



How to Increase the Impact of Your Talent Initiatives with Organization Guidance System

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Key Takeaways:

- *Talent discussions should start by identifying desired results that matter to business leaders.*
- *The Organization Guidance System informs decision makers about which talent initiatives drive key outcomes.*
- *Combining the Organization Guidance system with talent discussion shifts talent initiatives from descriptive to prescriptive, delivering profound improvement.*

We know *it* matters. Some go to war for *it*. Professional sports teams draft for *it*. Actors and musicians audition to show they have *it*. Others consider *it* the ultimate solution and try to manage *it*. Agents contract for *it*. Organizations build

plans to leverage *it*. Some are innately endowed with *it* while others strive diligently to earn *it*. All try to grow *it*. *Talent*.

Talent (called workforce, individual competence, skills, expertise/know-how, synonym for employees, and so forth) has been the hallmark of HR for decades. A multitude of programs and initiatives and untold millions have been invested to attract, retain, and upgrade talent. *Yet, how do business and HR leaders know which talent initiatives deliver results?*

We have spent the last 18 months creating an **Organization Guidance System (OGS)** that informs the impact of four Organization Effectiveness pathways on five key results (see **Figure 1**); In this

article, we report the findings from our Organization Guidance System pilot study about which talent initiatives drive key outcomes (cells 1, 5, 9, 13).

Step 1: Identify and measure key outcomes

Prioritizing talent initiatives starts with identifying desired results. The columns in Figure 1 suggest **five stakeholder results** that a company may prioritize [1] employee (well-being, competence), [2] business strategy (differentiated position, ability to execute), [3] customer (net promoter score), [4] investor/financial (profitability), and [5] social citizenship (environmental, social). Instead of talking

about an innovative talent initiative, HR professionals should start talent discussions by identifying desired results that matter to business leaders.

Step 2: Distill and measure key talent initiatives.

There are innumerable initiatives that could be done to improve talent. In our talent research and work, we identify three major talent domains (competence, commitment, and contribution or experience). Within each of these three domains, we identify **a number of talent initiatives**. For example, in the book *Talent Accelerator* we identify 13 talent initiatives to increase competence; in our engagement research, we identify 7 practices that make up VOI2C2E (Vision, Opportunity, Incentives, Impact, Community, Communication, and Entrepreneurship); and in *Why of Work* we identify 7 practices to increase contribution or experience.

Based on this work, we identify 18 talent initiatives we can assess. From our pilot study, we determined that these 18 talent initiatives could be distilled into 9 initiatives that an organization could invest in (see **Figure 2**). We created a 36-item index (4 items for each of the nine initiatives) to determine the extent to which each of the nine talent initiatives exist in an organization.

Step 3: Report status of talent challenges

We collected data on how well an organization performs on these nine talent initiatives (see **Figure 3**). This figure reports the overall mean (column A), variance (column B), and reliability (column C) of the measures of these nine initiatives.

This figure indicates which of the 9 initiatives are better done (positive employee experience (#9) and communication (#5)) and which score lower (retaining employees (#6)). The results also confirm that these are valid measures of the nine dimensions.

Most talent research ends by showing global averages and comparing them to the scores in column A.

Figure 1. HR Portfolio Grid of Key Results x Pathways to Organization Effectiveness

		KEY STAKEHOLDER RESULTS				
		1. EMPLOYEE	2. BUSINESS STRATEGY	3. CUSTOMER	4. INVESTORS / FINANCIAL	5. SOCIAL CITIZENSHIP
PATHWAYS TO ORGANIZATION EFFECTIVENESS	A. Talent	1	5	9	13	17
	B. Leadership	2	6	10	14	18
	C. Organization Capabilities	3	7	11	15	19
	D. HR Department	4	8	12	16	20

