

Talent Management and Professional Development of Employees using Digital Technologies

Fadi Sakka ¹, Mohammed Yasin Ghadi ¹, Allison Goldman ²

¹*School of Business and Quality Management, Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates*

²*VRplix Inc., Dover, Delaware, United States of America*

Abstract – This study explored the impact of online talent management systems on personnel recruiting, attraction, retention, and overall company performance. It involved 135 graduates working in international companies and 46 top managers and chief executive officers (CEOs). Surveys and interviews on the matters related to the use of online talent management systems were conducted. It encompasses five stages and is projected to take from 2 to 4.5 years to be put into practice. In sum, the conducted research demonstrated that online talent management systems are promising in the context of the current labor market situation.

Keywords – business; digital technology in HR; employee attraction and retention; online talent management systems for small business development; professional development.

1. Introduction

The availability of qualified and talented employees is the key to the stability and success of

any organization, as 50% of the domestic product of today's developed countries is knowledge-based [1]. In light of this, finding and attracting a high potential and talented workforce is one of the top priorities for human resource (HR) managers and company departments, including those working internationally.

Currently, the labor market experiences a notable and steady drop in the number of talented professionals having the necessary knowledge and skills. In this connection, many companies are faced with qualified personnel shortages. Their search is becoming more and more difficult as demand may exceed supply several times [2].

As in many other areas of social life, HR managers are being increasingly assisted by unusually fast-paced digital technologies. The paradigm of the HR management concept has undergone substantial changes due to their introduction into the work process [3]. As a result, most modern organizations have acquired online talent management systems and tools to help in versatile aspects of HR-related activities, including finding, attracting, and retaining employees.

As is shown by the practice, the challenge of keeping talents in the organization is no less hard than attracting them. Given that competitors also need a talented workforce, qualified employees often leave their current workplaces lured by the attractive terms of a new employer. Digital maturity of human resource management implies a shift from the traditional workplace paradigm towards engagement, learning, and development, as well as talent acquisition [2]. In order to attract and retain talented employees in a company, it is necessary not only to find them but also to provide a good social package, remuneration, and training and development opportunities.

Talent globalization has notably affected the flow of skills. It enabled people to work remotely across geographic boundaries [4]. Hence, many organizations experiencing difficulties with finding labor force in the local market turn to the services of

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Corresponding author: Fadi Sakka,
School of Business and Quality Management, Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.


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remote laborers able to work from any place in the world. Such opportunities offer a number of benefits, including increased search area, provision of highly qualified personnel, and cost-saving (relocation, workspace).

On the other hand, as online talent management systems are gaining in popularity these days, the challenge of determining their quality and effectiveness is not infrequent. Such systems require development and maintenance costs and may indeed be called time demanding. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that their use makes sense. This study aims to collect the opinions of both sides of such systems users: company management representatives and employees. The availability of such data and their analysis will help find out the real situation, distinguish the existing problems in the area, and determine the advantages and disadvantages of such systems. Along with this, such information will be useful in determining what aspects of these systems need to be reworked, modernized, or eliminated. Another issue this study focuses on is to find out the relationship between the use of online talent management systems and an organization's success.

2. Literature Review

Technological advances are dictating new rules for many areas of human activity. As a result, these improvements necessitate contemporary talent management to shift from specialized abilities to training and knowledge, deepening digital and soft skills [4]. Modern technologies offer a myriad of tools to aid the work of HR managers in organizations. Innovation is vital in attracting talents. It adopts various technologies and strategies, particularly big data analysis, artificial intelligence, chatbots, social media, video interviews, and teleconferencing, that cause a dramatic effect on the growth and development of the organization by attracting skilled workforce [5].

2.1. e-HR

The term "e-HR" first appeared in technology research after the 1990s as an approach to implementing HR activities, strategies, and procedures through conscious and focused support of the latest technology. E-HR is a cost-effective way to conduct HR activities. Within e-HR, there are also such concepts as e-recruitment, e-training, e-mentoring, e-career management, e-compensation, e-performance appraisal, and e-HR goals [6].

