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**Gartner Executive Programs**

# **Competing for Top Talent: Build the Talent Platform**

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# Foreword

As noted in the 2016 Gartner CIO Agenda Report, “66% of CIOs believe there is a talent crisis in the world ... yet there is surprisingly little talent innovation.” CIOs must particularly consider new approaches to acquiring and keeping top talent.

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This report addresses the question: *How can CIOs acquire and keep top talent in the age of digital business?*

“Competing for Top Talent: Build the Talent Platform” was written by members of the CIO Research Group, led by Richard Hunter (vice president and Gartner Fellow emeritus), assisted by Mark Coleman (director).



**Richard Hunter**



**Mark Coleman**

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# Executive Summary

To compete for top talent, CIOs must borrow the mindset, tools and technologies of branding and marketing.

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The balance of power between the enterprise and top talent has shifted to the latter. The largely reactive approaches to talent management that sufficed in the mid- to late-20th century are ineffective in an era of global visibility and opportunity for top talent. Persistent shortfalls in key talent areas show that IT organizations need to act now to adapt their talent management approaches to the new digital world.

The tools and analysis approaches marketers use to support their relationships with customers and markets are available to CIOs to support their relationships with top talent. Seeing top talent as a customer, and employment by the IT team as a brand promise fulfilled, will go a long way toward increasing a CIO's ability to acquire and keep top talent.

## DEFINITION

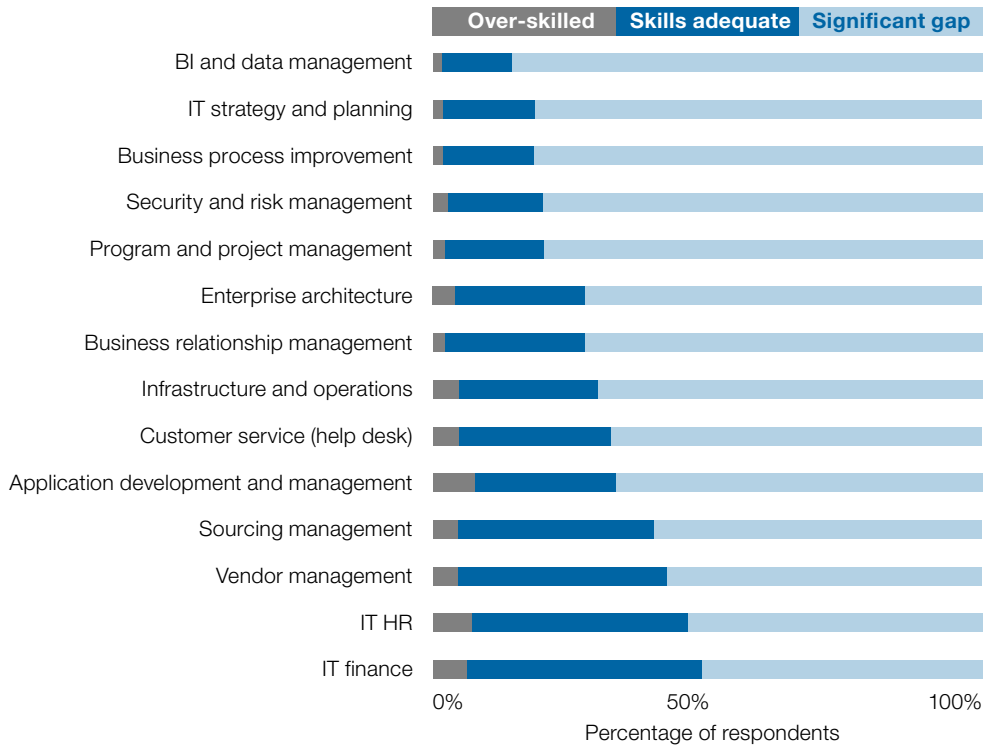
Dictionary.com defines **talent** as “a group of persons with special ability ... especially star performers.” Today enterprises have access to such persons through a variety of means beyond full-time employment.

Top talent is far more innovative than other talent and thus makes a greater contribution to enterprise outcomes. Though enterprises can easily outsource many roles, most choose to employ top talent in particular on an exclusive, long-term basis to reap the maximum contribution.

## The world is changing fast, and IT talent management must change as well

Comparison of the 2012 and 2016 Gartner CIO Agenda reports shows that the talent gaps of four years ago exist practically unchanged for CIOs now (see figures below and opposite).

### Most IT organizations have the same talent gaps in 2016 as they had in 2012



Source: “Amplifying the Enterprise: The 2012 CIO Agenda” (January 2012); question asked differently than in 2016.

## Most IT organizations have the same talent gaps in 2016 as they had in 2012 (continued)

| #  | Talent gap                | Percentage of CIOs |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1  | Information/analytics     | 40%                |
| 2  | Business knowledge/acumen | 18%                |
| 3  | Security and risk         | 17%                |
| 4  | Digital                   | 15%                |
| 5  | Project management        | 13%                |
| 6  | Software development      | 13%                |
| 7  | Architecture              | 12%                |
| 8  | Leadership                | 9%                 |
| 9  | Attract/retain            | 8%                 |
| 10 | Technical skills          | 8%                 |

Source: “Building the Digital Platform: The 2016 CIO Agenda” (October 2015); n = 937, aggregate of top 3 talent gaps.

In the current environment, talent has access to enormous amounts of information about almost any enterprise. Top talent is also highly visible globally. These factors are what tip the balance of power in the enterprise’s relationship to top talent.

Enterprises are recognizing that the talent to write code and design algorithms is now particularly strategic. Instead of renting this talent from outsourcers, large enterprises are seeking to directly hire and keep those who produce the code and algorithms that run digital business. Success requires that CIOs treat top talent as a “market of one,” and act accordingly by building and marketing the IT brand.

## The talent platform is at the center of the enterprise’s relationship with talent

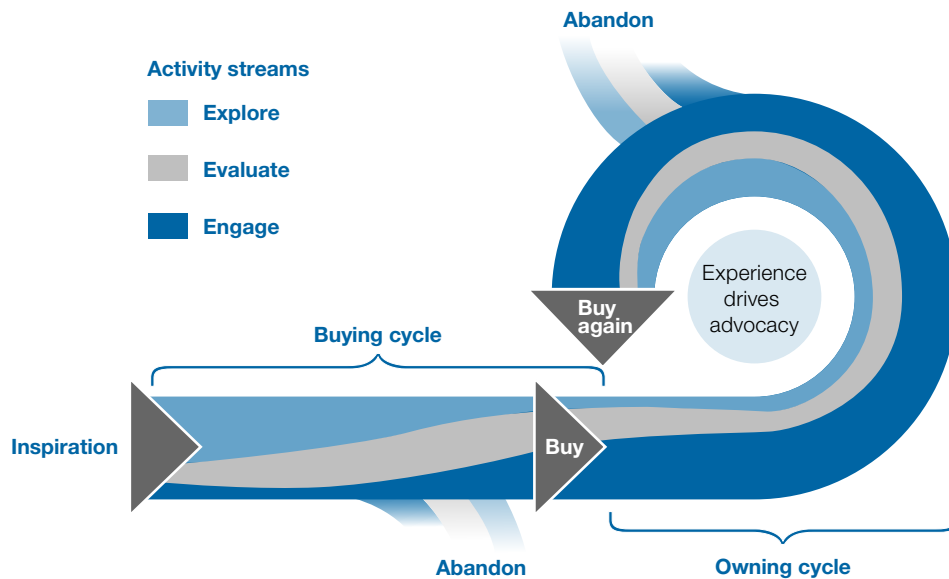
In the context of digital business, a platform is an architecturally innovative means of sharing assets such as algorithms, data and functions with ecosystems of people, businesses and things. A platform typically includes tools, functions and support for multiple customer segments (e.g., buyers and sellers; students, faculty and administrators).

A *talent* platform serves the need of multiple customer segments — including enterprise executives and managers, HR professionals and recruiters, and potential or current employees — to create and maintain engagement and evolving relationships between the enterprise and its contributors, internal

and external. A key function of the talent platform is data capture and analysis related to talented individuals and talent pools — before, during and after their employment by the enterprise.

The talent platform specifically supports an approach to talent that recognizes and leverages the “customer decision life cycle” of explore, evaluate and engage (see figure below). Treating talent as a customer whose relationship with the enterprise includes a mix of exploration, evaluation and engagement over time is more realistic and fruitful for all involved than treating the acquisition of talent as a transaction.

### Gartner Customer Decision Life Cycle



### The talent platform supports marketing of the IT brand

Defining “brand” is the first step toward fruitful relationships with talent; marketing the brand is the second step. Every enterprise and IT organization has a brand, whether or not it is designated as such, and the brand may or may not be what either actually desires. An IT organization’s brand is influenced strongly by the enterprise brand but may differ from it in important ways. For example, the IT organization in an insurance company may have a brand that represents innovation, even though most insurance company brands represent stability and predictability. Brand defines the organization and the people who will succeed there. Thus brand is fundamental to any organization and the talent it seeks to attract.

#### DEFINITION

For the purposes of this report, we define **brand** as an internal and external expression of an organization’s culture, values and value proposition. Less formally, brand is what a prospective or current employee thinks immediately when he or she hears your organization’s name.

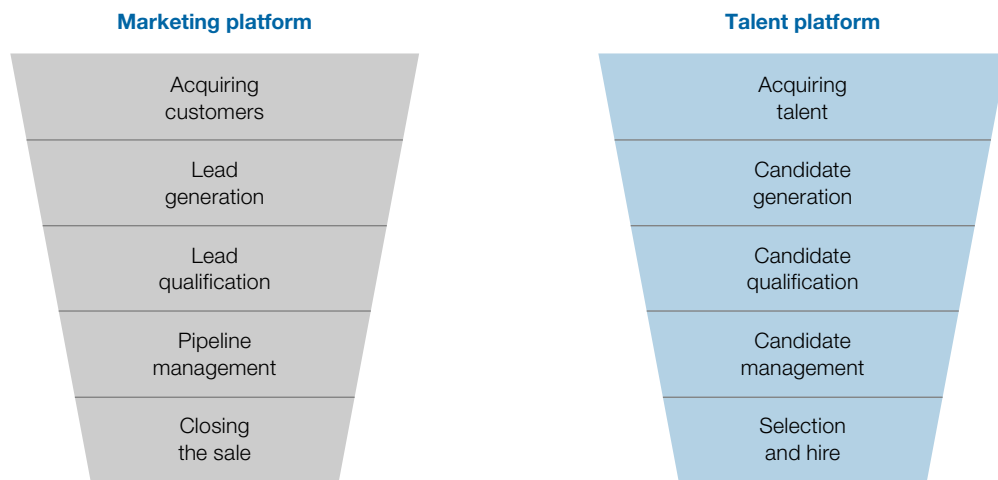
The talent platform creates leverage for marketing the IT brand to top talent by supporting and consolidating multiple, otherwise disconnected, functions and data. The value of the talent platform increases with the scale of the enterprise's need for top talent.

