

7 Managing talent

A Core competents

Devising strategies to prevent the flight of talent

Is your company today held dependent on “**core competents**” – talented individuals possessing the skills that make your products and services unique? If so, you’re not alone. In a study by the Corporate Leadership Council, a computer company recognised 100 core competents out of 16,000 employees; a software company had 10 out of 11,000; and a transportation group deemed 20 of its 33,000 employees truly **critical** to performance.

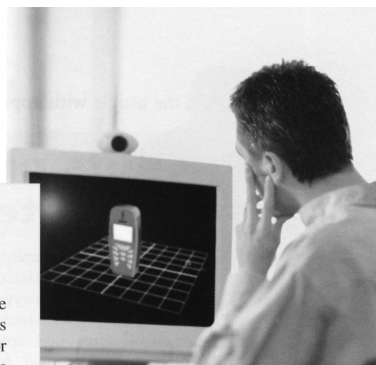
Core competents will stay only as long as organisations can offer them something they desire. Bear in mind, though, that this phenomenon concerns a small group of highly skilled people. However, **talent** does not necessarily equate to an impressive title. Core competents need not be senior executives, but

could just as easily be people whose **intellectual property** is crucial to the organisation, or whose particular **expertise** is difficult to replicate.

No company ever went bankrupt because it suffered from having too much talent. Recent research shows that only 7 per cent of all managers strongly agree with the statement “our company has enough talented managers to pursue all or most of its promising opportunities”.

In addition, 75 per cent of executives worldwide now rank **human performance** ahead of productivity and technology in terms of strategic importance. The same study also reveals that 80 per cent of all executives claim that by 2010 **attracting** and **retaining** people will be the leading success factor in strategy.

Financial Times



B Creatives and suits

An expert in workplace trends says:

‘Some activities depend on groups of freelance **creatives** for each project. For example, in film-making, the **creatives**, that is, the writers, director, etc., and the **talent** – the actors – come together for a particular project and then **disband**. This is a typical example of a **virtual organization**. The only permanent people in the company are the **suits**, the businesspeople, who bring the teams together for each project. Other industries work in similar ways.

For example, in software development, managers and programmers may come together to contribute to a particular project and then leave to work on others.’

Note: ‘Suits’ is mostly used in the plural and is colloquial.



7.1 Look at the article in A opposite and say if these statements are true or false. Core competents ...

- 1 are highly skilled people.
- 2 are key to the functioning of some organizations.
- 3 are always senior executives.
- 4 have knowledge that is easy for other people to acquire.
- 5 are in plentiful supply
- 6 and the way they work is thought to be more important than at least two other factors in a company’s success.
- 7 will be important for companies to recruit and keep in the future.

7.2 Complete the sentences with expressions from A opposite.

- 1 Core competents are employees who have been identified as to the success of the company.
- 2 People who have specialized knowledge or are very valuable to the company.
- 3 Some say that people are a firm’s most important assets, and therefore is key to its success.
- 4 For many hi-tech companies, is their most important asset, more important than their physical assets.
- 5 The problem with is that it can just walk out of the door – we have to find ways of it initially, and then it so that it doesn’t go to competitors.
- 6 In fact, getting the best out of is the most important skill these days for many managers.

7.3 Look at B opposite. In a film project, are each of the following people ‘creatives’ or ‘suits’?

- 1 the film director
- 2 the finance director
- 3 the actors
- 4 the head of the film company
- 5 the scriptwriter
- 6 the costume designers

Over to you



Who are the core competents in your organization or one you would like to work for? Why are they critical?

9 The right skills

A Hard and soft skills

For a long time, **hard skills**, for example skills in technical subjects, were considered the most important thing in business. But more and more, people are realizing the importance of **soft skills** – the skills you need to work with other people, and in the case of managers, to manage people in **tactful** and **non-authoritarian, non-dictatorial** ways.



B Emotional intelligence

You've got the brains but have you got the touch?

While IQ has traditionally been the means by which we judge someone's abilities and potential, **EQ** – the E stands for emotional – is the new benchmark for a new world. If you've got it, you're more likely to be powerful, successful and have fulfilling relationships than if you haven't. **Emotional intelligence** – the ability to understand and control your emotions, and recognize and respond to those of others – is emerging as the single most important and effective business and personal skill of the new century. At American Express, financial advisers who'd been through emotional intelligence training

improved sales by up to 20 per cent, significantly more than the company average. A ten-year study by Sheffield University of over 100 small- and medium-sized UK businesses found that **people management** was three times as important as research and development in improving productivity and profitability and six times as important as business strategy.

Daniel Goleman, a US science journalist-turned-consultant with a background in psychology, first popularized the notion of emotional intelligence in the mid-nineties. Goleman defines

five elements of emotional intelligence: **self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy** and **social skills**. Sceptics argue that this sounds suspiciously like the old **soft skills**, in management-course speak, dressed up in new clothing. But Tim Sparrow, of human performance consultants Buckholdt Associates, points out a crucial difference. 'Soft skills training was only about **interpersonal intelligence** – relating to others. Emotional intelligence involves intrapersonal skills – knowing yourself – as well. You can't be **interpersonally** intelligent if you don't recognise feelings in yourself.'

The Observer

- 9.1 Look at A opposite. Were (a) hard skills or (b) soft skills mainly required at each of the following stages of a project to design insurance products? The project manager ...
- employed someone with a doctorate in mathematics to work on risk probabilities.
 - gave three days off to a team member who said they had family problems at home.
 - analyzed her own feelings of frustration that the project was going too slowly.
 - dealt politely but firmly with a request by her boss to finish the project a month early.
 - did market testing of the product with a number of potential consumers of the product and analyzed the results on computer.
 - did careful research on the Internet to find the best advertising agency to launch the product.
- 9.2 Complete the sentences with appropriate forms of expressions from B opposite.
- If someone is good at persuading employees to do things without making them annoyed, they are good at
 - More generally, getting along with people and avoiding tactless remarks are examples of
 - Knowing your own emotions and feelings is : this is an skill. Contrast this with the ability to get along with other people:
 - If you are able to control your own emotions, you have good
 - If you are able to understand how other people feel, you have with them.
 - The whole area is referred to by Daniel Goleman as The abbreviation for the way this is measured is

- 9.3 Find the words and phrases (1–6) in the article in B opposite and match them to their meanings (a–f).

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 1 benchmark | a (gradually) becoming |
| 2 fulfilling | b a reference point by which you judge something |
| 3 emerging as | c terminology from a management course |
| 4 sceptics | d given a new image |
| 5 management-course speak | e making you feel happy and satisfied |
| 6 dressed up in new clothing | f people who doubt the truth of an idea |

Over to you



Write a description of the soft skills required for your job or one you would like.