



HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Hiring the right talent requires behavioral data

For business and HR leaders, the selection, development, and retention of top-performing employees is a key driver to commercial success, which is why it is usually at the top of their agenda. When thinking about the talent we already have in our organizations, and the people we need to hire, it's our approach to recruitment, integration, and performance management that will impact retention.

Historically, it has been the twin metrics of cost per hire and time to hire that act as the measures that recruitment teams are judged, which leads to strategies for keeping transactional costs low and filling positions quickly. This is often achieved by attracting a large pool of applicants to give some validation to the final hiring decision. If we are to achieve desired business outcomes, though, then it is the quality of hire that is most important.

Quality hires are hard to define

Bringing in people with the skills and attitude we need, who will fit well with our culture, and perform at the right levels, is the ongoing challenge for HR. This is particularly felt when we recruit for high-volume roles that by their nature carry a high level of attrition. There might be a large pool of candidates, many of whom appear capable of completing the tasks associated with the role. For these hiring scenarios we must find more effective ways to assess individual skills and capabilities. We have to understand the culture and dynamics that help teams perform, and the individual relationships within teams that contribute to successful business outcomes and create ways to assess for this during a volume recruitment campaign.

Overall quality of hire can be difficult to define. For some organizations it might be the length of time a new starter stays with the business, while others may look at the speed with which new employees reach productivity and performance targets. Reference is often made to “bad hires” and these will tend to be people who join and fail to live up to expectation, or those who maybe unsettle team members with their behaviour or attitude.

Why do new hires leave?

The early months of employment are a much-researched period. Companies invest a lot of time and budget in hiring and making their new employees successful, so it helps to know why they often don't stay. A few tweaks to the early stages of the talent lifecycle can have significant longer-term benefits.

Most studies show that around one in four new hires leave within the first six months of employment, and up to 90% use that period to decide whether they see a long-term commitment with the organization.¹ So why do they leave after a few months? The reasons are fairly consistent.

The main one is that the role isn't what they expected or wanted it to be—either from the recruitment process or the way it was explained at the interview—and the second reason is a failure to get along with their manager or colleagues.

These two would imply that the way we design and market roles, select candidates, and give them a feel for the job and working environment, could be improved. This is most prevalent for positions in high performing, task-based teams, as dissatisfied colleagues who join and leave in a short space of time can cause disruption and create low morale.

Other common reasons for new employees leaving early are that they are not enjoying their work and perceive a lack of opportunity to grow and develop. These are factors that should be covered during the assessment and selection phase and underline a lack of clarity over job design and mapping out a path for progression. With having the opportunity to learn new skills and improve being a major reason for changing jobs in the first place, it is essential that we demonstrate how this can be done during the hiring process.

Clearly, we must improve the hiring and on-boarding phases. The way we identify potential job candidates, assess potential, and help them on the journey from interested applicant to successful and productive employee needs to change. The reasons behind poor staff retention and early period churn underline how difficult it can be to identify the talent a business needs. It's often too easy to make decisions from assumptions of a candidate's future potential based on their previous performance. A successful strategy requires data and a clear understanding of the people we need, the environment they will be working in and what success looks like for the business.

¹ <https://studylib.net/doc/8092200/onboarding-benchmark-report--aberdeen-group>

Data-driven recruitment

Good recruitment is hard to get right. Too much of it has previously focused on little more than guesswork. Applications are usually reviewed by reference to historical roles and academic achievements, while interviewers may make assumptions on a candidate's potential from the way they answer questions about past performance and future aspirations. Sometimes people are hired on a hunch to see how they perform, and on other occasions someone who ticks all the boxes joins and fails to live up to their potential.

Recruiters need more data to make better informed decisions, and much of this data is increasingly being collected within our HR systems. Where we have previously selected candidates based on knowledge, skills, and perceived ability, we now must identify the behaviors that are essential for success in our business and look for them. Modern talent acquisition requires more than conjecture and assumption. We can map out much clearer profiles of what makes people successful, which means that we should be able to better predict which potential candidates are most likely to succeed in our organization.