In general, there are three main areas of impact of digital technologies on HR management: digital workforce, digital workplace, and digital HR management [7]. Combined with big data and

predictive analytics, digital technologies significantly affect professional practices at individual, organizational, national, and international levels [8]. Digitalization helps generate a positive image before the talent that needs to be attracted, ensures employee engagement, gives workers and departments more autonomy, and accelerates the introduction of new roles in people management [9].

Global talent management is part of the international HR management actions aimed at attracting, developing, retaining, and mobilizing people with a high level of current and potential human capital, corresponding to the strategic directions of international companies to serve the goals of multiple beneficiaries [10]. Global virtual teams are a typical phenomenon in modern organizations. Also known as multinational, multicultural, or transnational teams, global virtual teams are most often defined as temporary, culturally diverse, geographically dispersed work groups communicating electronically. They may include not only full- or part-time workers but also freelancers, contractors, suppliers, and other collaborators [11].

The practice shows that in order to attract high potential and young workers, talent management programs should be able to (1) get commitment on behalf of senior managers and employees; (2) analyze the work and the people now; (3) recruit and select talents; (4) evaluate performance; (5) analyze the work and people needed in the future; (6) evaluate potential; (7) develop employees; (8) retain the best personnel; and (9) evaluate program results [2].

According to some scholars, the problem of retaining employees in a company is more important than attracting new ones. Such talent management practices as mentoring, strategic leadership, and social media positively influence the intention of Generation Y employees to stay, while knowledge sharing has no significant impact on it. Generation Y, or Millennials, has higher expectations for career development and career exploration within the organization [12].

2.2. Replacing Jobs with Digital Solutions

In some areas of business, digitalization facilitates dramatic changes in the way companies organize themselves. This applies in particular to the availability and roles of employees. Similarly, in some areas of talent management, digitalization leads to a fusion of supply chain management leaders and digital technologies, as well as to a clear division of roles in which either supply chain management executives or technology will dominate in the future [13].

Digital technologies affect the roles of supply chain management leaders in human resource management in supportive, intensifying, and transforming ways. In some areas, technologies can take over some of these managers' roles; in others, they are only able to complement them. However, almost always, there are also some tasks that remain with managers and cannot be done by a machine [14].

2.3. Employee Attracting and Retaining Levers

Money. Today, young professionals do not just need a good salary level in an organization. They also strive for new opportunities and growth prospects, professional development, and improved knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, money remains an important stimulus in traditional HR strategies. Managers can use remuneration strategies to attract, retain, and motivate employees, as well as achieve some organizational goals. However, it must be remembered that money is not the only or chief talent retention lever.

Psychological atmosphere and professional development. Emotional commitment to the organization is a powerful link between talent management and performance. It is defined as affection to, identification with, and involvement in the organization. Employees' reactions to organizational practices (such as talent management) are shaped by their perceptions of those practices and not by the practices per se [15]. Though, for a company to be successful and long-living, workers also need opportunities for learning and professional development.

Brand. To attract and retain skilled personnel, modern companies must also have a positive employer brand or, in other words, employer reputation. In today's environment, employer brand is critical in recruiting and retention of high-potential employees. Hence, it must focus on learning and leadership development, mobility, rewards, and competency systems [2].

Social media. Social media is one of the most influential and effective tools for finding, attracting, and retaining talent. They contribute to such aspects of talent management as talent acquisition, onboarding, training, performance management, career and leadership development, and many others. [16].

As one can see, the influence of digital technologies on talent management practices is quite strong these days. The primary task for professionals is to improve them, adapt them to the needs of specific businesses, and get the most out of them for the particular organization.

2.4. Problem Statement

Currently, the problem of finding, attracting, and retaining talented employees is becoming more and more urgent. Many firms and organizations, including international ones, are now encountering a shortage of qualified specialists. This is relevant to different activity areas, including engineering, supply chain management, finance, insurance, pharmacy services, and a variety of others. High digital technologies' development level helps modern HR managers to cope with these challenges. Modern online systems and talent management tools provide multiple new opportunities for company managers, but their work today is not perfect and requires development and refinement.

