

Creating Talent Accountability Leadership Brief

Provided by



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Talent Accountability

The Core Capability Needed to Deliver Talent Results

The Stage

Organizations can not achieve and sustain high levels of performance (in any area) without clearly defining what they are trying to achieve AND taking action to do what needs to be done to deliver the expected results. Results demand execution. Execution demands focus (what we will achieve) and follow through (we did “X” to impact “Y”). Larry Bossidy in *EXECUTION* says it well. “Execution is a specific set of behaviors and techniques that companies need to master... Organizations don’t execute unless the right people, individually and collectively, focus on the right details at the right time.” So, the questions which must be answered are, “What talent results must be accomplished?” and “What will managers do to deliver the talent results?”

Let’s focus in on the talent side of the business equation and look at what it will take to execute and deliver results.

For the last five years we have talked with thousands of leaders and managers within some of the best Fortune 500 companies and top organizations, as well as leaders and managers within good companies trying to become great. We always take a few standard measurements before we begin any intervention to understand the current talent situation and focus improvement efforts.

One area which is always measured – “talent accountability”. We ask frontline leaders and managers the following question, “Does your organization hold you accountable to engage and retain your employees?”... An astounding 86% say “NO”! They are also asked, “Can you describe the specific talent results your organization is trying to achieve... 93% say “NO”... and “Do you spend enough time and energy engaging and retaining your employees - 73% say “NO”.

To be fair... about 1-in-10 companies do create accountability, managers can describe specific talent results, and they do spend time and energy to engage and retain talent. Is your organization one of them?



The Foundation

To understand “talent accountability”, we must first define the root – accountability.

Accountability (accountability) defined: The state of being accountable: an obligation or willingness to account for one’s actions - explaining one’s conduct and reason for an action: answerable.

Imagine if every leader and person in a managing role felt an obligation to engage, build, leverage, and retain their employees... imagine if all frontline leaders would stand up and be answerable for their actions related to engaging each employee to perform at their best. Imagine the performance which is resting right now within your organization that can be unleashed if only we could pull the right levers to increase accountability for talent.

(A) Talent Results:

I know what I must achieve.

(B) Talent Actions:

I know what I must do to.

Talent Accountability:

I feel accountable to deliver (A) and (B).



Senior Leadership Deliverables

To produce talent results, leaders must achieve four key deliverables... “talent accountability” is one of the four.

One... Talent Goals

Leaders must define the level of talent results/goals the organization needs to achieve to support the business strategy, deliver operational results, or build a capability which will be required to produce future results. Defining the level of talent results and goals is not an HR responsibility or something that gets produced by a grass-roots initiative. Leaders define what results must be achieved for success.

Two... Talent Strategy

The second key deliverable helps provide focus and ensure adequate resources are dedicated to support achieving success. Leaders must make sure there is a “Talent Strategy” in place to achieve the targeted talent results/goals. The term strategy is purposely used vs. plan to indicate the organization has made choices about what will be required to achieve its talent results. Leaders make sure there has been sufficient rigor put into understanding the current state – outlining the desired future state, and identifying targeted initiatives which will close the gap.

Three... Talent Accountability

The third key deliverables focuses on creating “Talent Accountability” – Breaking the strategic plans and operationalizing the strategy into a set of clear organization practices and talent actions which need to be executed with discipline. **“Talent Accountability”** makes sure the strategy gets defined into deliverables/actions and real consequences get put in place to cause leaders and managers to take action on-the-job.

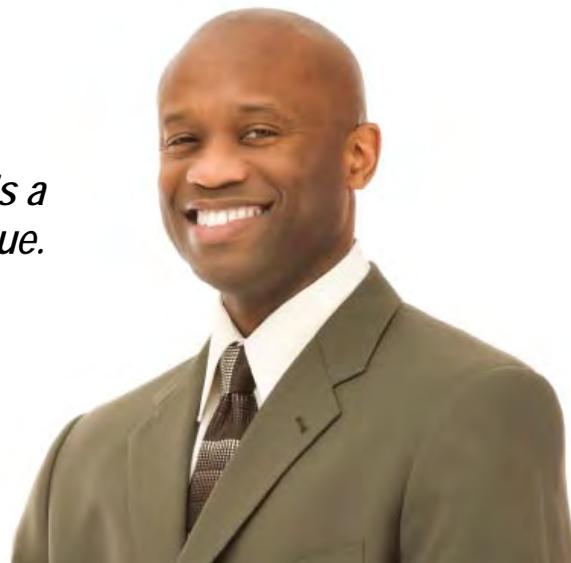
Four... Role Model

Leaders lead the process through actions. They set the standard (We need to do “X”), Role model the standard by personally stepping up to the plate and taking action... thereby, creating credibility. They make the time to reinforce when other leaders deliver (talent results and talent actions) and confront if leaders do not deliver (talent results and talent actions).

