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Modern Approach to Talent Management in Organizations

The modern approach to talent management assumes that all employees possess talents, although particular attention is given to high-potential (HI PO) employees. A shift from the traditional division between “talented” and “ordinary” employees towards a more holistic approach addressing the needs of all employees is being observed. The aim of the article is to compare the perspective of management practitioners with psychological theory and to indicate where and how science can respond to practical challenges in talent management, taking into account new generational and technological phenomena. Research in management psychology indicates that a key element in improving employee effectiveness is their sense of happiness and satisfaction. The “involved life” mechanism, based on working in alignment with talents and achieving a state of flow, enables an increase in employee satisfaction and effectiveness. To achieve this state, tasks must be properly aligned with the employee’s skills, and their difficulty should slightly exceed existing competencies. Implementing this approach requires advanced managerial skills and the use of diagnostic tools, such as talent assessments. Interviews with practitioners highlight key challenges in talent management: a lack of clear communication about development program goals, insufficient managerial support, and a lack of individualized approaches to employees. Solutions may include introducing personalized development paths, calibrating employee evaluations, and fostering an organizational culture based on partnership and transparency. Further challenges include adapting to changing expectations of younger generations, such as flexible work arrangements and work-life balance. The gig economy, based on project-based work models, offers solutions that enhance job satisfaction but require advanced talent management competencies.

Keywords: talent management, positive psychology, flow, organizational culture, flexible work models

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Współczesne podejście do zarządzania talentami w organizacjach

Współczesne podejście do zarządzania talentami zakłada, że wszyscy pracownicy mają talenty, choć szczególną uwagę poświęca się pracownikom o wysokim potencjale (ang. *high-potential*, HI PO). Obserwuje się odchodzenie od tradycyjnego podziału na „utalentowanych” i „zwykłych” pracowników na rzecz bardziej holistycznego podejścia, które uwzględnia potrzeby wszystkich pracowników. Celem artykułu jest zestawienie perspektywy praktyków zarządzania z teorią psychologiczną i wskazanie, gdzie i w jaki sposób nauka może odpowiedzieć na praktyczne wyzwania w zakresie zarządzania talentami, biorąc pod uwagę nowe zjawiska generacyjne i technologiczne. Badania w psychologii zarządzania wskazują, że kluczowym elementem poprawy efektywności pracowników jest ich poczucie szczęścia i satysfakcji. Mechanizm zaangażowanego życia (ang. *involved life*), oparty na pracy zgodnej z talentami i osiąganiu stanu przepływu (ang. *flow*), umożliwia wzrost zadowolenia i skuteczności pracowników. Aby osiągnąć ten stan, zadania muszą być odpowiednio dopasowane do umiejętności pracownika, a ich trudność powinna minimalnie przewyższać posiadane kompetencje. Stosowanie tego podejścia wymaga wysokich kompetencji menedżerskich oraz wykorzystania narzędzi diagnostycznych, takich jak testy talentów. Wywiady z praktykami wskazują na kluczowe problemy w zarządzaniu talentami: brak jasnej komunikacji celów programów rozwojowych, niedostateczne wsparcie ze strony menedżerów oraz brak indywidualnego podejścia do pracowników. Rozwiązaniem może być wprowadzenie zindywidualizowanych ścieżek rozwoju, kalibracja ocen pracowników oraz budowanie kultury organizacyjnej opartej na partnerstwie i transparentności. Dalsze wyzwania obejmują konieczność dostosowania się do zmieniających się oczekiwań młodszych pokoleń, takich jak elastyczność pracy czy równowaga między życiem zawodowym a prywatnym. *Gig economy*, oparta na modelu pracy projektowej, oferuje rozwiązania sprzyjające zadowoleniu z pracy, choć wymaga zaawansowanych kompetencji w zakresie zarządzania talentami.

Słowa kluczowe: zarządzanie talentami, psychologia pozytywna, *flow*, kultura organizacyjna, elastyczne modele pracy

Introduction

Currently, it is becoming increasingly accepted that all employees possess inherent talents. The so-called HI PO (high-potential) employees are often identified as successors to key positions, representing a group in which organizations heavily invest, nurture, and retain (Juhdi et al. 2012). However, there is a gradual shift in perspective, moving away from the dichotomy of an organization's workforce into “talented” and “ordinary” employees. The traditional view that talents must be prioritized and meticulously retained due to their perceived critical role in the organization's future, while the turnover of ordinary employees is seen as less impactful, is being reconsidered. This process encounters numerous challenges that require strategic and systematic approaches to address effectively.