The aim of this research is to collect and analyze the opinions of young employees working in international companies (graduates of Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Dubai, UAE) as well as companies' chief executive officers (CEOs) and top management representatives on the performance of online talent management systems and other related digital solutions used at their workplaces.

The objectives of this research include studying the situation in talent management and professional development of employees using digital technologies, collecting and processing these data, and developing a relevant model with recommendations to improve the situation at hand.

3. Methods and Materials

3.1. Research Design and Sample

This research was conducted through questionnaires and interviews. Similar methods were used by Whysall et al. [17] as well as Martínez-Morán et al. [9].

3.2. Survey

The study involved 135 graduates and 46 top managers and CEOs working for international companies in the UAE (Table 1.).

Table 1. Research sample composition

| | | | |
|-----------|--------|---------|----|
| Graduates | Age | 22-24 | 24 |
| | | 25-27 | 34 |
| | | 28-30 | 39 |
| | | 31-33 | 38 |
| | Gender | Males | 76 |
| | | Females | 59 |
| Managers | Age | 31-35 | 12 |
| | | 36-40 | 15 |
| | | 41-45 | 10 |
| | | 46-50 | 9 |
| | Gender | Males | 32 |
| | | Females | 14 |

Young graduates were also employed in international companies benefiting from online talent management systems at the time of the study. For the study purposes, graduates had to fill out an online questionnaire emailed to them by the study organizers on October 18, 2021. Invitations to participate in the study were also sent via email. The very process of surveying was carried out using Google Docs.

The questions addressed to respondents were as follows:

1. Are you satisfied with your employer's talent management practices? (Yes; No)
2. Does your employer actively use online systems in their talent management practices? (Yes; No)
3. Do you have access to your company's online talent management system as a user? (Yes; No)
4. Does the online talent management system contain enough tools and functions for you to use them and understand the process comfortably? (Yes; No)
5. Are you satisfied with the online system's goal-setting tools? (Yes; No)
6. Are you satisfied with the available online system tools for evaluating your performance? (Yes; No)
7. Are you satisfied with the available online system tools for providing guidance regarding your career? (Yes; No)
8. Does your employer use online system data to determine your wages or bonus level? (Yes; No)
9. Does the talent management system have technical deficiencies that prevent you from using it successfully? (Yes; No)
10. Can you declare that the online talent management system positively impacts your in-company experience and career? (Yes; No)

In contrast to former students, research participants from the cohort of top managers and CEOs were invited to participate in interviews conducted on October 21, 2021, using Skype software. Invitations were also sent to them via email, whereas the conversations were recorded and further transcribed in Microsoft Word.

The main interview questions were:

1. Does your company use an online talent management system and/or other similar digital solutions?
2. Do such a system and/or solutions positively impact employee productivity and results?
3. Do such a system and/or solutions contribute to the company's bottom line?
4. Has the process of attracting and retaining talented employees improved since the introduction of such a system and/or solutions?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a system and/or solutions?

3.3. Data Analysis and Statistical Processing

The results of surveys and interviews were entered into Microsoft Excel and analyzed using the instruments proposed by this spreadsheet.

3.4. Ethical Issues

After clicking on the link in the email, the page outlining the rules, procedure, and ultimate goal of this study was opened. In order to proceed to the questionnaire, graduates had to confirm their acceptance of these stipulations. Top managers and CEOs, in turn, were handed a hard copy of the rules, and written consent to participate in the study was obtained from each of them.

3.5. Research Limitations

The results of the conducted research are believed to be reliable as no irrelevant results were obtained. However, it should be noted that the study only involved individuals who graduated from one UAE university, and their number was limited.

