

Case Study: Development programmes to support career paths and talent management: A case study of ACCU Limited (UK, 2019)

Abstract

This case study of an engineering SME in Holmfirth addresses talent management in SMEs. Talented employees are a key resource for enterprises to support their competitive advantage. This case shows how ACCU Limited created talent management programmes to support its corporate strategy. ACCU Limited invests in and organises study trips, courses, training and open lectures for its staff to support their learning and on-going growth.

Introduction

Human resources are the basis of every organisation. They play a very important role in small and medium-sized enterprises. Modern management practices, implemented by HR departments in enterprises, increase work efficiency and improve its quality. These activities, although they relate to human resources, are aimed at improving the functioning of the entire enterprise.

There is more and more talk about strategic human resource management. The activity of HR departments does not only refer to employment, recruitment, training or workforce management.

HR activities are no less important than the organisation's marketing and financial management. Enterprises face new challenges and in order to meet them, must look for new competences among their employees. The ability to attract and develop talent is one of these major challenges.

Objective

The main aim of the work is to illustrate an efficient talent management system at any position in the ACCU LTD. Changes to people management processes may be proposed.

ACCU Limited - Overview

ACCU Company Limited established in Holmfirth, West Yorkshire (UK) in 2014, is a not a family business. Operating on a Business-to-Business (B2B) basis, ACCU Ltd is an engineering sector business. The company has a very good employee motivation system. The company has a one-time bonus system. HR responsibilities include looking after the employees and supporting them during any periods of absence. The organisational structure consists of three directors, HR and team managers and leaders. The company is not anxious about Brexit. It operates globally, and global clients and businesses come from the USA. Their clients include companies such as Aston-Martin, Philips, Dell and they provide components to research projects for over 100 universities worldwide. In 2018 ACCU Ltd completed Google's Accelerated Growth

Programme for Fast-growing tech companies. The company sponsored the UCL Rover project, providing ACCU components to create rover effects based on the stimulation of parts of Aston Martin.

The concept of talent and talent management

The uniqueness and importance of human capital and the search for sources of success, drew the attention of researchers and practitioners to people's great potential and how that can be shaped for the needs of the organisation. In the US in the 90s, the popular slogan "war for talent" emerged, to indicate the growing trend towards the management of talents (Listwan, 2010).

Modern human resources management strives to make the most of the potential to develop employees whilst satisfying their wider needs. Therefore, it is important to identify employees' ambitions, their development opportunities, predispositions and potential. An employee with potential is an employee whose knowledge, abilities, skills and personal predispositions are crucial to the company. Such an employee, in the context of career development, is referred to as "talent". It should be noted that, in both theory and management practice, there is no uniform definition of talent. Defining talent in an unambiguous manner is as important as it is extremely difficult.

The definition of talent can be double-checked against the following criteria: uniqueness (range) talents, their relationship with goals (company strategy), and the type of talent. The criterion of uniqueness is based on the assumption that talent is relatively un-common, therefore its supply and availability is limited.

The company's strategy means that talent is a good or gift brought to an organisation regardless of organisational needs and the possibilities of its use. The criterion of the type of aptitude allows the distinction of a mono- and multiform person, moreover, it emphasizes the specificity of these talents. Existing definitions cover both elitist and egalitarian assumptions: elitist definitions assume that only a handful of employees in the enterprise possess some unique attributes and are talents; while egalitarian definitions assume that all employees may have talents.

According to one of the most famous and prestigious consulting companies in the world - DDI (Development Dimensions International Inc.), the concept of talent has been defined as a critical mission process, which provides organisations with the right quality and quantity of people for the purpose of satisfying current and future business priorities (Khan, Ayub, Baloch, 2013). The authors sum up talent as resource with above average skills and knowledge, ready for new challenges and involved in the work that for the organisation, is an indispensable source of development. It creates strong foundations of competitive struggle, constituting a source of innovative and creative solutions (Puto, 2014).

