

Solomon Case & Co.

Human Capital Strategists

Strategic Talent Sourcing & Acquisition:
Original Thought for the Executive Search Industry

Business entities are constantly faced with the complex challenge of keeping pace with people; processes and technologies that can help drive their shareholder value. As a human capital strategy firm, our focus is of course, on the people portion of this trilogy. We seek to emphasize the value created for our clients by migrating toward a Strategic Talent Sourcing & Acquisition paradigm.

Our work in the professional services industries (primarily management and strategic consulting) took us on a ten-year journey to better understand and deal with implications of lateral hiring at the Partner and Vice President levels. A significant investment of time, money and resources is at stake when bringing someone into a new organization at this level.

The same significant investment is required of any business entity to achieve the full potential and desired outcome of a lateral hire opportunity. Yet, it is our belief, that even given a client's reasonable preparedness to execute the search process, the Client Team and the Search Team are generally approaching the objective from the wrong position, a reactionary position indeed.

You see, spending time on the search process itself should be the least time commitment involved. The bulk of the effort, largely committed too by the search team, should occur before the candidate dialogues begin. Management of the dialogue process and all that that entails is an important step toward the final push which is from the offer phase through at least commencement, and preferably, throughout the first 12 months of asset transition.

Sourcing & Acquisition

Two terms that clients are abundantly familiar with, describe the precise differential value gained from this kind of platform. Sourcing – to constantly monitor the production of significant contributors in the intellectual value chain and Acquisition – to have dutifully executed the agreed upon strategy from talent asset acquisition through successful acquisition integration.

A Strategic Talent Sourcing & Acquisition mindset, between the client and search team begins with a presentation to an appropriately chosen client team. This mindset will, over time become a part of the company culture at the C-Level & Boardroom, as well as up and down organizational lines.

A human capital asset landscape map is maintained for the purpose of competitive intelligence in the particular client's industry group. Primary, secondary and tertiary or peripheral industry groups where potential human capital assets are discovered are included. Competitors (near and distant), vertical contributors, suppliers, vendors and association participants are among the map criteria. This step charts the success pathway to understanding and getting ahead of the competitive human capital game, in a targeted and sustainable fashion.

The Rule of 20

It has been our experience that for each truly successful Talent Asset Integration there are 20 or so individuals that contribute directly or indirectly to the successful transition of the new hire.

The same rule is generally applicable toward developing a good human capital landscape map. 20 or so well researched companies will produce insights into those companies' management styles, board contribution, competitive positioning, succession planning, professional development and human capital discoveries up and down organizational lines.

An interesting event occurs when the human capital landscape map is being compiled. Trends and reactions begin to emerge defining corporate culture from a slightly different perspective. One begins to see why certain events took place, what the reaction was, where the value was added or subtracted and who the primary drivers of these activities were.

You see, to develop the map in the first place there must be an organizational standard (client) to benchmark against. The organizational structure, culture, history, vision and objectives play a part in how competitive data is valued or utilized. News of those participants familiar, un-familiar and temporarily off-radar will become pertinent and perhaps viable sources of new market data. This translates into valuable decision-making power, (if knowledge is power and we believe that it is).

Remember this is all from the "people" side of the equation. People are the drivers and detractors of every development, milestone, or federal investigation. From a well-tailored human capital landscape map, organizational leaders will gain more perspective into the 20 or so "surrounding organizations" that can add significant competitive data for the client. This should not be difficult for the search team to compile, but it is a different kind of services deployment, one that is formatted to deliver timely reports to the client of where they are in terms of the human capital competitive landscape.

A good Human Capital consulting team can make this presentation to 7 or 8 members of the client team given just a couple of weeks' notice. The client team should watch for an accurate representation of industry leadership, financials, project awards, talent departures and additions. Some of the individuals should be familiar to you, while other participants will be unknown, thus begging further description of the human capital marketplace developments. This exercise serves to complete the cultural and competitive linkage that binds search team with client team for the foreseeable future.

This human capital landscape map can be developed, tailored and managed for one specific client practice area or group, or system-wide to include the most relevant, leading components of the business entity.

Tremendous insights can be gained by following the course of events inspired and managed by people. Future outcomes are influenced by revelations of the past. Moving forward via a pathway of knowledge is what human capital development is all about. Binding this information together to advance people strategy is a step toward capturing a marketplace reputation as a best-in-class company.

Strategy Connectivity

A human capital consulting team can understand and even help to validate or repudiate certain pieces of strategic vision. Businesses do, from time to time, make mistakes. Some of these mis-steps could well have been avoided given some other outside data, (The Rule of 20 again).

The tactical response to human capital initiatives requires a foundation of teamwork between client and search team. Breakthrough sessions can add dramatically to the over-arching results obtained by the combined forces of client and search. The partnership should reflect this foundation as a sort of outsourcing of a People Officer task to the search team, gaining not just one outside participant but the entire infrastructure. The client account team should be able to deliver Human Capital Reporting, Industry Management Breakouts, Succession Forecasting, Talent Asset Movement, Association/Organization Contribution and Competitive Landscape material.

When this level of material contribution is achieved and certain objective templates laid over, the result is tremendous. However, that result is only as significant as is allowed by the client's receptivity.

The fundamental shift in thought is based upon current client expectation of a search team: When talent is unavailable, use a search team to help and When talent is plentiful, do not use a search team. This is an example of recruitment ideology. Strategic Talent Sourcing & Acquisition raises the contributory level of the value-added relationship. Talent acquisition and performance improvement is an on-going system of understanding the market from a human capital and contribution perspective. The value of a properly selected potential acquisition is significant enough to warrant making that decision based upon a full compliment of on-going market familiarity. Reduce hiring process mistakes, develop and validate integration plans, prepare for integration, organization or economic hurdles and capture the value of process excellence.

Strategic Talent Sourcing & Acquisition is a mindset that we believe adheres itself too your corporate culture. You may have a similar plan in effect currently, the *learning organizations* do. It is something that can and should be tied to corporate and business unit strategy. People are a company's greatest assets, but a great many of those assets are not on your payroll.

Planning to leverage or acquire those assets and continuing to develop them is paramount to organizational health and preparedness.

In being receptive to this subtle shift in thinking, not only can a business become far more productive in the lateral hiring arena, but also avail themselves of a consistent information feed designed to promote higher levels of commercial and competitive advantage.

Solomon Case & Co, *Human Capital Strategists* is a 4.0 version of search firm standards. We are committed to raising client expectations of search industry capabilities, thus truly bringing a greater strategic approach and execution to engagements in our arena.

Watch for subsequent articles on Human Capital & Capabilities Improvement; and Aligning the Stars: Tactical Strategies for Talent Asset Acquisition.

Visit us on the web at www.solomoncase.com

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