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Talent as the Main Driver of Business

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Major economic uncertainty and unpredictability have resulted in fundamental structural changes on many fronts. Financial, economic, demographic, geopolitical, technological, ecological and value systems have been redefined, redesigned and reinvented. The ecosystem that has been dominant in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for the last 50 years is no longer sustainable in today's environment, as an economic bifurcation is growing between "rich" OECD countries and emerging markets, increasing the risk of nationalism and protectionism. The world of work continues to undergo pivotal transformations and adjust to a new ecosystem (the Human Age), in which human potential itself will become the major agent of economic growth.

The ability to attract and retain talents will become a serious competitive advantage of one's company in the Human Age. Adapting to this new environment will require a new focus on new priorities. Employers must reconsider their work models and people practices and develop a robust work force strategy that in a sense "manufactures" the talent they need to execute their long-term business strategy.

According to ManpowerGroup's 2011 Annual Talent Shortage Survey of nearly 40, 000 employers across 39 countries and territories, the overwhelming majority (89 percent) of companies cited a lack of experience, technical skills deficiencies or poor soft skills among available candidates as a bar to employability. In this situation the right work force strategy and the right steps in solving this problem are the key competitive differentiators, helping a company survive and win.

Let us look at different sources of talent that can improve employer's work force pipeline.

- Tap overlooked and underused talent pools. The recent spikes in unemployment have particularly afflicted younger age groups. A Guardian newspaper article in April 2011

reported that 40 percent of the unemployed in Britain are between the ages of 16 and 24. Such numbers have spurred serious social problems. In one 2011 survey, unemployment was the most cited reason for youths joining gangs or rebel causes. Yet, while young people often do not possess the experience or skills that companies need, they can learn quickly. By taking a more active role in schools and vocational training programs and creating their own development initiatives, organizations can make better use of this age group. Germany, whose economy has outpaced those of many other traditional industrialized nations, has already made inroads in this direction through a well-established internship system. Growing older populations will also offer opportunities for companies to enhance their work forces. In the past, many companies considered these workers too old, set in their ways or not worth the investment because they were unlikely to work for many years. But in recent years, companies have discovered that such groups are easily retrainable. A German initiative has focused to great success on connecting companies with retirees still vital enough to handle a full-time job. Older workers have a sound understanding of appropriate workplace behavior, and with advances in health care, may have the energy to work comfortably into their late 60s and 70s. The potential return on investment for companies is huge.

- Strategically migrate in-demand talent within and across countries. Talent mobility has grown worldwide. ManpowerGroup's 2011 Borderless Workforce Survey of more than 25,000 employers from 39 countries and territories has found that about one quarter of responding employers have been seeking foreign talent to solve their skills shortages. Companies in the United States were the most likely to seek foreign talent. China was among the countries in which employers were least likely to look externally. The same is true for highly qualified specialists in Russia.
- Re-evaluate how to assess, recruit, develop and compensate talent in certain markets. This will be necessary in a more "glocalized" world where people's perspectives vary widely. Given increased public access to information, companies will be under more pressure to make fair decisions everywhere. Techniques used in managing these fundamental HR functions will vary among locations.
- Collaborate with educational institutions and government. For decades, schools and universities set curriculum with nary a glance at business needs. This has created the present skills gap and a general lack of understanding of proper work force comportment. Improved collaboration will produce better trained workplace candidates.
- Develop a broad understanding of social media functions. Many companies have improved their use of social media to enhance their employer brands, which attracts qualified candidates. Some have assigned individuals not only to file items that are informative and reflect well on the company but to monitor commentary: criticism and praise. A few such social media specialists target influencers, key individuals who via their writings and expertise can sway opinion about organizations. Followers of companies, including job candidates, increasingly rely on social media to learn about salary, benefits and how particular managers treat their employees. But companies can also use social media to find out more about job candidates faster. These potential employees reveal much about their careers through their postings and interactions on social media sites. Some companies are also using outside consultancies effectively in their HR-related social media activities.

Hopefully the "tips" given above will help companies survive in a new ecosystem and attract

gifted specialists as the main drivers of business.

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