

A photograph of an industrial facility at night. The scene is dominated by a large, vertical cylindrical structure on the left, which is illuminated from below, casting a warm glow. To its right, a complex network of metal walkways, stairs, and railings is visible, some of which are lit with green and yellow lights. The background is a clear, dark blue sky. The overall atmosphere is industrial and modern.

ig

Creating a global talent and succession planning framework

The context

A manufacturing company operating in multiple markets across the globe, our client offers an expert service to businesses within their industry.

Despite their success, they were struggling to keep pace with their growth and had developed a number of internal shortcomings in the way they managed their people.

Something needed to change.

Tech, not Talent

Composed mainly of technical experts rather than leaders of people, the company had been buying management in from outside.

But with a wealth of talent within their own organisation, there was a significant opportunity to maximise the value of their existing resource and reduce costs by developing their people into the future leaders of the organisation.

We knew we needed to improve the 'toolkit' – the range of tools and techniques used for talent management purposes – and to make this a shared resource across the entire organisation.

Apples with apples

The problem was, each subsidiary within the umbrella was operating according to a different set of procedures.

There was no shared understanding of what 'good' talent looked like, or what 'potential' really meant. This was suffocating collaboration within and between the subsidiaries, wasting resource and inhibiting team effectiveness.

// “Communicating with the markets in other regions was a challenge; we could never really get on the ‘same page’. It was easier to just work in isolation.”

Head of Talent Acquisition, UK

We needed to find a way to integrate a universal approach into all of the markets.

This would allow for a more collaborative approach to talent management, facilitating the global mobilisation of talent in addition to the establishment of a consistent employer brand.

Essentially, it was setting up an environment for a more nimble, connected, and efficient organisation.

Give a man a fish

We've all heard the saying: give a man a fish, and he'll eat for a day; give a man a fishing net and the knowledge of how to use it, and him and his family will be fed for the rest of their lives.

This is what we wanted to achieve with our client, and is in fact one of the under-pinning tenets of our approach to consulting.

So rather than just foisting a new management, talent, and succession framework on them, we took the time to carefully absorb each market's way of doing things. We collected the existing tools and processes from across the globe and used them to create a talent management toolkit and guidebook that where possible, used existing vocabulary and matched up approaches.

This allowed us to build something which felt familiar and 'do-able' to their people, ensuring its uptake.

“People are always suspicious about the ‘new way of doing things’ – especially engineering types who are very focused on the technical. But the new framework wasn’t full of jargon and meaningless buzz words. It made sense, right from the beginning”

COO

Ducks in a row

With this common language and approach to talent management in place, the next step was to turn the focus to developing the framework around potential within the organisation.

How do you define potential?

The fact is, potential means something different for every organisation, and we needed to create a solution that really resonated with the needs of this organisation. Again, as with all our clients, we weren't looking for a cookie-cutter definition that would slip off like oil on water and fail to embed properly.

The best way to find out the type of people that succeed in an organisation: get on the ground and get real experience of what works.

With this in mind, we interviewed twenty-five individuals who work closely with general management. We asked them what potential looked like to them; the qualities and attributes someone needed to possess for success now and into the future.

This would help us create a framework truly grounded in the commercial realities of the business, viewing the problem through different lenses to create a rich, three-dimensional view that we never could have achieved from speaking to one or two individuals alone.

The similarities and differences in people's idea of what would constitute potential for leadership were a very rich source of insight, and fertile ground for further conversations within the business.

Transforming thought into action

We knew that having a sound idea of what potential meant to the company was a good start, but we needed to produce the information in the format of an easy-to-use tool, rather than an unwieldy bank of information.

We decided to perform a somatic analysis on the transcripts from the stakeholder interviews. We identified the common competencies across the board, and mapped them onto a psychometric assessment. We don't believe in a reductionist view of potential and talent that removes the element of human judgement from the conversation, but we also wanted to introduce some objectivity in the process that would further the aim of consistency within and across markets.

The tool was highly individualised to the company's needs. It would also, once again in-line with our commitment to producing permanent added value, allow us to remove ourselves from the process in the future.

To make sure it was working how it should, we then internally verified the model.

Embedding the change

Before we removed ourselves from the frame, we wanted to verify that the people involved in talent decisions were comfortable and confident combining the toolkit, the guidebook, and the potential model.

So we sat down with the key players in the organisation, armed with last year's talent data, and jointly decided who to put forward for a move up using the new approach to talent identification.

We also led them - as a group - through a calibration process to ensure consistency across the board.

// “To put it simply: we were wasting resource in HR, which was negatively effecting our bottom line. Now, we’re not.”

HR Director

Eyes on the horizon

We are already starting to see the new approach to talent taking hold within the organisation, with a group of promising high potentials now transitioning to leadership roles.

Once these individuals move into their new positions, the organisation has plans to engage us in their ongoing development.

This will close the loop from beginning to end, creating a leadership and talent cycle that will become the heart of a connected, collaborative organisation firmly entrenched in success.

// “Indigogold have had a truly transformative effect on the organisation.

“They know their stuff, and they’re not afraid to face the hard truths to make the change the company needs.”

CEO