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Turning People Intelligence into Competitive Power

This is part of a special advertising section on the [Outlook for 2012](#).

By Robert Morgan, Chief Marketing Officer, SHL



Insight derived from objective data on talent is set to become a significant source of competitive advantage in 2012. Most current talent analysis is subjective and based on "internal perspectives," whereas true insight and greater business value comes from understanding people and the outcomes of their behavior.

It's not important just to have these insights, but to use them to make better decisions. And by benchmarking your data against industry norms, you can unlock valuable information that can impact the success of your workforce programs and your organization's competitive positioning. By using this people intelligence, you are empowered with actionable strategic decision-making capabilities that result in improved talent programs and competitive advantage. Enter "talent analytics."

Today, organizations are sitting on mounds of employee data, mainly collected through various components of HR management systems -- ranging from applicant tracking to performance measurement. For the most part, these generally administrative statistics are only able to go as far as telling us what happened, how often, how many and where the problem may be.

But what about how to fix it? How to predict what will happen next? How certain changes can affect that outcome? How to achieve positive outcomes faster? How to gain a competitive advantage? These questions are often left unanswered, because organizations lack the benchmarks, tools and methods to extract this intelligence from the data.

Every organization wants to improve overall effectiveness and knows a big part of the answer lies with its people. But smart organizations want to go beyond thinking that their brand attracts the highest quality staff, and get to the point of truly believing that employees are performing to their fullest potential.

Just as business analytics have been trusted to predict and optimize operational conditions and challenges, talent analytics will help answer critical questions about an organization's workforce, as well as give access to, and interpretation of, new data cuts about them. But most importantly, talent analytics can offer evidence-based and scientifically researched guidance to optimize the effectiveness of talent programs -- providing concrete insights where, previously, there were just open-ended questions.

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So what is the roadmap to put talent analytics to work for your organization in 2012? First, you need to baseline your talent assessments for new hires (talent acquisition) as much as for existing employees (talent mobility). Research has shown that bottom-line business outcomes are directly linked to the processes organizations use to acquire, retain and develop their talent. Assessing cognitive ability, motivation, and personality can accurately predict an individual's potential for on-the-job performance. Of course, each job role will require its own analysis of what competencies are most relevant, and then which of those are most important for employees to be successful in those positions.

Community-based information-sharing and collaboration is another key element to optimizing talent programs. Quite often, talent-assessment data is collected and stored in regional silos -- lacking integration and accessibility. However, by using integrated online platforms, talent assessments can be seamlessly delivered globally, with results aggregated in, and accessed from, a central database. Then, the analysis of this assessment data can provide a true macro picture of the effectiveness of the organization's people at work.

Having a solid understanding of people-intelligence data within one's organization is vital; however, additional competitive advantage is gained when that data can be compared within the industry. Benchmarking an individual organization's people-intelligence data and comparing it with industrywide results provides insights to help make talent decisions with significant impact.

With talent analytics, organizations will gain clear knowledge of:

- * What caliber of people is my employer brand attracting?
- * How does my talent pool compare to the wider market across job level, business function and geography?
- * How effective are my recruiters in helping me acquire the talent I need?
- * Will my quality of hire deliver the results my organization needs?

Once organizations are able to answer these questions, a comprehensive and formidable talent strategy can be developed and aligned with strategic companywide goals.

Talent analytics will enable organizations to have greater confidence in their talent strategy -- spanning recruitment and hiring, to employee development programs, to succession plans and beyond -- while gaining a meaningful competitive advantage in both talent attraction and retention in their respective markets.

The worldwide economic conditions we now face have increased the demands on organizations to produce higher-value, measurable returns from human capital. With talent analytics, you hold the power to turn data into actionable intelligence. You'll achieve greater certainty and predictability in your talent-management programs, while reducing organizational risks and inefficiencies.

October 2, 2011

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