Dancing with data:
why analytics and integration will drive future success

Oleeo

Understanding the challenge

Getting data and analytics right is a key part of a successful recruitment and retention strategy. But despite years of discussion about its transformational capabilities, only the most forward-thinking organisations are using the data they have to its fullest capabilities.

The latest LinkedIn Global Talent Trends survey points to a 242 per cent increase in HR professionals with data-analysis skills in the last five years. This suggests it's not a lack of skill within the talent acquisition (TA) space that's holding companies back when it comes to creating an integrated and analytics-led function that can have a transformational effect on the business.

RL100 participants at a session – titled "Becoming an integrated and evidenced-based function" – identified the need to convince the C-suite of the value of investing in analytics and appropriate technology as a major stumbling block in this area, with many not understanding the benefits of investment.

The challenge is real, but for companies that get this right the rewards promise to be significant – from cutting down on the costs of "bad hires" to better employee-experience scores on Glassdoor and other social media.

"We believe fundamentally that embedding analytics into the recruitment process is going to drive huge change in our ability to recruit diverse and talented people into organisations," says Charles Hipps, founder of talent intelligence group Oleeo.

The bigger picture: breaking down the challenge

Members of the RL100 discussed the barriers to transforming their TA function into an integrated and analytic-led department. They came up with three main challenges that must be overcome in order to harness the power of analytics within their organisation.

● The need to raise the profile of TA within the business, so that senior leaders see the need to invest in systems and processes that give recruiters analytics capabilities.

● The issues of data integrity, standard metrics and technology. This includes the need to train internal and external recruiters to input quality data into the system, as well as to purchase or adapt technology systems within the organisation that can handle and assess employee and hiring data.

● The need to change the mindset of recruiters and other departments within the organisation. TA needs to be seen as being both proactive and reactive, and aligning with the objectives of the rest of the business.

Raising TA's profile within the business

The issue of "gaining a seat at the top table" was raised in this session, as it was in other discussions throughout the day. As one senior RL100 member pointed out *"when you are in a big organisation, you're just one of maybe 40 or 50 heads all wanting the C-suite's time, so you have to explain to them why this is important".*

Respondents suggested the value of having upfront conversations with senior leadership about the value and benefits of a good, integrated TA function. *"Use metrics to demonstrate TA's value to the business in business terms, including profit, sustainability and diversity and inclusion risk,"* said one.

"Be transparent and strategic," another suggested, while yet another urged fellow professionals to put down their perfectionism and take risks to help explain the benefits. *"I think we worry about only bringing ideas to the table when they are perfectly baked,"* they said. *"Have the courage and conviction to innovate and to pilot new approaches, without being afraid to fail."*

Focus on solutions: dealing with data and technology, and standardising quality metrics

Delegates spoke of their frustration with the quality of the data they receive, as well as reliance on systems that are outdated, or chosen by different areas of the business without much thought to TA.

"The data we receive isn't always clean," said one, adding that the use of external agencies makes this worse as data-entry can be inconsistent. Other issues included a lack of standardisation on metrics and analysis and even a lack of understanding about what needs to be measured.

"Focusing analysis on the cost and speed of hiring ignores the fact that these might be bad hires," said one RL100 Member.

Suggested solutions included greater engagement with IT providers, resulting in the ability to use tools to bring data together and get reliable insights, either by investing in new systems, building them inhouse or using new technologies developed to pull together data from a variety of sources.

Companies and sectors also need to standardise how they measure the quality of a hire. *"Metrics like quality of hire and candidate experience are soft and non-standard to measure,"* said one delegate, adding that companies need to give greater thought to how to ensure these are best captured.

Used properly, the RL100 stressed, TA data analysis can help the function to act strategically.

"A sign of success would be the ability to predict and fill vacancies before they happen," stated a delegate.

In conclusion: changing an organisation's recruitment mindset

The RL100 identified that getting the whole business on board with TA as a strategic function would support the move towards becoming more integrated and analytical.

This would involve a shift from seeing the department as simply "putting bums on seats" - in a reactive manner - to viewing TA as a key driver of success for the organisation, included in strategic and workforce planning.

Engaging senior leadership, as mentioned above, is a key way to do this. Explaining the value of TA analytics is also vital. *"It is about balancing TA's tactical agility with its strategic abilities,"* said one RL100 member. *"You need to have the right technology and skillsets."*

"We want to inform decisions, not just report trends," stated one delegate.

As an integrated and analytical function, this shift in focus is far more achievable.

Making the C-suite sit up and listen

RL100 members shared several suggestions on how to ensure that senior leadership took their function more seriously:

● **Connect it to their agenda:** *"Ask them – what's our role in helping you to achieve your bonus?"* suggested one delegate. *"That might not be your priority, but it is theirs."*

● **Focus on the reputational risk:** *"Show them social media and Glassdoor, as well as any good or bad things that are happening with competitors in this area."*

● **Use case studies:** *"Links with others in your industry can help you to explain where best practice is making a difference."*

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