*An Interview with the Managing Director of the Strategy
and Market Analysis Division at a Global Bank*

There are several issues related to talent management which can cause serious problems. The lack of clear communication of the goals of talent programs, which can lead to confusion among participants. It is important to have a clearly defined program goal and accountability that impacts participant engagement.

Desirable practices in talent management include clear definition of development program goals, genuine involvement of participants and the organization and program owner. Talent programs should allow for interpersonal relationships. The importance of communicating with talents, providing them with flexible work models, matching tasks to employee strengths, and maintaining work-life balance were also emphasized. The interview also highlighted the need for those in charge to run the programs adequately and to match the organization of the programs to the needs of the employees, which is key to keeping them engaged and effective.

It is also important to clearly and openly communicate the goals and expectations of talent programs to avoid misunderstandings. The need for flexible working hours and adapting work models to new market realities and employees' personal predispositions should not be ignored either. Clear goals and accountability for programs, authenticity in engagement and tailoring activities to the employee's needs are the keys to success in talent management.

The Role of Positive Psychology and Flow in Enhancing Employee Effectiveness and Well-Being

Management psychology has long focused on identifying methods to enhance professional effectiveness among employees (Farooq et al. 2024). Particular attention has been devoted to strategies aimed at improving employee productivity or mitigating its decline without necessarily increasing financial incentives. Extensive research has explored diverse aspects of employee performance within organizational contexts (Ngwenya, Aigbavboa 2017).

One prominent area of investigation, grounded in the theoretical framework and methodologies of positive psychology, is the concept of happiness (Seligman, Csikszentmihályi 2000). It is well established that individuals who experience greater happiness and life satisfaction are more likely to achieve professional success (Achor 2011). Research conducted by Shawn Achor demonstrates that a positive mood enhances brain efficiency by 31% compared to negative or neutral states. Furthermore, sales professionals exhibit a 37% increase in effectiveness, and

physicians demonstrate 19% faster and more accurate diagnostic capabilities when in a positive emotional state (Achor 2018).

Satisfied and happy employees contribute significantly to organizational success (Achor 2010). As a result, management psychology increasingly incorporates insights from positive psychology to foster improved employee performance and engagement while addressing potential declines in these areas. The primary objective is to cultivate workplace environments that enhance employees' sense of happiness and life satisfaction (Sageer et al. 2012).

According to advancements in positive psychology, particularly the research conducted by Martin Seligman, three mechanisms are identified as essential for fostering life satisfaction: the "pleasant life", the "engaged life", and the "meaningful life" (Seligman 2011). The first mechanism, the "pleasant life", emphasizes seeking and experiencing pleasure in various forms derived from external sources (e.g., enjoying good food, making purchases, forming new relationships, or traveling). This approach focuses on maximizing positive emotions and extending their duration through skill development. However, the capacity to experience positive emotions, referred to as the "pleasant life", is significantly influenced by genetic predispositions (Layous, Lyubomirsky 2014). Approximately 50% of this capacity is inherited and tied to temperament, which is rooted in innate neurological traits. While the intensity of positive emotions can be enhanced by 15–20%, their effects diminish rapidly due to adaptation. Nico H. Frijda's principle of hedonistic asymmetry (Frijda 2017) highlights that what initially provides pleasure gradually becomes ordinary, necessitating either stronger stimuli or an increased frequency of pleasurable experiences to sustain satisfaction. This cycle often leads to diminishing returns, as evidenced by individuals with significant financial means who have pursued this path extensively, yet without enduring fulfilment.

The second mechanism, the "meaningful life", involves recognizing and utilizing one's core strengths to transcend personal limitations and contribute to a purpose greater than oneself. This sustainable approach to life satisfaction involves actions that benefit not only the individual but also others, the environment, or the broader community.

The third mechanism, the "engaged life", is particularly relevant to talent management in organizational settings. This mechanism enhances life satisfaction by aligning work with an individual's talents and achieving a state of flow. Flow occurs when an employee engages in tasks that align with their strengths – activities they perform willingly, enjoy, and naturally excel at due to relative ease in mastering them (Meyers et al. 2013). These are the competencies an employee would prioritize if given complete autonomy.

Flow is characterized by deep immersion in the activity, a high degree of focus, and the perception of clear goals and immediate feedback. Tasks that are appropriately challenging – neither too simple, which leads to boredom, nor too difficult, which

creates anxiety – enable employees to experience flow. In this state, individuals lose their sense of time, feel part of something larger, and derive intrinsic satisfaction from the activity itself. The heightened concentration characteristic of the flow state significantly enhances an individual's effectiveness. When flow is consistently experienced at work, it becomes a stable and lasting source of happiness (Csíkszentmihályi 2013).