The talent platform has features and functions that mirror those of data-driven marketing programs. However, full-blown marketing platforms exist today, while talent platforms are evolving.

## Make the talent platform a priority for your digital business

The figure below compares a marketing platform's support for the sales cycle with a talent platform's support for the hiring cycle. The resemblance is striking. This strongly suggests that an enterprise's talent and marketing platforms may in the future evolve in tandem, though it is unlikely they will converge into a single platform.

### The talent platform's features and functions are remarkably similar to those of a marketing platform



Clearly, many enterprises can leverage their experience and knowledge in managing marketing platforms and functions to increase their capabilities in marketing to talent. CIOs who want to begin construction of a talent platform should start by bringing the CMO and the CMO's marketing platform team into the discussion, along with the talent management team. CIOs must buy rather than build the components of the talent platform. First efforts in this area will probably — and rightly — focus on the needs of internal users, such as the CIO, HR and hiring managers. Before exposing the talent platform to external talent, CIOs should ensure that their brand messages are fit for the audience.

Top talent seeks a fulfilling mission and the chance to innovate. When you make a bold move toward either, make sure that the messages to talent clearly reflect it.

# 1. The world is changing fast, and IT talent management must change as well

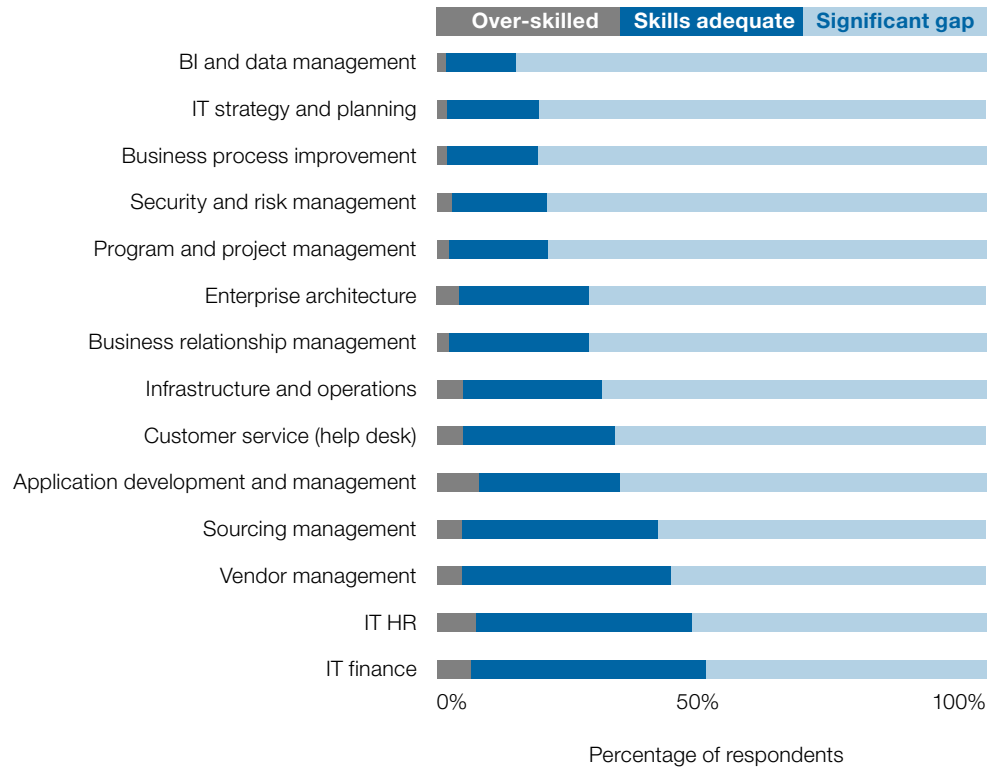
In an era of rapid and transformative change, CIOs have made few changes in recruiting and retaining talent. New CIO mindsets, practices and technologies for finding, accessing, hiring and retaining top talent are needed.

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## Despite a talent crisis, most IT organizations have changed little in their approach to talent

According to the 2012 Gartner CIO Agenda Report, by that year CIOs believed they faced significant shortages of talent in key areas. Our 2016 CIO Survey shows gaps similar to those of the 2012 report, and some of the gaps are larger (see figures opposite).

## Most IT organizations have the same talent gaps in 2016 as they had in 2012



Source: “Amplifying the Enterprise: The 2012 CIO Agenda” (January 2012); question asked differently than in 2016.

| #  | Talent gap                | Percentage of CIOs |
|----|---------------------------|--------------------|
| 1  | Information/analytics     | 40%                |
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| 10 | Technical skills          | 8%                 |

Source: “Building the Digital Platform: The 2016 CIO Agenda” (October 2015); n = 937, aggregate of top 3 talent gaps.

## What is talent?

Dictionary.com defines **talent** as “a group of persons with special ability ... especially star performers.” For many enterprises, “access to expertise” is an acceptable (and sometimes necessary) alternative to employing talent directly. In this era, “machine expertise” is also a potential alternative in a growing number of cases. McKinsey has estimated that almost a quarter of the workforce in the insurance industry (including over 10% of IT workers) might be reduced by 2020 via deployment of smart machines.

Interviewees for this report were clear that, especially for skills considered strategically important to the enterprise, they prefer to employ the best talent, and keep it employed. Because exceptional talent makes an exceptional difference, this kind of talent is the focus for this report.

Perhaps not surprisingly, CIOs responding to the 2016 survey also identified “personnel/workforce” issues as one of their most hated duties, as shown in the figure below. It is unclear whether this rating is the consequence of dealing with a difficult issue, or one of the causes.

## What CIOs love and hate about their job

| Love |                               |     | Hate |                                 |     |
|------|-------------------------------|-----|------|---------------------------------|-----|
| 1    | Leadership/responsibility     | 16% | 1    | Administration/bureaucracy      | 11% |
| 2    | Impact business outcomes      | 15% | 2    | Politics                        | 11% |
| 3    | Change agent                  | 14% | 3    | Stress/pressure/workload        | 7%  |
| 4    | Innovation                    | 11% | 4    | Personnel/workforce             | 7%  |
| 5    | Engagement/diversity          | 10% | 5    | Business as usual               | 6%  |
| 6    | Strategy/planning             | 8%  | 6    | Financial constraints/budgeting | 6%  |
| 7    | Challenges                    | 6%  | 7    | Operational issues              | 5%  |
| 8    | Collaboration/problem solving | 5%  | 8    | Change management               | 5%  |
| 9    | Transformation                | 4%  | 9    | IT stigma                       | 5%  |
| 10   | Technology                    | 4%  | 10   | Governance and compliance       | 5%  |

Source: “Building the Digital Platform: The 2016 CIO Agenda” (October 2015); n = 876.

Talent issues are in fact difficult at both personal and corporate levels. As the world goes digital, it is increasingly clear that the quality of IT talent is more important than ever to enterprises, and that the balance of power between the enterprise and top talent has shifted to the latter. CIOs can and must engage with talent in ways that go beyond what was sufficient in the mid- to late-20th century.

### **Top talent is different**

Talent experts interviewed for this report agree that top talent differs from the rest in the following ways:

- *It has a far greater impact on the enterprise, especially in terms of innovation.* As the CTO of a large data broker told us, “You don’t just get more [output] with better talent. You get different.”
- *It is far more visible globally, and highly coveted.* The most talented individuals have a very wide range of options for their next assignment (or employer) and can act on such options quickly — often within a few days.
- *It expects outsize pay for outsize performance.* “All people are not equal,” says Dr. John Sullivan, an HR strategy, branding and technology expert based in Silicon Valley, California. “If you pay LeBron James 10% more than the average, you’re underpaying him.”

### **Top talent has power and new expectations**

Thanks to the business press, to websites such as Glassdoor, and to social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook, any potential employee can more or less instantly find out what a company values and believes, how it ranks in terms of employee engagement, what it’s doing in the world, and how the IT organization figures in its plans. This ensures that the balance of power between employees and employers will continue to favor the most talented individuals.

“If you have a superstar IT person, and it takes you two months to make a decision, they’re gone. The top 10% are gone in a few days. It’s innovative turnover. The innovations leave with the people.”

**Dr. John Sullivan, HR Strategy, Branding and Technology Expert**

The impact of millennials on the workforce is more controversial. There's no disputing that by 2020, millennials (the generation currently aged 25 to 35) will comprise 50% of the global workforce. Of course, these demographics do not apply to all countries equally. But top talent, especially in this young cohort, seeks opportunities globally, not just locally.

The general perception of most interviewees for this report is that millennials see career in terms of a sequence of assignments, not a lifetime commitment to an employer. They expect employers to offer work that is innovative, not routine. They also explicitly seek work that provides a meaningful mission (which, as we will see, is a competitive advantage for public-sector employers). More than other generational cohorts, millennials are immersed in social media and more likely to seek fulfillment in the social and community aspects of their work (such aspects come to the fore in the Zappos case study — see the Appendix).

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“Millennials and future workers wish to work for themselves or small enterprises, not for large employers. To win the talent they need, large organizations should have an HR retention strategy. Such a strategy will focus on the unique needs and wants of millennials, getting them to stay longer. Leaders should know exactly what to expect from them and manage to this if they want any long-term loyalty.”

**Dr. Linda M. Pittenger, Associate Professor, College of Business, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University**

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## Coders are top talent in the age of digital business

Digital business runs on code — including algorithms (advanced statistical models using predictive analytics) — a point highlighted in “Algorithms Will Transform Talent Acquisition” (see Further Reading). In the not-too-distant past, when the potential for code to make or break an enterprise was less obvious, enterprises rented many of their coders from outsourcers. Our research shows that large enterprises making substantial commitments to digital business are reversing this trend to acquire — and keep — the top talent that writes the code and algorithms that arguably will soon run the world.

