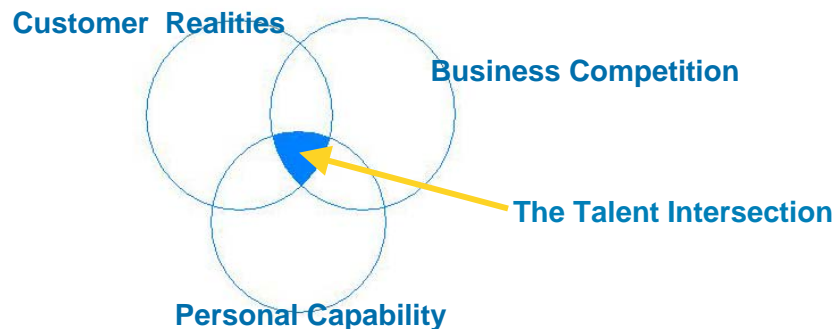
<sup>2</sup> [www.diversitygains.com](http://www.diversitygains.com)

## Battle ground 1: a new talent blue print

According to McKinsey's "The War for Talent", talent is "the sum of a person's abilities, intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character and drive. It also includes the ability to learn and grow." Here, talent seems to be an aggregation of everything. Undeterred by this loose definition, the authors of "The War for Talent" suggest that "you simply know it when you see it." Well if it's that easy to spot, we're not sure what all the fuss is about.

The problem of course is that talent is difficult to define and to describe.

A strategic perspective to talent management starts from the concept that talent, rather than being "all things sugar and spice" is **"the intersection of exceptional levels of unusual ability that are important to your customers and help differentiate you from your competitors."**



**Customer Realities.** Expertise, know how and skill combine to be a talent only if the customer says so. We might not like the enormous differential in rewards between Premier League footballers and medal winning Olympic Games athletes. But customers pay large sums to watch Premier League football matches; they don't for athletics. Talent is only talent if there is demand for it in the market place.

**Business Competition.** Advanced capability in project management isn't a talent if all your competitors are equally proficient in the planning, coordination and implementation of projects to budget and time scale. But if your competitors aren't skilled in contract negotiation, this is a critical talent of huge advantage to your organisation. Talent management doesn't focus on each and every possible competency, only those that help create strategic space in the market place.

**Personal Capability.** Once the ability to manipulate huge amounts of financial data was an important talent. Spreadsheets have now made this skill commonplace. But commercial acumen - the aptitude to spot profitable opportunities from financial analysis - remains a talent in demand. It calls on a combination of business experience, a particular attitude to risk, and a complex set of critical and creative thinking skills that is rare. Unusual blends of capabilities amount to talent.

## Battle ground 1: a new talent blue print

Talent, from a strategic perspective, isn't a simple listing of generic competencies. This isn't to ignore the attributes and skills that underpin professional and leadership effectiveness. But we shouldn't confuse the competencies of operating effectiveness with the unusual and exceptional talents our customers value and which differentiate us from our competitors, and which should be the focus of our efforts.

The future war for talent won't be won by those organisations who import off the shelf competency listings or rely on the vague concept of "potential". It will be won by those who understand this intersection of customers, competition and capability to pinpoint the specific dynamics of their business model.

Instead of generating another list of competencies, it's worth asking:

- which talents underpin the products and services our current and future customers want?
- what will set us apart from our business rivals also keen to attract these customers? What will we have to do to provide a superior service and experience for our customers that creates the big space between us and our competitors?
- what mix of experience, know how, expertise, skill-set and attitude will make it difficult for anyone to copy our recipe of success?



This debate may not create a nice neat list of competency dimensions, but it will generate a robust blue print to shape talent management priorities:

- the roles that are emerging as pivotal to future success
- the key individuals we need to recruit and retain for the future
- where succession exposure will be a corporate vulnerability and where coverage is a business opportunity
- where learning and development effort needs to be directed

Why has the last decade of talent wars been so troublesome?

Maybe because most effort was directed at generic competencies rather than factor in the specifics of expertise and know-how that are critical to competitive success and underpin exceptional performance. This is talent management confusing the factors that "get you to play at the table" with the skills that will "win the game".

## Battle ground 2: rethink the assessment of talent

When the supposedly gold-plated method of assessment centres shows falling validity<sup>1</sup> - now struggling to predict more than 10% of future effectiveness - it's time to rethink how we identify talent.