The talent of individual employees is a unique source of competitive advantage, especially for international enterprises. The scientific discourse in the context of human resources management focuses on the question, to what extent organisations effectively manage

talents (Collings, Scullion, Morley, 2007). Therefore, regardless of the adopted definition of talent, it is necessary to specify a package of different - albeit coherent – actions, that provide an opportunity to prove talent (career path planning), or talent management. Undoubtedly, the overriding goal of talent management is to locate the right employees in the appropriate positions and in a timely manner, so that the organisation can benefit from their potential and knowledge. At the same time, these employees should be able to pursue their own ambitions and achieve satisfaction with their career. Thus, talent management, as opposed to talent per se, concerns a set of referencing processes to the strategic management of the talent flow through the organisation (Iles, Preece, Chuai, 2011).

According to Lewis and Heckman (2006) the concept of talent management, talent strategy, succession management and human resource planning are used interchangeably. The literature on the subject is recently-oriented; articles can be found on talent management as a mindset, a key ingredient effective to succession planning, as well as an attempt to ensure that every employee in the organisation, at all levels, works to develop their potential. Lewis and Heckman (2006) cite the approach to talent management based mainly on the concept of the talent pools. According to this concept, talent management is a set of processes aimed at ensuring the right flow of employees to work throughout the organisation.

It should be emphasised that talent management is a challenge for all organisations, in particular SMEs in the local and global context, regardless of the country and the size of enterprises. In addition, concerns about lack of talent are almost universal. The global talent market means that organisations from around the world compete for the same pool of talent (Lyria, 2013).

The concept of a talent management programme

The way that talent management is practised in ACCU Limited is not really described in the literature on the subject. Example tests were carried out in the form of a questionnaire and an interview with an employee responsible for HR. The company includes talent management in its strategies, clearly indicating the domain of enterprises with foreign capital rather than domestic ones (Taha, Sirková, Ferencová, 2013). In addition, the company has always looked for valuable employees and cared for them, but not necessarily related this with the whole process of shaping their career or designing talent management programmes. A similar approach is presented by K. Huk (2014), stating that talent management programmes consist of three consecutive stages:

- Stage I: Entering the programme, consisting of identifying and acquiring talented employees;
- Stage II: Functioning in a programme in which employees develop, creating their career paths, motivating;
- Stage III: Leaving the programme, ending with the employee's promotion or return to the previously occupied job position.

Dries and Pepermansa (2008) describe identification of talents, training and development, succession planning and employee retention management. Therefore, the talent management process is based on strategic planning of human resources, because the main areas of interest are recruitment, selection, training, development, maintenance and binding of employees, evaluation and management of talented employees. The process itself is often based on a talent management programme that is related to the career planning model and helps employers in the evaluation of employees.

Using a set of various practices, HR aims to expand the knowledge, skills and abilities of employees. However, whether the company uses talent-dependent programmes, depends on its maturity. According to Tansley, Harris, Stewart and Turner (2006) talent management is related to the company's maturity. Tansley et al. (2006) distinguish 5 levels of organisational maturity in talent management, from non-talent management strategies to a fully integrated process.

Enterprises with the lowest level of maturity only incidentally manage talents; they have no strategies, no policies, and there are no established formal practices in this area. At the second stage of a strategy or action plan for talent management, action packages are isolated. It is characteristic of the third level that these are integrated and coordinated and created for selected segments of the enterprise activities related to talent management. At level four, a talent management strategy already exists, which is created in such a way as to implement the strategic aims of the human resources department of the enterprise. At the highest level of company's maturity, talent management is crucial and coordinated not only with the HR department strategy, but also with the overall strategy of the company.