Recently I listened to a CEO for a large pharmaceutical company address his top 200 global leaders around the area of talent. He wanted to set the expectation for upcoming business review meetings... “When we meet in our upcoming business review meetings, I expect to thoroughly discuss 3 areas of your business: 1) The Top Line – How you will grow the business, 2) The Bottom Line – How you will manage the business to be profitable, and 3) Talent Pipeline – How your people (talent) will drive and support the other two areas. The Talent Pipeline is the key to the first two areas. As a listener to the comments, I instantly understood along with the other leaders how it would not be a good thing to walk into the meeting without a clear picture as to what talent results were going to be required to achieve the growth plans and deliver the bottom line results.

After the meeting, I asked the CEO, “Where did you come up with the saying, “Top-line, Bottom-Line, Talent-Pipeline” – He said he put it together after thinking about what was required to move the business forward. “You can’t create a sustainable top-line, or maintain the bottom-line... without the talent pipeline. No pipeline... forget the other two.”

*Talent Accountability is a
business issue not an HR issue.*



Creating Talent Accountability

Now let's take a look at "talent accountability" and begin to define what it is and talk about what an organization can do to create and increase the accountability level for talent results.

A Working Definition of "Talent Accountability" ... contains two parts:	
#1 Clear Performance Expectations	#2 Real Consequences
<i>I am clear on what talent results I must achieve...</i>	<i>I understand what happens if I do achieve the talent results and perform the desired talent actions, as well as...</i>
AND	<i>What happens if I don't achieve the desired talent results or perform the talent actions.</i>
<i>What I must DO to achieve the desired talent results.</i>	

You need both "Clear Performance Expectations" AND "Real Consequences" to create accountability. Clear expectations without consequences usually outline a lot of work that never gets done. Consequences without clear expectations will crank up the pressure to perform, but may leave people confused about what to do to make a difference on the desired results.

The first requirement: Clear Performance Expectations

What will you achieve? Is the desired result, outcome, or achievement clear to everyone involved? Desired results need to be specific, measurable, and time bound, such as, "We will reduce new hire turnover to 12.5% (losing less than one in eight of our new employees) in the next 12 months".

The other half to creating a clear performance expectation is to define - What you will go *DO* to impact the desired results. Are people clear on what actions will be taken to impact the desired results? When the people involved in delivering the results are asked, "What are you going to do more of, less of, or differently to impact "X" result?" – What specific actions do they describe? If they take _____ actions will it make a difference in the targeted results?

The second requirement: Consequences

Consequences capture what happens after you perform or "do not" perform. To identify what consequences are connected to talent results, answer two simple questions - What happens if I do it? What happens if I don't do it? If the answer to each question is "nothing"... there are no consequences. It may be a great job responsibility, but due to the lack of consequences, there is limited accountability. When things get busy – these responsibilities will get very little attention and focus. Consequences don't have to necessarily be imposed or applied by others to have an impact on creating accountability. Each of us can create ways to monitor what we do and what impact we create in our work situations.

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I will do 1, 2, and 3 to achieve "X".

I am accountable for my actions and results.

Create Real Consequences by Pulling the “Accountability Levers”

Talent results are significantly improved when an organization creates accountability with leaders and managers to perform specific talent practices and achieve talent results.

Creating talent accountability is an absolute requirement for achieving and maintaining high levels of talent results. Accountability can be achieved and sustained when organizations assess the talent situation, outline talent results and actions, and pull a number of “Talent Accountability Levers”. The question for leaders, “*What levers need to be pulled to increase the “accountability” for taking action and achieving talent results?*”

Step 1 Outline Clear Performance Expectations

Frame the current talent situation.

Outline the Current Results	Define the Desired Performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What talent results do managers/leaders currently deliver on a regular basis? What talent actions are consistently performed to achieve the current talent results? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What talent results do you need managers/leaders to achieve? What do you need managers/leaders to DO: More of? Less of? or Differently?

Step 2

Review the “Accountability Levers” and determine which levers have been already pulled within the organization to make create “accountability” for talent results.

Step 3

“Test” the accountability levers to determine whether they would have the intended impact by answering the following:

- If we *pull* this lever... What impact will it have on the desired actions, needed results, and required consequences?
- If we *do not pull* this lever... What impact will it have on the desired actions, needed results, and required consequences?