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“Innovation, speed, secrecy — the ‘gig economy’ doesn't work with these imperatives. There's no way Google would let someone leave if they could help it, no way that they'd let their secrets out. Everyone at Google is a permanent employee.”

**Dr. John Sullivan, HR Strategy, Branding and Technology Expert**

Most enterprises have always sought to employ, not rent, the most strategic talent. However, the recognition that coders are strategic talent is something new for many of them. Shell, DBS Bank (see the case studies in the Appendix) and GE (see section 4) have decided that talent for creating algorithms is strategic, so they are hiring rather than renting it. This is a decision with long-term consequences for all involved, and it highlights the importance of finding and keeping the best talent, as well as looking ahead to the demands of digital business.

## **Top talent is a “market of one”**

Finding, hiring and keeping top talent demand the ability to manage relationships — over time and changing circumstances — with many potential “markets of one.” CIOs need a new approach to talent to respond to a rapidly changing scenario, in which the balance of power has shifted from the enterprise to the talent. This approach begins with recognizing the importance of brand in attracting talent, and proceeds to marketing the IT organization to talent in new ways. The talent platform — which includes tools, technologies and support for both — is the subject of section 2.

## 2. The talent platform is at the center of the enterprise's relationship with talent

The talent platform is multisided to satisfy the needs of both the organization and the talent it seeks.

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### Platforms support digital business

In the context of digital business (and this report), a “platform” is an architecturally innovative means of sharing assets such as algorithms, data and functions with ecosystems of people, businesses and things. A platform typically includes tools, functions and support for multiple customer segments (for example, buyers and sellers; students, faculty and administrators). Platforms may be focused on specific industries or more generalized. Examples of platform offerings and services include directories, data analysts and analytics, and standardized interfaces (APIs) to access platform functions and algorithms.

“Technologists have long recognized the power of platform approaches to information and technology architecture. What is new is that platform dynamics are being applied to create value in all aspects of the business.”

From “**Building the Digital Platform: The 2016 CIO Agenda**”

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## A talent platform is multisided

A talent platform serves the need of multiple internal customer segments — including enterprise executives and managers, HR professionals and recruiters, and potential or current employees — to create and maintain engagement and evolving relationships between the enterprise and its contributors, internal and external.

Features and functions of a fully configured talent platform include the following:

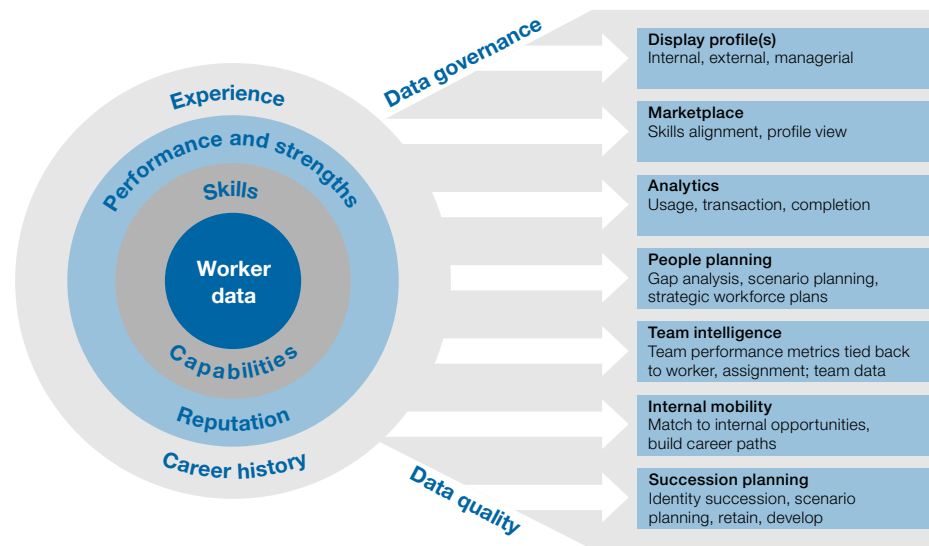
- Directories of individuals, including extensive data about their skills, achievements, experiences, employment, roles (at the enterprise and elsewhere) and (increasingly in this age of social media) personal history
- Data analysis tools to support identification, hiring and retention of employees likely to succeed:
  - Data-driven analysis of the effectiveness of candidate characteristics and employer evaluation techniques in predicting employee success in current and future roles
  - Ongoing analysis of internal and external talent pools — their locations, sentiments, skills, etc.
  - Ongoing analysis of specific talented individuals and their evolution, aimed at identifying the kinds of people and traits that lead to success
  - Ongoing analysis of team performance and the factors affecting it
- Tools, materials and support for managing relationships with individuals and groups:
  - Two-way channels (e.g., social media and web presence)
  - Defined individual roles that supplement, substitute for or encourage employment by the enterprise
  - Information about the company — its mission, goals, agenda, culture, the kind of people it wants and expects to succeed, and other aspects of brand (as described in section 3)
  - Outreach programs to engage interested individuals in activities that involve the enterprise and its employees
- Data capture, integration and analysis for all of the above

The many features and functions of a talent platform reflect the complexity in identifying, cultivating and working with talent “markets of one” over time on

a global basis. A drawer full of resumes is no longer sufficient mainly because it is essentially reactive. Indeed, as Google’s Laszlo Bock, “head of people operations,” writes in his book “Work Rules”: “The odds of hiring a great person based on inbound applications are low.” This is why Google now uses data-driven approaches — consistent with the tools and support provided by a talent platform — to identify, hire, fire and develop talent.

A recent example of an enterprise talent platform is Cisco’s internal “talent cloud” (see figure below). Its features and functions are consistent with those listed above. Note Cisco’s emphasis on data and analytics throughout.

### Building the Cisco “talent cloud”



Source: Cisco Systems.

## Current enterprise talent platforms are internally focused

As with many early enterprise efforts in digital business, enterprise talent platforms may begin with internally focused data gathering and analysis. For example, many companies analyze data related to the traits and characteristics of successful performers in a range of roles, sometimes extending the analysis to the performance of teams. And in a growing number of office environments, sensors gather data on how office characteristics affect the well-being and productivity of employees.

Over time, we expect that, as in the rest of digital business, talent platforms will increasingly look to individuals and talent pools that are outside the company’s orbit (see “Cool Vendors in Human Capital Management, 2015” in Further Reading). In other words, they will become more like marketing platforms (as described in section 3).

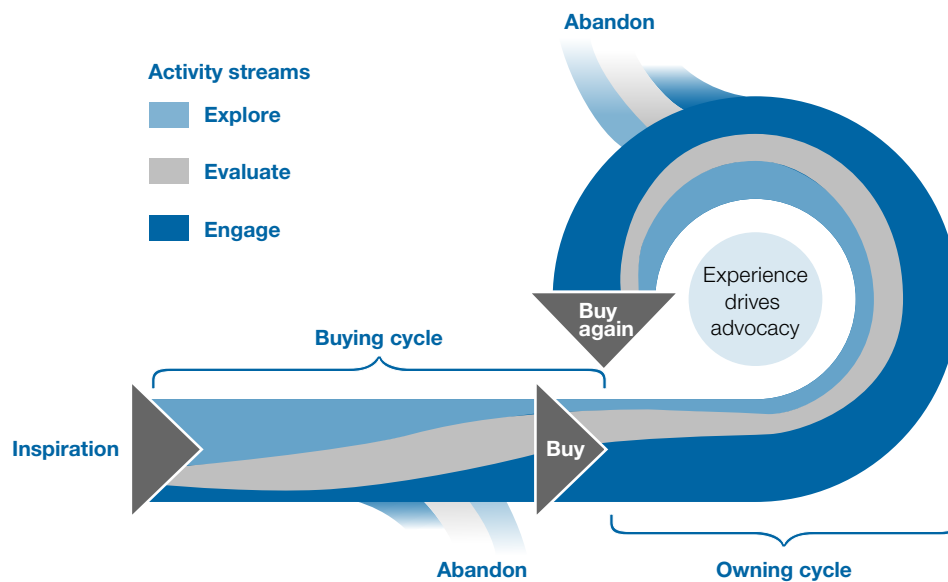
## Talent is a customer before it is an employee

Most enterprises don't address the multiple roles, beyond employment, that an individual plays in the enterprise and its networks. This approach worked in the mid-20th century, when talent essentially signed up for a lifetime with a company whose product, service and market change cycles were measured in years or decades. Today, however, this approach is a woefully inadequate match for top talent's expectations.

The figure below depicts the Gartner Customer Decision Life Cycle, which is explicitly about the ways in which customers make decisions to buy or reject a product or service. It is helpful to think of the enterprise's relationships with talent in terms of exploration, evaluation and engagement, with all three waxing and waning, ultimately leading to "advocacy" (i.e., an individual's decision to "buy" or refuse employment with the enterprise, or to promote or denigrate the enterprise to others).

Mike Pettit, CIO of Ventura County, California, summed up how the life cycle works there: "We're successfully contracting with talent. They work on some engaging projects with us; we make it enjoyable to be here. The county is a great place to live. We've been able to attract desirable people and get them to stay full-time."

### Gartner Customer Decision Life Cycle



Rick Jordan, head of talent attraction and candidate experience at Zappos, a U.S.-based online retailer, told us this: “A few years ago, there was a lot of interest in Zappos, but few jobs. We could only turn people away, and we didn’t have a way to engage people that might work here someday.”

An enterprise that fails to track and reciprocate with a wider range of relationships will be turning away people who have taken pains to signal their interest. Zappos has corrected the problem with a number of programs for non-employees (see the case study in the Appendix).

In short, top talent is a customer who must be sold on the enterprise, and with whom the enterprise will maintain a mutually valuable relationship over time. Managing that relationship is complex. A platform is necessary to manage the complexity of “marketing” the IT team to talent.

Like all customers, talent is attracted by brand, so building and marketing the IT brand are the first steps in cultivating relationships with top talent. Brand is what top talent encounters when it starts exploring, and marketing is the means to present and reinforce brand. The talent platform’s support for marketing the IT brand is the subject of section 3.

## 3. The talent platform supports marketing of the IT brand

A talent platform is meaningless without a message for the talent. Defining “brand” is the first step toward fruitful relationships with talent. Marketing the brand is the second step.

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### Brand defines the organization and the people who will succeed there

A talent platform is multisided, and one side faces the talent. This face is most effective when it is driven by brand and marketing (in that order).