4. Results

4.1. Research Outcomes for University Graduates

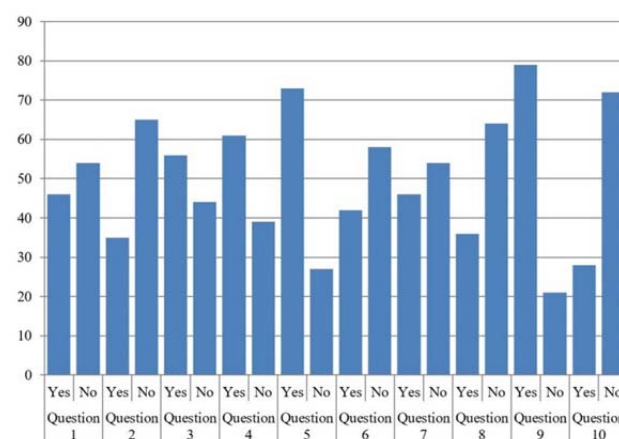


Figure 1. Graduates' survey results

Q1. Are you satisfied with your employer's talent management practices? (Yes; No)

According to the data collected (Figure 1.), the share of negative answers to this question (54%) is only 8% more than the share of positive ones (46%), which implies that slightly less than half of all respondents are not satisfied with the talent management practices of their employer. This fact suggests that the current talent management approaches are not ideal and require improvement. In this case, digital technologies offering solutions for HR departments can help.

Q2. Does your employer actively use online systems in their talent management practices? (Yes; No)

This question was answered as “Yes” by 35% of respondents and as “No” by 65% of individuals surveyed. Such an outcome implies that today’s companies are not making enough use of digital technologies’ capabilities in talent management. Improving such tools and positive experiences of businesses implementing them may well increase this indicator.

Q3. Do you have access to your company’s online talent management system as a user? (Yes; No)

As far as 56% of respondents answered this question positively (and, correspondingly, 44% of answers were negative), one can infer that a little more than half of the companies miss in using all the features online talent management systems propose. It appears that most HR managers prefer more traditional methods of working with the staff.

Q4. Does the online talent management system contain enough tools and functions for you to use them and understand the process comfortably? (Yes; No)

The shares of answers collected (61% for “Yes” and 39% for “No”) suggest that online systems are at a fairly good level today and cover all major areas of employee relations.

Q5. Are you satisfied with the online system’s goal-setting tools? (Yes; No)

To this question, 73% of respondents answered “Yes,” and 27% answered “No.” From this it follows that online talent management systems employed by respondents’ companies provide a good toolkit for setting employee performance goals.

Q6. Are you satisfied with the available online system tools for evaluating your performance? (Yes; No)

In this case, the share of negative replies (58%) was slightly higher than that of positive ones (42%). This points to the fact that online systems do not always provide a way to evaluate employees’ performance objectively. This can be solved by improving the systems, as well as by having face-to-face meetings with workers.

Q7. Are you satisfied with the available online system tools for providing guidance regarding your career? (Yes; No)

This question was answered positively by 46% of graduates and negatively by 54% of them. Consequently, almost half of respondents are optimistic about the career guidance provided by the online system.

Q8. Does your employer use online system data to determine your wages or bonus level? (Yes; No)

To this question, 36% of respondents answered “Yes,” and 64% answered “No.” This result testifies that the connection between online talent management system data and employee remuneration is not strong enough. Hence, managers should be motivated to use information from the system when deciding on wages/bonuses.

Q9. Does the talent management system have technical deficiencies that prevent you from using it successfully? (Yes; No)

No less dramatic was the distribution of graduates’ responses to this question – 79% of them answered “Yes,” and 21% answered “No.” Such an outcome indicates that the online systems at the disposal of many employers are imperfect and require additional attention from technical specialists.

Q10. Can you declare that the online talent management system positively impacts your company experience and career? (Yes; No)

The last question was answered positively by only 28% of the surveyed and negatively – by as many as 72% of them. This suggests that most graduates do not believe in the effectiveness of digital solutions in talent management. However, their standpoint can be changed by involving them in seminars and explanatory work as well as by improving the digital solutions as such.

4.2. Research Outcomes for top Managers and CEOs

Examples of answers of top managers and CEOs to interview questions:

Respondent 1: “Our company started using an online talent management system several years ago. I haven’t seen any significant positive results yet, though, it makes employees feel that their performance matters and possibly influences their wages.”

