

# **Talent Management and Its Place Among Other Organizational Development Initiatives**

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## **Introduction**

Talent Management (TM) has become a buzzphrase in the business world and among the academic community. As a relatively young concept, it quickly gained enormous popularity in the public and private sectors and became a standard practice widely implemented by the Human Resources (HR) function.

While the benefits and the process description of TM have been discussed and studied pretty extensively, and there is hardly any lack of knowledge regarding those, the place of TM in the bigger HR picture and its intersection with other Organizational Development initiatives remains a poorly understood and often disregarded topic.

In this paper, I will argue that in large organizations, TM works most effectively not as a stand-alone HR practice, but in combination with other Organizational Development (OD) initiatives. I will show how it creates a synergistic effect with them, leading to a prosperous and healthy environment favorable for unlocking employee potential.

## **When the Size Matters**

In small organizations, talent management may not be needed at all. Teams of 50, 100, and perhaps up to 300 employees are easier to manage, oversee and develop. Top and even middle management would most likely know every employee by name, and they can surely remember what they are capable of, i.e., understand their talents.

Besides, in smaller organizations and businesses, the HR function is often reduced to a single or a few employees, who are largely, or perhaps 100% of their time preoccupied with basic operational activities, including payroll, employee records, and recruitment.

The need for mature TM arises when the size of organizations starts to exceed 200-300 employees. Bigger companies of 10,000 employees and more are in critical need of systemic, and well-managed talent initiatives. The HR functions of such companies are usually developed enough to have dedicated employees whose sole function and responsibilities are overseeing and managing talents.

## **Part of Organizational Development Initiatives**

### Performance Assessment

Performance assessment is another widely spread HR responsibility in organizations and businesses. It assumes periodic assessment of employee performance utilizing various tools – simple testing (formal and written, or as part of informal employee-manager discussions), key performance indicators (KPIs) implementation, and others. However, testing without incentives and motivation is not only a waste of resources, but also a potential talent suppressor – if only punishment comes out of it, the employee potential may remain permanently locked.

That's why it is critically important to identify talents and work on their development as part of performance assessment initiatives. The bigger the organization, the more this synthesis is important, and the higher the benefits for TM.

My strong take on the performance assessment is that it helps to identify talents and work persistently on their development for the benefit of talents themselves and organizations in general.

### Training and Development

Another potential candidate for creating a synergetic effect with TM is Training and Development. The latter is a representative of typical HR functions, closely resembling an old-school educational process that we all remember from colleges and universities. Corporate training happens quite often, and its benefits are easy to understand – the reskilling and upskilling of employees to help make organizations more competitive and successful.

However, while training and development is usually a company-wide initiative, the TM only focuses on the small group of top talents requiring special focus and attention. The ability to differentiate between the standardized training and development of ALL

personnel and the special educational needs of the NARROW group of top talents – this is what only an experienced HR professional can do.

The training and development function helps to establish an environment, in which talented employees are easier to identify, monitor, and engage.

I think it helps to think of Talent Management as a special force (speaking in military terms) within training and development, characterized by a stronger impact on organizational performance.

### Strategic Workforce Planning

While the previous two initiatives were classified by me as vital contributors to Talent Management, Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP), on the other hand, is a good candidate for harvesting the results of the TM process itself.

SWP is a system process of a strategic nature focusing on forecasting, identifying, and managing the entire workforce to ensure that the right people are available at the right time and for the right cost. In other words, it's a strategic process that guarantees that organizations always have the right people to achieve their business goals.

The TM process helps SWP to maintain a constant flow of individual and organizational capabilities. However, it is up to SWP to define what those capabilities are, where at, and how many of them are needed.

I believe that Talent Management must have instruments in place to help SWP do its strategic work. Hence, the effectiveness and utility of TM are largely defined by its potential to supply SWP with the right people possessing the right capabilities.

Remarkably, SWP makes TM more powerful and strategically important.

## Conclusion

The importance of thoughtful integration of Talent Management into other organizational development initiatives is hard to overestimate. In medium and large organizations, this

becomes both a vital need and a significant challenge for HR personnel and responsible line managers. However, once TM is masterfully combined with performance assessment, training and development, strategic workforce planning, and potentially other initiatives, its benefits and organizational significance become magnified.

In this paper, I've highlighted the key principles of such a combination and the points of synergetic value creation for organizations and businesses, based on my professional experience and personal understanding.

However, the theory and practice behind TM is constantly evolving and the need for regular reviews and updates of the best practices is ongoing.