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“As we invest in digital innovation and reshape banking, DBS is attracting talent that would otherwise not have chosen to work with us.”

**Dave Gledhill, CIO, DBS Bank**

“If you want to be loved, be lovable.”

**Ovid**

In large part because employees have so much more information about employers globally than ever before, the employer's brand is, in turn, more important than ever to attracting top talent. By defining brand for the IT team, the CIO is, in effect, defining the kind of person the organization needs and wants. For potential employees, the CIO is defining the kind of person who can succeed in the IT organization.

## DEFINITION

For the purposes of this report, we define **brand** as an internal and external expression of an organization's culture, values and value proposition. Less formally, brand is what a prospective or current employee thinks immediately when he or she hears your organization's name.

Every enterprise and IT organization has a brand, whether or not it is designated as such, and the brand may or may not be what either actually desires. An IT organization's brand is influenced strongly by the enterprise brand, but may differ from it in important ways. For example, the IT organization in an insurance company may have a brand that represents innovation, even though most insurance company brands represent stability and predictability.

From the point of view of top talent, brand includes any factors related to a role in an enterprise that affect the prospect or employee's decision to work there, including:

- The enterprise's mission. This is a powerful aspect of brand for all IT organizations, especially those in the public sector, which often seek to make changes in the world.
- The culture of the organization — its values and beliefs as expressed in its behaviors.
- The lifestyle that goes with employment. Senior Vice President and CIO Klas Bendrik cites Volvo's "Nordic balanced lifestyle — a high quality of life." At Ventura County, the Southern California setting is a key attraction; at Zappos, the lifestyle is social. (See the case studies in the Appendix.)
- The nature of the work the employee will take on. Top talent rejects work (and the company providing it) that is not innovative.

- The management style. At Zappos, moving from hierarchy to “holacracy” (see box below on this trademarked term) two years ago represented a radical internal and external overhaul of the company’s brand. Approximately 18% of the company’s employees found the new organizational system unattractive, accepting a severance package to leave the organization. According to Fortune Magazine, an additional 10% of employees departed within 18 months. (For context, it is common for 5% to 10% of an organization’s employees to depart voluntarily when major enterprise change is underway, whether or not reduction in the workforce is an explicit goal of the change.)

Managers and their style are a powerful aspect of brand. As the HR leader of a midmarket publishing company in the U.S. Midwest said, “The most important aspect to retention and development is upskilling our managers.”

#### **“Holacracy” defined**

“Holacracy is a new way of running an organization that removes power from a management hierarchy and distributes it across clear roles. The work can then be executed autonomously, without micromanagement. The work is *more* structured with holacracy than conventional management. There is a clear set of rules and processes for how a team breaks up its work and defines roles with clear responsibilities.”

From “How It Works — Holacracy” (see [www.holacracy.org/how-it-works/](http://www.holacracy.org/how-it-works/))

(In the opinion of the authors, it is unclear at this time whether holacracy solves the problems it was intended to solve without introducing new and equally serious problems. We sincerely admire the goals of holacracy and await the outcomes of current experiments with great interest.)

By design, a meaningful brand isn’t attractive to everyone, no matter how exceptional it is on its own terms. Though CIOs have limited influence over the enterprise’s brand, they can often shape IT’s brand in ways that make the IT team an attractive destination for top talent. Along with the Southern California lifestyle, Ventura County CIO Mike Pettit emphasizes mission and community impact. At a government defense agency, the CIO offers young recruits the opportunity to experience cyberwar firsthand, with all the thrills and satisfaction that come with accomplishing the mission.

“It’s a lot easier to attract someone to be part of a winning team. We have a long, successful history, and in the last few years we’ve added a reputation for innovation.”  
**Klas Bendrik, Senior Vice President and CIO, Volvo Cars**

## The talent platform creates leverage for marketing the IT brand to top talent

According to HR thought leader Dr. John Sullivan, “The largest talent gap is research — how do we market to recruits? We never even ask, ‘What’ll it take to get you here?’ We don’t know anything about the recruit’s process, such as the three people they ask for advice, and so on. The biggest thing we don’t do at all is know the customer.”

The depth of knowledge about top talent — Sullivan’s “customer” — is impossible to acquire and leverage at scale without automated support. Accordingly, the talent platform supports and consolidates multiple functions and data related to marketing IT’s brand, such as:

- Identifying and engaging with specific individuals and larger talent pools
- Monitoring and analyzing internal and external sentiment related to brand factors such as office environment, lifestyle and management style
- Targeting brand messages and delivery channels to specific talent pools and individuals, and routing feedback to the appropriate parties for action
- Correlating the brand to recruiting results. Are the brand messages heard? Are they attracting the right kinds of recruits? Do the hires we want know the brand, and did it influence their actions in the desired way?
- Representing the brand, via multiple channels, to potential employees and other contributors to the enterprise (for example, the Zappos website offering interested parties the opportunity to become a “Zappos Insider” and participate in one or more of the company’s departments and functions — see [jobs.jobvite.com/zappos/p/inside](http://jobs.jobvite.com/zappos/p/inside))

In short, the talent platform supports data-driven exploration, evaluation and engagement for all parties involved. A talent platform brings the same leverage to the combined functions and the data they generate that a marketing platform brings to marketing and sales functions (see “What’s a Digital Marketing Platform? What Isn’t?” in Further Reading).

The importance of leverage increases with scale. The 7N case study (see the Appendix) describes a Scandinavia-based consulting company that is staffed via a network of independent consultants. Historically, 7N has relied on word of mouth and personal referrals. The company is increasingly using technology to support recruitment and retention as it expands to an 800-person organization doing business in seven countries.

## Example: Marketing to data analysts via the talent platform

The biggest talent gap selected in our 2016 CIO Agenda Report was business intelligence/data analytics. How would a full-blown talent platform with robust data-gathering and analysis capabilities support efforts to acquire top data analysts? Here is an example:

- The first step in appealing to this customer segment is to define an attractive brand in which mission and innovation are foremost. How will the company’s data analytics improve the world? What is the importance and contribution of the data analysts who contribute to these outcomes? The talent platform itself might be part of the message: “We care enough about our talent to use big data to find and hire you.”
- When brand messages have been defined, the talent platform is used to acquire and analyze data to identify the target audiences: talent pools and talented individuals. (Of course, many of these audiences will be employed by other enterprises, so information about other enterprises’ data analytics programs is essential input for the talent platform.) The target audiences are used first for testing and refining messages, and then for full rollout of the campaign.
- The talent platform coordinates matches between specific messages, the profiles of talent that responds positively to those messages, and the channels most appropriate for communicating with the talent — all in preparation for larger-scale efforts. The channels include those likely to be searched by talent in exploration mode, such as the company’s website and communications to stakeholders (annual report, etc.). If the company’s data analysis operations are in multiple locations attractive to different demographics — young singles, families and so on — relevant aspects of the brand are emphasized in messages aimed at those demographics.

### **What messages do your company’s channels send to data analysts?**

As a test case, we looked at the website of a global sportswear marketing company. Typing “data analytics” into the search window on the company’s home page brought us to detailed video and PowerPoint presentations by the vice president of strategy and innovation on the role of the company’s “insights team” in creating deep understanding of customer needs and behaviors.

We also visited the home page of a chemicals business, where the words “We are data driven” are front and center, in the largest font on the page, leaving no doubt as to the importance of data analytics and data analysts to this company.

- When talented individuals are identified as specific targets, the talent platform can be used to analyze their personal and professional networks to identify influencers who might be brought to bear on an individual's decision. Further analysis might allow the enterprise to put together an offer that involves projects of specific interest, along with the opportunity to work with and learn from other talented individuals.
- Information about an individual's collaboration and personal work styles, and other traits, can be used to determine whether he or she would be a good fit for a particular role or team. When the individual is hired, ongoing data capture and analysis can further refine tools and algorithms for identifying the data analytics talent most likely to succeed, and the circumstances that help talent along.

## **The differences are about customer segments, not techniques**

To summarize, the talent platform is a tool for marketing the enterprise to talent and analyzing the results of these marketing efforts. Top talent is thus a customer segment with its own needs, desires and characteristics. Again, this approach (and more) is standard operating procedure for data-driven marketing programs.

The final section discusses approaches to acquiring and leveraging the talent platform.

## 4. Make the talent platform a priority for your digital business

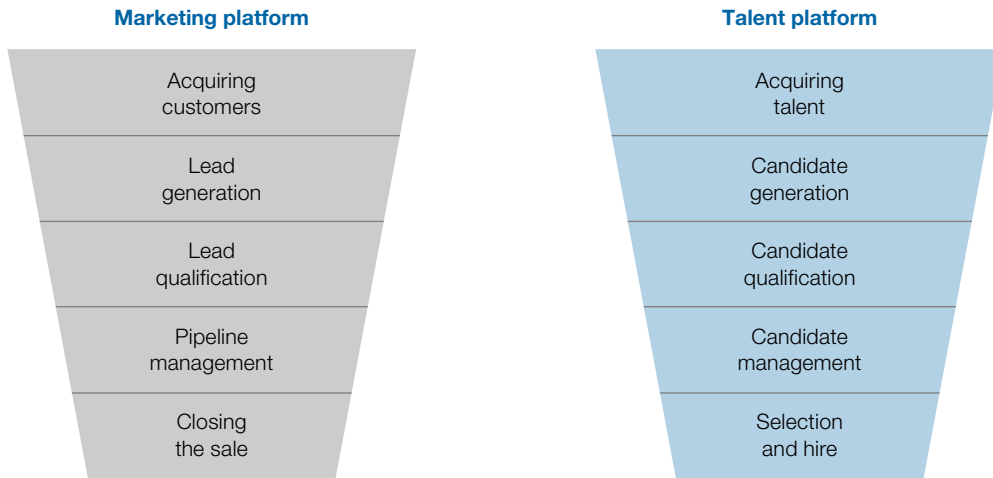
As with digital business generally, sooner is better than later for developing the talent platform.

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### Look to marketing platforms for inspiration and practical pointers

Talent and marketing platforms are about persuading their respective customer segments to explore, evaluate, engage with and ultimately advocate for, the enterprise. The figure on page 28 compares a marketing platform's support for the sales cycle with a talent platform's support for the hiring cycle. The clear implication is that the enterprise marketing team is already dealing with the issues that CIOs and HR professionals will encounter as they build the talent platform.

