

Project: Inside Univar USA / Talent Management article

Talent Management Helps Employees and Company Shine

Talent management may sound like something out of Hollywood, a talent scout or agency that helps people uncover and use their unique talents and become stars. In a way, it's exactly like that, and it's coming to a cubicle, office and warehouse near you.

Craig Lawson, Vice President of Human Resources, recently explained the talent management initiative to *Inside Univar USA*. At its core, talent management is a simple concept: putting the right person in the right job at the right time.

"Talent management is the more strategic part of Human Resources (HR)," Craig said. "Rather than just making sure that we pay people properly and have the right compensation, we want to make sure we have the right people doing the right jobs, now and in the future."

Aligning the person with the job and the moment does not magically happen. It takes strategic planning and a well-executed process. The timing aspect cannot be understated. A critical focus of talent management is succession planning, helping people develop their talents and skills in order to meet the company's future job requirements.

Better Utilization of Greatest Asset

People are the company's greatest asset. Yes, it's a timeworn cliché. But it's particularly true for Univar. Think about it: We don't manufacture a single

product. Instead we buy, sell and distribute products, which mostly depends on the talents and skills of our people and business partners.

“It’s not the trucks, warehouse, or computers that make the difference,” Craig said. “It’s our people using those tools that make the difference. So it’s important for us to have good people who are well trained and develop over time so that we can achieve greater success.”

Craig also noted that helping Univar employees develop and succeed is absolutely essential to the company’s growth strategy.

“In order to grow,” he said, “we need to have the right people take open positions and be promoted to new opportunities, whether it’s in their own location or a new location, in their own country or other countries.”

A Strategic Priority

While talent management isn’t entirely new at Univar, it is becoming a bigger strategic priority. Besides its importance to the company’s ongoing success, talent management is also rooted in the belief that people in our company want to do their best in their current jobs and step up to new opportunities as they arise.

“I think employees have an idea of what they would like to do,” Craig said. “If, as an employee, you are interested in another position, at the same or different level, you often need further experience, education, training and opportunities to develop your abilities so when an opportunity comes up you are able to apply for it and get it.”

One of the key tools in talent management—and something you'll be hearing more about—is the individual development plan, in essence a personal roadmap for your career at Univar. The development plan process includes performance management and appraisals that help to set and attain clear, measurable goals and objectives.

There are several things in the works, including tools to help employees manage their career and provide the company with a more complete and searchable information repository. One, for example, is a Web-based tool that resembles LinkedIn, the business-oriented social networking site. Employees will be able to post their resume online (internal to Univar), including work experience, education, certificates, awards and more.

“It will give us a broader view of who they are, what they have done and what they can do,” Craig said. “Then, when we look at opportunities for development or promotion, we will have a great database to search.”

As another example, there will also be new tools that help employees and their supervisors enter and manage performance appraisals.

While HR is leading the effort, talent management is a company-wide initiative, something all employees, supervisors and managers have a stake in. Along with Craig, counterparts in Europe, Canada and the United States are working together to guide the process.

Like anything else worth doing, it requires support from the top. Univar President and CEO John Zillmer, as a result of his previous corporate experience, is a veteran and advocate of the talent management process.

John, Craig and many others in the company recognize that our collective success is directly tied to individual success. Talent management will help us achieve both.