

Managing Talent.....Unearth, Unlock, Unleash

If you are a business leader and if you haven't already realised it 'Talent' has just become a more precious commodity.

This is a message at the forefront of my thoughts as I prepare to give a presentation to some 80 professionals in the Belfast Insurance Institute on the subject. In difficult and challenging times you need to have the very best people working with you to ensure survival in the short term, as well as building for the future.

I have some practical tips to share with you but let me raise some issues I have recently heard business owners talk about

- There are plenty of talented people now out in the marketplace
- If I could get rid of some of my existing staff I could get better people - cheaper
- My talented people will stay with me because there is nowhere else to go
- Its easy to cut back on training - the staff won't expect it

I don't have space to deal with each statement except to say that each has very negative consequences and none of these attitudes - or actions - will deliver the level of performance you need. I'm not saying that you won't have staff that don't or won't fit with where your organisation needs to go but even if that is the case, it's up to you as a manager to deal with that in a constructive way.

Conversely I have had some conversations recently where firms that brought their staff together to explain how difficult things are, have been amazed by the level of ideas and commitment provided. The outcomes have been increased sales, lower costs, new processes, new products and new working methods. As a result the firm has become stronger, with jobs saved and even modest recruitment.

Managing Talent is not just about the 'hi flyers', it's about unearthing, unlocking and unleashing the talents we all have. Nor is it about complex HR systems or expensive programmes, although that may be required in some cases, but it is about having a mindset that looks to building a strong capable workforce that means business! I have deliberately concentrated on the manager's role in this article as I am convinced it is a fundamental leadership responsibility but I am also very aware that each individual has full responsibility for their own development.

Here are some basic rules for managers - whether it's one person or a corporation

- Everyone has talents - you have to find them and use them
- It's the whole person - not just their brains or their hands
- Link their future to your future - make sure they know what your plans are
- Let them know how you are doing - communicate clearly and regularly
- Let them know how they are doing - provide open and honest feedback
- Give them the skills - coaching, mentoring, training and development
- Listen - to their ideas, to their plans and aspirations
- Play to your strengths - don't have people out of position
- Stretch them - with the proper support
- Get the timing right - too early and you burn, too late and it passes by

Pause for thought

The 'Susan Boyle' phenomenon is a case in point where a great talent is unearthed, unlocked and then unleashed. The lessons we can learn is that the rewards are enormous but get it wrong along the way and the consequences can be disastrous. Its not just about the particular talent – it's about the whole person.

Bill Manson is a Director with Podiem. Podiem offers services in People and Organisation Development, Integration and Event Management. Bill can be contacted by phone on 028 9080 4209, online at <http://www.podiem.com/> or by [email](#).

The content of this article is provided for information purposes only and does not constitute professional or other advice.