To our mind, talent management took a wrong turn when it assumed that “black box” assessment was the solution to improving the decisions we make in recruitment, promotion and redeployment.

This isn't to downplay the impact of well designed psychometric tests or 360 feedback instruments. They should make a contribution to improved talent decision making. But it is to question the prevalence of the “gadgets and gimmicks” of assessment technology in which generalisations of effectiveness and progression are based on spurious evaluations of limited validity. Tarot card assessments of long-term potential may provide the reassurance of certainty, but they won't make a practical difference to the future business.

*“I have yet to see any method that can predict a person's development more than a short time ahead.”*

Peter Drucker



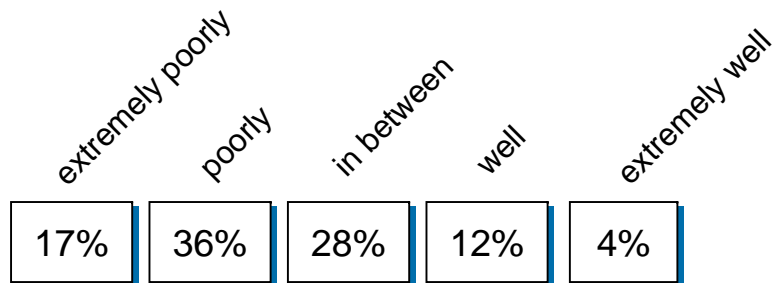
Talent wars won't be won by the organisation who introduces an amazing “black box” assessment tool that promises outstanding levels of predictive power.

Peter Drucker is spot on. The complexities of human nature, the realities of social cooperation and competition, and the fundamentals of business life mean that any attempt at long-term forecasting of an individual's future effectiveness is flawed.

<sup>1</sup> Validity of assessment centres for personnel selection, Thornton et al, Human Resource Management Review, 2009

## Battle ground 2: rethink the assessment of talent

A few years ago we ran a survey of talent management practice which included the question: “How well is data from different assessment sources integrated to provide meaningful career recommendations?”



If we're fighting talent wars, it seems it's often being fought in a Dickensian world of folders and filing cabinets, in which CVs, appraisal data, psychometric test results and assessment centre reports, reside in different locations, or are caught up in competing HR systems.

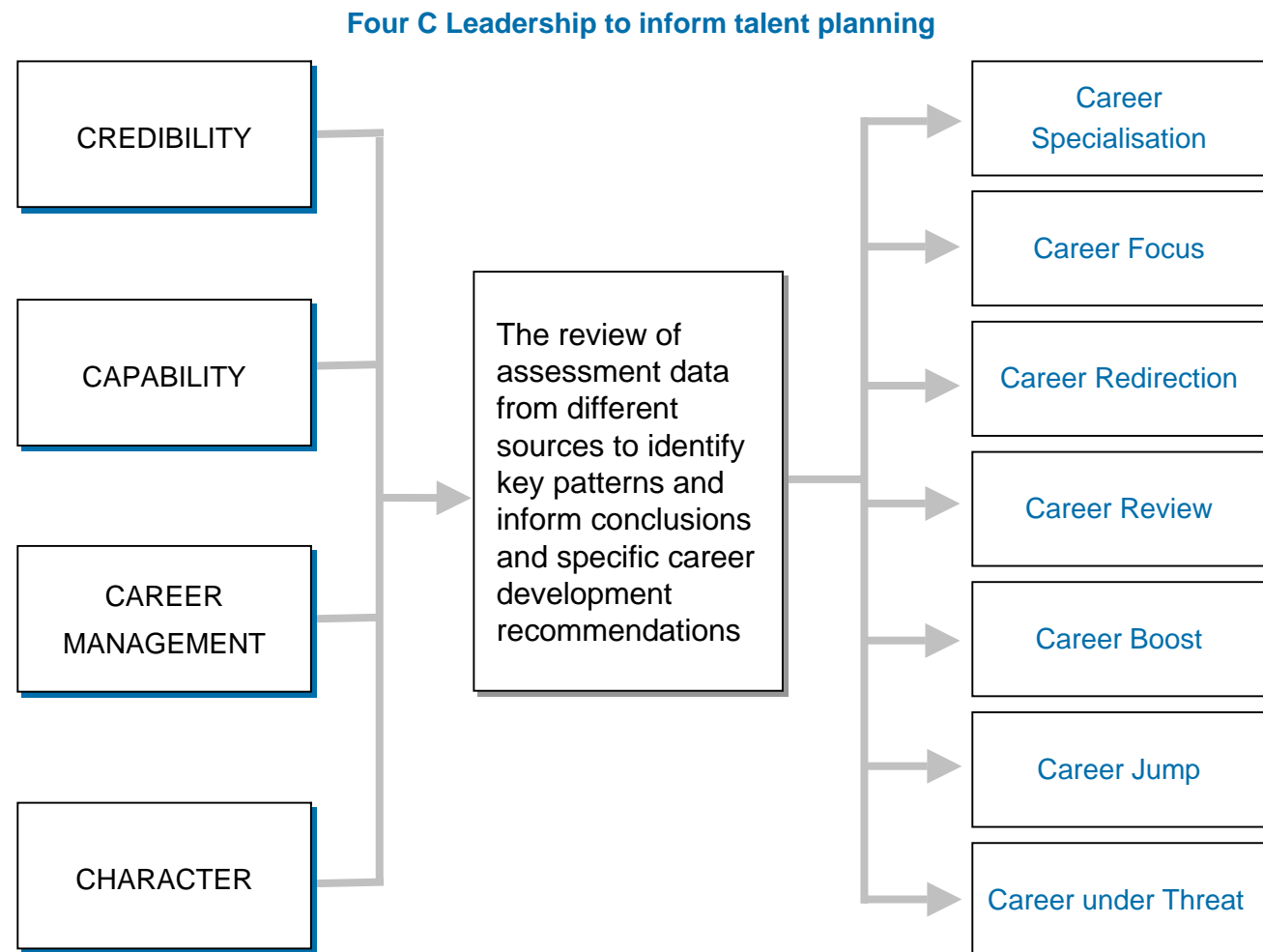
Before we introduce a new assessment tool maybe we should revisit the information we do capture, how it is consolidated and integrated to inform talent decision making, or at least ask the question: do we know what to do with the results?

