

Toward an Understanding of the Failure of Talent Identification Initiatives in the African Public Sector

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This paper reports upon a study designed to understand talent identification initiatives in African public sector organizations. Specifically; to identify the reasons that have led Human Resource (HR) professionals in some of those organizations to observe that mainstream western talent identification practices do not work in the African context. The study was conducted applying a Grounded Theory Research Method (GTRM) using semi-structured interviews with twenty-two HR professionals from ten African countries representing a diverse range of public sector organizations. The participants were selected using convenience sampling in that the participants were all attending strategic HR workshops being facilitated by this paper's lead author.

INTRODUCTION

This research project had its genesis in a series of executive workshops facilitated in South Africa by this paper's lead author. The workshops focused a good deal on the broad topic of talent management in organizations because this topic continues to interest HR practitioners in emerging markets and especially in Africa. Interest is sustained, in part, because strategic talent management has been linked to numerous organizational benefits. High performing employees, for example, are invaluable to their organization in terms of gaining competitive advantage (Whelan & Carcary, 2011; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Lewis & Heckman, 2006); achieving strategic goals and increasing productivity (Nilsson and Ellström, 2012; Heinen, 2004) and increasing profitability and improving retention rates (Ellehuus, 2012). The paper is structured into five sections. First there is a review of the relevant literature. The second section details the research design, process and the data analysis phase of the study. The third section of the paper presents the study's findings and a discussion of those findings. Finally the paper presents its conclusions, highlights limitations of the study and outlines some of the implications for practitioners and organizations relating to talent identification.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The identification, development and retention of high potential or 'top talent' employees is commonly referred to as *talent management* (Dries *et al.*, 2012; see also Dries, 2009). A study (1997) and then a book (2001) by McKinsey and Company drew attention to talent management for the first time

(Boussebaa and Morgan, 2008 see also: Vaiman *et al.*, 2012; Höglund, 2012; Zhang and Bright, 2012; Whelan and Carcary, 2011). The study argued that in order to be successful, organizations should first identify and select employees who demonstrate superior potential and secondly allocate resources such as training and coaching to these exceptional individuals in order to cultivate and nurture their talent (Boussebaa and Morgan, 2008). Talent management is thus concerned with identifying key positions which have the potential to differentially impact the organization's performance and then staffing these roles with 'A performers' (Whelan and Carcary, 2011; Boudreau and Ramstad, 2007; Huselid *et al.*, 2005). In spite of the fact that talent identification is a critical component of talent management, most of the literature on talent management focuses on issues related to talent attraction, development and retention. Talent identification has been paid scant attention by researchers.

Talent Identification

Talent identification refers to the processes and activities undertaken in order to define and discover the sources of talent in the organization (Davies and Davies, 2010). However, in practice, identifying genuine high achievers in an organization can prove to be difficult because paper-based, subjective reviews (such as performance appraisals) which are still the most commonly used tool for identifying talent (Dries *et al.*, 2012; see also Dries and Pepermans, 2008 and Pepermans *et al.*, 2003) give an unreliable view of an organization's talent and make searching for internal candidates problematic (Rowland, 2011). Hills (2009) suggests that in selecting individuals for high-potential programs, organizations must focus more on self-nominations rather than manager nominations. This incremental, self-nominating approach may reduce resistance, manager Favoritism and perhaps garner greater employee engagement with the initiative. The alternative, creating special groups of talented employees, requires singling out an elite for special treatment and thus challenges established principles of equality and diversity (Harris and Foster, 2010). If talent identification is mis-managed then the consequences can be that top performers alienate others, do not share knowledge or work in ways to benefit others and are not emulated by their peers (Coulson-Thomas, 2013a; 2013b). Significantly for the present study, Coulson-Thomas highlights the important role HR plays in ensuring talent programs do achieve the desired results.