Career path development programmes as a key element of SMEs management

Criterion	ACCU LTD	SMES
Programme objective	Acquiring people to take up strategic position in the company (engineering)	Education of the relevant staff to take up managerial positions in all areas
The scope	UK	International SMEs
Participant programme	Employees of ACCU LTD, not more than 35 years old	A graduate and postgraduate of technical universities
Type of recruitment	Internal	External and Internal
Person responsible for picking candidate	Direct supervisor	Recruitment conducted by the HR department the immediate supervisor- in the case of internal recruitment
Form of recruitment	Structured interview, session Assessment Centre	Inter- structured interview, preparation of work on a

		specific topic, verification knowledge
Duration	1 year	No specific time frame
Guardian participant	Assigned mentor- usually a person occupying a high position in the structure, support of the direct supervisor- project supervisor, supervisor of HR	Potential direct superior participant, HR
Development plan	Precisely determined, individual plan development, specific goals to implement regular feedback, mentoring sessions, 360 degree assessment, necessity preparation of the project.	Practical training at a potential job position, training improving, postgraduate studies
Career path	After completing the programme, the participant goes to the talent pool, according to with received level for promotion in the case study of a vacancy, for a position important in the structure	The determined participant covers a specific position, not necessarily from it is the destination position immediately high level
Verification progress	As part of established sessions, numerous summary meetings, mentoring sessions, presentations, huge support from manager, feedback	Verification carried out on an ongoing basis by guardian, direct supervisor
Formalization project	Big; a predetermined schedule the course of the programme	Little
End of programme	Formal, at the national level, summarising the achievements and development process participant	No formal completion of the project; the ending is considered promotion of the participant

Source: Own work

In the enterprise, the programme can be a helpful tool for talent management. Employees and potential employees can take part in the programme. The proposed programme is to meet the growing demand for strategic leaders for enterprises within SMEs, through the accelerated development cycle of young talent:

- provide a predictable and continuous organisational flow of talents;
- to attract, develop and maintain employees with potential;
- meet the management of young talents and their vision of career development with the business needs of the organisation.

A general description of the situation

The engineering company, in which the consulting and training process was carried out, is part of a very extensive worldwide network, co-operating as a distributor of components and parts with technical companies.

In the sixth year of its operation, the factories belonging to this company employ a total of about 34 permanent employees and are experiencing some HR challenges with them. For example, as an external consultant, using the assistance of an HR employee with an ACCU company, the subjects examined were rotation systems and improving the talent management of the employees.

The human resources management process is one of the key elements of the organisation, because its proper deployment allows it to achieve the set goals in accordance with the mission, vision and strategy of the organisation. Currently, every enterprise is trying to contribute by making every effort to ensure that their employees feel that they are of great value.

The work presented uses selected literature and additionally is enriched by the results of previous research based on interview. During the visit to ACCU Group, selected aspects of personnel policy were identified, affecting individual functional areas of the company. The study involved: HR Dannica Llong - who answered questions closely related to the personnel policy in the organisation.

When analysing the presented company, the author noticed many innovative solutions that were introduced to improve management in this type of organisation. On the other hand, the threat posed by the acquisition of employees was identified.

ACCU Limited invests and organises study trips, courses, training and open lectures and promotions, omitting concepts that should be implemented within the organisation. For example, one of these concepts is corporate social responsibility, which the company implements gradually and carefully. It should also be stressed that this is a young company that day by day identifies its position in a turbulent environment, increasingly by its human resources potential.

Summary and Recommendations

To sum up the above considerations, it is certainly worth emphasizing that the struggle for talents is continuing and that this trend will probably last for at least the next few years. However, the most important issue is that talent management is a natural development element of every employee involved.

Each employee at ACCU Ltd. has the potential of continuous improvement, development and implementation of his or her professional aspirations, regardless of whether the organisation will grow or expand during the given time perspective or stay as it is. The concept of talent management is fully utilised in the enterprise. Proper talent wiping creates a strong competitive advantage, which is a very important element of any organisation.

The development programmes proposed in the case study can certainly provide a great opportunity for young employees entering the labour market, and it is worthwhile for such programmes to be created and implemented by SMEs. It is also worth making systematic reviews of staff in the organisation, so as not to overlook anybody deserving of the title of talent.

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