Talent wars may be less about finding new ways to assess talent, and more about improving our current processes to ensure we're turning data into intelligence to provide key insights to shape the discussion about key individuals and their career progression.

## Battle ground 2: rethink the assessment of talent

The aim of an assessment strategy is to map out how the building blocks of effectiveness<sup>1</sup> combine to identify different “talent segments” that inform development planning and career progression options.

This is to move from the attempt to provide a summary index of “potential” (essentially good vs. bad guys) to think more insightfully about the range of different professional and management permutations, and what responses are needed to accelerate their development.



<sup>1</sup> [Rethinking Leadership Realities: the dynamics of the Four Cs](#)

## Battle ground 3: accelerate development

There seems to be two philosophies of talent management.

The first - **the “right stuff” school** - sees talent as a set of qualities and attributes that is pretty much hard-wired by the time new recruits turn up at the work-place. Some have the right stuff, others don't. The talent management agenda is about spotting this “stuff” and fast tracking its progression. This is the hard-nosed perspective of the psychometricians who armed with the assessment black box separate the managerial wheat from the chaff. It is also the outlook of the “strengths-based movement” with its assumption that because people don't change that much, it's more effective to identify and play to existing strengths<sup>1</sup>.

The alternative outlook - **“everyone is brilliant”** - suggests that we all have the potential for outstanding achievement. In the language of Tony Robbins, the talent management challenge is to “awaken the giant within” and move everyone towards exceptional levels of performance. The focus here is less on assessment and more on development, and the interventions that build the capability to realise this potential.

A balanced approach to talent development recognises:

- not everyone is a future leader; we need to place our bets on those with the attributes and mind-set that are more likely to succeed
- leaders are not “born”, but made in the experience of success and failure, triumph and adversity that builds resilience and versatility

In “The Republic”, Plato set out his vision for equipping leaders for the ideal political state. Mapping out the key steps in the process, Plato felt after 50 years of development, the candidates would be ready to rule.

