



# Diving IN DEEP

*How do you get the right staff in the right place at the right time? Mark Oliver provides his tips for building ‘talent pools’ and reveals that the benefits extend far beyond just recruitment success*

**HOW DO YOU GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE RIGHT** place at the right time? A major factor affecting the answer to this question is the stability of your organisation. The higher the rate of change in your organisation or industry, the more complex it usually is to get the right staff in the right place at the right time. This often means getting the most capable people now! But motivation is just as important. If someone has the capability but not the motivation to do something, then the necessary behaviour is very unlikely to arise and they will not perform; similarly, if someone has the motivation but not the capability, it won’t work either. You need both motivation and capability for performance.

How stable the organisation is will likely have an effect on staff motivation, although this effect may be two-sided, with some staff being motivated by a fast-changing environment while others are demotivated by it. So it can be hard to predict what motivates individuals and simple analyses are often wrong. For example, a lot of research indicates that there is a ‘myth’ around bonuses; that is, the idea that external rewards in the form of bonuses improve productivity or results. In fact, research shows that it can lead to team members making poorer decisions and focusing on getting their bonuses even when it is at odds with what is best for the organisation.

A good model on human motivation is useful because it helps you to understand people’s motivations, which in turn underlie their behaviours and resulting performance. The Universal Hierarchy of Motivation (UHM) provides the basis for a comprehensive understanding so that you can accurately judge likely motivations for each team member, and subsequent behaviours. The table below shows the UHM levels that correlate with each motivation and resulting behaviour.

UHM LEVEL	MOTIVATIONS	THE DRIVE FOR...
7	Meaning	Self-transcendence
6	Wisdom	Imaginative guidance
5	Courage	Determination to save others
4	Compassion	Generosity
3	Power	Control
2	Pleasure	Passion
1	Survival	Safety

The UHM has recently been validated by neuro-scientific research and, as you can see, is very different to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Once you understand motivation better, you then need to integrate all the 'people' systems in the organisation to maximise staff performance; systems such as:

1. Organisational branding and recruitment
2. Selection and assessment
3. Induction
4. Performance management
5. Training and development
6. Promotion
7. Exit and redundancy

Some people systems tend to have a greater effect on the calibre of employees than others, and the selection and assessment system is a critical one. As the saying goes, 'you can train a turkey to climb a tree, but it is much easier to hire a squirrel'.

One way to get the capability right in the organisation is to use a 'talent pool'. If a talent pool is set up correctly, it can help ensure three important systems are all addressed that get you the right staff in the right place at the right time: performance management, training and development, and promotion.

## PRINCIPLES FOR SETTING UP TALENT POOLS

**1 Clear purpose:** Be clear about the reason for and benefit you want to get from the talent pool. For instance, is it to help retain good people or to help ensure a succession plan?

**2 Commitment of senior team:** Get the buy-in of senior managers to develop a 'leadership culture' in the business (as opposed to a management one) and a strong leadership pipeline at all levels of the organisation.

**3 Real leadership and development needs:** Understand the essence of 'authentic leadership' through formal ongoing leadership development learning, and then identify key leadership development needs and priorities versus the 'wants'. Make sure the program focuses on increasing 'self-awareness' as this is a prerequisite for leading others.

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**4 Map out the whole process:** Develop a practical, broad-ranging experiential learning program, including significant cross-functional business-oriented projects and unique business challenges, together with experience 'leading' a functional team at a senior level.

**5 Delegate key responsibilities to participants:** Ensure they know they must take control of their career development as if it is their own 'strategic plan'. Help them develop their brand and a 'what's possible' five- to 20-year career plan that incorporates business, career, family, and personal aspirations and goals.

**6 Measure progress:** Evaluate both performance (what is being achieved) and competencies (how it is being achieved). In the spirit of 'what is not measured is not managed', the 'hows' are the keys to long-term success of the program.

**6 Support with the right people:** Involve organisational executives so they interact periodically with the talent pool face-to-face and share leadership experiences, war stories and lessons on the leadership journey, as well as an executive leadership development coach to provide a critical objective perspective.

Setting up and implementing talent pools offers many more benefits than just the obvious ones, if this is done well. The key is to tailor the talent pool to the needs of the specific organisation, resource it appropriately (not too much or too little), and avoid a cookie-cutter approach. **HC**

### About the author

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