10 Accountability Levers

Potential levers which can be pulled to increase talent accountability

1	<u>Job Expectation Lever</u> Managers need to take action to impact talent results... This is a job requirement – To manage here – you must build it into the way you lead your team.	6	<u>Talent Take Action Lever</u> Managers share what they DID and the IMPACT created... I perform because I want to earn respect from peers and employees.
2	<u>Performance Level Lever</u> Achieving our top “Performance Level” requires you to DO the talent actions and ACHIEVE the following talent results.	7	<u>Boss Expectation Lever</u> Leaders directly ask for talent results/actions. Managers take action and deliver talent results to earn respect from their boss and show the organization they are committed to success.
3	<u>Base Pay Lever</u> Rewards are based on your talent results... You need to do “X” and achieve “Y” to receive a pay increase or merit adjustment.	8	<u>Challenge Lever</u> Managers take action to solve a tough talent situation... I earn recognition as a leader who can deliver and show I am willing to accept a challenge.
4	<u>Bonus Lever</u> Your “Bonus” is impacted by achieving talent results... Talent results will be used as one of the “triggers” for a variable bonus.	9	<u>Talent Story Lever</u> The “visibility” created within the organization makes it worthwhile... the leader takes great pride and achievement in creating a personal brand anchored by talent results.
5	<u>Career Advancement Lever</u> If you want to advance in this organization... Deliver talent results. Our “High Potentials” show a track record of delivering talent results.	10	<u>Line Of Sight Lever</u> I take action to deliver talent results because this helps deliver other important results (productivity, customer experience, cost performance) – talent results is a means to another desired end.

Step 4

Create an implementation plan for the selected accountability levers.

- WHO, needs to do WHAT, WHEN to make sure the accountability levers get pulled.

Step 5

- Evaluate the results - Review the following and make additional adjustments based on real levels of accountability created by the levers pulled.
- Did we follow through and implement the accountability lever?
- How did the implementation help clarify what managers/leaders needed to DO: More of? Less of? or Differently?
- How did the implementation help achieve the talent results we need managers/leaders to deliver?
- Did the implementation help achieve the right consequences required to reinforce the talent actions and achieve the desired talent results?

Accountability Levers

Potential levers that can be “pulled” to increase talent accountability... causing leaders/managers to take action and impact talent results.

	LEVER	IMPACT	PULL LEVER (YES—NO)
1	Job Expectation Lever Managers need to take action to impact talent results... This is a job requirement – To manage here – you must build performing the talent practices into the way you lead your team.	To keep your current job (job security) you must deliver talent results in the right way. (period) The leader will perform to fulfill expectations and be seen as a person who delivers – “I want to do what is expected of people in my position.”	
2	Talent Take Action Lever Managers share what they DID and the IMPACT created... I perform because I want to fulfill my accountabilities and earn respect.	The leader is seen as delivering results in an important area and taking action increases respect from peers/manager. Taking action demonstrates competence and commitment.	
3	Career Advancement Lever If you want to advance in this organization... deliver talent results. Our “High Potentials” show a track record of delivering talent results.	Taking action with the talent practices and achieving talent results is an important criteria used to judge candidates for promotions or job moves.	
4	Performance Level Lever Achieving our top “Performance Level” requires you to DO the talent actions and ACHIEVE the following _____ talent results.	To maintain or achieve “high performing” status within the organization, a leader must take action and achieve talent results. Managers earn the “High Performer” distinction by excelling with talent.	
5	Base Pay Lever Rewards are based on your talent results... You need to do “X” and achieve “Y” to receive a pay increase.	Reward – The leader wants to continually increase his or her compensation level... Achieving talent results will ensure pay stays competitive and grows.	
6	Talent Story Lever The “visibility” created within the organization makes it worthwhile... the individual takes great pride and achievement in creating a personal brand anchored by talent results.	The person wants to be known as a “talent leader” – they love to make an impact on talent results and like to share what he or she is doing to achieve results.	
7	Line Of Sight Lever I take action to deliver talent results because this helps deliver other results (productivity, customer experience, cost performance) I want to achieve.	Talent results are a means to another desired end. I will deliver talent results to positively impact another performance area that needs to be improved.	
8	Boss Expectation Lever Managers take action and deliver talent results to earn respect from their boss and show the organization they are committed to success.	Desire to be seen as a person who delivers against commitments... taking action and delivering talent results increases respect from the boss or other leaders.	
9	Bonus Lever Achieving talent results impacts a “Bonus.” Talent results will be used as one of the key triggers for a variable bonus.	Reward – A clear line of sight creates the desire to earn the “bonus” by taking action to deliver talent results.	
10	Challenge Lever Managers take action to solve a tough talent situation... I earn recognition as a leader who can deliver tough results and show I am willing to accept a challenge.	The leader likes challenges and knows it will be tough. They earn respect for accepting and meeting the challenge.	