

The benefits of an integrated approach to talent management

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DELIVERING BUSINESS SUCCESS THROUGH PEOPLE SOLUTIONS

Talent management will and always has been a crucial component of successful business management. It is important to develop practical strategies for ensuring your key talent are engaged, motivated and ultimately committed to your organisation and its objectives. Reflecting this, Volvo Car Corporation has developed a talent management strategy that reflects the requirement for organisational capability to meet business commitments in the short, medium and long term. For Volvo, organisational capability is about having the right competences in place and the right levels of commitment to utilise those competences in an ever-changing and fiercely competitive global economy. So the starting point, for their talent management strategy is a competence framework.

The Volvo Competence Management Framework is built on the six generic competences which the company believes all employees should have. These competencies are considered essential if Volvo is to strengthen their people-centric culture; continue to operate successfully in the premium global automotive industry; and deliver on their brand promise to "design cars for a better life". For leaders, there is an additional component to the framework as they are assessed against four key competences deemed as essential in delivering business success through people. Alongside the generic employee and leadership competences, Volvo has also identified the specific competencies required for each role/function to deliver business commitments both now and in the future.

In order to determine progress against these competencies, employees and leaders are assessed (self and supervisor assessment) against the framework according to the Volvo standards of: Acquire, Apply, Guide and Shape. A development discussion is then held around

this assessment and a personal development plan is produced. As demand for learning far outweighs the resources available to satisfy all needs, any competence gaps identified are then prioritised in order of importance for business continuity. Once priorities are determined the competence area specialist group identifies ways to provide high quality learning solutions at the lowest affordable cost.

Volvo has found that their Competence Management Framework provides a greater return on investment than previous training and development activity as it enables the organisation to achieve more learning for less as a result of the systematic approach which eliminates ad hoc, subjective training requests. In addition, competence gaps are now defined and identified within a business context and so learning solutions are more closely aligned to business needs. The Framework also drives the operating management to think more radically about strategic needs in terms of competencies and so the focus is shifted from the short to medium/long term.

With many organisations currently experiencing constraints on the budgets related to managing and developing talent, it is becoming increasingly challenging to facilitate and promote a culture of continuous learning. The transparency of Volvo's Framework combats this by reinforcing a learning culture; whereby individuals take responsibility for their own learning agenda. HR guide and enable as opposed to directing staff, thereby creating a culture of career ownership amongst staff members. In addition, greater emphasis is placed on self-help solutions, blended learning, relationship-learning and experiential learning. As a result, Volvo's role is shifting away from pure provider to enabler.

A successfully implemented and managed competency framework is not only a useful performance management tool but it can also act as an indirect motivator, particularly

in the current climate where organisations are constantly seeking new and alternative means of engaging talent. Clearly defined competencies can be a useful means of integrating remote workers, ensuring that all staff are aligned and engaged with organisational goals and consistent in their approach to promoting and representing the organisation. A successful competence management framework can also give structure and direction to employees during times of change, ensuring they are fully aware of where their role 'fits' within the organisation and what they need to achieve to be successful.

The key to Volvo's talent management success lies in their integrated approach – they recognise that recruitment planning should be linked to career or succession planning and leadership development should not be seen as something disconnected from a company's Employer of Choice positioning – they are all part of a holistic talent management system. As Geoff Glover, Vice President Talent Management at Volvo Cars says: "Connectivity is the key to future business success."

With talent retention set to remain a key concern in 2010 (CIPD 2009, HDA, 2009, 2008) it is critical for all organisations to ensure they develop a proactive, integrated but diversified strategy for attracting, engaging and retaining talent now and in the future. To receive a copy of the case study in full – including information on the Volvo Lean Academy, please contact Sweta Patel - sxp@hda.co.uk

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