

Talent Shortage Won't Be a Crisis Any Time Soon for Some Employers

The long-anticipated talent shortage isn't showing up, at least not anytime soon, according to 39% of 3,100 senior human resources executives. Furthermore, 10% of respondents expect no talent shortage in the next decade. Conducted by Novations Group (Boston), the survey also found that nearly a third (32%) of the companies have taken steps to update their selection and recruitment criteria.

The participants were asked: "With respect to a long-anticipated shortage of talent, how would you characterize your current approach to selection and hiring?" In response:

- 32.1% said they have already seen signs of a talent shortage and have taken steps to update talent criteria.
- 29.1% said they have seen signs of a shortage, but will continue to hire at a normal pace in the coming year.
- 19.4% said they have seen no signs of a talent shortage and will remain cautious on new hiring in the year ahead.
- 9.7% have seen no signs of a talent shortage, yet they are convinced that one is coming before the end of the decade and will take appropriate steps.
- 9.5% don't anticipate a talent shortage in the next decade.

"There's ... widespread uncertainty on what's going to happen and when," noted Tim Vigue, vice president of Novations Group. This uncertainty extends to how organizations are planning to deal with the forthcoming retirement of baby boomer workers, he noted. While 17.9% anticipate a "serious loss of talent and institutional know-how," they don't have any steps in place to mitigate this loss. However, 29.6% are taking steps such as creating ways for boomers to gradually reduce hours. And nearly 40% said that their organizations don't expect an unusually large loss of talent with boomer retirements, while 14.1% were unsure about how this situation will affect their organizations.

Help for Employers Seeking to Screen Illegal Alien Job Applicants

The Department of Homeland Security's office of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is developing a new partnership with private employers to help the businesses to maintain legal workforces. The ICE Mutual Agreement Between Government and Employers (IMAGE) will help employers to strengthen their hiring practices and reduce unlaw-

ful employment of illegal aliens, according to Ronald Boyd, a spokesman for ICE.

This is a well-timed initiative, since the agency has targeted several construction sites for ICE investigations and arrested illegal workers discovered at those sites. ICE representatives said the employers are responsible for following federal immigration and employment laws, and further investigations will examine whether the contractors hired the immigrants knowing they were not authorized to work in the U.S.

Employers also will have access to a series of best business practices, including the use of the Basic Pilot Employment Verification Program, an online verification system that checks Social Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security databases to verify the employment authorization of new hires.

Companies that participate in IMAGE must also agree to Form I-9 audits by ICE agents. Those that comply with IMAGE standards will receive "IMAGE certified" status, a distinction that ICE hopes will become an industry standard.

Until IMAGE standards become available, HR professionals seeking help with I-9 compliance may want to consider a current resource, a tape or CD of a recent IOMA audioconference, "I-9 Compliance." To purchase a copy of the session, contact IOMA Subscriber Services at 212-244-0360, subserve@ioma.com, or www.ioma.com/audioconferences/707.html. Request product code 6A067. Price: \$275.

Workforce Planning Now Key to Productivity and Efficiency

More organizations are using strategic workforce planning to enhance productivity and efficiency, driven by an aging workforce and the coming baby boom retirement, according to the findings of a study by The Conference Board (www.conference-board.org).

Strategic Workforce Planning: Forecasting Human Capital Needs to Executive Business Strategy also notes these trends that are contributing to the strategic workforce planning movement: projected labor shortages, globalization, the growing use of contingent and flexible workers, the need to leverage human capital to enhance returns, mergers and acquisitions, and the evolution of workplace technology and tools. The study includes case studies of nine organizations.

Central to strategic workforce planning is conversation and an inquiry process, rather than numeric calculations. Consistent, organization-wide data is

needed to obtain confidence in the planning process from top executives. Challenges cited in the study include making the process and tools simple and efficient, developing HR capabilities and comfort level, establishing a common language to describe jobs and required competencies, integrating workforce planning with business and budget planning, and driving the plan deep into the organization.

Most companies are still in the process of fully implementing strategic workforce planning or realizing its potential. However, even organizations that are in the process report that strategic workforce planning delivers value by:

- Generating insights and knowledge that executives can use to make business decisions.
- Providing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of workforce dynamics than was previously available.
- Enabling organizations to manage human capital more efficiently. For instance: evaluating the long-term impacts of various staffing options and creating a stronger internal job market.
- Enabling HR to realize its desire to win a “seat at the table” and be a valued contributor to high-level strategy decisions.

Exercise May Trump Ergonomics for Treating Work Injuries

Ergonomic methods such as keyboard adjustments that are used to treat work-related arm, neck, or shoulder problems have limited effectiveness, according to a review of studies published in *The Cochrane Database of Systemic Reviews* (2006 Issue 3; www.cochrane.org/reviews). Exercise, on the other hand, is “a good thing to do,” said Arianne Verhagen, study review co-author, physical therapist, and epidemiologist at the Erasmus University Medical Center (Rotterdam, Netherlands). “I’m an evidence-based person, and exercise seems to be the best intervention from this review.”

Verhagen and her co-authors updated a systematic review from 2003 that included 15 trials. A total of 2,100 adult industrial workers or hospital staff members who suffered chronic upper-body pains for three to 12 months were included in the trials that were reviewed. The trials evaluated more than 25 interventions including exercises, manual therapy, massage, ergonomics, and workplace adjustments.

The review found limited evidence about the positive effect of exercise when compared to massage (in one study); adding breaks during computer work (one study); massage as an additional treatment to exercise (one study); manual therapy as an add-on treatment to

exercise (one study); and the use of some keyboards for people with carpal tunnel syndrome when compared to a placebo (one study).

The review also found conflicting evidence about the efficacy of exercise compared to no treatment (eight studies) or as an add-on treatment (three studies). No differences were found between strength and endurance exercises (four studies). In addition, the review found conflicting evidence about the effectiveness of ergonomic interventions over no treatment (two studies).

Despite all of the findings, Verhagen said, “Overall, the quality of the studies was poor” and further research is needed to determine whether various interventions have a significant impact on short- and long-term outcomes post injury.

Telecommuting Works Best at Staff Level: Survey

Telecommuting is a better option for staff-level employees, according to 43% of recently surveyed senior executives at the 1,000 largest organizations in the U.S. Only 18% said that telecommuting is most beneficial for managers, and 14%, executives.

The survey, conducted by OfficeTeam (www.officeteam.com), also found that two-thirds of the 150 respondents said senior executives at their organizations rarely or never telecommute.

Dominguez Leaves EEOC

Cari Dominguez stepped down as chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission on August 31. During her five years in that post, she implemented a reorganization to streamline the EEOC’s management structure and increase front-line staff. Vice chair Naomi Earp became acting chair in September. Before coming to the EEOC in April 2003, Earp served as director of EEO and diversity for the National Institutes of Health. Earlier in her career, she was director of the office of advocacy and enterprise at the Department of Agriculture.

A New Resource for HR Benchmarks

Looking for information on benchmarks and ways to calculate metrics? The Bureau of National Affairs has a new research site for you. The BNA Research & Performance Metrics Page offers HR calculators and benchmarks, highlights from selected research reports, and research advice. Visit the site at www.bna.com/surveys.

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