We can start by analyzing the data we already have on performance, looking for the behaviors that our top performers exhibit, and identifying the mix of skills and capabilities they share. This will help inform the characteristics we look for in future hires. People currently working within the business take assessments to help build a stronger profile of successful candidates, which we can reference by looking at the profiles and behaviours of people already achieving in the role. We can analyze the "behavioral DNA" of these employees, and look at their needs and motivations, how they approach problems and complex situations, and also gain insight in to how they collaborate and work with others.

At the attraction and selection stage we can use this data to identify those potential candidates that most closely align with the profiles we have created of successful employees.

Pipelines of potential future candidates can be created from those who are a good match but might not be available at this time. These pipelines can be a source of referrals to other new candidates and provide a strong network through which to disseminate corporate information and future hiring intentions.

When assessing potential, it can be wrong to draw too many conclusions from past performance, which is often shown to be a poor predictor of future achievement. We are looking to hire talent for tomorrow, people who will grow and develop with us and assimilate into our teams and working culture. Candidates who are looking to improve, rise to challenges and achieve successful outcomes. Individual needs and motivations play a large part in this, as do approaches to problem solving. We need to collect data that will help identify these behaviors.

The use of data also helps the HR and recruiting teams to justify their hiring plans by offering a level of proof to back up their decisions. A data driven approach should significantly improve retention and performance. This will be achieved when focusing on the talent that most closely aligns with the behaviours, capabilities and performance indicators that we know the business needs to achieve successful commercial outcomes.

Data needs context. New employees will be joining a new organizational culture and we need to understand what that culture is and how it contributes to success. When assessing candidates, we need to look at how they have adapted to previous environments, and what impact culture and structure may have had on their previous performance. For example, a top salesperson in one business might not be as successful in a new one. Their previous achievements might have drawn upon a support structure or internal network that enabled them to achieve results.

We can't purely analyze an individual's performance data, we need to understand the circumstances that helped them achieve that performance. Then we can really start to focus on how to best enhance operations to hit revenue and business targets.

The importance of job analysis for recruitment and team building

To recruit the people who will be the best fit, we must understand exactly what is required in the role. Attempting to find people who meet the requirements of a historical job description is unlikely to help identify the individuals who can improve operational effectiveness. Any inherent weaknesses in the original job classification will lead to poor hiring matches being repeated.

Too many attempts to analyze a job fail either because of an assumption that similar jobs in similar companies require similar skills, or through looking at the minimum skills and capabilities required, hence creating a focus on the role as “business as usual” rather than looking at how to exceed expectations.

Using data, we can get real-time insights into how the role is performed, and the actual activities involved in completing tasks. We can build up a stronger profile of the knowledge needed, the skills that are being practiced and the capabilities required. Additionally, we can gain information around the working environment, have a better understanding of the role that tools and technology play in task completion, and see the internal relationships and collaborations that help support success. This will help with team building and team dynamics.

Job analysis helps define a template for the type of people, skills and behaviours that we need to look for in individuals to build successful teams. It helps to take the guesswork out of identifying top talent, replacing it with objective and predictive data, which helps recruiters and hiring managers to reach decisions earlier in the recruitment process, and improve the consistency hire quality by making it easier to recruit the right people for the role.

Four ways that data helps HR create better talent outcomes

The HR team needs to design a recruitment and talent process that offers business solutions to business problems. For many organizations the concerns are around hiring, retention and performance. Here are four ways this can happen:

1. **Recruiting the right people**—We can create better individual profiles that will enable us to identify, assess and select people who have a much higher chance of success. Replacing assumption and guesswork with objective data makes it easier to hire the right people consistently.
2. **Building the best teams**—In so many organizations, it is the team dynamic and cultural fit that will deliver superior business results. By understanding the personal attributes and behaviours that help create a high performing team in our business we are better placed for recruiting to create successful teams.
3. **Supporting employee development**—By targeting the specific strengths we need in place, it is possible to create individualised learning and development plans to help each employee develop and sharpen the skills and behaviours they need to contribute to success business outcomes.
4. **Succession and talent mobility**—Data helps us to identify the strengths and attributes that are required for success and supports us in hiring and developing the people who best demonstrate them. This enables us to identify future leaders and high performers from within the business, and create proper succession paths, helping to build successful and performance driven organizations.