## The talent platform's features and functions are remarkably similar to those of a marketing platform



### Ask for help

Marketing is not simple, and very few IT organizations have the resources to become expert marketers. The talent management teams that in many enterprises work with both internal and external marketing professionals to create collateral marketing material should be the first stop for CIOs; the marketing team itself should be the second stop.

The advice of professional marketers will be valuable not only in early stages of building the talent platform, but in understanding its ongoing use as a tool for increasing exploration, evaluation and engagement with respect to top talent. This is also an opportunity for the CIO to develop a deeper and mutually rewarding relationship with the CMO, as well as insight into how the marketing team does its work.

### Start with data

The data the CIO needs to build and extend relationships with talent is very similar to the data with which a marketing team manages relationships with customers, much of it coming from Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. The data should answer the following questions:

- Who is the talent (i.e., the customers or candidates)?
- Where are they?
- What are they doing personally and professionally?
- What do they like and dislike?

- What are their goals?
- Who or what influences them?
- Who or what do they influence?

Because of the similarities between marketing and talent data, CIOs and their talent management teams should closely study the marketing team's data sources, structures and applications.

## Get the brand straight before you build the platform's face for talent

The CIO should be clear on IT's initial brand messages before the talent-facing part of the platform is designed and built. IT organizations typically have two missions with different value propositions, and this can introduce complexities into the brand (see box below).

### Minimizing brand conflicts for IT's missions

IT's brand represents the kind of person that can succeed in your organization. One potential conflict is that IT has two essential missions: to run the business and to advance the strategic agenda.

These missions entail very different cultures and value propositions. The differences can lead to conflict organizationally and in the brand. CIOs therefore need to promote a brand that recognizes and celebrates the contributions made by the teams that support both missions.

Consider that a government employer with such a brand — say, a municipal IT organization — might simultaneously (and with justification) claim that it is guarding the public safety and welfare, advancing the quality of life in the city and providing employees with varied opportunities for challenging and fulfilling work. The first and second of these brand appeals speak to the value of IT's first mission (run the business). The second and third address the second mission (advance the strategic agenda). All three appeals are compatible with other aspects of brand, such as lifestyle.

In most cases, the defining of brand for the IT organization is driven first by inspiration and intuition. Ultimately, it should be driven by data that reveals how brand messages are perceived by different audiences. For example, IT organizations in general have more trouble recruiting and retaining women than men. One reason is that women perceive specific brand messages and language differently than men, and most IT organizations are unaware when their language alienates this key demographic (for examples, see [www.eremedia.com/ere/you-dont-know-it-but-women-see-gender-bias-in-your-job-postings/](http://www.eremedia.com/ere/you-dont-know-it-but-women-see-gender-bias-in-your-job-postings/)).

## Use the talent you have to get more of the talent you need

Data analysts are a priority talent community, not only for IT, but for multiple other enterprise functions, including HR. Clearly, the ability to recruit effectively within that community is of high value to the entire enterprise. CIOs should therefore make it a priority to put this talent to work defining the data and analytics needed to recruit more of it.

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“It’s getting easier to crunch data and understand talent and skills in various locations around the world. This data allows us to get more targeted and surgical in hiring top talent. The work of HR becomes more customized and high-touch, and HR skills need to shift to better leverage analytics.”

**Francine Katsoudas, Senior Vice President and Chief People Officer,  
Cisco Systems**

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Though the talent platform is multisided, all sides do not need to be developed at once. One approach to developing the talent-facing side is to look internally to the recruiting needs of the IT team, the HR team and others. Then the CIO can explore specific outward-facing functions, including those aimed at supporting a range of relationships besides employment.

## Expect market offerings for talent platforms to evolve

A number of tools for marketing to potential recruits have recently emerged, often promoted as “social recruitment” or “recruitment marketing.” They are still maturing and have relatively low adoption rates. Some focus on job marketing, others on being able to set up and manage talent pools (which can include internal employees, candidates, candidate referrals and alumni). Often, dedicated communication strategies are applied to the various tools, complicating integration of functions and data.

These tools are new to talent management leaders in many organizations, who are still figuring out how to best leverage them. Other tools are emerging that leverage extensive data insights and advanced analytics techniques, both for predicting which candidates could be the best fit for a given role and for understanding when and how to send which messages to different candidates based on their most recent interactions (see “Algorithms Will Transform Talent Acquisition” in Further Reading).

An implication of the striking overlaps in scope and function between marketing platforms and talent platforms is that they might not only evolve in tandem, but could also converge into a single platform at some point. However, the sensitive nature of candidate data, which may be regulated differently depending on the jurisdiction, makes such a convergence very unlikely in the foreseeable future.

## Go big, go bold, and don't stop with technology

In recent months, GE announced that it will move its corporate headquarters to Boston from its current location in Fairfield, Connecticut, USA. Apparently this move is at least partly inspired by changes in corporate taxation in Connecticut. A second likely reason is that GE, in the midst of a huge shift from selling products to selling IoT-enabled services, is making a strategic play for talent by going where the talent lives.

Greater Boston is home to 54 colleges and universities and 250,000 students, including such bastions of engineering talent as MIT. Simultaneous with announcement of its HQ relocation, GE has been running a series of prime-time television commercials depicting the journey of a young coder from college graduate to GE employee.

With humor, the first commercials in the series repeatedly showed the young protagonist responding to misunderstanding and dismay about his new career from friends and family. In the most recent ad (as of this writing), a friend nonchalantly drops a résumé with a small bribe into the path of our protagonist, allowing him to point out that you can't bribe your way into a job at GE.

The young coder persists in his career path because he can write software for GE that he believes will change the world. With every commercial, the mission-seeking audience of millennial engineers that will soon surround GE in Boston sees how much GE's world-changing mission needs their skills.

GE has recognized that top talent is inspired by a bold message and big ambitions. When you're preparing to make a bold talent move, tell the world about it, and make sure to provide channels for the world — and especially the talent — to respond.

## Conclusion

Seeing top talent as a customer and IT as a brand, and recruiting top talent as a “market of one,” represent new thinking for IT organizations (and in most cases for the enterprises they serve). In a world where top talent is aware, mobile and empowered — just like the customer — this thinking is essential. The costs of outdated talent approaches are high, and there is plenty of potential upside to an approach based on a talent platform. We recommend that CIOs wait no longer to begin.

# Appendix: Case Studies

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## **7N faces the talent challenges that come with global expansion**

Founded 25 years ago by two consultants, 7N helps companies benefit from IT tools and technology. In its home country of Denmark, the company is a market leader, with a presence in six other countries. 7N provides IT consulting services to the private and public sectors.

### **Growing internationally demands collaboration**

7N is growing its business and becoming a global team, offering competencies in IT development, IT business alignment, and IT infrastructure and operations. Eight hundred highly experienced consultants operate in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Switzerland and Germany, with offshore centers in Poland and India.

7N's consultants are independent contractors who rely on 7N for infrastructure, support, sales and marketing services. "Traditionally, about 300 of the 800 consultants have been in Denmark," says Henrik Andersen, 7N recruitment manager. "Denmark is historically a closed ecosystem. Now we see the need

for international capability and multicultural competence. We've gone from local to global teams, all working together." Andersen spent 21 years building this relationship-based network.

### **Connecting projects with consultants**

Since 7N matches projects to consultants, it is striving to structure growth according to client needs. "We saw the potential for a loosely organized workforce," explains Andersen. "We connect with consultants via projects, with offerings for their families — but they're free to say yes or no to assignments and growth opportunities. It's a very modern way of working."

Relationships among 7N managers and the consultants are based on mutual respect. "We have no clauses in our contracts that bind our consultants to anything," says Andersen. "If you don't like it here, you shouldn't be here. Our manager-consultant relationships are 100% based on trust, and the perception of value on both sides."

### **Capitalizing on employee referrals**

Andersen and his colleagues call 7N's talent ecosystem a consultant community — a network of professionals working for clients that demand very high expertise. "We talk about talent in terms of a platform that provides consultants with access to our clients," he says.

For talent outreach, 7N uses technology, including Microsoft CRM. "We combine that with years of experience, including deep interviewing proficiency," says Andersen. "We also have a strategy to build new tools that support our growth globally."

To find specific candidates, the company draws on an internally built CV system, LinkedIn, other social media, and employee referrals. However, the consultants are Andersen's most important tool. "Every year," he says, "I ask them for the names of the three best people they're working with in their personal networks. Good people attract good people."

Finding those good people, particularly project managers, is one of Andersen's biggest challenges. Currently, project managers with international experience are the most sought-after. "We want people with more than 10 years of experience," he says. "If we're looking at the latest technology, of course those people will have less experience than this. The people with the most experience go into a role such as an agile coach or an architect."

### **Finding talent with the skill to succeed in digital business**

For both Andersen and Anders Sogaard, chief competence officer, digital business and agile transformation present opportunities and challenges. "Our consultants are eager to move into these areas," says Sogaard, "and we do everything we can to help them."

## **7N faces the talent challenges that come with global expansion (continued)**

For example, last year 7N conducted a seminar for clients and consultants. “That created customer interest,” says Sogaard, “but at the time we didn’t have people of the quality we needed to sell our services. We were a bit behind the wave in getting people who knew what they were doing. It was a challenge for us — we were not the first movers on technologies.”

7N predicts future growth in countries such as Denmark, Poland and India. “We have good growth in Poland, one of the most attractive EU locations in Eastern Europe, due in part to the volatile political situation in Ukraine,” says Sogaard. “We have huge potential in India and other new markets, where we use the same model that we’ve succeeded with elsewhere — building specialist teams to deal with specific problems.”

*Based on interviews with, and material from, Anders Sogaard, chief competence officer; and Henrik Andersen, manager, recruitment team, 7N, February 2016.*

## **Cisco Systems evolves its talent management model to center on employees**

Based in San Jose, California, USA, Cisco Systems is a multinational company that designs, manufactures and sells networking equipment.

### **Innovating with Cisco’s “People Deal”**

Acquiring and managing talent have “changed dramatically,” says Francine Katsoudas, senior vice president and chief people officer. “Because of social media, there is no such thing as active and passive candidates. There are only candidates. With work changing faster than people, we’re striving to move faster, too.”

Cisco has invested in its “People Deal,” an innovative concept to connect everything, innovate everywhere and benefit everyone. People Deal is about understanding what Cisco can do for its people and what the company expects in return. “That clarity in a company helps you focus on the business, because you know what you’ll receive and what’s being asked of you,” says Katsoudas.

