

CHICAGO LAWYER

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INSIDE OUT

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hat are the various components of talent management?

Martini: First there is the training that goes into teaching someone a substantive area of law. This is done through both formal training and more informal training which organically occurs in the context of servicing clients and running the business. This talent development must also include soft skills, which are frequently linked to emotional intelligence and to honing one's client service orientation.

Other aspects include developing ways to ensure that members of your workforce align well with one another so that the strengths of some complement the weaknesses of others. Leadership development and succession planning are critical aspects of this process. You must look at business objectives holistically and ensure there is meaningful alignment between the skill sets of your workforce and those objectives.

Susler: Talent management begins with a thorough and honest understanding of the organizational needs, goals, strengths and weaknesses. Once you hire the right people, you must develop and train them to ensure both success and retention. This includes goal setting, providing honest feedback and career planning. Successful talent management requires strong cooperation and alignment between business strategy and human resources.

Why is talent management important?

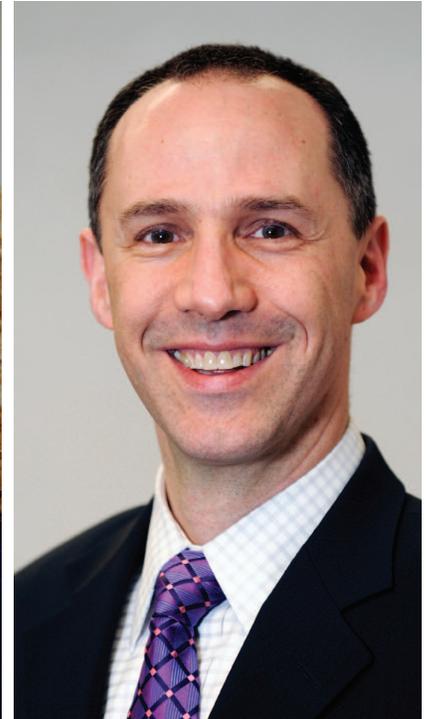
Martini: It helps ensure that you have the right people in your talent pool, both for the short and long term. The business world is not static and, as your people progress in their careers, it is critically important their overall development continues along a successful trajectory personally and for the organization. People develop in different ways and talent management involves discerning how best to harness your talent with the knowledge of what works well and what doesn't.

Susler: Without strong talent management, organizations face a steady talent drain and inability to reach their full potential. It helps individuals perform well and enables the organization to create a culture of success with motivated, satisfied employees regularly performing their best work.

Losing valuable employees is simply bad for business and for the bottom line. It is far more expensive in terms of knowledge, time and dollars to have to replace employees than it is to properly train and develop your current workforce. I believe in the adage that if you take care of your employees, your employees will take care of your business.

What are some of your lessons learned regarding talent management?

Martini: One can never fully predict whether someone is going to succeed in your organization.



MANAGING YOUR TALENT

Successful organizations require business as well as legal skills

by **CHRISTINA L. MARTINI** and **DAVID G. SUSLER**

People can come out of the gate incredibly strong and for whatever reason not make it over the long haul. Conversely, people with rocky starts have been able to turn it around and then some. Moreover, employees may not be a good fit for an organization over the long run but that doesn't mean they are not able to meaningfully contribute during their tenure at your organization or that they cannot find tremendous success elsewhere. In addition, delegation is key. Leadership must be willing to give their team the vast majority of the work that crosses their desk, both the pedestrian and the tough assignments, for employees to really cut their teeth. This also helps ensure that your team is well leveraged and that assignments are being performed by the lowest cost provider.

It is critically important to keep apprised of how best to spot and develop talent within your industry and more specifically for your talent base. It involves taking a critical look at who is succeeding and why, and trying to institutionalize things which contribute to that success. Effectively developing talent takes a lot of time and commitment but if done properly can be a key differentiator for your organization.

Susler: When hiring, identify your needs and hire people with the right qualifications. Just because someone is bright or personable doesn't necessarily mean they are a fit for your organization. Also, failure to give people the resources,

training and support for their personal growth, as well as failure to give a stake in the success of the organization, will lead to unnecessary turnover.

I believe talent management applies to all employees, not just the "top performers" or "most talented." All organizations need leaders and support employees. Failure to manage all of them appropriately can be a fatal error for the organization. [CL](#)

Christina L. Martini is a practicing attorney, author and columnist. She is chair of the Chicago intellectual property practice group, the national hiring partner of associate recruiting at DLA Piper and sits on its executive committee. She focuses on domestic and international trademark, copyright, domain name, internet, advertising and unfair competition law.

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To submit a question for future columns, e-mail questions.insideout@gmail.com