Unfortunately we don't have 50 years development time. The challenge in talent wars is **to identify the specific strategies and tactics that will work for different individuals** to accelerate the development process. Fortunately we now have an insight into the development strategies and tactics that seem more effective<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> [Is Strengths Based Development Weakening Your Talent Pipeline?](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Acceleration: 7 principles to speed up leadership development](#)

## Battle ground 3: accelerate development

Acceleration happens when:

- we begin with the **individual in context**. Group based programmes have enormous value in reinforcing key organisational messages about culture and in forging networks of leadership trust. They won't however deliver the gains of a process that is personalised and customised to the individual. Coaching has its critics; nonetheless, in its focus on the individual - their current starting point and desired destination - it represents a powerful accelerator of development<sup>1</sup>.
- **new experiences are opened up**. Leaders develop when they lead, and when they have to lead in different and unfamiliar situations. Class room training and action learning sets are helpful. But capability and character is forged in the crucible of real life experience. This is talent development, less as the allocation of a budget for business education and management training, and more about ensuring that key individuals are given progressive exposure to the range of experiences that keep extending their repertoire of skills and operating styles<sup>2</sup>.
- we **make it easy for individuals to take risks** to learn and grow. An organisational culture dominated by the fear of failure will find it tough to develop its next generation of leaders. If "honest failure" is sidelined or fired, aspiring talent gets the message: leave or stay within the current comfort zone of low risk.

### 3 As of Leadership Experience

- **Accountability**: putting individuals in those roles where there are clear expectations of outcomes and criteria to evaluate contribution, and where there is pressure to deliver "big results". This isn't sink or swim". It is the recognition that genuine talent needs to be tested and proved by taking on new responsibilities and making an organisational difference.
- **Adversity**: giving emerging leaders the challenges which require them to dig deep and discover new qualities in themselves. The "natural born strengths" perspective seems to operate around the assumption of an orderly organisational world, of clearly defined roles in which individuals pick and choose which talents they deploy. But leadership in the real world is messy, asking tough questions, not only of existing strengths but also how to address gaps and constraints.
- **Autonomy**: giving individuals the scope to do things their way. If leadership is largely about managing uncertainty and challenge, then its development cannot be summarised in a "how-to-check-list". Development assignments should have clear outcomes but allow individuals the freedom and discretion to achieve those outcomes their way, through exercising their initiative.

<sup>1</sup> [10 Years On: Succession management, organisational survival and success](#)

<sup>2</sup> [33 Leadership Things To Do Before You Retire](#)

## Battle ground 3: accelerate development

Talent wars will be won by those organisations who take calculated risks.

This is the kind of risk taking that is imaginative in identifying “who and when” to spot which individuals should gain exposure to new and unfamiliar challenges (not simply promoting more of the same).

It is this kind of imagination that also identifies the real life experiences that are becoming increasingly important to future success (not simply designing a development programme that is a rerun of the current senior team’s career path).

But accelerated development isn’t reckless. It is also calculated in the shrewd evaluation of those individuals who will gain most from accelerated experience, and in establishing an infrastructure (of regular reviews, coaching and mentoring) to support individuals in taking on new challenges.



*“In our analysis of Career Tactics<sup>1</sup>, the consistent theme that predicts both personal fulfilment and rapid progression is the scale Using New Challenges To Develop Quickly.”*

Susanna Douglas-Mann

<sup>1</sup> [Career Tactics, Leadership Effectiveness and Progression](#)

## Battle ground 4: keep it simple

Complexity is easy. Throw lots of factors into the talent management mix and hope that others manage to make sense of it. Simplicity is tough. It requires long and hard thinking to work through the issues to identify the fundamental causal dynamics and generate solutions that are both robust and practical.

Anything that involves the dynamics of human nature and organisational life is of course going to be complicated. The challenge is to locate the level of detail that is usable and insightful.

On the one hand, the much loved performance-potential grid seems too simplistic, lacking the sensitivity to pinpoint the specific issues that inform meaningful action planning. On the other hand, many competency frameworks are engineered to the point they are unworkable in the practicalities of application, e.g. interview protocols, workshop design, performance reviews or succession planning meetings.

The trick is to find the format that is simple for end users to access but incorporates “behind the scene” complexity to provide sufficient insight and meaning.

