

Quick Links

MenKus & Associates
Web Site

Greetings!

At our recent breakfast seminar, we had [Jill Foley](#) join us to set up a discussion about Strategic Talent.

I've known Jill for some time, as a client, colleague, and friend. When I heard what she is doing with clients like Whitbread and Talk Talk around talent, I knew she was the right person to get us started on the topic. It was such a good debate, I felt I should share some of what she had to say as widely as possible.

If, like many Board members, you are worried about talent in your organisation - you should read this. Or, if you work in a large organisation, or manage any sort of team. It's a different, practical way to look at talent.

Supply and Demand

Talent Supply. Most large corporations (and many not so large) use a "performance and potential" grid, on which they plot their "top talent".

It's an industry standard way of looking at the supply of talent you have in your organisation. And, at that level, useful.



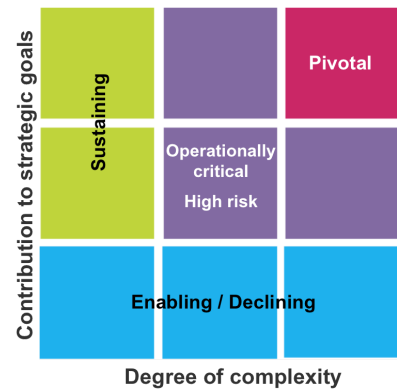
However, knowing what you've got isn't knowing what you need. In most organisations, lacking anything more focused, they adopt a "more is better" approach, seeking to push all their employees into the top right box, filling in gaps in skills, attitude, character, behaviour - or whatever - that's keeping them from getting there. And, if you don't have anything better, that's a sensible approach. But, there is something better...

Talent Demand. Few large corporations understand what talent they need - from a strategic, rather than operational, perspective. So, here's one of the parts of Jill's approach that is pure genius. She's developed a different 9 box grid, which allows you to do just that.

In this one, instead of plotting people, based on your

evaluation of them, you plot roles (or more generally "things that need to get done") based on how they contribute to the strategic goals and their degree of complexity.

For me, the key bits to pay attention to are the green "Sustaining" zone and the red "Pivotal" zone.



The green zone has roles that might add a lot of value (and have a lot of people and budget) but aren't really all that complex - because they are generally well established, with a proven set of management processes. Yes, they may be fast paced, with lots of reports and high visibility perhaps, but as Jill put it, "My mother could run one of these for six months and it wouldn't kill the company". Yet, it's here that you find the most senior, most experienced people, in most organisations.

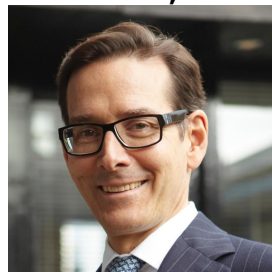
"Red zone" ones are going to make a big difference to the future of the organisation and aren't easy. They are also often ones that have limited people or budget. Sometimes the work has not yet been formally recognised (i.e. 'skunk work' being done lower down the organisation) or accountability for the output has not yet been assigned to a role. This is where structure lags behind business priorities.

When you look at it this way, the question for talent management becomes "where is the business plan at risk" ... and how do we deploy (redeploy) resources to mitigate risk as well as stretching them?". That might mean diverting senior time away from the green ("Sustaining") activities and onto the few things (in the red) that will really grow value over time.

As you can imagine, that idea alone sparked a fair amount of discussion. There's more, but I won't take you through the whole thing, though Jill might. (Just [email](#) her and ask.)

As ever, I'd be interested in your thoughts and comments.

All the best,



Belden Menkus
MenKus & Associates

FDs and Strategy

We are in the midst of a research effort to understand the involvement of FDs in strategy development and implementation. We believe they face a specific set of challenges that are largely unaddressed by traditional consulting approaches. If you know an FD who might be interested in discussing this with us, please let me know.

Creating Strategic Leadership Capability for an Age of Disruption