Ross (2013) argues that instead of trying to identify the most talented employees who will not necessarily be the most successful, organizations must focus on the identification of talent according to criteria where talent is the input and to enable every individual to understand their core strengths and abilities and to create a climate that effectively enables them to leverage this talent into an output – personal and professional success. Dries *et al.*, (2012) conclude that although high performance may be a precondition to being identified as high potential, learning agility is an overriding criterion for separating high potentials from non-high potentials. While Cunningham (2007), argues that an over-emphasis on a person's performance while in junior positions or on their educational record could be dangerous because these things do not accurately predict future competence or success. This is explained by Davies and Davies (2010) as owing to ambitious, achievement-oriented, self-confident people having a short-term focus, arrogance, an inability to listen, and a lack of self-control. Another explanation (Dries *et al.*, 2012; see also McCall *et al.*, 1988) is that numerous managers and executives derail because they tend to depend largely on the same skills that got them promoted in the first place rather than learning new ones.

Hughes and Rog (2008) have made two important findings in relation to the present study. They have said that funding and resourcing talent management initiatives properly is critical for their success and that senior managers are increasingly seen as ultimately responsible for the success of talent management and their commitment therefore is vital. Despite this, research conducted by Ellehuus (2012) revealed that just 19 per cent of senior executives have the required commitment to talent management and the ability to apply talent management practices to drive desirable outcomes. HR professionals have also been found to be a threat to successful talent management. Morton (2005) found that many HR practitioners lack the skills associated with planning and analysis, and many organizations lack integrated systems for collecting and analyzing essential data. This approach must be changed. In a world of increasing change, complexity and competitiveness, there has never been a greater need to help HR professionals identify

what it means to contribute more fully, effectively and insightfully (Ulrich *et al.*, 2012). Boudreau and Ramstad (2007), Vaiman *et al.* (2012) argue that HR offers far great potential if it focuses on providing non-HR leaders who ultimately make talent decisions with the decision framework and data and analysis required to inform key decision around talent.

Talent Management in Africa

Many organizations in Africa (not only private, but also public) suffer from a shortage of skilled labor thereby increasing the relevance and importance of talent management initiatives for African organizations. For instance, Horwitz and Jain (2011) report that South Africa has an oversupply of unskilled employees and a severe shortage of qualified employees thus limiting the ability of the state to deliver effective public services. Sing and Admin (2012) studied HR challenges confronting senior management in the South African Public Service and concluded that the Senior Management Service, which constitutes the supreme leadership cadre of the South African Public Service, experienced training needs in financial management, project management and strategic capacity and leadership. Webster and Wood (2005) report that many companies in Mozambique continue to rely on low-skilled and low-paid employees. In Eritrea, according to Ghebregiorgis and Karsten (2006), a shortage of skilled labor in the market has engendered poor recruitment and selection practices which have increased the amount of intense training required by the employees. It would seem that a severe shortage of skilled employees is common in Africa. This accentuates the importance of talent management to African organizations and especially talent identification. The scarcity of talent increases its value meaning careful identification of high performing and high potential employees is critical where so few exceptional people are available to staff key organizational positions.

Talent management is also important for African organizations as it provides an objective process to ensure the most capable and promising employees are those who end up benefiting from talent management initiatives. This is at risk in many African countries due to widespread Favoritism, tribalism and nepotism in employee selection, promotion, training and remuneration (Okpara and Wynn, 2008; Wood 2005). These non-merit based pathways of advancing certain people who may not be the most talented bear a significant cost because, for example, training and developing the most able and promising employees impacts on performance and results (Aroge and Hassan, 2011; Dimba, 2010). Therefore, advancing mediocre employees at the expense of high potential or high performing employees costs the organization results. Everhart (2010) has also identified corruption in African organizations as a barrier to improving the competence of employees while other authors have identified gender inequality and gender stereotyping as a barrier to identifying and developing talented women (Booyesen and Nkomo, 2010; Ghebregiorgis and Karsten, 2006).

