
Acquiring and retaining talent is a strategic imperative for every organisation to sustain in competition. Ed Michaels, Helen Handfield-Jones and Beth Axelrod, the trio of McKinsey in their “war for talent” argued that talent acquisition and retention is not just limited to recruitment and motivation. It goes beyond, as organisation are supposed to work out robust strategies for attraction, development and retention of talented people, even if it requires changes in policies, systems and structures. Author has argued that, there need to be a fundamental change in the way modern day organizations perceive their human resource. He articulates, “viewing people as a resource for the organisation embeds our mindset for exploitation. Contrarily viewing people as a capital legitimize our investment on people”. Anchoring the talent pool as a capital resource for an organisation first requires developing a shared conviction that talent can only ensure sustainability while strengthening competitive advantage. The book is basically not intended to debate on talent management literature, rather the focus of the work is on talent management’s value proposition and suggesting tools and techniques for acquiring and retaining talent. The manuscript is constructed basing on author’s long experience as an HR professional offering solutions for acquisition and retention of talents to premier MNCs. The entire book composing of 5 chapters unravels the process of making an organisation as “the magnetic employer” through efficient talent management practices, encompassing the whole gamut of talent attraction, development and retention.

1st chapter of the book discusses in detail on various connotation of talent and talent management issues while introducing terms related to talent, talent attraction, talent acquisition, talent retention, talent development, talent management and talent pipeline etc. Author has mentioned that, organizations create talent pipeline through succession plan and fight with their competitors to grab their talent. However, considering handful of employees as hyper-performers in bell curve, as they perform by exceeding the expectation levels is certainly not a desirable practice. In this process, organizations became more questionable in their talent management practices, as many potential talent of the organisation are lost and they leave their job to join the competing organizations. It was observed that Indian IT majors believe that the use of bell curve reinforces their commitment to meritocracy. However, it is to be understood that potential talents of the organizations may not only be those who are hyper-performers as there are many average
performers who can emerge as hyper-performers when they are nurtured with some development support. Some of the researchers have recommended for introducing realistic assessment of various performance groups with a face to face calibration approach, reinforcing bell-curve results with 360-degree feedback results, reintroducing management by objective method of assessment or the most sought after peer review assessment. The introductory chapter has set the premise for subsequent four chapters of the book. However, a clearer picture and a depth analysis on articulations of talent needs with examples would have given a better thrust to the chapter.

2nd chapter of the book deliberates on talent acquisition stating it as an ongoing process for attracting, finding and selecting highly talented individuals. Talent acquisitions are made through following certain sequence of steps for example, generating lead for potential talents, behavior and organisation-fit analysis, deciding on assessment tools and exercises, reference checking, final selection, onboarding and integration. Globally talent acquisition decisions are taken through leveraging various talent analytics. Based on employee’s data, and benchmarked information from other sources, companies are designing various talent analytics which are used both for acquiring talent from with-in and from outside. For talent acquisition it is also suggested that organizations need to design skill inventories with detailing of the information on the employees, their job-related skills, training and/or experience that can benefit organizations in future job allocations and assignments etc. Dashboards, social networking sites, head hunting, brand building, competency based approach in acquiring talent, organisation-fit and job-fit analysis are some of the effective talent acquisition tools are used by the organizations. Author has detailed through numerous examples as apart from acquiring talents through innovative talent acquisition practices, they are also focusing on developing in-house talent pipeline, grooming them after identifying their potentialities.

3rd chapter of the book deals with author’s own insight on talent development process and this has been ensemble through drawing the inputs from theories and organisational practices. Author states that the scope of talent development extends to incubation of in-house talents, developing the newly hired talents, pacing with the changing needs and strategies of the organisation. Talent development process should be business driven, future focused, integrated and capable of measuring results. Therefore, while developing talent development programs, organizations broadly consider issues like nature of market, global perspectives, competitive advantages, economic value creation, culture and leadership. The chapter has impressed on ethical consideration on talent development which stems from organisational talent development policies. It is suggested that, ethical talent development practices, apart from organisational brand building is expected to attract new talents and enhance employee engagement.

The 4th chapter highlights various talent retention strategies for the organizations. It is understood that even if most companies succeed in attracting the best talent, most of them falter on the critical part which is retention management. When a talented employee leaves the organisation, the entire cycle of recruitment, training and development is repeated. Therefore, a
high rate of talent retention obviously reduces the cost of manpower replacement (re-recruitment) and also the cost of training (re-training of the replaced manpower). The chapter has started with the discussion on definitional debate on talent retention and then investigates on possible talent management practices that can enhance talent retention for the organizations. Elaborate discussion on various talent retention tools and techniques, like employee engagement, career planning and development, succession planning programs, workforce diversity, performance management systems, compensation and reward programs, ambidextrous human resource management practices have been theoretically debated while drawing lessons from organisational practices.

All the four chapters of the book discussed on specific talent management areas like acquisition, retention and development whereas, the 5th chapter of the book wrapped up with elaborate discussion on talent management issues, referring to talent management practices. As an integrated HRM function, primary activities of talent management are attracting, developing and retaining right people for right job at the right time. Effective talent management need to be business aligned and strategy focused and effective talent management enhances the competitive advantage of the organisation. Author has suggested that, while designing a talent management framework for an organisation, necessary people alignment with the job roles is warranted. This kind of scientific orientation can help in realizing the benefits of talent management programs and justify the return on investment (ROI) from talent management. Big data which was so far used for strategic and marketing decisions in organizations are now getting popular across MNCs for use in talent management and they are called as talent analytics. It is predicted that, using talent analytics, organizations can effectively manage talent management function, particularly in predicting the potential talents and performances. Talent analytics can help in designing suitable rewards and compensation for talented employee for their retention, drawing career progression path for the identified talents and finally designing talent development programs for building the talent pipeline. Though the chapter has acknowledged the usefulness of talent analytics in managing talent, but it warns it cannot altogether replace the subjective analysis.

As a whole this book unravels the process of making an organisation “The magnetic employer” through efficient talent management practices. With a blended approach, the book combines the theories and practices of talent attraction, development and retention while drawing numerous examples from the corporate world. One of the key strength of the book is that it lies in its comprehensiveness in terms of its orientation, style, coherence, coverage and depth. The lessons on practices, step by step action plans are some of the significant features of this book. Author suggests that, for management students the book can serve as a reference text whereas, in many business schools talent management though taught as a full credit course, but there is no structured text was available yet. Therefore, this book can meet the academic requirements of management studies. The author’s approach makes the book suitable for talent management courses as well as a self-guide for organisation’s managers.