



**Head
Light**

Lessons from marketing: Talent as customers

part of our We think... series

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Ian Lee-Emery, Managing Director at Head Light, explores how HR is able to borrow techniques typically associated with marketing to improve its talent management activities – and offers five techniques to get you started.

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HR teams can improve talent management by borrowing five techniques from marketing.

When your workforce spans four generations, a one-size-fits-all approach to talent management is never going to cut the mustard, particularly if your model is based on the false assumption that talented employees want a long-term career in your organisation. Instead, a smarter and more targeted approach to talent management is required.

The scarcity of talent is forcing many HR teams to reconsider how they attract, engage and retain individuals with the skills they need. The balance of power has shifted towards those who possess valuable skills and away from those who need them. Consequently, talented employees are now adopting shorter-term, more transactional relationships with their employer.

Research by Henley Business School suggests that the way forward is to shift your mindset from thinking of employees as servants of your organisation, to thinking of talent as consumers. The research claims that consumer marketing approaches are now being introduced into talent management.

Your employees are consumers of the career you offer – keeping them engaged will keep them loyal. So you should aim to understand and satisfy their needs in the same way that your organisation attempts to meet the needs of customers. One thing is certain: your marketing colleagues don't think of your customers as one homogenous group. They'll gather data about consumer behaviour, they'll segment the audience, develop an enticing proposition and they'll target specific products and offers to defined customer groups.

This is an effective model for talent management. So here are five techniques that you can apply to your talent:

Identify your 'audiences'.

Pinpoint who your talented employees are and keep a record of their skills and competencies. Engage with them as early as possible in their careers. Aim to build your talent pool.

Uncover their needs.

Find out what individuals want and what drives how they think about their careers. Talk to them about their career aspirations and their motivations. What will keep them engaged? For example, is it wellbeing, recognition, involvement, autonomy, collaboration or finding meaning in their work? Good management is balancing what the organisation needs with what the individual has and what the individual wants.

Try to give them what they want.

Different employees will be engaged by different things, depending on their expectations, working preferences, development needs and the relationship they want to have with you. So, your policies and benefits will need to be flexible. But this doesn't mean you'll need an unmanageable number of engagement options. Like new car packages, they can be bundled for different talent groups.



If you lose them, win them back.

If you can't offer what your talent wants in the short- to medium-term, they're probably going to leave. However, by joining another employer, they'll inevitably gather new experience that could be valuable to your business in the future. So keep the door open for them to come back.

Make good use of analytics.

With talent management, perhaps more so than any other aspect of HR, there is unexploited value in data. Talent systems can help you to understand people's capabilities, how they're performing, their potential and exactly what will engage and motivate them. They also enable you to create 'role profiles' for specific jobs and explore multiple career paths. By making these insights readily accessible, you can give line managers the tools to have better focused and more productive talent conversations.

HR teams should be wary of the 'knowing-doing gap' in talent management. This is where you acknowledge that something needs to be done but you fail to make the necessary changes to bring it about. Those who adopt a marketing-led approach to talent management will hold a significant competitive advantage.

Next steps

If you would like to take a closer look at how you can shape your Talent Management activities to recognise the shift in the behaviours and attitudes of your talented people, then please get in touch.

About Head Light

Head Light is an award-winning talent management software and consulting firm that works with clients to define and implement impactful talent management strategies.

Talent Cloud® is our cloud-based portfolio of integrated talent management software tools designed for those who expect the maximum return from talent management processes. Our training and consulting services uniquely complement our breakthrough software that engages employees, managers and senior leaders in the selection, development and progression of people in their businesses.

Companies in the FTSE 350, public sector, large and small, from retailers to high tech innovators have all benefitted from our tools, techniques and expertise. Founded in 2004, we are headquartered in the UK.

Head Light has attained the ISO27001 standard for Information Security.
Certificate No 217613.





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