*“Our analysis found that the perceived simplicity of a talent practice is a key driver of its effectiveness.”*

State of Talent Management  
Survey, 2010

### 4 Problems with the Performance-Potential Grid

1. **it doesn't differentiate across the target population being reviewed.** Typically there is a huge skew in the plotting of individuals. And it's difficult to imagine too many individuals low on performance being highly evaluated as the high potential that is prioritised as key talent.
2. **it begs the question “potential for what?”** Potential to do anything and everything? Probably not. Potential to progress to the next level? To any role? Again, probably not? The potential word seems too broad brush a concept to do anything other more than be short-hand for “future value”.
3. **it doesn't result in meaningful action planning.** Performance-potential grids create much debate, but there is less evidence of follow up actions. In order to put in place practical career development recommendations, potential needs to be broken down into its elements, and be clear about the specific factors that are constraining progression.
4. **it makes it difficult to have authentic conversations** with individuals as part of a debrief. Talent conversations can be tough enough without making it next to impossible for line managers to have informed discussions with their team members. Either the talent review process and its outcomes is a closed process, or managers are forced on the back foot to explain judgements about an organisational evaluation they find difficult to either defend or do much about.

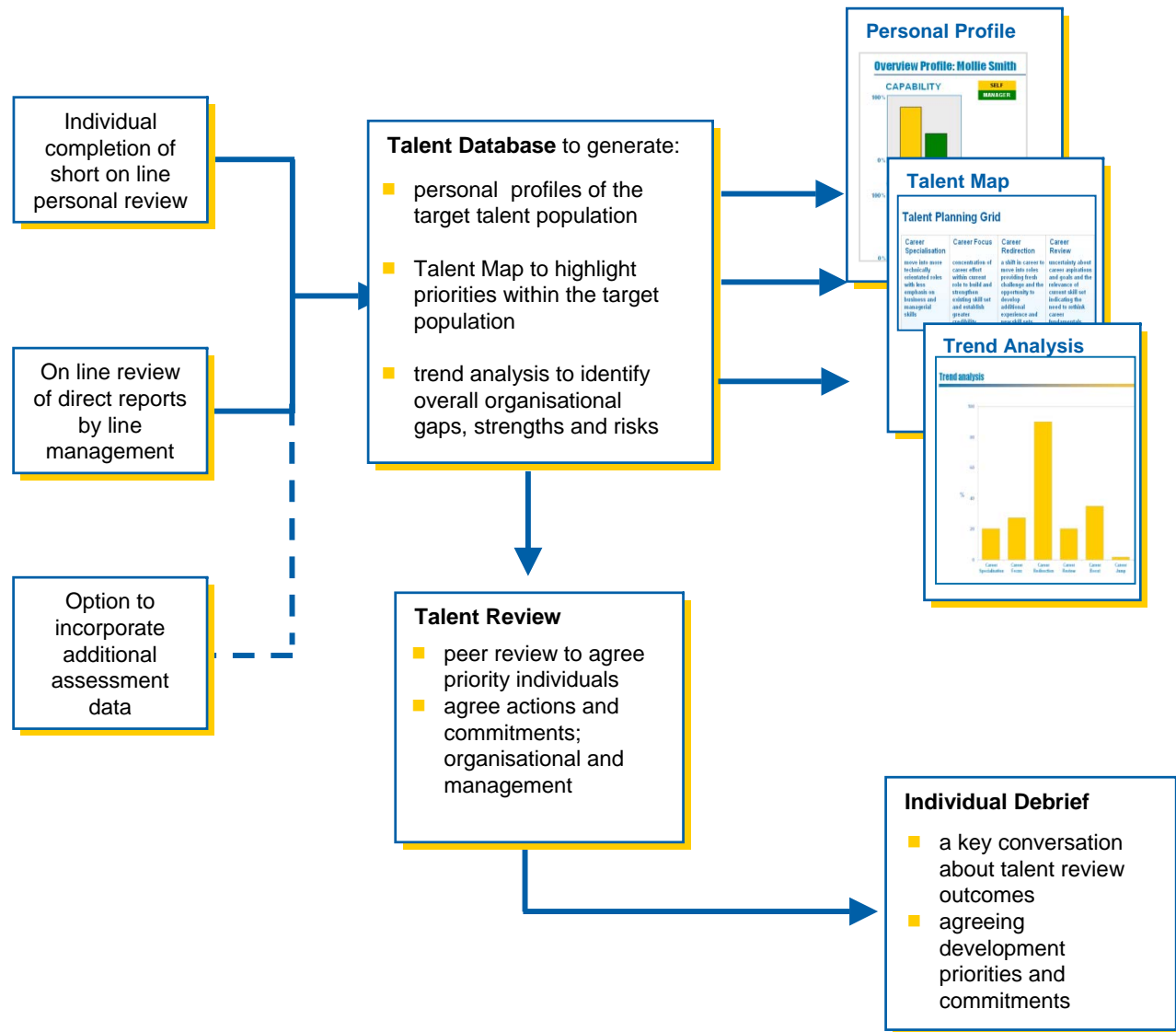
# Battle ground 4: keep it simple

For us the hub of an effective talent strategy is that review session in which line managers meet to take a collective view of talent priorities:

- who do we need to retain in mission critical roles?
- who do we need to invest in to accelerate their development?
- who should consolidate their current skill sets?
- who needs a new role to revitalise their energies and talents?
- who represents a blockage to the pipeline of future talent?

and agree next steps, actions and commitments.

