Unlocking Talent Recruitment and Retention Strategies within Media & Entertainment

Understanding how to Attract, Keep and Motivate in the Media & Entertainment Industry

What Should You Consider when Navigating Organizational Workforce Reductions?

Each day, we read about the continuing and rapid changes occurring in the Media & Entertainment (M&E) industry—such as changes in business models, windowing strategies, new and emerging technologies, mergers and acquisitions, consolidations, original content expansion, original content contraction, the shift from linear to streaming and the examination of the cost of streaming.

Amidst these changes and opportunities, reductions in force (RIFs) are also observed across the M&E landscape. Unfortunately, many companies still employ a less strategic approach in identifying and executing these RIFs. Directives such as "Cut $1 billion from OpEx" are followed by a close examination of personnel, purchasing decisions and content licensing practices. Operating groups are listed, and the lowest performers in each group are identified for cuts. The RIF is then implemented, delivering cost savings back to the company.

While this approach may yield short-term results, it is essential to consider the longer-term implications to assess their impact on talent management.

Understanding Talent Trigger Events in Media & Entertainment

Managing talent is critical to the success of any organization. It is important to understand how certain trigger events can elevate the need to manage talent effectively:

Enterprise and functional transformations to reimagine the operating model, organizational design or the culture to support growth. For example, an organization that may have previously provided software on a perpetual licensing basis may find that, in order to fulfill the needs of its customers, they must transition to a software as a service (SaaS) based model. The resulting transformation of the organization requires operational, functional and technical knowledge and skills that must be identified and/or acquired to ensure a successful transition.
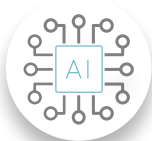
Technology modernization to drive efficiencies and scale. Organizations are incorporating digital transformation, upgrading systems and implementing automation capabilities. The technologies employed, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML), may require specific training and re-training of employees.

Mergers and acquisitions where leadership and cultural alignment can often make or break the underlying criteria for success. Proper and complete communication through all levels of the workforce is often cited as a key component of successful transitions for both parties—the acquiror and the acquired. Roles, responsibilities and continuity of operations must be clearly defined to avoid concerns regarding personal futures or discontinuance of specific endeavors.

Divestitures and joint ventures where transition periods and handoffs are critical. A clearly communicated plan for both exiting and remaining employees is necessary when divesting a specific portion of the organization. When a joint venture (JV) is announced, it is important to gauge if there is a sufficient number of trained employees who are identified in assuring the success of the JV.

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Relocating operations where specific location characteristics influence the strength of candidate pools and incentives for Tax and R&D. Creating a comprehensive plan that includes tax benefits, R&D credits and proximity to educational institutions for recruitment are valuable inputs to include in assessing location changes.

With these trigger events in mind, it becomes apparent that simply eliminating the bottom quartile of performers, regardless of skills, personality and leadership qualities, may not be the best course of action. If the organization is experiencing these trigger events, a different set of measures is needed to evaluate personnel. The lowest revenue performers may, indeed, turn out to have among them the most valuable talent for how and to where the organization is transitioning.

Right and Wrong: How do you identify the necessary components of a Good Talent Strategy?

Company A – Missing the Talent Management Mark
This real-world example is of a $2 billion acquisition where the parent company employed a bad talent management strategy—no strategic communication and implementation of objectives, no understanding of cultural nuances, and so on. The result of this improper talent strategy management was demotivation, disenfranchisement, missed roadmaps and openings for competitors, as well as write-offs, missed opportunities, decreased market share and, ultimately, missed quarterly numbers.

Company B – Job Well Done, a Thoughtful Approach to Talent Management
This real-world example is of a business that grew from $0 to $253 million with less than 50 people and an Initial Public Offering (IPO) in four years. How did Company B achieve this level of revenue with so few people?

Let's examine the key differences in each organization's talent strategy, below:

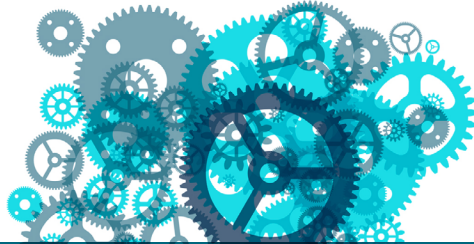| What Makes an Effective Talent Management Strategy?	What Makes an Ineffective Talent Management Strategy?
Over communicated the company mission	Under communicated objectives
Integrated internal employees and external contractors	Did not integrate properly
Encouraged employees to offer suggestions to improve all facets of the operation	Failed to motivate the new workforce
Incorporated customers into the planning process to solidify "the voice of the customer" being present in all deliberations	Ignored new employee concerns about their futures
Reinforced how its products were changing the lives and business outcomes of its customers	Did not understand or address the cultural differences

Both the triumphs and setbacks in these scenarios were guided by the keen focus on fundamental principles that are integral to every organization—namely, Talent, Organizational Structure and People.