Specifically, Cisco’s People Deal focuses on:

- Connecting people with the information and opportunities they need to succeed
- Focusing on people development, especially driving the skills and capabilities dialogue
- Focusing on creating the best teams, and making leaders accountable to their teams

With People Deal, Cisco puts employees in charge of the talent brand. “The power is not from the corporation, but through our teams and people,” says Katsoudas. “Our People Deal is a big shift for us. When we launched it, we shared it with the entire company through the experience of an employee named Alex.”

Cisco followed Alex's first-year experiences. "Through Alex, we could better understand the highs and lows and how we could improve," says Katsoudas. "There will always be highs and lows in an employee's career, and we have the ability through our leaders to help architect a better employee experience. Of course, we want our employees to have a differentiated and positive experience."

As part of its People Deal, Cisco has created "Moments That Matter," which are those experiences that mean the most to employees. Cisco employees share their experiences in ongoing focus groups. "Employees have shared what matters to them," says Katsoudas. "They also have rejected a number of ideas that senior leadership thought were things that mattered. Our employees are helping us shape their experience."

### **Eliminating performance evaluations**

Cisco has changed its culture. "We eliminated employee performance reviews," says Katsoudas, "because they were more focused on ratings and deterred from the discussion around development. What we found was that we were spending time explaining ratings, when the focus should have been on development conversations and improving performance. We made this decision on a Thursday in the operating committee meeting and announced it three days later."

In the traditional way of working, the Cisco operating committee would have made the decision. Then HR would have worked on it for nine months and come back with ideas on how to implement something new.

"What we did in this case is partner with the business in designing our approach," says Katsoudas. "We agreed we're not doing ratings anymore, and we put the focus on our managers talking with their employees on a regular basis. The first time we went through the compensation review without the ratings, we asked our leaders to assess their talent and allocate awards as appropriate. We realized we did not need a rating to do this; our managers know their teams best and who their top performers are."

"One of the insights we also have had is that we were focused on the individual, but all our breakthroughs come through teams. We're looking at teams closely. At some point we might move teams around the company, not just individuals."

Today Cisco focuses on internal mobility and allows employees to job-swap or try out new roles. "In HR, we're allowing employees to bid on projects, on a body of work," says Katsoudas. "It allows us to go internally before we try it externally."

### **Focusing on employee development to move forward**

As the employee model has evolved, so has the role of HR. "As we put more control in the hands of our managers, the role of HR has changed, too," says Katsoudas. "Now we talk about strategic intent. Instead of being the creators of the rules, HR is focused on business impact and supporting our leaders with differentiated options and consultation."

## **Cisco Systems evolves its talent management model to center on employees (continued)**

Moving forward, Katsoudas believes that Cisco must carve out individual career tracks and evolve talent management.

“Work is changing faster than people,” she explains. “Our role is to support and drive development and agility among our employees. We are working at creating a more targeted approach to enable career path growth and opportunity.

“We’re defining the future of work. Across the industry we are all looking at the skills and capabilities we not only need today, but tomorrow. We are moving to a ‘one size fits one,’ high-touch approach, and having the best data and analytics is critical. For us the future of work is the intersection of digital technology and the human touch. We will continue to test, innovate and evolve.”

*Based on an interview with, and material from, Francine Katsoudas, senior vice president and chief people officer, Cisco Systems, February 2016.*

## **DBS builds a digital culture to reimagine banking**

DBS Bank is the largest bank in Singapore, with a growing presence in Southeast Asia, Greater China and South Asia. The bank has 280 branches in 18 markets, providing a full range of banking services in the consumer, small and midsize business, and corporate areas. DBS’s staff of 22,000 represents 40 nationalities.

### **Investing in digital innovation and transformation**

CIO Dave Gledhill explains the bank’s digital business focus: “We missed most of the agony following the 2008 financial crisis. Senior management attention could therefore focus on growing and investing in digital innovation without the distraction of post-crisis regulatory and financial issues. We’re continuing our investments, and positioning ourselves as a digital bank — a digital player.”

To support its transformation journey, DBS’s strategic priorities revolve around the following:

- Embrace digital innovation.
- Embed DBS in the customer journey.
- Live the corporate values of being purpose-driven, relationship-led, innovative and decisive; create a fun place to work.

“People see technology as a key enabler,” says Gledhill. “As we invest in digital innovation and reshape banking, DBS is attracting talent that would otherwise not have chosen to work with us. Increasingly, we are looking for talent with UX [user experience], human-centered design, big data analytics and artificial intelligence expertise. We also look for those who embrace agility.

“The key is staying ahead of the game — keeping DBS as a leading place to work, where people are doing exciting, enjoyable work. The focus on innovation and transformation comes from the top. People feel that they have an opportunity to be part of something really special, so why would they leave?”

“Digital transformation is a step-by-step, multiyear journey that requires equipping our people with the right tools and processes, while creating an inspirational stretch — the moonshot goal. Of course, you can’t talk about leading innovation if you aren’t doing the basics right, such as security.”

Gledhill adds that it is important to break down team silos and be open to forming multidisciplinary teams, as was done in the process of creating DBS digibank, India’s first mobile-only bank, which is branchless, paperless and “signatureless,” and incorporates advanced technology such as biometrics and artificial intelligence. “Digibank was launched in record time — 18 months — and is indeed a major milestone for DBS, as it brings to bear results of our digital transformation so far,” says Gledhill.

### **Using ecosystems, not outsourcers**

A talent ecosystem connects the providers and institutions that offer the creative talent DBS needs for its digital business agenda. “An ecosystem includes vendor partners, universities, government research facilities, financial technology and startup communities, blog networks, and open-source developers,” explains Gledhill. “They are ecosystems of people sharing ideas.”

DBS has set up a pre-accelerator program to nurture digital startups, including “fintechs,” and the bank helps employees develop their entrepreneurial ideas. “DBS doesn’t own the resulting products, nor require participants to give up equity,” says Gledhill. “Instead, it has created an ecosystem that fosters innovative thinking and entrepreneurship. The more you are seen as a company with this capability, the more people want to join you, either as a partner or an employee.”

DBS is also working with A\*Star, a government research agency in Singapore, to develop predictive analytics capabilities. The bank’s HR department is using analytics to improve workforce planning, while the audit and global transaction services teams are among the first in banking to use analytics tools to swiftly identify potential errant behavior in the trading room and fraudulent-trade finance transactions.

Thanks to such partnerships, DBS has changed from nearly 100% outsourcing to an in-house model. “The accepted wisdom is that banking is all about technology, so you are only as good as your technology,” says Gledhill. “You need to own your destiny. At DBS, permanent employees manage projects and couple this with a talent ecosystem. What formerly came from technology vendors now comes from ecosystems.

## **DBS builds a digital culture to reimagine banking (continued)**

“The structure of the organization will look very different. We will have the same number of employees doing different jobs and types of work, and serving more customers.”

Intelligent systems will have their place in the ecosystem. “I see them as enabling support systems, so people can do their jobs more effectively,” adds Gledhill. “Machines can enhance human performance by doing the grunt work. Other areas of cognitive technology — call-center voice recognition with back-end technology, for example — can replace people, eliminating manual work that supports basic customer services.”

### **Relying on strong leadership**

Gledhill insists that leadership is “massively important” to the digital transformation of the banking sector. “It gives everybody a clear purpose,” he says. “The senior management in the bank is committed to this process. We’re using a group scorecard throughout the organization founded on a new purpose and mission: ‘Making Banking Joyful.’”

This also means creating joyful experiences for employees at the workplace. DBS is targeting 100 customer journeys and 50 to 60 employee journeys to change in 2016. “We can only make banking joyful for customers if it is joyful for employees,” says Gledhill.

*Based on an interview with, and material from, Dave Gledhill, CIO, DBS Bank, February 2016.*

## **IDA Singapore gets innovative to recruit and retain public-sector talent**

Formed in 1999 by the merger of the National Computer Board and Telecommunication Authority of Singapore, the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), a government entity, has a mandate to make Singapore a dynamic global information communications hub and to leverage “infocomm” for Singapore’s economic and social development. IDA supports the growth of innovative technology companies and startups, works with leading global IT companies, and develops information technology and telecommunications infrastructure, policies and capabilities.

### **Offering talent employment with purpose**

According to Chan Cheow Hoe, assistant chief executive of IDA and government CIO of Singapore, IDA is always looking for top talent. He explains Singapore’s talent challenges:

“We’re looking for people in the fields of data science, analytics and digital. They’re hard to find. The good ones cost a lot and don’t move around. Singapore is a small market. We currently take people straight out of university under the technology

associate program. But if you hire 30 people, five years later you might be left with four to five. We find that if the person has the right attitude and is willing to learn, that's what is most important."

IDA has increasingly used technology to gauge whether job candidates are suitable. "We want people to have a basic understanding of technology before they come in," says Chan, adding that they must not only pass a coding test but also prove they can work collaboratively.

Hiring people and training them, only to lose them to the private sector, remains a challenge. "We can't always hire from the market, but we can train," says Chan. "It's good for us, the industry and the nation." Retaining good people, especially millennials, is a critical success factor. "When we attract people to the government, we can't match the pay of industry," explains Chan. "But we can offer purpose with programs that provide the opportunity to do good things for society."

Toward this end, IDA created a group called "Hive" that is organized into small squads and tribes. "It is a very collaborative environment, with a different culture," says Chan. "The millennials love it."

The government is now looking to develop technology products in-house besides outsourcing them. "Through Hive, we now concentrate internally on data analytics and app development," says Chan. "If I had put this group in a traditional government IT setting, it would be crushed. So we keep them separate, in a very different setting from traditional IT."

### **Pursuing bimodal IT and reshaping the culture**

As Chan rebuilt the IT environment, he rebuilt the culture to enable bimodal IT, moving people from Mode 1 (traditional IT) to Mode 2 (exploratory IT). "Now we have over 100 people in the Mode 2 group," he says. "We create faster, at lower cost, with higher quality. And it's more fun."

People in both groups have autonomy. "You need to trust that people can do their jobs well," says Chan. "We don't force people to clock in and out. If they want to work from six in the morning until four in the afternoon, they can. The culture is fun because people realize they need to work collaboratively. They can't deliver by themselves. The sense of belonging is very high — they go to lunch and dinner together."

