

**ACP International
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Career Management Strategies – The Organisational Advantage

Denmark and other Scandinavian countries are ranked by the World Economic Forum as the most competitive with good public institutions, economic dynamism and IT prowess. In addition Copenhagen is the environmental capital of Europe; a city full of friendly, bike-riding and English-speaking people and the venue for ACPi's first professional forum.

The event also coincided with the annual Traefpunkt HR exhibition arranged by the Organisation of Personnel Managers in Denmark with various sponsors. A quick visit found over 100 exhibitors offering Coaching, Stress Management, Outplacement, Training and Occupational testing. In addition to several familiar faces it also offered keynote sessions and speed networking opportunities.

The ACPi forum was held in a purpose built conference centre, DGI-byen, and was ably chaired by Derek Osborn, also chair of the CIPD Career Forum, who introduced the speakers and set out the objectives for the day. Mark Venning, ACPi President, welcomed the 30 plus participants from 10 countries.

Jean-Baptiste Labrusse, HR Director at French pharmaceutical company Lilly, represented a strategic overview from the board, a coherent approach to attract, develop, and keep talented people. "Why would a company invest in people development instead of saving that money to improve productivity?" Put simply he said that by 2010 there would be millions more jobs than people and that the war (for talent) had started! The 5 success factors were: a high level of employee alignment to corporate strategy, a high level of employee commitment, HR playing a strategic rather than admin role, a culture of performance, and a long-term vision of employee management.

Lilly carried out a Company Capability Assessment, and then actively engaged supervisors and employees in dialogues, with a view to changing behaviours, performance and attitudes. The outcomes were: performance management, development plans, two 3-day events each year to review the top 100 talent, succession planning, and a feedback culture. The key was the Company Capability Assessment and the Individuals' Development Plans, reconciled by HR whose role was to help the company "invent the future".

The first case study was presented by James Taylor, Head of Talent Europe, Africa & central Asia, for HSBC, the second largest bank in the world. His topic was delivering business strategy through talent management. After implementing a Group Talent Management Strategy and establishing a Group Talent Pool (around 250 people), his current responsibility is for the next level of strategy and implementation. Fifteen years ago HSBC employed 50,000 staff; it now employed 250,000. He described how the Managing for Growth Strategy was being rolled out: People Strategy => Talent Strategy => Learning & Development Strategy => Leadership Development=> Resourcing => implementation.

He likened Group Capabilities to “critical chips” which powered all the HR processes but were invisible to the end user who should experience greater quality, consistency and flexibility. In other words what the company and development needs there are in the future, compared with competencies and how good the employees actually are. Finally, the employee proposition – the new psychological contract - is built around career & development, work-life balance, work environment and reward.

Lieven Vallaey is manager at Belgacom Corporate University’s School of Leadership. Belgacom is a former state telecommunications provider which employs 20,000 people. It has 300 competitors yet has only a 0.6% turnover rate. Facing a significant decline in business leadership of more than 20% at top and middle level management across all functions and industry sectors, Belgacom has set up the School to develop and assess high potential employees for current and future leaders.

To become one of the high potential staff you have to be referred by both your line manager and HR and have to pass an exam. If successful you are invited to a 4-day House of Development, the filter that provides homogeneity of assessment through a range of activities including outdoor exercises, a business case, simulations, psychometric testing eg MBTI, presentations with Q&A, and reflective time. Assessment is against benchmarked core and visionary competences with company executives actively involved in 3 of the days providing “hard but heart” follow-up with top management support and monitoring. The outcomes include feedback from an executive coach, a written report saying whether or not the participant has been successful (and if not they are not allowed to be considered for another 2 years), and development actions.

Lea Lillkall, Head of Competence & Leadership at TeliaSonera, Finland, talked about talent management, career orientations and self-management. TSF is a Nordic and Baltic industry leader and employs 6,500 staff whose average age is 37 with peaks at 33 and 50 years of age. They are a mix of people with fixed line and mobile technology experience. TSF requires self-responsibility and initiative from employees in managing their own development in return for which the company offers a framework, guidance and support.

For the company it is a balance between where it wants to go – the business vision, strategies and capabilities, and where the employees want to go (a la Bridges’ “Me Inc” model). The company offers several strands of support:- talent/people management; planning dialogues looking at core values, personal development, CVs, and targets; career orientation and coaching using an on-line system called Career Storm Navigator backed up with e-mail support and introductory and debriefing sessions; and the internal job market – a transparent process which handles up to a hundred jobs a day. All underpinned by a set of leadership principles about adding value, showing respect and making it happen.

Silke Pippert from Coca Cola (Germany & Nordic Division) described how, following a change at the top, a staff survey showed that employees were not engaged. Career development opportunities were seen as important across most countries so they decided to move employees from being managed to wanting to manage their own careers.

Benchmarking themselves against companies like GE and Amex they developed an integrated career development strategy. Using an on-line system developed with Insala,

employees can develop their career plan using a variety of self-assessment tools, profiles and MBTI-type questionnaires. Set within a business strategy framework and linked to performance management and talent reviews, it makes explicit who is responsible for what – the employee, the manager, HR, and the company.

Sarah Lane, the Leadership Development Manager for Woolworths – the UK’s leading general merchandise retail group –deals with talent management, senior succession, executive development and coaching. Based on evidence that using transition coaching can speed up the time taken for new managers to reach performance targets from six to three months, she described how Woolworths uses executive coaching during the first 100 days.

Delivering the coaching with coach and manager reviews at 30 day intervals from induction the process is highly visible, provides a powerful framework and strategies, prevents failure and ensures new leaders succeed and add value faster. The topics addressed at the reviews are: 4 key areas, quick wins, stakeholders, boundaries of influence, short-term objectives, managing others’ perceptions and overcoming barriers. Early feedback shows higher levels of motivation and faster breakeven at a time when RoI is at a premium.

The final session was a joint presentation and the only one from the public sector. Anne-Marie Gustaffson managed a 7-year life and career-planning project called PROPELLOR from within the Swedish Tax Agency and Enforcement Authority which covered 9 Swedish civil service organisations. Based on the premise that career planning is an investment for both the individual and the organisation, the project helped 777 people, average age 48, with their career management. This included CVs, stress management, and development dialogues with their managers. Within 3 months of the end of the programme a third of the participants had moved on to new jobs in the public sector and just over a half were in the same job but with a plan. A year later just over a third of those with a plan had also moved on within the public sector. All those who took part reported high levels of satisfaction with the project.

Eva Bentsson, her co-presenter, was from LOK, a project inspired by the success of PROPELLOR. Using a mix of internal and external coaches LOK had a similar client profile and similar results with a quarter of the participants moving on to new jobs. Both projects helped to motivate staff and make them more self-aware and improved career mobility within the public sector.

The speakers were mostly from internationally recognised organisations or large corporates but provided a real smorrasbrod of experience, a mixture of top down and bottom-up, employee-focused initiatives. One of the participants summed it up in the plenary session when he said; “career management is not an option but an imperative!”

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