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Why Should Talent, Organization and People Be a Top Priority?

You can think of talent, organization and people (TOP) management as the human side of doing business, and it's important to get it right, up front, before making massive personnel changes. You would, after all, almost certainly prioritize different skills and capabilities for a complete organizational transformation than for a relocation of operations.

Additionally, depending on the unique objectives of workforce changes, plan on continued discussions of TOP on a quarterly basis. This frequency is especially warranted due to the rapid changes occurring in the global business environment. Understand that it is no longer the case that these areas are "set and forget," only to be revisited on an annual basis.

Consider the below approaches with regard to your TOP Strategy:

Talent	Organization	People
What skills will we need to retain and find? If reskilling means making people relevant to these corporate changes, then we must also understand that upskilling makes them available to multiple parts of the organization.	How is the organization designed, and how will we transition the workforce? How can we use performance metrics to motivate and guard against disenfranchisement?	Where are the gaps, and how do we judge retention? Do we have a talent strategy that includes an onboarding and exit plan that looks at a three to five year horizon rather than quarter to quarter?

Why Are Proper Measurement Tactics Important for Talent Strategies?

Once you have assessed your TOP Strategy, be careful to scrutinize how performance is measured – as how and what is measured may not be the right litmus for making key decisions. For example, in sales, it is often quota achievement. However, in engineering, it is a more nuanced approach—is it time required to develop code? Are there integration tasks or app development costs that must be considered? A few examples of additional areas of measurement are:

- Time estimated to deliver software vs. actual delivery
- The number and depth of complexity for employee suggestions. The more complex the suggestion equated to very engaged employees
- Employee referrals for high caliber colleagues to join the company
- The knowledge transfer from contractor to employee and the resulting building of skills
- The sharing of information, company-wide, of what the executive staff was working on and why, and the milestones that everyone achieved and needed to achieve leading to transparent accountability

Take Heed to the Organizational Change Danger Window

The 6-18 month time period directly following a massive change is where organizations can be particularly vulnerable to key talent losses. Communication is key. Be cognizant that where leaders are silent, the workforce will fill that communication vacuum with its own explanations, which more often than not are less favorable than reality. Properly communicate to your staff how changes to the business and operational models or technology landscape can impact their roles.

Otherwise, performance and motivation will dwindle, and within that 6-18 month period, top talent may be saying: "Leadership hasn't communicated. This is taking too long, and because I don't know where I stand, I'll take this into my own hands."

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Why Does Technology Modernization, Digital Transformation and Proper Workforce Planning Matter for M&E Talent Strategies?

Does this conversation sound familiar?

"" Last quarter I had to let five of my engineers go. We lost three developers, and there's still a hold on outside contractors. Now, they've decided to transition some of the non-PII subscriber management apps to cloud. Three of those five people had cloud skills. They're not going to come back–they've already landed at other places. Why do we do this to ourselves every year? ""

The M&E industry, amidst all the business and operational changes, is, by necessity, evaluating what infrastructure and operations remain on-prem and what workloads are appropriate for the cloud—public, private or hybrid. Digital transformation is needed to modernize operations, as well as improve customer interactions. These changes beg long-term questions of what talent skills are core to the operations and what is best suited for externally managed services and contractors. A long-term approach and outlook is critical in evaluating where and how to find, retain and motivate talent.

Avoid the Pitfall of Workforce Planning in a Vacuum

When you look at your talent, consider how you can employ a collaborative approach with human resources, finance and business units and the importance of planning longer term. Work in close conjunction with the Chief Development Officer and Chief Strategy Officer to plan for the next five years, and define the organizational approach and the skills that are required to achieve company goals.

The Takeaway: Stay Strategic and Flexible When Assessing An M&E Organization's Talent Strategy

The M&E industry depends upon individuals who are attuned to the fast-pace changes occurring in the underlying and emerging business models of the sector. These changes bring with them challenges and opportunities in an incredibly dynamic and specialized ecosystem and with an already tight labor market. While this raises the stakes for recruiting and retaining the right talent, getting this right results in long-term, lasting benefits.

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