



Planning a future-ready workforce

When it comes to future-proofing top talent, organisations that fail to be proactive run the risk of missing out. Securing top-level backing is crucial and comes down to defining resource planning and selling its impact using language the C-suite will relate to.

Understanding the challenge

The fourth industrial revolution brings massive disruption to the world of work. The proliferation of automation and artificial intelligence (AI), an explosion of other nascent technologies and an ever-widening skills gap are just three reasons why it's nigh on impossible to predict with any confidence how tomorrow's workforce will look.

From a resource-planning perspective there are a myriad of other factors to consider – including the millennial and Gen Z trend to strive for more meaningful work, the rapid rise of freelancers and the gig economy, as well as the ever-looming threats of market disruption and another global financial crisis. This all makes it perilously tricky to plan too far ahead and, therefore, to future-proof organisations.

In these uncertain times, more fool those who claim to have cracked the code in predicting what challenges the future holds – this was the sobering conclusion of the Resourcing Leaders 100 (RL100) session on this business-critical topic. How then can organisations best resource-plan for the unknown?

The bigger picture: the need for a proactive approach

Arming talent acquisition (TA) teams with modern tools – including data analysis – and top-level backing to attract and retain star employees, who are adaptable and willing to upskill, is a decent start. “Today there is no such thing as a ‘job for life’ – and it hasn’t been that way for some time,” one attendee commented.

The workshop – titled “Maximising internal resources and selecting external talent to support a future-ready workforce” and hosted by global financial services company Aon – began with illuminating statistics. Aon’s most recent Global Risk Management Survey said that finding, hiring and retaining employees with the right skills was among the most critical challenges they faced.

But worryingly, more than 50 per cent of respondents to Deloitte’s 2019 Global Human Capital Trends survey said they believed their employees would have an easier time finding a job with a new employer than within their current organisation. Furthermore, almost half (49 per cent) of those surveyed stated that a lack of processes to identify and move employees was the number-one roadblock to internal talent mobility. This leading reason was closely followed by the availability of internal employees to fill roles (48 per cent), current managers’ resistance to internal moves (46 per cent), and a lack of information for employees on available positions (45 per cent).

So what needs to change to persuade employees to seek career progression at their current place of work?

Focus on solutions: modernise mindsets, remove barriers, utilise tech, dial-up the scare factor

The majority of the RL100 audience agreed that a significant issue is the outdated mindset of businesses. “Too many companies – particularly large corporates lumbered by legacy systems – tend to be reactive, waiting for problems to happen and accepting job churn rather than being proactive,” a delegate suggested. “Businesses are getting caught focusing on today and are missing out on tomorrow.”

Another expert said a more joined-up, “holistic” attitude is required. “Break silos, knock down barriers and the human resources (HR) and finance directors, as well as the rest of the C-suite, simply have to be on the same page,” the TA leader advised. When asked how to deal with opposition to an agile approach, they added: “It’s like in football when you have the club-versus-country argument; you have to create a culture where people want to play for their nation.”

On the subject of utilising technology for resource planning, AI and humans must work in conjunction and not separately, as biases might go unchecked. Truly insightful data analysis emboldens TA teams, not least because it informs a business case, meaning the C-suite is more likely to release budget.

After all, resource planning requires support from the leadership team, and for them to be convinced the language and messaging has to be pitch-perfect. Another tactic is to dial up the “scare factor” and paint an alternative picture of the near future for the leadership team. “If you don’t do this now, then in three years we will be way behind our competitors,” should be the narrative.

In conclusion: take ownership, be agile, have a strategy

But where exactly does resource planning sit within an organisation? Initially, attendees were unclear about how to answer this. After some discussion it was decided that for best results a leadership group, or task force, should be appointed, with representatives from finance and HR departments, as well as a data analyst, someone from information technology, and a member of the C-suite.

“

“Take a project mindset and adopt an agile, iterative approach,” one RL100 member said. “Even view it as a business strategy, and then use that as a template. Start small scale, and then expand. Don’t try to boil the ocean.” Offering a final piece of advice, she added: “However, unless you find an early adopter to champion the cause and show the benefits of this method then it is challenging to resource plan for a future-ready workforce.”

”

Ultimately, the economy of the future requires a new kind of workforce planning; one that empowers diverse groups of people to respond rapidly to emerging threats and opportunities.

Top trends for talent acquisition teams in 2020

- Social mobility is increasingly important.
- Meaningful work matters more than a bigger salary for millennials and Gen Z.
- Sustainability and ethics also rank as high priorities.
- Diversity and inclusion offer more than a tick-box exercise.
- Social media and professional networks, such as LinkedIn, may not be the best routes to younger talent.
- To narrow the skills gap, companies must be proactive and offer internal training opportunities.

Six steps to improve resource planning

1. Dial up communication across the business and ensure employees have better internal career opportunities.
2. Stress to C-suite that the company must be proactive – use scare tactics if necessary.
3. Use the right language so that senior leadership really understand the need to plan resource.
4. Enlist a C-suite champion early in the process.
5. Start small scale when resource planning and use that template for bigger projects.
6. Use insights gathered through artificial intelligence in conjunction with humans – don't leave biases unchecked.

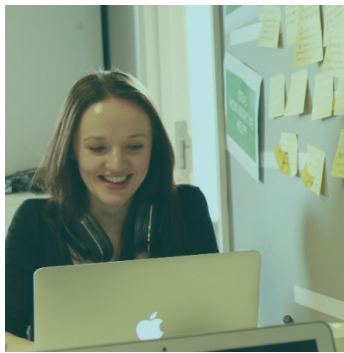
Partner



Key Contributors



Tom Lucas
Head of Client
Solutions @ Aon



Della Rath
Principal Consultant
@ Aon



Kate Phillips
Workforce
Transformation @ BSI

Contributors

Skye Cracknell, Julia Harvie-Liddel, Sarah Wallace, Tom Baker, Steve Jacobs, David Vinton, Lisa Kelly, Sav Bassi, Adrian Thomas, Andrew Willis, Nick Forkin, Daniel Harris, Simon Holland, Toni Williams, Adam Rawlings-Smith, Sasha Worthington, Charlotte Nicolson, Nigel Barker, Joanne Lee, Will Dempsey, Melissa Hannigan, Lisa Ford, Melanie Punch, Kelly Martin, Kate Phillips, Martyn Wright, Lisa Monteith, James Kennedy, Natalie Brock, Kat Rooney, Andy Clapham, Graham Charsley, Emma Smith, Sarah Dingwell, Becky Pulley, Lesa Molinari, Cath Possamai, Kat Dijkstra, Alison Miller & Matt Anderson.