Respondent 2: “I think online systems and talent management solutions greatly facilitate the work of the HR department. They help in finding new candidates, simplify the assessment of their skills, knowledge, and effectiveness of already working employees, allow making decisions regarding personnel issues (promotion, demotion, transfer to another department, etc.). But I doubt in their positive impact on the company’s income right now.”

Respondent 3: “Employees in my department are quite optimistic about the system’s implementation. Although getting used to working with it takes time on the part of employees and HR managers, it gives the feeling that the efforts are not spent in vain and will be taken into account during the next performance evaluation and remuneration paying.”

As we can see from the answers of graduates and interviews of top managers and CEOs, the attitude towards online talent management systems and related solutions is predominantly favorable (Figure 2.). However, the majority of respondents see no significant shifts in the context of the impact of these solutions and systems on companies’ activities or profitability. The only possibility to raise this impact’s visibility is to improve the systems and operation with them and make them centered upon positive outcomes at the organizational level.

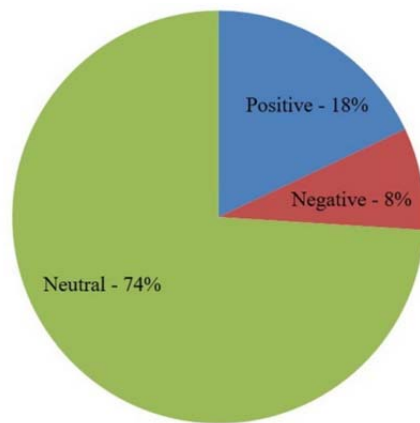


Figure 2. Top managers and CEOs' opinion concerning the impact of online talent management systems on company's performance

The analysis of the obtained survey and interview results allowed developing a model for effective implementation of online talent management systems in an organization (Table 2.).

Table 2. Online talent management system implementation model

| Stage | | Description | Duration |
|-------|--|--|--------------|
| 1 | Selecting a basic system or developing a new one | Choice of the most suitable online talent management system among those already available on the market and its adaptation to the needs of the organization or development of a brand new one | 3-6 months |
| | | | |
| 2 | System testing and fixing deficiencies | System's testing and adjustment | 2-4 months |
| | | | |
| 3 | Pilot run | Familiarization of employees of the HR and other departments with the system, their provision with access to it, and organization of their work with all the parts of the system (or some of them) | 6-12 months |
| | | | |
| 4 | Dealing with user feedback | Collecting feedback from system users, its analysis, and making necessary corrections | 3-6 months |
| | | | |
| 5 | Full-scale implementation | Provision of employees with access to the system and making it fully operational | 12-24 months |
| | | | |

The model suggested above will help to implement an online talent management system in the organization and ensure its effective exploitation.

5. Discussion

As is shown by the findings of this study and the results obtained by other researchers, the two key actors in talent management – the organization and the talented employee – have a rather different perception of the intended and actual value of talent management [18]. Since an organization is able to build and implement a talent management system that meets its goals and requirements, from an organizational standpoint, talent management is effective. However, considering that the needs of the talented employees are addressed rather insufficiently in the intended and actual talent management practices, it has less value for them [18]. Top managers and CEOs should understand this difference and build talent management practices with allowances made for it.

If an online talent management system is only at its initial implementation stage in an organization, scholars suggest setting up a helping strategy consisting of four steps: (1) developing assessment tools and scales; (2) developing training and development tools; (3) evaluating each employee using the tools developed; (4) preparing action reports (including talent development plans for employees) [19]. Alongside this, the structure and functions of the system should be tailored to the needs and goals of each company individually. The authors of the current study also propose a model for the effective implementation of an online system in an organization (Table 2.).

As evidenced by the findings of the conducted research, the digitalization of talent management can potentially positively impact organizational performance. One aspect of such an alliance is the ability to attract the employees most suitable for a particular organization. Interviews with the top management of UK engineering firms revealed that there is now a notable decline in the number of skilled workers across industries [17]. In view of this, firms need to work hard to promote their employer brand and thus attract the most qualified labor force. In addition, customers today expect more than just good engineering solutions [17].