A combination of a few powerful questions, smart on line technology, and management commitment ensures this simple process becomes a key driver of talent planning.



## Battle ground 5: integration of effort

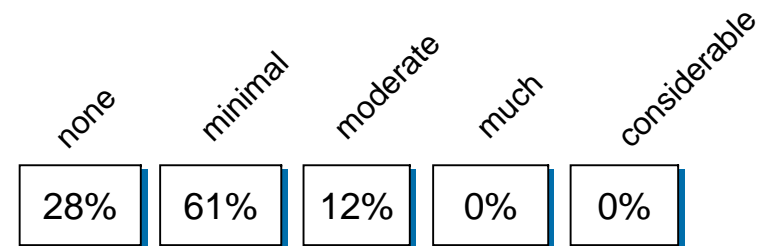
We decide to “raise the game” by bringing in new talent to energise and revitalise the work force and move the organisation in a different direction. Twelve months later we’re puzzling why turnover among the new recruits is so high, and why the business hasn’t made much progress.

The chances are that we lacked a coherent talent game plan to join up the dots across inter-connected activity. This is when imaginative and targeted recruitment isn’t accompanied by attention to the induction process or aligned with a shift in rewards policy. It is also when a high potential programme is introduced for fast track career development but the succession planning process remains a corridor conversation in the executive suite.

Organisational life, characterised by uncertainty, change and complexity, means we won’t always get all the “ducks lined up a row”, but we can achieve greater consistency by:

- clarifying the “how and what” of recruitment and selection against agreed standards
- managing the induction process to set the tone of performance and manage two way expectations of success
- conducting candid performance reviews to confront the under-performance of C players, identify ways to keep stretching the B players, and guide those A players with high expectations of career progression
- recognising and rewarding effectiveness in talent management practice
- running talent reviews and exercises in succession planning that engage senior level management in exploring how the business is changing

Our survey of talent management practice asked the question: “How would you evaluate your organisation in the recognition and reward of line managers for their effectiveness in developing staff?”



As Einstein pointed out, the true definition of madness is repeating the same action, over and over, hoping for a different result.”

If we seriously believe that talent is key to our future business success, we shouldn’t expect to win talent wars if we don’t appreciate success in the associated battles.



## Battle ground 6: accountability and the discipline of follow through

The wise old sage of Omaha, Warren Buffett noted that “boring is better.” Speaking as the world’s second wealthiest individual, it’s advice worth noting.

When talent management is seen as a series of gimmicks, introduced within a culture that lacks management accountability or the commitment to make things stick, we’re in trouble.

Marshall Goldsmith points out talent is developed in organisations when accountabilities are understood and commitments are made to the follow through. This kind of discipline doesn’t necessarily make for a compelling conference presentation, but it is the reality of how talent management is implemented and sustained.

This is talent wars won through:

- **attention to the detail** of every aspect of the talent pipeline, from the specifics of recruitment advertising to the room layout of meetings for succession reviews
- the explicit **mapping of roles and responsibilities** to articulate expectations of the different constituent groups. This is a clear understanding of the top team’s personal involvement, Divisional and departmental imperatives, the positioning and priorities of the HR function, and the obligations of line managers and employees
- the discipline of **success metrics**. Talent wars amounts to a series of skirmishes to keep ahead of (or leap frog) the competition. But progress needs to be tracked to evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of activity, and evaluate how talent practice is improving supply for future demand



## Battle ground 7: talent management as a proactive stance towards diversity

Diversity is currently viewed as a “bit of a nuisance”. It demands attendance on awkward or patronising workshops that make us feel more fearful and less confident about diversity in the workplace<sup>1</sup>. Or it requires us to track and submit recruitment, retention and promotion statistics as an exercise in impression management to be seen to be doing “the right thing”.

