

The Talent Era



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Part 2 of 4

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INTRODUCTION

In Part One of the Talent Era White paper series, the discussion was about the transition from the Industrial Era to the Talent Era. It discussed today's world of work and the absolute change in the relationship between people and organizations and touched on what that means for both. And, it talked about the dependence of organizational achievement on the different types of roles that exist in all organizations.

Industrial Era



Fingers had the dexterity and motion necessary for production. Their owners were little more than a necessary inconvenience.

Knowledge Era

Organizations are dependent on the interest and desire of people to apply their unique blend of knowledge, skills and abilities to create its products and services.



TALENT

Talent is “a unit of value” and “a characteristic feature”. The synonyms for talent include “aptitude, ability, expertise, capacity, strength, skill, artistry and brilliance”.¹ People who have the capabilities essential to achievement of a specific organization’s strategic plan are its Essential or Key Talent.

¹ Merriam Webster

Key Talent Program

A Key Talent program involves a proactive approach to having a reliable supply of the right talent and having the right people in the right job at the right time and the right cost.

It moves beyond supply-demand approach to the attraction and retention of people.

While the specific capabilities of Key Talent differ between industries and organizations, the essential attribute of Key Talent is that their capabilities and use of those capabilities significantly impacts the wealth and strategic success of the organization.

KEY TALENT

Key Talent programs are based on the premise that intellectual capital – what people know and in particular those with the capability essential to the production of organizational goods and services – is the most important organizational asset.

Development of a Key Talent program involves looking at the organization and its roles from the perspective of capability, and differentiating the capabilities² essential to product/service production from those that enable and support it. Any of these roles can and do exist at any level in a typical organization chart.

The extent to which the type, magnitude and use of capabilities affects organizational wealth³ determines which roles are Key (Essential), Enabling or Supporting roles.

Key talent affects organizational wealth both positively and negatively. Enabling talent can have moderate positive impact and a substantial negative impact on organizational wealth. Supporting talent can have moderate positive and negative impact on organization wealth creation.

The identification of the capability profile for an organization and its staff requires a comprehensive analysis of the activities that produce wealth. The activities are analyzed to establish the capabilities essential to the successful achievement of the strategic plan. Identification of *key*, *supporting* and *enabling* roles, the capabilities required for effective completion of them, along with the supporting metrics is the foundation of a key talent program.

Below is a sample of a partial organizational Capability Profile, generally applicable to knowledge service organizations along with Capability Profiles for each of the three types of talent. The examples of the roles for which sample profiles are provided include a *Client Service Provider* in the Key Talent role, a *Client Service Team Leader* in the Enabling role and a *Project Support Administrator* in the Supporting role.

² Capabilities are “the power or practical ability necessary for doing something” (Encarta Dictionary)

³ Wealth is used in the broad sense and includes monetary and non-monetary wealth.

Capability Profile

Sample Capability Profile Table

Chart 1

Strategic Priorities	Leader in Field Innovator		Client Centric	
Organization	Transformation of information into knowledge	Development and maintenance of effective and efficient processes	Define and communicate Client relationship & service principles	Identification, definition and transformation of knowledge assets into products and services valued by clients/ customers
Key Talent <i>Client Service Provider</i>	Maintenance of current comprehensive subject matter knowledge Learning is applied across a variety of environments and situations	Existing processes are used to deliver customized products/services	Client centered service provision	Identification and sharing of ideas and opportunities
Enabling Talent <i>Client Service Team Leader</i>	Capacity building elements are in place and effectively used	Continuous improvement mentality and approach used to assess and manage process	Provision of feedback and coaching related to client service needs	Resource access and allocation is aligned with value creation
Supporting Talent <i>Project Support Administrator</i>	Accurate accumulation of information into applicable records	Existing processes are used effectively and efficiently	Obtains and accurately records client service results	Maintains knowledge assets and provides accurate reporting on value and value change.