The “engaged life” mechanism necessitates ongoing assessment of employees' skills, preferences, and growth potential. Managers must ensure that assigned tasks remain slightly beyond employees' current capabilities, encouraging learning and skill development. If task difficulty cannot be increased, alternative opportunities to utilize employees' other strengths should be explored. This dynamic and adaptive approach, supported by diagnostic tools and advanced managerial skills, enables organizations to foster employee satisfaction, improve performance, and cultivate a resilient and motivated workforce.

An Interview with the Head of People and Culture at One of the World's Largest Global Media Agencies

The main problems in talent management are related to the extent of managers' support in the employee development process. Today, it is also difficult to avoid occupational burnout caused by rare contact with superiors. Another challenge is the need to adapt to changes in the labor market, requiring a more individualized approach to talent, including the use of identification tools such as 9 Box Grid (Yura, Ayush 2022) to assess employee potential, for example. A major challenge in talent management is ensuring fairness and objectivity in employee evaluations through calibration systems to eliminate errors such as halo or precedence effects. There are too few individual conversations with employees about their career development and about finding the right balance between managerial and expert paths for each person.

In order to practically and effectively address the key talent management issues, it may prove helpful to develop a “synergy” structure that allows employees to find themselves in areas where they feel strong and are effective, which contributes to better use of their competencies. It is necessary to introduce regular development conversations with employees to understand their needs and aspirations, as well as early detection of declines in motivation to prevent occupational burnout. Our organization uses calibration of employee evaluations through calibration sessions with managers and the elimination of evaluation errors such as the halo effect or the primacy effect. We also create career paths that provide opportunities for advancement in different areas of the company, in line with business needs and employee aspirations.

Harnessing the State of Flow for Enhanced Employee Satisfaction, Learning, and Talent Management

The state of flow facilitates two critical aspects of work: it enhances employee satisfaction, leading to greater effectiveness, and promotes continuous learning. Achieving and maintaining the state of flow, however, requires consistent observation of employees and an in-depth understanding of their skills, strengths, and talents. It necessitates identifying what employees find enjoyable, the tasks they willingly engage in, and the areas they aspire to develop. Leveraging the flow mechanism in organizational settings demands advanced managerial competencies.

As a result, organizations increasingly adopt standardized talent typologies and diagnostic tools, such as Gallup talent assessment tests, while investing in training managers in effective talent management practices. To effectively utilize the flow state in workforce management, managers must periodically review and adjust the tasks assigned to employees. Sustaining high levels of engagement requires that employees continually take on challenges that slightly exceed their existing skills, as learning typically occurs through the performance of demanding tasks.

In cases where increasing task difficulty is not feasible, alternative opportunities to utilize other employee strengths should be explored. Contemporary understanding defines strengths as the skills that employees find inherently enjoyable, are naturally adept at, and can master with relative ease. By aligning tasks with these strengths, organizations can foster both individual and organizational growth.

An Interview with the Chief Strategy Officer of One of the World's Five Largest Global Media Companies, Board Member Responsible for the Company's Strategic Product

The biggest problem in talent management seems to be the lack of structured development programs within companies, which can lead talent loss. Those seen as key talents do not always achieve success. The lack of dedicated support and development for these individuals can result in their departure. In addition, changing expectations of employees, especially the younger Gen Z, in the context of well-being and remote work, as well as the need to better align human resources with projects, pose challenges for effective talent management.

Comprehensive development programs dedicated to employees at different levels of their careers can be a solution to talent management challenges. The focus should be on individual development paths tailored to employees' personal ambitions and professional needs, while promoting open communication and fair recognition of their contributions to the company. It is also important to build an organizational culture based on respect and partnership so that employees feel they are a valuable

part of the team. It may be important to increase transparency in the promotion and talent selection process to ensure that each employee has a clear picture of the opportunities that lie ahead and receives the support needed to realize them. However, it should be kept in mind that an employee's development depends on their own actions and responsibility, not just on the company's efforts.

Task Reallocation and the Flow Mechanism: Enhancing Engagement and Satisfaction in Traditional and Gig Economy Work Models

There exists an effective method for redefining tasks and aligning them with employees' skills and preferences, which has been successfully implemented in numerous corporations. This process involves the team collectively listing all tasks performed, followed by each employee identifying the tasks they realistically handle. Subsequently, employees select tasks they prefer to undertake and indicate those they wish to delegate. When an employee takes on a task previously performed by another, the original task owner is responsible for training the new assignee, thereby enabling them to transition to a more engaging, flow-inducing activity.