While matching potential candidates to the needs of the role is key to a successful selection process, we must also look at team dynamics and how this helps with team building.

A focus on the internal relationships and networks that help to deliver successful outcomes will help to build a better understand of the team dynamics, ensuring that we get the right people working together.

Clear analysis of each role supports the building of improved and effective working relationships and helps teams align around goals, while minimizing the potential risks of role ambiguity, where individuals are unsure of the interdependence of their own tasks. Using behavioural assessments to form a view on how different individuals will collaborate and support each other will help build a more harmonious working environment. Teams with strong interpersonal relationships will function better than those without.

Getting the on-boarding right

Probably the most important part of the recruitment and assimilation process is on-boarding. The journey people take from being a potential hire to becoming a productive and settled employee is one of the key influences on their success, and therefore retention. Many of the reasons for new hires leaving a business early can be traced to weaknesses in their integration, starting with the way the role is described to them and ending with a lack of support for their progress and development.

A seamless integration into the business helps acclimatize new employees quickly and can equip them for early success. The period between accepting an offer and starting a role can be an uncertain time for a new hire. They need validation that they have made the right decision, and that the business they are joining will support them. This is particularly true if the sector is high-volume, with a likelihood that the type of role they have been hired for can be one with quick turnover, particularly if new employees don't settle and start performing early. These feelings will be exacerbated if there is little or no contact with their new employer before starting.

Current thinking is that on-boarding should start once an offer is accepted—or even during the final interview phase. It should follow on seamlessly from the recruitment process and offer new employees a real, and personalised, insight into the role they will be doing, the company they are joining, and the team they will be working in. This is known as pre-boarding and it will take any uncertainty out of the first day experience. Relevant paperwork can be signed digitally, and any necessary checks completed, well ahead of starting.

Information on the role, business, culture, leaders, and colleagues should be made accessible early on, either through digital communication or an online portal. As well as informing and educating, on-boarding should allow new hires to start building relationships and friendships with their new team members, though social interaction and sharing of experiences. By building social interactions early, a new employee can feel part of the team straight away and is more likely to build a support network for knowledge sharing and to help them navigate the early weeks and months.

On-boarding shouldn't be a program that is left with HR to plan and activate. Line managers need to have involvement in on-boarding. One of the key relationships a new employee has is with their manager, so this should be built early, giving a clear indicator that the manager is invested in making sure the new hire succeeds. This will also eradicate any potential misunderstandings or lack of clarity that might arise around expectations, performance and orientation. An added bonus is that early integration with managers and leaders, can help show a new employee how the values of the business are lived on a daily basis, which help underline that they have made the right choice in joining.

To increase retention and improve hiring quality we also need to adapt how we approach talent development. Using proper data, we will know which strengths a candidate has, and which areas of their performance will need to be worked on, so development plans can be individualised. This will help inform the learning content, and also the approach. With more employees eager to learn from any device, at any time, our learning plans can be customised to support individual employees in their growth and development.

Identifying quality hires can be improved with a modern candidate assessment that takes advantage of behavioral data analysis. Insight from this type of pre-hire information can bring clarity as to who to hire, instead of guessing and only using previous job experience. Hiring the right candidate should be based on success profiles and the behavioral of high achievers of the role. By taking a data driven approach companies will be able to gain insight in to how potential new hires will collaborate, to help create a more engaged environment in which possibilities can become probabilities and where high performing teams can thrive—and deliver desired business results.

[Learn more >](#)



About the author

Mervyn Dinnen is a talent and HR analyst, advising recruitment and HR technology businesses on the emerging trends impacting hiring, retention, and engagement. He is the author of the book *Exceptional Talent*, and a writer and international speaker on recruitment and HR trends. He previously spent 20 years advising and working with companies on their talent strategies.



Infor builds business software for specific industries in the cloud. With 17,000 employees and over 68,000 customers in more than 170 countries, Infor software is designed for progress. To learn more, please visit www.infor.com.

Follow us : [!\[\]\(10f8862fc183b400327470ea85afe9ae_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(4ba8d838a2aa5445d51c9dee78fcb0cc_img.jpg\)](#) [!\[\]\(4fe307d00a844a23eb14d503e73187bd_img.jpg\)](#)