As was noted by the present study participants, digital talent management systems make each employee's contribution to company outcomes more visible. Though, the scientific evidence shows that they are also effective in identifying high potential individuals for specific jobs and contribute to the development of digital skills and abilities, precise planning for career development, and raising a new generation of leaders [2].

Today's HR departments are likely to rely on the old-fashioned operation manner. The online systems they have at their disposal are used to improve and simplify these activities. In the future, however, such platforms will take on many more functions that would take companies' performance to the next level, mainly by effectively attracting talents. The digital revolution enables new models of collaboration that allow better innovation and higher productivity [20]. Right now, the talent management model covers hiring, training, managing, retaining, and evaluating employees' performance. Though, in the future, smart companies will do none of this. Their work will resemble a jazz ensemble, where creativity, senses, peer-to-peer collaboration, and improvisation will replace hierarchy [20]. In this respect, leading analysts in the field predict that the following principles will work: (1) do not hire, initiate relationships and attract top talents; (2) do not train, create a learning-working environment; (3) do not manage, collaborate; (4) do not retain, establish lasting relationships; (5) do not conduct annual reviews, improve performance in real-time [20]. The results of this research also support these assumptions.

As is shown by the collected outcomes, top managers and CEOs rarely report a significant positive impact of online talent management systems on the company's profits. Yet, according to scholars, talent management exists to achieve the overall goal of an organization, which comes down to making money if the matter stands in a business environment [21]. The core operation principles applied to contemporary talent management are (1) make and buy to manage risk; (2) adapt to the uncertainty in talent demand; (3) increase the return on investment in employee development; (4) preserve investment by balancing employee and employer interests [21].

Today, most international organizations already have some experience with online systems and talent management solutions. Of course, this experience is not extensive thus far, but it is already yielding results, such as increased employee loyalty, a sense of need for the efforts made, a simplified employee performance evaluation system, less human error in employee evaluations, etc. This makes us believe that in the future, such systems will bring significant benefits to organizations by performing the above-mentioned and new, not yet fully developed, functions.

6. Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrate that slightly less than half (46%) of graduates are satisfied with their employer's talent management practices, whereas 65% do not believe their employer actively

uses online systems and other digital talent management solutions. As many as 56% of graduates already have access to such online systems (login, password, personal account), and 61% hold the view that systems provide enough tools and functions to use them successfully. Although most young people (73%) argue that their employer's online talent management system allows easy and convenient performance goal-setting, 58% of graduates are not happy with the system's performance evaluating capabilities. On the other hand, while 46% of respondents believe the system is able to provide useful guidance for building their careers, only 36% of them think that employers take into account the information in the system when reviewing salary levels or awarding bonuses. A significant share of the surveyed (79%) points to the fact that their company's system currently has a number of technical deficiencies that complicate its use. Hence, it is quite natural that only 28% of respondents on the part of young employees believe the online talent management system used within their companies has a positive impact on their career development and the organization's overall workflow.

As for data obtained from interviews with global companies' CEOs and senior managers, most are now satisfied with the availability and the state of development of online talent management systems at their organizations. However, only 18% of them consider such systems to impact the firm's overall performance favorably, 8% regard them as exerting a negative impact, and 74% claim them to hold a neutral position in this respect. Taken together, these results suggest that such systems are flawed but promising, and much work needs to be done to improve them nowadays.

Based on all the data collected, this paper proposed a model for implementing an online talent management system in an organization effectively. It consists of five stages: (1) selecting a basic system or developing a new one; (2) system testing and fixing deficiencies; (3) pilot run; (4) dealing with user feedback; and (5) full-scale implementation. Overall, the process is projected to take from 2 to 4.5 years.

The findings of this study provide a valuable contribution to a growing body of literature on the impact of digital technology on HR and talent management. They may be found beneficial by company executives, HR department employees, software developers, and many other actors in the field. Further research can be devoted to examining how each particular module of an online talent management system works and preparing recommendations for extending its functionality.

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