



# **Transformational resourcing: a CEO's perspective**

Knowing the boardroom's attitude towards attracting and retaining talent is invaluable. To gain traction with senior leadership, seek out C-suite engagement, link plans to the organisation's core goals, use data to illustrate messages, and prepare for tough questions.

## Understanding the challenge

Many talent acquisition (TA) professionals suffer an unrequited longing for a seat at the table with the executive committee. So how can they boost their chances?

Knowing where resourcing ranks on a list of priorities for the leadership team would certainly help. Hence why the Resourcing Leaders 100 (RL100) session "View from the top – a CEO's perspective" was so useful, as it provided invaluable insights into what chief executives genuinely want. It also offered nuggets of advice about how those in TA can better communicate with an organisation's top decision makers.

The workshop, hosted by Sova – a global talent assessment technology company, providing a fully configurable assessment platform enabling organisations to make data-driven decisions that are fair, robust and explainable – focused on the view from chief executives and other members of the C-suite regarding resourcing. The session helped TAs broach business-critical conversations with senior leadership, armed with data, and advised how to translate resourcing matters so they gain traction in the boardroom.

### The bigger picture: speaking from experience

Sir David Walker, former senior Royal Air Force officer, Master of the Household to the Sovereign, former NED at HSBC, PwC and Barclays, who currently holds a directorship at TA leaders Alexander Mann Solutions and board advisor at Sova, began by delivering home truths from the boardroom. Drawing on his vast experience, Sir David stated the bottom and top lines drive commercial organisations, so the executive committee is naturally *"focused on what is going wrong. Everything else is an input to the success – or otherwise – of what the business is trying to achieve."*

He continued: *"Therefore, things that are causing friction and risks are going to be focused on greatly by the executive committee. On that basis, how often is the resourcing function going to come regularly to the mind of the executive committee?"*

The insight was clear: senior leadership teams, especially at large corporates, have a lot of ground to cover and don't possess in-depth knowledge of resourcing – and probably never will. They are primarily concerned with achieving their goals and delivering strategy, with little time for periphery elements.

## Focus on solutions: align with company goals and speak the C-suite language

However, by cleverly connecting TA and resourcing with the organisation's goals, and speaking the language of the executive committee, senior management are more likely to listen to what you have to say. Crucially, rather than feeling left out, TA professionals must prepare well and make the first move to engage with the C-suite.

For example, Sir David suggests pointing out that high tolerance to job churn is costly, training up staff is disruptive, and taking on new employees is risky. Further, to future-proof the company, CEOs will want agile and adaptable employees, and hires that are suitable both professionally and culturally. "There is a whole pile of good reasons, in terms of driving the business to great results, why the executive committee should be looking at these things and wanting their resourcing function to be working well," he added.

## In conclusion: resourcing is a vital C-suite issue

As Sir David pointed out: "All the FTSE 100 companies claim that people are their most important asset." Therefore, CEOs are more likely to listen to those in the TA department if the conversation is centred on the following three interlinked topics: the importance of building an agile workforce for the future; diversity and inclusion; and the brand and customer experience.

Dr Alan Bourne, CEO of Sova, presented data that revealed resourcing is, in fact, a vital issue for senior leadership. According to recent PwC research – taken from its 2015 and 2018 Annual Global CEO Survey – 79 per cent of CEOs are concerned about the availability of skills to deliver business strategy, while 81 per cent say they are looking for a much broader range of skills when hiring than in the past. Additionally, 56 per cent of respondents think organisations will increasingly compete in new sectors other than their own over the next three years.

Finally, Dr Bourne compiled a list of the top five things CEOs want from the human resources department:

1. **Cover the basics first – employees need to keep the wheels of the business turning.**
2. **More focus on the 'D' element of HRD – i.e. more direction from a business perspective.**
3. **Look from the outside in – question how things are done at the organisation.**
4. **Challenge the status quo and be more agile.**
5. **Hire the best people to deliver the business strategy.**

Ultimately, the main issue to home in on is this: how does an organisation build the workforce today that is going to help it deliver tomorrow? Aided with data, there's a vital need to communicate the value, and underline that talent needs to be matched with business ambition; leadership capability – current and future – must be strengthened; and critical skills have to be better understood.

## Sir David Walker's invaluable boardroom insights

- People at the top of organisations are focused on what's going wrong.
- Resourcing only comes on the radar when there are pinch points.
- There are three good reasons to drive down churn: cost; disruption; and risk
- Employees need to be a suitable fit for the organisation, both professionally and culturally.
- Employees need to be adaptable and agile to future-proof the company.
- The talent war is raging so resourcing is something that should be on a CEO's agenda.
- TAs must be active, proudly raise the flag, and link this to the bottom line.

## Lost in translation: how to engage with senior leadership

- Ensure your message aligns with the business's core goals, and determine the connecting points.
- Use data to illustrate plans, and be forceful: explain why the CEO should worry about resourcing.
- You may only have five minutes to speak, so be concise, clear and deliberative.
- Land your key message in two bullet points.
- Stress-test ideas. Before approaching senior leadership, ask ten people for feedback.
- Prepare for tough questions – and don't rely on thinking on your feet in the boardroom.
- Run all ideas by the finance department before speaking to the executive committee.
- Use simple models and creative storytelling – but change the narrative regularly.
- Build emotional bonds with the executive committee – invite them to events and to the frontline.



# Partner



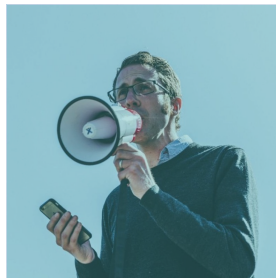
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