

CAHRS Working Group The Role of the Chief Talent Officer and Emerging Trends in the Talent Center of Excellence

Hosted by American Express
New York | June 5, 2018

Participating Organizations

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Key Takeaways:

1. There are a number of core functions, such as acquisition, development, assessment, and leadership, which most companies have integrated into the Talent COE, whereas other areas, such as total rewards and global mobility, currently sit outside. There is variability across companies in terms of where areas such as diversity and inclusion and talent analytics sit, with some including them in the Talent COE and others putting them in standalone groups. There is discussion across companies as to whether it makes sense to further integrate some of these outlying groups given their intersection with other talent functions.
2. Much of the work of the Talent COE is conducted through partnerships with others, including business partners, talent partners, and shared services. Thus, success depends to a considerable extent on the ability to effectively collaborate with and influence these partners.
3. Success and better talent outcomes from a larger, more comprehensive Talent COE partially rests on developing and clearly articulating an overall talent strategy which helps to guide decisions on where to invest and take actions and enables stronger and more coherent connections between the disparate parts of the Talent COE
4. A number of additional factors also serve as key enablers of the success of the Talent COE, including a clear and compelling talent philosophy, a highly personalized employee experience, transparent and open conversations with employees, and integrated deployment of technology.

Managing the workforce and workplace of the future will be increasingly challenging in a world that's being turned upside down by rapidly shifting technology, globalization, changing demographics, and environmental challenges. These changes are creating large scale disruptions in how work will be done, employee expectations, employer-employee relationships, and required employee and leader capabilities. No function in HR may be impacted more in the next decade than the Talent Center of Excellence. In light of these changes, many organizations have started to rethink the structure of the Talent COE, what work should and will fall into this COE, new operating models, new technologies to deliver talent solutions, and new roles and capabilities required for leaders of this function. The goal of this working group was to begin to explore how companies have changed their Talent COE, how they might be moving the function in new directions going forward, and the implications for Chief Talent leaders. A few of the key themes and insights that emerged during the day are summarized below.

Key Themes on the Structure of the Talent Center of Excellence

- There are a number of core talent functions that most companies organize under their Talent COE, including acquisition, development, leadership, performance management, and talent/succession planning.
- Many companies also include assessments related to everything from external hiring to internal movement and succession planning to internal development and learning plans.
- Beyond these core areas, there were often differences in what companies chose to include or exclude from their Talent COE:
 - ◊ Some companies include functional training within their Talent COE, whereas in others it sits within the business. In those companies where functional training sits outside the COE, there have been discussions about integrating it more given the rapid pace of change today and the need for reskilling.
 - ◊ In most companies total rewards and global mobility sit outside the Talent COE, although there is discussion about possibly repositioning these areas given their intersection with other talent functions.
 - ◊ There is variability across companies in terms of where diversity and inclusion sits: in some organizations it is part of the Talent COE and in others it is a standalone area. This is another area where there is considerable discussion about whether it should be more tightly integrated into the Talent COE.
 - ◊ Similar to diversity and inclusion, some organizations include talent analytics in the Talent COE whereas in other organizations it sits in a dedicated analytics group.
 - ◊ Backend and technology services largely sit outside of the Talent COE, usually with shared services.
- Overall, functionally specialized programs seem to usually sit in the business and areas that touch most or all employees, such as total rewards and diversity and inclusion, currently often sit in a dedicated center. The Talent COE often manages those programs designed for select audiences (e.g., high potentials, executives) as well as those areas, such as acquisition, where integrated and standardized processes are necessary across the organization.

Key Themes on the Role of Partnering

- Organization development is currently viewed as a weakness across many companies — in many ways a lost art. Some have a small OD group within the COE whereas others are trying to develop their business partners' capability in this area.
 - Some companies have adopted a federated model in which talent partners sit in the business, with the goal of having them develop intimate knowledge of the talent in their area, particularly with regard to high potentials. A challenge is that the roles of the talent partners and business partners can become blurred. When they collaborate effectively, the model can be very powerful. But, role ambiguity and turf wars often undermine the arrangement.
 - The success of the Talent COE depends greatly on the willingness of the business partners to collaborate on driving talent initiatives and provide insights and information across to talent profiles and also on the ability of shared services to support execution of routine or replicable talent initiatives. Thus, success is determined greatly by the ability to influence others.
 - Greater focus is being directed to the understanding the moments that matter in the employee lifecycle and working together as a team to manage these moments and provide an excellent employee experience.
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Key Themes on Enablers and Success Factors

- A clear and compelling talent philosophy can serve as a valuable guidepost in the midst of rapid change and great unpredictability.
- Given the current turbulence, many organizations are moving away from what roles people need to what types of experiences they need. Roles will change, but there is greater consistency in experiences. Critical experiences can be identified through reverse engineering – identifying what good looks like and then figuring out how to get someone there.
- As companies direct more attention to the employee experience they are realizing that one size does not fit all. In order to provide more personalization many companies have created different personas that they use to approach the employee experience from a variety of perspectives.
- Transparency continues to be a perpetual challenge. Companies talk a lot about talent, but rarely talk to talent. There is a need for more open dialogue with employees and a good place to start the conversation is to ask people what they want to do next in their careers.
- Technology can be an important enabler of the talent function, but there are a number of important considerations:
 - ◇ A key part of leveraging technology is figuring out how to extract valuable insight.
 - ◇ The proliferation of technology creates the risk of having a bunch of segmented applications that don't talk to one another. It is important to think about the technology roadmap and how it impacts the employee experience.
 - ◇ Also important to think about how to integrate the technology seamlessly into employees' daily work.
 - ◇ It is important to have people in the Talent COE that are passionate about technology.

Key Themes on Measuring the Impact of Talent Investments

- Focusing on costs is a losing proposition. Instead, it is important to identify measurable that can be used to demonstrate the value of talent investments.
- Some companies are attempting to move toward more integrated talent metrics that can be used to answer bigger questions, such as whether employees hired through an internship program perform better and stay longer and whether the company is advancing diversity. These efforts are an attempt to break out of the silos and think more holistically.

Topics of Interest For Future Meetings

- Advances in the areas of onboarding and career development
 - Artificial intelligence and its role in the Talent COE
 - What does the move to a digital company mean for talent and HR
 - Building out a talent strategy, particularly among business partners
 - Workforce planning
 - Emerging employee lifecycle models, such as boomerang employees, alumni, etc.
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This Summary Report was prepared by Brad Bell and Chris Collins for use by participants of the Chief Talent Officer and Emerging Trends in the Talent Center of Excellence Working Group.

The Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS) is an international center serving corporate human resources leaders and their companies by providing critical tools for building and leading high performing HR organizations. CAHRS' mission is to bring together Partners and the ILR School's world-renowned HR Studies faculty to investigate, translate and apply the latest HR