

1 FUNCTION DESCRIPTION

Traditionally structured as two separate sub-functions within the broader Human Resources discipline, Talent Acquisition & Development (HRTD) reflects the successful sourcing, selection, and on-boarding of new employees, as well as the continuous assessment of organizational training needs and the effective delivery of development solutions for employees across the company.

2 VALUE PROPOSITION

As change management experts and stewards of organizational culture, HR professionals play a critical role in developing and successfully embedding a sustainable business strategy. Serving at the forefront are talent acquisition professionals, who must proactively identify relevant sustainability trends, translate these trends into required competencies, and develop candidate profiles that target the types of employees who are strong fits now and over the long-term as the organization's sustainability agenda matures. Sourcing talent that is increasingly formally educated and trained on sustainability issues will be key—ideally as an integrated part of their education on marketing, finance, etc.—but finding individuals who also share the values and vision of the company will accelerate the embedding of sustainability across the organization. For existing employees, continuously identifying relevant sustainability skills, assessing training needs, and developing tailored solutions to help develop these skills also makes learning and development a critical component of holistic sustainability integration.

As corporate sustainability considerations become more mainstream and are viewed as material to company performance, business leaders will seek greater recruitment of candidates with experience in these fields and up-skilling of their current workforce. This provides HRTD professionals an opportunity to better position themselves as strategic partners for business. Concurrently, marketing the sustainability credentials of an organization has proven to be an effective method in attracting and retaining top talent. With the war for talent heating up, this strategy will be important as younger segments of today's workforce increasingly rate the type of organization that they work for as a more important factor in their employment decisions relative to traditional metrics of pay or benefits. A strong commitment to sustainability also provides an opportunity to engage existing employees and to reinforce the connection each employee has to the organization's broader mission.

3 STRATEGIC INTEGRATION

To assist in further embedding the sustainability agenda within an organization, HRTD professionals should increasingly see their role as using employee market insights to help evolve organizational purpose and challenge status quo thinking. By constantly surveying emerging macro and industry trends, HRTD professionals should make it a priority to help their organizations effectively adapt to a future competitive landscape where sustainability integration will be commonplace.

The HRTD function should also embrace their critical role in identifying the sustainability implications for positions across their organization and at times challenging business leaders who may not be adequately considering the sustainability dimensions of their work. The goal for HRTD professionals should be to influence business leaders to the point where they independently, and strongly, consider the sustainability angle for all of their staffing and development needs.

Over time, as more business leaders understand their respective sustainability agenda, employees with strong sustainability expertise are hired, and internal employees are effectively up-skilled on the subject, a reinforcing sustainability culture develops where the topic gradually becomes business-as-usual rather than being treated as a separate consideration.

4 OPERATIONAL INTEGRATION

HRTD professionals themselves must first be adequately educated on the business dimensions of sustainability. Working with leaders from across the business, this general knowledge must then be translated to the industry with a view to identify both specific sustainability competencies, certifications, and degrees that could benefit their organization as well as the more general sustainability qualifications that should nowadays be required as part of a more traditional professional profile.

Ideally, competency models should be developed to include sustainability related qualifications. However, more realistically, when hiring managers engage talent acquisition practitioners to develop requisitions for open positions, a

dialogue must take place to identify relevant sustainability related job requirements, a process to assess sustainability competence, and an understanding of the prioritization of sustainability skills as part of the candidate selection process.

Similarly for learning and development, if sustainability job requirements are clearly identified for each position in the organization, such practitioners can assess where deficiencies exist and create the necessary development opportunities.

5 CULTURAL INTEGRATION

The Human Resources functions have long sought to transform themselves into strategic partners for the business. HRTD is particularly well positioned to make this transition, but is still often relegated to reactive and administrative support. While pushing the sustainability agenda may not be a silver bullet in helping the HR functions reinvent themselves, it does present an opportunity to assist business in addressing an increasingly critical and material issue that they have yet to successfully address on their own.

Sustainability presents a relatively new and exciting topic where HRTD practitioners can utilize their skills in identifying emerging trends, helping their business partners develop plans to attract a workforce ready to meet future needs, as well as developing change management strategies to transform an organization's existing workforce into one that is ready to tackle sustainability challenges. However, relative to many other functions, HR's work is much more relational and story-driven. These qualitative strengths should also be leveraged to craft the stories that can help attract, engage, and develop employees.

6 EMERGING TRENDS AND INNOVATIONS

Sustainability as a Weapon in the War on Talent

Companies are increasingly realizing the benefit of sustainability investments to their recruitment efforts, in particular with respect to recruiting young and well-educated professionals. Talented future leaders critically evaluate the companies they want to work for and are questioning what the company does on above and beyond just creating value for shareholders, and investing in a more sustainable business model is emerging as an important prerequisite for attracting and recruiting top talent.

Targeted Recruitment from Government and Non-Profit Sectors

The complexity of today's critical societal challenges, particularly those related to sustainability, requires a good understanding of the interests and concerns of other sectors as well as new forms of partnerships with government and civil society organizations to develop effective solutions to interdisciplinary problems. As a result, more and more companies are deliberately recruiting professionals with an experience from working in non-profit sectors of the economy.

Recruitment is Adopting Environmentally Conscious Procedures

Many organizations challenge candidates to prepare environmentally friendly applications and some now refuse to accept paper applications at all. After the application has been submitted, many companies require "virtual interviewing" to decrease the carbon emissions associated with business travel and many recruiters have also highlighted an added benefit of reducing their "time-to-fill" rates—a key recruiting metric seeking to place candidates quickly.