

# HR Transformation

## Turning Your Team Into a 'Talent Engine'



**Kendra Vanzo**

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Kendra Vanzo was a co-winner of the 2017 Ogletree Deakins Human Resources Professional of the Year award. Nominations are open for the 2018 award with a March 2 deadline ([www.indianahrconf.com/award](http://www.indianahrconf.com/award)).*

For years, human resources (HR) professionals have worked hard to legitimize our function by forging partnerships with leaders throughout the organization. During most of my career, being known as a “strategic business partner” has been viewed as the goal and most significant achievement of the HR function.

Today, being an effective strategic business partner within the organization is no longer enough. In order for HR to become a critical driver of business performance in 2018 and beyond, it needs to become a “Talent Engine” that fuels the entire company.

### Importance of talent culture

What does it take to transform an HR department into a true Talent Engine that drives performance? It starts with reimagining and redefining your HR team as a group of leaders whose primary mission is to improve the people capabilities of your company. This means recognizing that the most important function of HR is ensuring that the “right people” are ready.

The right people in an organization are those with the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform roles that are central to the company’s business strategy. They are not simply capable workers; they are diverse, engaged associates who embody the values of the company. They anticipate what will be needed in the future, own their careers by actively preparing themselves and know that their contributions will be valued and rewarded.

What enables your organization to attract and foster these self-driven, emerging leaders? The answer is your talent culture. A strong talent culture clearly communicates to associates that they are the owners and drivers of careers (along with coaching from their managers), and it is also fully supported by the systems and resources of the company. As the organizational Talent Engine, the HR team owns and champions this talent culture.

### Making the transformation

I once was told you can identify a person’s priorities by looking at his or her calendar. How much of your HR team’s week, quarter and year is spent actively involved in assessing, developing and engaging talent? Have you formalized these processes within your organization? Are your team members adept at facilitating these discussions? Are you truly a talent champion?

Start your transformation by ensuring that formal talent assessment is a top priority for your team and your company.

- Create talent portfolios that are actively managed by professionals on your team who ensure that development plans, succession plans and related rewards packages are in place to meet the needs of employees and the organization
- Conduct workforce planning to identify future staffing needs

- Find ways to measure your internal and external talent pipelines
- Employ business development techniques in your talent acquisition function and move from requisition-based recruitment to relationship-based recruitment (the active management of your talent portfolios should result in less recruitment cost and more internal placements)

Such a transformation may require reshaping roles on your team. Identifying talent managers who can effectively lead the development of talent strategies for key business units is an important part of this change. These talent managers will work with business line leaders to identify the structure, roles and competencies required to achieve business objectives.

Talent managers determine the unique learning needs of the organization and create development programs with customized experiences to meet those needs. As a result, they need to be as adept at creating broad-based strategies as they are at identifying individual development needs and coaching employees.

At Old National, we have developed a suite of leadership development programs that start with professional development, progress to emerging leader mentoring and culminate with executive education experiences. For example, our university partnership program combines business theory, presented by professors, with the practical application of those theories, delivered by business executives.

Cross-functional teams made up of the “right people” then apply this learning to a business case and present their conclusions to the CEO and executive leadership team.

Mentoring is also a common element across our development programs. Graduates maintain their “readiness” by progressing through the various levels, participating in self-directed alumni programs and then are encouraged and empowered to pay it forward by becoming mentors themselves.

### Indispensable value of diversity

The final piece of the Talent Engine puzzle involves taking a close look at the profile of your current HR team. Have you sought out non-traditional HR professionals? Have you considered fostering diversity by recruiting HR team members who bring experiences from outside HR and outside of your industry?

At Old National, we are fortunate to have Carrie Ellspermann as our chief talent development officer.

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She previously served as president of our wealth management division and brings the strategic thinking and business perspective to our HR team that can only be gained through executive experiences. The addition of a former business line leader to your HR team provides additional credibility and leadership depth.

Team members from outside your industry can also be a valuable resource as they often deliver fresh approaches, out-of-the-box thinking and new ways of addressing challenges. Be on the lookout for professionals from all fields who are passionate about talent management

and actively engaged in keeping themselves “ready” for the next opportunity.

Over the past 30 years, human resources has successfully moved from being an administrative function to having a C-suite seat at the leadership table. Let’s not be content with our progress! Challenge yourself to continue this transformation by making your HR department a true Talent Engine that drives your company’s long-term sustainability.