Chan notes that government entities can offer a sense of mission that is lacking in purely commercial enterprises. "We create software and undertake projects that aren't just about making money," he explains. "They're about making life better for citizens. This keeps interest levels very high. People are excited to join us."

For example, a team developed an app called "MyResponder" to crowdsource volunteer life-savers to respond quickly to emergencies. "We've created a virtual community of 5,000-plus people who know how to save lives," says Chan. "We can notify them when they're within 400 meters of an emergency. Every time a life is saved, we celebrate."

## **IDA Singapore gets innovative to recruit and retain public-sector talent (continued)**

In addition to innovative projects that are succeeding in enticing people to work at IDA, Chan supports a culture of diversity. “In any big organization,” he says, “there’s always a feeling that IT people are like this, millennials are like that, etc. To help build a new, more creative and diverse culture, I spent a great deal of time with our IT team, making very clear that it’s not either/or with regard to Mode 1 and 2 — it’s both. And it’s not just the software guys who can be innovative. We also let the infrastructure people look at nontraditional ways to run the government infrastructure.”

As for new hires, Chan notes that data scientists, cybersecurity specialists and digital application developers are the toughest to find. “I’ve talked to our leaders about improving compensation for these skills,” he says. “Because people look for mentors, I brought in new hires at the middle and higher levels of the organization, and they’ve been great. So people work for people, and all people work for purpose.”

Finally, Chan insists that the Mode 1 and Mode 2 groups work together: “What’s happening right now is ‘overlapping circles’ — for example, infrastructure plus developers. But in a sense, every project we do needs all the people we have. The moment you start isolating one group, things fall apart.”

### **Adopting a collaborative approach**

Chan explains how advances in intelligent systems, combined with the “overlapping circles” concept, have impacted workforce composition: “IDA has formed a digital team, the first circle. Six months later, we pulled together the analytics team, another circle. Then we added the people who do geospatial and data visualizations. Now we’re bringing in people who like to work with IoT.”

As the circles collaborate, they work as a “holacracy.” (Holacracy is a management philosophy that removes power from the hierarchy and distributes it across clear roles with refined rules and processes — see [www.holacracy.org/how-it-works/](http://www.holacracy.org/how-it-works/).) “The leadership should naturally evolve,” adds Chan. “As much as this is a technology experiment, it’s also an HR experiment.”

“For us, holacracy is more than overlapping circles. Yes, we have people who specialize in certain things. But on every project, the circles look for each other to make the project successful. And the project managers may come from different circles. After a while, you create an ecosystem. People recognize that relevancy, rather than authority, is what makes things happen.”

Chan’s organization manages people based on three pillars: operational excellence (primarily Mode 1), innovation (primarily Mode 2) and citizen centricity. IDA rewards people on team performance, factoring in skills, talent, leadership, successful overlapping circles and achievement of goals.

“We start with operational excellence,” explains Chan, “then we move to innovation, and the three Cs — customer/citizen/centricity — overlay it all. Everything falls apart otherwise. We go from outside to inside in the organization. That’s the philosophy behind how we will manage HR going forward.”

*Based on an interview with, and material from, Chan Cheow Hoe, assistant chief executive, IDA, and government CIO of Singapore, February 2016.*

## **Shell’s recruiting strategies seek to attract quality IT talent to the energy industry**

Formed in 1907 and headquartered in the Netherlands, Shell is a group of energy and petrochemical companies. Shell believes that oil and gas will remain a vital part of the global energy mix for many decades. The company has 93,000 employees, operates in 70 countries and generated earnings of US\$3.8 billion in 2015.

### **Data analysis identifies new opportunities**

While Shell is a leading global energy player, it may not necessarily be the first employment choice of IT professionals, according to Lucy McNamara, vice president HR for IT. “We’re not Google,” she says. “IT professionals may or may not consider Shell to be a company of choice. As with professionals of many hues, we need to help IT experts understand the important role Shell plays in delivering energy and keeping the world moving.”

McNamara believes that IT professionals will be motivated by the opportunity to make a meaningful difference to an important industry. “Our aspiration is to grow our position as a competitive and innovative energy company,” she explains. “I personally see great potential for our staff to drive enormous business value opportunities through IT innovation combined with broader technological developments. We can create an environment in which our professionals can, through their deep technical IT expertise combined with business understanding, help to meet the energy needs of the planet.”

McNamara notes that Shell’s values-driven culture is also a major asset in this quest. “We have transparent core values that are the reason that people like me joined, and stay with, the organization. We value honesty, integrity and respect, and live by these values. The way in which we interact with each other is very much driven by these clear principles.”

Shell is currently on a journey to insource some of its IT activities, with a focus on project delivery. “We’re transitioning from large amounts of activity delivered by external consultants to a much more insourced model, in order to develop and retain our skills base in-house, as well as to achieve efficiencies,” says McNamara.

Shell will still deploy contractors in niche and specialist skill areas but is focused primarily on building its internal skills base. It has a newly established IT hub in Bangalore, India, for which recruiting began in 2015, and which officially opened

## **Shell's recruiting strategies seek to attract quality IT talent to the energy industry (continued)**

in April 2016. Why this strategic shift now? "We've established IT reliability and excellence inside Shell, and have articulated the strategic benefits of this move, so have reached the point at which we can now take this step," says McNamara.

### **Knowledge management supports talent management**

To recruit the right talent, Shell takes advantage of social media. "Presence on LinkedIn and Facebook already forms part of Shell's recruitment approach," says McNamara. "It is simply an expectation of potential recruits, of all generations, that social media will form part of their dialogue with, and review of, employers."

Internally the company also uses technology to support collaboration, knowledge management and resourcing. "We have recently upgraded our internal resourcing system to provide better visibility into, and management of, our talent," says McNamara. "Knowledge management is already important to Shell and is growing in importance. Much of it is IT-enabled, and we aspire for IT people to be role models in this regard, so are placing a lot of emphasis on it. Amongst other things, we have something called 'Expertise Finder,' a type of internal CV which employees are expected to keep up to date to support knowledge management, collaboration and the sharing of often dedicated, and sometimes otherwise invisible, skills and experience with each other."

### **Changing market dynamics create opportunities as well as challenges**

With the market challenges now facing the energy industry, talent management issues could similarly arise. "The market dynamic creates an opportunity as well as a threat," says McNamara. "Most importantly, we're a robust company, and will be made strategically stronger by our integration with BG. That will help us to stay resilient through the dip in oil price, which we expect to continue for some time to come."

She adds that market dynamics also present an opportunity for even better cost management, transparency and discipline within the organization:

"An external context such as this creates the opportunity to drive greater focus and performance. From a talent management perspective, such a challenging environment creates opportunities for our strongest employees to shine. It also requires that we scrutinize our talent needs and provide clarity on the skills we need our employees to develop and demonstrate to remain current, and deliver, both now and in the future, in a very dynamic environment."

### **Women are tougher to recruit and retain**

Diversity and inclusion are very important to Shell, and no less so in IT. "Female talent is scarce in IT, particularly at more senior levels," says McNamara. "Women tend to be highly valued and well looked after by their current employers, so we need a strong value proposition for them when we seek experienced hires to recruit into Shell. Employee referral is a powerful tool, and one that we wish to make use of more often. In our new hub in India, as well as in all other countries in which Shell

operates, great attention is paid to ensuring that the right policy frameworks exist to support diversity, as well as to leveraging them to ensure that we get, and get the most from, the best talent available.”

*Based on an interview with, and material from, Lucy McNamara, vice president HR, IT, Shell, February 2016.*

## **Ventura County’s branding uses mission, location and lifestyle to recruit top talent**

Ventura County in Southern California, USA, has a population of 850,000. The 11th most populous county in the state, Ventura has 42 miles of coastline and the Los Padres National Forest. With two naval bases and an Air National Guard post, the U.S. military is the largest employer in the county.

### **Public-sector job classifications pose hiring issues**

Situated between Los Angeles and Silicon Valley, Ventura County is far from high-tech companies. “I don’t have a lot of high-techs competing with me,” says CIO Mike Pettit. “We’re the second-largest employer in the county and have been generally successful in recruiting for IT. But it’s tough to get the exceptionally talented individuals. The demand for people with IT job experience is increasing, but the pool of talent is steady or diminishing.”

Pettit’s IT organization offers some unique opportunities to serve the community. For example, the IT team collaborated with the animal shelter to create a no-kill system. With a contractor, the IT team created mobile apps to match pet owners who have lost pets with pets that have been found. “The contractor felt a sense of contributing,” says Pettit, “and our people saw that they are making a difference. We’re not changing the world but definitely changing the county.”

To find the right talent, Pettit teams with HR. “My departmental HR manager is very attuned to us,” he says. “She’s been a great leader in tapping into our culture and building on it.” Still, the county’s job classification system has been a significant challenge for HR.

“Classifications are very slow to change,” explains Pettit, “so they have posed a challenge in hiring the right people. People are put into classifications that don’t really describe the work they do. Because the job descriptions are not accurate, assessing performance is a problem.” He adds that a classification may not always fit the resource need either. “A union issue may also be involved,” says Pettit. “We just have to work around it.”

The county’s HR professionals use social media tools, including LinkedIn and Facebook, to recruit employees and communicate with customers. Applications include Microsoft Office 365, Microsoft SharePoint, Skype (for external recruiting interviews) and Yammer (for internal project collaboration). Telecommuting is allowed — one employee did so from Arizona. “Database and server administrators are the underpinning tech components that the county relies on,” says Pettit. “They are the best positions for telecommuting because they aren’t customer-facing.”

## Ventura County's branding uses mission, location and lifestyle to recruit top talent (continued)

### Managing performance is a higher priority than retention

According to Pettit, managing talent in the public sector presents challenges not often found in the private sector. "Retention is not a significant problem for us," he says. "Performance managing — in particular, separating underperforming employees — is a bigger challenge, given the 'property rights' and bargaining units in government. Government rules can be restrictive. Hiring, firing and buying can be problematic, given the level of regulation and the trust and liability issues involved."

With many county employees nearing retirement, Pettit tracks departure metrics. "The 'silver tsunami' has created lots of opportunity for us," he says. "I tell my team: 'Every time we have a departure, it's an opportunity to raise the bar and level-up the org.'"