This approach to task reallocation often results in a few residual, unattractive tasks that no one in the team is willing to perform. These tasks are typically outsourced. Observations indicate that teams employing the flow mechanism in this manner experience significantly lower employee turnover rates compared to other teams within the same organization. It is important to note that the success of this method heavily relies on the advanced interpersonal and managerial skills of team supervisors.

The flow mechanism is not only employed within organizations to enhance job satisfaction and happiness but also underpins the operational framework of the gig economy. In the gig economy, workers engage in a labor market characterized by project-based or freelance assignments rather than traditional full-time employment. This innovative work model, enabled by advancements in digital technology, facilitates remote connections between employers and employees for the exchange of services or content, transforming traditional perceptions of labor opportunities (Muhammed 2018).

The increasing prevalence of gig work is underscored by data from the Gallup Institute's 2018 report, which revealed that 34% of the U.S. workforce identified as gig workers. Moreover, 64% of these individuals considered the gig model the most advantageous for their professional needs. These findings highlight the growing appeal and viability of gig work across various professions (McFeely, Pendell 2018).

Creative industries are particularly well-represented among gig workers, including graphic designers, content creators, and financial or IT professionals, who thrive

on the flexibility and novel challenges inherent in this model. Research conducted by Cardiff University further supports the appeal of the gig economy, demonstrating that individuals working within this framework report exceptionally high levels of job satisfaction, underscoring its attractiveness from both professional and personal perspectives (Gleim et al. 2019).

An Interview with an Experienced CEO Manager, Working in Managerial Positions for 30 Years, Member of Management Boards Since 2004, in the Telecommunications, Energy and Education Industries

The greatest problems in talent management are the failure to translate the ideals of talent management into practice within organizations, the lack of tolerance for mistakes and innovation, and the changing expectations and habits of employees toward work. In addition, the problem is the lack of adequate preparation of the younger generation for the real world of work and changing working conditions, such as young people working for multiple employers at the same time. The lack of attention to emotional needs and personality development in the education system is also a major issue.

Solutions to talent management problems may include greater organizational awareness of employees' needs and priorities, more frequent acknowledgment of employees and feedback, and engaging in employee development by allowing them to learn, experiment and gain experience in different environments. Changes in education are necessary, including fostering innovation and emotional intelligence as early as primary education. In addition, it is important to remember to build employee satisfaction by providing adequate support and development opportunities, as well as adapting to the changing expectations and habits of the new generation entering the labor market.

As reported in the 2023 Gen Z and Millennial Survey, "it is evident that Gen Z and millennials regard remote and hybrid employment and recognize its advantages. If their company required them to work full-time on-site, 75% of respondents who presently hold remote or hybrid jobs would think about seeking for a new position" (Deloitte Global 2023).

Summary

The modern approach to talent management emphasizes the recognition of all employees' inherent talents, with special focus on high-potential (HI PO) individuals. This paradigm shift moves away from the dichotomy of "talented" versus

“ordinary” employees, advocating for a holistic framework that addresses the needs and strengths of the entire workforce. Central to this approach is the integration of positive psychology concepts, particularly the “engaged life” mechanism and the state of flow, to enhance employee satisfaction, productivity, and engagement.

Research and interviews with practitioners highlight several challenges in talent management, including unclear communication of development goals, insufficient managerial support, and limited individualized approaches to employee development. Proposed solutions involve personalized development paths, transparency in evaluations, fostering a supportive organizational culture, and adapting to changing workforce expectations, such as flexible work models and work-life balance.

The gig economy, characterized by freelance and project-based work, exemplifies the practical application of these principles, particularly the flow mechanism. Workers in the gig economy report high levels of job satisfaction, demonstrating the effectiveness of aligning tasks with individual strengths and preferences. However, implementing such approaches requires advanced managerial competencies and ongoing task reallocation processes to sustain employee engagement.

The importance of structured development programs, calibration of employee evaluations, and career path clarity is underscored by the evolving expectations of younger generations. Organizations must balance these changes with initiatives to foster innovation, emotional intelligence, and resilience to address occupational burnout and prepare employees for dynamic labor markets.

Overall, contemporary talent management frameworks aim to harmonize organizational goals with employee well-being, leveraging insights from positive psychology and modern work models to foster sustainable growth and satisfaction within diverse professional environments.

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