This is diversity as a defensive manoeuvre and largely an exercise in organisational hypocrisy to protect the organisation from legal threat. It certainly isn't positioning diversity as a key dynamic of greater productivity and creativity.

The workplace is shifting, and talent management must move beyond “fearful compliance” to the proactive management of diversity. The research base is clear. Diversity, in the short-run, may be challenging but yields longer-term gains.

Diversity as an integral theme within talent management isn't simply a shift in recruitment practice. It requires a rethink about how work is organised and roles are structured, and the kind of culture that encourages greater flexibility and responsiveness.

When McKinsey introduced the vocabulary of “talent wars”, diversity was not a dominant theme in its analysis. Ten years on, any organisation that doesn't recognise the fundamental shift in market-place and work-force demographics, or isn't positioned to harness the benefits of diversity (and address the short term challenges) will struggle to win talent wars.



*“A more appropriate 21<sup>st</sup> century talent model assumes a work force that is global, diverse and gender-balanced.”*

**The Talent Innovation Imperative, Strategy & Business, 2009**

<sup>1</sup> [Diversity Training: Time For A Rethink](#)

## How to win talent wars

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Formula 1, the world's premier motor racing sport, is an intensely competitive business. This is a sector in which the battle for the best aerodynamicists, best race engineers and best drivers, is fought at a ferocious level. This is a competitive world where the margin between success and failure on the racetrack is measured in tenths of a second, and translates into hundreds of millions of dollars in annual accounts.

Each racing team has a budget, the money raised partly by prize money from previous racing success, by TV revenues, and above all, by sponsorship funds. Sponsors of course want to see success, and racing success creates more sponsorship money to fund future competition.

Every year, each racing team is faced with a series of complex decisions in the allocation of its budget. How should it spend its money to maximise its ability to win the championship? Does it place its bets on:

- **buying in** an established world champion, a less expensive proven contender, or a free “rookie” new to Formula 1
- **race car design and engineering** to build the most competitive car on the track and achieve the optimal combination of speed and reliability
- the **team infrastructure** and support to sustain a testing programme, to plan and coordinate logistical back up to mount a competitive challenge throughout the ten month season

It's 1996 and racing team Ferrari are concerned. It has been 17 years since their last championship win. Ferrari decides to fight talent wars.

They bring in twice winning champion, Michael Schumacher, as its lead driver. But Ferrari know that Schumacher, however exceptional as a racer, won't win in a slow car. Ferrari also recruit Ross Brawn, a shrewd engineer, and Rory Byrne as chief designer, to mastermind the development of a car that could fight at the front row of the grid.

But a racer in a fast car won't be enough either. Handily, a few years before, it had brought in Jean Todt, the former team manager of the successful Peugeot rally team, to coordinate the entire racing enterprise.

This is Ferrari fighting talent wars to build a “package” of driver, car and infrastructure.

Success didn't happen immediately. It wasn't until 2000 that Ferrari won the championship. But when it rediscovered its winning ways, it sustained its initial promise to win seven constructors' championships in the next 10 years.

Talent wars are won by fighting on several battle grounds, not relying on recruitment to attract and hire exceptional individuals. Talent wars hinge on a culture that reinforces a success mindset, the coordination of different skill-sets, and attention to the detail of organisational infrastructure to enable everyone to give of their best.

## About Us

AM Azure Consulting Ltd works with a broad portfolio of clients in the design and implementation of on line services in recruitment and selection; management assessment, development and career management; on line leadership tool kits, 360° feedback, performance management; and talent and succession management.

If you are interested in our approach to talent management, our assessment tools, talent planning software, and our on line resource at [www.theleadershipdirectory.com](http://www.theleadershipdirectory.com) call us:

- 44 (0) 1608 654007 or email
- [admin@amazureconsulting.com](mailto:admin@amazureconsulting.com)

- **we're professionals but we're not pompous.** We are at the edge of the latest research and thinking in the field of people management, but we're not precious about the "one thing". We have some good ideas to help your organisation perform even better, but we know that you have some better ones, but want support in making them work. We don't impose the "solution".
- **we design but we also implement.** Our content, design and technology can build cost effective solutions quickly. Our consultancy experience of "real world" implementation and our levels of client service will move things forward from initial concept to results rapidly.
- **we start things to build momentum but we also follow through.** Results come from the discipline of "making it stick", of evaluation, learning and continual improvement. And we maintain ongoing relationships with our clients to keep achieving positive outcomes.