To improve management practices, the county has adopted Lean Six Sigma principles. "Our CEO was the champion of our Lean Six Sigma practice, with the goal of empowering all levels of the enterprise to bring about change," says Pettit. "We applied kaizen in onboarding to shorten the ramping-up process. Often, people in government feel they have no way to change an entrenched process, but lean has generated many opportunities to change processes for the better."

At the same time, county officials are examining ways to measure employee value. "There are certain innate qualities, such as emotional quotient, that have a bearing on the success of the individual," explains Pettit. "We're not measuring these today, but we're talking about it. Analytics is a key component for us — we're doing a strategic tech plan refresh, and data analytics are a big part."

Looking ahead, Pettit says intelligent systems will have an enterprisewide impact. He predicts that in the next 10 years, his service desk will use "Amelia," an artificial intelligence virtual assistant from IPsoft. He outlines the county's thinking in this regard:

"What does our customer base prefer in terms of interaction? If we find that humans can improve customer service, we'll be at the same employment levels. When attrition happens as a result of SaaS, the business will increase use of this new model of access to business solutions. So there will be less demand for the IT department, which will produce further attrition. We're helping facilitate such solutions for the business now, helping them understand the risks and the value. In some ways, we're increasingly becoming a broker of solutions."

### Improving space to attract millennials

To improve recruitment of millennials, the county is renovating its physical environment. Cubicles have been removed to open up the space, and there will be "refuge" and collaboration rooms. "It is more like the environment of a software company," says Pettit. "Once our remodel is done, we anticipate being able to better attract the type of talent we are looking for."

Pettit would also like to do a “contract to hire” with professional service technology providers. “They’re typically dialoging with people in the industry over a long time, so they have a very wide net for IT talent,” he says. “They have an incentive to deliver because they don’t get paid until they find someone for you. Velocity is key for them. In contrast, our internal recruitment has no incentive to speed up the pace of recruitment and the filling of openings. We’d also really like to be able to customize the interviews to the candidates.”

*Based on an interview with, and material from, Mike Pettit, CIO, Ventura County, California, January 2016.*

## **Volvo Cars uses innovation as a recruiting tool**

Founded in 1927 in Gothenburg, Sweden, Volvo Cars is a global brand, with manufacturing operations in Sweden, Belgium and China. The company’s premium line of cars includes sedans, wagons and SUVs.

Volvo recognizes that its brand attracts prospective talent. A reputation for innovation and safety not only appeals to car shoppers but also to those in the talent marketplace.

“It’s a lot easier for us to access talent now, because we have a positive image in the industry,” says Senior Vice President and CIO Klas Bendrik. “Young professionals and senior consultants alike want to work for us.”

Bendrik adds that people often associate Volvo first with safety and second with great design, which is no accident. “Safety has been a goal attribute for our products,” he says. “When you add great design and connect that to safety, you ultimately get an autonomous vehicle. It’s all about trust and putting people first.”

Volvo is currently refining its brand to underscore innovation. For this company, a major part of innovation is to reduce complexity wherever possible. “We are in the midst of a renewal of our brand with a human-touch perspective,” says Bendrik. “We are making the brand more relevant, and this encourages talent to take a closer look.”

Bendrik also believes that Volvo’s heritage of roadworthiness transfers to talent that seeks a strong, reliable, yet innovative employer. “We’re a Swedish company,” he says, “so you get a Nordic balanced lifestyle — a high quality of life.”

In Bendrik’s experience, what makes Volvo recruitment unique is that it taps talent from every industry. The company’s engineers, designers and marketers haven’t necessarily made parallel career moves to get where they are.

“It doesn’t matter if the knowledge comes from inside, consultants, third-party vendors, strategic partners or from universities,” explains Bendrik. “We have interactions from multiple industries, including startups. People and ideas can flourish in our ‘hot spot’ to increase revenue and consumer value.”

Volvo even seeks to recruit people who don’t drive cars. “I’d like us to employ people without an interest in the industry and who don’t have a driver’s license,”

## Volvo Cars uses innovation as a recruiting tool (continued)

says Bendrik. “Then we can make stuff that’s so great it inspires them to get a driver’s license.”

How does the company access talent? This process is changing, too. “We’re much more focused on the talent and domains in which we need top talent,” says Bendrik. “To accommodate this view internally, we have to be more flexible about compensation levels compared to the rest of our industry.” As an example of this flexibility, Bendrik cites people who work part-time for Volvo while maintaining their own businesses. “Bridging these domains is beneficial for both parties,” he says. “We have a higher level of talent coming to us because of this flexibility. We’ve moved into the future.”

### Expanding the vision

Riding the globalization wave, Volvo is developing worldwide operations, from building factories in the U.S. and China, to launching products that are well-received internationally. This worldwide reach has inspired the company to recruit globally.

“We’re using an ecosystem that we’ve been part of for 20 years,” says Bendrik. “For example, we have connections in Silicon Valley and are using them as a bridge to the investor community, design community and so on. We’re also developing talent in Shanghai to generate influences from the East.”

For Bendrik, Volvo’s talent platform is simply a way to use brand and innovation as talent acquisition tools. “It is about building the brand and our reputation for innovation,” he says. “Our latest TV commercials feature people building Volvos. That not only generates brand and product interest but also interest in what it would be like to work at Volvo.”

To retain talent, the company emphasizes teaming, and a visionary strategy in automobile design. “By 2020, no one should be killed or seriously injured in a new Volvo,” says Bendrik. “We talk about this internally and externally. With 1.3 million people killed worldwide in traffic accidents every year, markedly reducing the risk of injury and death while driving is an important social issue. Top talent wants to be involved in this.”

Also by 2020, Volvo expects self-driving electric cars to be a reality. “With great ambitions in this domain, we need to know how to find talent there,” says Bendrik. “If you look at where we’re going, we have connections to financial services, gaming and software that will grow in importance. We’re looking to outside industries, and looking at internal talent in a different way.”

*Based on interviews with, and material from, Klas Bendrik, senior vice president and CIO; and Lena Nordberg, HR manager IT, Volvo Cars, March 2016.*

## Zappos embraces “holacracy” to transform its workplace experience

Launched in 1999, and acquired by Amazon in 2009 for more than \$800 million, Zappos is an online retailer of millions of products from 1,000 shoe and clothing brands. The company, based in Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, has 1,500 employees.

### Energizing the innovative spirit

With its adoption of “holacracy” (see [www.holacracy.org/how-it-works/](http://www.holacracy.org/how-it-works/)), Zappos has moved toward a new and dramatically different management structure that significantly impacts the brand. “It’s a tool, a system we’re using to organize our work,” says Rick Jordan, head of talent attraction and candidate experience. “We want a self-managed, self-organized company. It started with a core group, HR and others, and then rolled out to the entire company. Some departments practiced it; others behaved in an old-school manner. Finally, Tony [CEO Tony Hsieh] issued a statement to this effect: We’re going all in, and if you’re not passionate about our new direction, you have the option to take a severance package. The people still here are on board with the concept.”

Leveraging holacracy, the CEO looks to keep the innovative spark that inspired the company’s inception. Jordan explains:

“We were a startup 16 years ago. Now that we’re a larger organization, we don’t want to lose the innovation and spirit of a startup. The organization was becoming static; Tony had an ‘ah-ha’ moment and discovered holacracy. Core talent principles haven’t changed much, but the specific qualities we look for have migrated when we’re looking for people who will succeed here.”

### Engaging the community to find prospects

“‘Deliver Wow Through Service’ is core value No. 1, and we use that mentality in our interactions with each other and our vendors,” says Jordan. “We’re on a daily mission to ‘wow’ our customers and our employees.”

The company’s 10 core values put a high priority on how the company relates to both the community and customers. The values range from the expected (“embracing and driving change”) to the unexpected (“create fun and a little weirdness” and “be humble”).

Zappos looks for prospects who share the core values. “We want folks who are comfortable with ambiguity,” says Jordan. “We also want folks who can accept the idea of an evolutionary purpose — that we can’t predict the future and the journey will never be finished. We believe these things lead to success for our hires.”

When the company posts a new job opening, the HR team searches its “Zappos Insider” database for potential recruits. “They’re warm leads,” says Jordan, “providing opportunities for prospects to engage with the recruiting team. We wanted to create a robust program that went beyond ‘opt-in for job alerts.’”

## **Zappos embraces “holacracy” to transform its workplace experience (continued)**

We’ve moved the company to downtown Las Vegas and are trying to help rebuild the community. Our brand is lived through our values — they’re not just a piece of paper on the wall. We hire and fire for our values and also look at philanthropic efforts from that perspective.”

Jordan cites a company event at a food bank as an example of the value/philanthropy/talent interplay: “About 40 people showed up to make a difference to the community,” says Jordan. “The recruiting team connected with those who were already Zappos Insiders, and we had two hires from that event. When we got back to the office, we said, ‘We should call X and Y, too, because they’re passionate about Zappos and our community.’”

The company also attracts prospects by holding events in Las Vegas and other cities, and offering online interaction opportunities. The events, which range from a night of bowling to a baseball game, are opportunities for potential “Zapponians” to connect with the recruiting team in a fun, social way. “We do a biweekly chat,” says Jordan, “that helps break down the barriers between prospects and the recruiting team. The idea is to create an engaged community whose members might someday become employees.”

Marketing activities come into play in the search for talent as well. “Marketing creates awareness around brand,” says Jordan, “so we create awareness around our recruiting brand. We’re trying to generate interest, excitement and even intrigue. We want to talk about a career at Zappos with those who respond in these ways.”

### **Promoting work-life integration**

Zappos has an alumni program for those who leave the company on good terms, and it encourages employees to start their own social groups — for example, “Zappos Parents.”

“We push the idea not of work-life balance, but of work-life integration,” says Jordan. He adds that such flexibility is especially attractive to millennials. “The characteristics millennials seek in the workplace have always been strong values for Zappos. From the beginning, we’ve also attracted people outside that generation because of our flexibility. It’s not just a job. This job will contribute to more than your career.”

According to Jordan, Zappos will continue to focus on self-management, not the least because it allows employees to have dedicated time during the day to explore an area outside their expertise. “With holacracy, you don’t have to be assigned to one position,” he says. “You can try out a lot of areas. For example, a recruiter with a background in marketing might want to spend 20% or so of his or her time in marketing. Zappos is not a one-stop job.”

*Based on an interview with, and material from, Rick Jordan, head of talent attraction and candidate experience, Zappos, February 2016.*

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56 Top Gallant Road  
Stamford, CT 06902-7700  
USA  
+1 203 964 0096

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