Figure 2. Nine Primary Talent Initiatives

TALENT INITIATIVES	ASSESSMENT (TO WHAT EXTEND DO ...)
1. <i>Acquiring talent</i>	We bring the right people into our organization.
2. <i>Managing employee performance</i>	We facilitate employee improvement through standards, evaluations, and rewards.
3. <i>Developing employees</i>	We find ways to help employees become better.
4. <i>Managing employee careers and promotions</i>	We manage careers and succession opportunities.
5. <i>Communicate with employees</i>	We share information with employees, so they know what is expected.
6. <i>Retaining the best employees</i>	We have the ability to keep our top performers.
7. <i>Managing departing employees</i>	We remove employees appropriately.
8. <i>Track employee engagement</i>	We have good ways to track employee emotional response to work.
9. <i>Creating a positive employee experience</i>	We ensure that employees have positive personal experience at work.

Step 4: Report guidance on talent practices

To move from these talent descriptions (Figure 3) to prescriptions, we offer guidance in **Figure 4**. This figure shows the relative impact of each of the 9 initiatives (rows) on four outcomes we measured in the pilot (columns B, C, D, and E). We used proprietary analytics (variance decomposition) to understand

how different talent initiatives will deliver different results (note: in the pilot, we focused on 4 results; we now have added a fifth, social citizenship).

The findings in Figure 4 dramatically shift the discussion of talent from what is done to what **should be** done. Some findings include:

1. In general, the talent activities with the most overall impact on results are

acquiring the right people and tracking their employee engagement. The overall least impact is removing people.

2. Employee results increase the most through tracking employee sentiment and managing performance.

3. Business strategy results are most accomplished through acquiring the right people and tracking their engagement.

4. Customer results are most impacted by tracking employee engagement, communicating with employees, retaining the best employees, and acquiring the right employees.

5. Financial results are most impacted by developing employees, acquiring employees, and managing careers and succession.

Implications

The implications of implementing the Organization Guidance System into talent discussions are profound. Depending on the results an organization seeks, business and HR leaders can utilize the information from the Organization Guidance System to provide data on where to focus talent initiatives.

Read the Organization Guidance System pilot results of the three other pathways: Leadership, Organization Capabilities and Human Resource Department.

This Organization Guidance System is FREE to anyone. Simply visit www.rbl.ai to get started.

Figure 3. Talent Initiatives: Basic Statistics.

TALENT INITIATIVES <i>Sample of 119 people in 45 companies</i>	<i>A. How well do we do it? (1-5) Mean</i>	<i>B. Variance Standard Deviation</i>	<i>C. Reliability Alpha</i>
1. <i>Acquiring talent</i>	3.33	0.49	0.87
2. <i>Managing employee performance</i>	3.41	0.54	0.77
3. <i>Developing employees</i>	3.32	0.72	0.82
4. <i>Managing employee careers and promotions</i>	3.14	0.66	0.84
5. <i>Communicate with employees</i>	3.50	0.68	0.82
6. <i>Retaining the best employees</i>	2.86	0.64	0.59
7. <i>Managing departing employees</i>	3.33	0.62	0.61
8. <i>Track employee engagement</i>	3.34	0.69	0.80
9. <i>Creating a positive employee experience</i>	3.51	0.63	0.79

Figure 4. Talent Guidance: Which Talent Initiatives Deliver Which Results

TALENT PATHWAY	<i>A. Global Mean (n=119)</i>	What guidance can we offer? (Relative impact on ... divide 100 points)			
		<i>B. Employee</i>	<i>C. Strategy Business</i>	<i>D. Customer</i>	<i>E. Finance</i>
1. <i>Acquiring talent</i>	3.33				
2. <i>Managing employee performance</i>	3.41				
3. <i>Developing employees</i>	3.32				
4. <i>Managing employee careers and promotions</i>	3.14				
5. <i>Communicate with employees</i>	3.50				
6. <i>Retaining the best employees</i>	2.86				
7. <i>Managing departing employees</i>	3.33				
8. <i>Track employee engagement</i>	3.34				
9. <i>Creating a positive employee experience</i>	3.51				
R²		19.8	24.0	15.7	10.7

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