The practical ability necessary for doing something implies ownership and use of a variety of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). For example, a *Project Support Administrator* with the above noted capability profile would need to have technology skills, an attention to detail and organizational skills along with an aptitude for and interest in information management, among others. Similarly, the *Client Service Provider* would need creative and critical thinking skills, the ability to think on their feet and to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences. The KSA sets are foundational. The capabilities result from the individual's ability to integrate all three, understand the value of doing so and consistently apply it.

Of course, the capability profile for the organization aligns with its strategic objectives. The culture, approach, industry, location and size, among other organizational factors affect the specific details of the metrics that would be used to determine the levels of success.

Capability and Strategic Success

Below is an example of the alignment of strategic priorities, organizational capabilities and organizational, key, enabling and supporting talent metrics. Given the broad nature of the example - knowledge service organizations - the metrics are generalized. Each type of organization would need to establish specifics relevant to their field of practice.

What is important to note is that incremental changes in *Key Talent* performance will directly affect achievement of the strategic priorities and will have significant positive or negative implications for organizational wealth. The results produced by the *Enabling Talent* can have significant detrimental implications but after a certain point only limited positive impact on results. *Supporting Talent* can provide indirect moderate positive and negative impact; good work will ensure the Key Talent has current, accurate and useful information which will provide the potential for the Client Service Provider to produce

at a high level. Similarly, poor work has the potential to negatively impact the Client Service Provider’s production. Ultimately though, it is the Client Service Provider who directly and significantly impacts results.

Sample Organizational, Key, Enabling and Supporting Talent Metrics

Chart 2

Strategic Priorities	Leader In Field Innovator		Client Centric	
Organization Capabilities	Transformation of information into knowledge	Development and maintenance of effective and efficient processes	Define and communicate client relationship & service principles	Identification, definition and transformation of knowledge assets into products and services valued by clients/ customers
Organizational Metrics	A variety of information is combined to generate new uses, products and services which are generating new revenue streams within annual targets	Work processes support facilitate effective and efficient use of resources; and ensure client service principles are satisfied	Clients have a comprehensive understanding of what they can expect with products/ services delivered and the associated experience	Products and services grow with the evolving and changing client expectations resulting in new work and new clients at target levels
Key Talent Metrics <i>Client Service Provider</i>	Client projects consistently provide results that enhance client operational value through use of new information and/or knowledge	Work is produced on time and on budget in the form most beneficial to client	Clients rely on Service Provider for information, advice and guidance. Billing is at standard with 0% write-offs.	Active contributor in development and introduction of new approaches/uses of existing knowledge and new products/services
Enabling Talent Metrics <i>Client Service Team Leader</i>	100% of staff have comprehensive individualized learning program aligned with career aspirations and are progressing according to plan	Metrics are established and used to ensure processes achieve established client service standards and internal efficiency requirements	100% of clients receive performance feedback requests on completion of projects	Client value standards and metrics established and analyzed and used to ensure valuable product/service delivery
Supporting Talent Metrics <i>Project Support Administrator</i>	Information is current, accurate, complete and accessible	Established protocols for research, data and information integration are continuously evaluated to ensure knowledge development	Client feedback is inconsistently entered into files for use in service delivery	Trends, changes and evolving information is accumulated and provided to others to ensure inclusion in development of new uses and products/services.

Culture Shift

Organizational hierarchies are based on the assumption that the higher a role is in the organization chart, the more valuable it is to the organization. As is indicated in assigning the Key Talent role to the Client Service Provider and the Enabling Role to the Client Service Team Leader, the traditional hierarchical value assumption is challenged by the Key Talent ideology. That isn’t really a surprise as organizations have been acknowledging the value of specific skill sets for some time, and there has been a growing level of pressure to recognize the contribution of highly specialized non-management roles at a level that is substantially the same as the highest management roles.

The changing underlying assumption about the contribution value of roles, regardless of hierarchy, also means that all Talent Management processes need to be re-examined based on the implications of those changed assumptions. Part 3 of this White Paper will discuss the implications of Key Talent programs on talent management and provide some examples of change.

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