Talent management in Africa is in its early stages and, as Wood (2008) has observed, there is almost no literature on the topic as it pertains to African organizations. Yet, writing at the same time, Kock and Burke (2008) saw the potential for the integration of talent management with HR strategy to achieve public service objectives as a way to counter the shortage of skilled labour in African organizations. Despite Wood's observation and the prescient recommendation of Kock and Burke, now some eight years ago, there still appears to be very little scholarly research on talent management, and especially talent identification, in African organizations and the integration of talent management with HR seems no closer now than it was then. It seems that talent management would greatly benefit African organizations and help address some of serious HR-related challenges they face. However, as this literature review has revealed, HR in Africa is itself still clearly developing and has not caught up with the widely accepted international standards and practices of strategic talent management yet.

Looking toward the future, though, there is evidence that some African organizations are already enjoying the benefits of strategically implementing western HR practices. They are finding that well designed and managed HR practices relating to compensation, training and development and many other HR responsibilities are improving productivity, profitability, teamwork and retention. Ghebregiorgis and Karsten, 2006 (Eritrea); Onyema, 2014; Ihionkhan and Aigbomian, 2014 (Nigeria); Ijigu, 2015 (Ethiopia); Singh, 2014 (South Africa) and Jain (Botswana) all provide examples that illustrate African

organizations implementing western HR practices are deriving the same benefits as their western counterparts. While the same evidence is not there yet to highlight the benefits of western talent management, these examples show that African organizations could be just as suited and receptive to western talent management practices as they are western HR practices if designed, implemented and managed well. The purpose, therefore, of this study is to explore the evidence to the contrary and to identify why HR managers are reporting that western talent management practices are not working in their organizations.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Grounded Theory Research Method

Although frequently misunderstood and misrepresented, Bryant and Charmaz (2010, p.1) observe that: “the Grounded Theory Method is currently the most widely used and popular qualitative research method across a wide range of disciplines and subject areas”. Grounded Theory entered the lexicon in 1967 when Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Since that time Grounded Theory has been appropriated and misappropriated to describe a wide variety of research methods across many disciplines. Goulding (2005) has said that most of the problems associated with GT stem from its abuse and misuse while Geiger and Turley (2003) claim that GT has been applied indiscriminately to describe many studies only tenuously based on GT methodology. Bryant (2014) provides important clarification by pointing out that Grounded Theory actually refers to the outcome of a research process which has used the Grounded Theory method although many researchers refer to the process itself as Grounded Theory. As Grounded Theory nomenclature in the literature is confusing due to its frequent interchangeability, clarification is required at the outset. This paper uses the term Grounded Theory Research Method (GTRM) to describe the research process about which this paper reports, and Grounded Theory (GT) to explain the outcome of the research process.

There are also numerous variations of the GTRM itself. These differ, for example, in terms of process, the epistemological inclination of the researcher, and the coding method and types adopted (Bryant, 2014). A review of popular ‘how to’ texts on GTRM highlights the diversity within the Method (*see, for example*: Quinn-Patton, 2015; Urquhart, 2013; Birks and Mills, 2012; Oktay, 2012; Noeranger-Stern and Porr, 2011; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). This research project has adopted the GTRM proposed and primarily developed by Cathy Charmaz (2006; 2007; 2008; 2014). According to Charmaz (2006), GTRM is a systematic, inductive and comparative approach for conducting research that has the goal of generating a theory. GTRM does not set out to test a hypothesis, it does not begin with a clear objective or problem statement and neither does it seek to answer pre-conceived questions. Indeed, to be able to do these things a review of the literature is first necessary but the GTRM only reviews the literature as a part of the data collection process. Typically, GTRM begins with an observation or experience of some phenomenon, this is then contextualized and leads to the posing of broad, open-ended questions the answers to which are sought through data collection and analysis. The GTRM process is not linear as is the quantitative research process. Data collection, analysis, interpretation and theorizing occur simultaneously. Once data ceases to reveal new information; when, for example, interviewees are only repeating what has already been said in earlier interviews, then data collection ends.

Charmaz’s GTRM is paradigmatically and epistemologically constructivist which contrasts with the ‘discovery’ orthodoxy. Constructivist GTRM posits the researcher an active participant in each stage of the research process. For example; while discovery orientations believe that meaning (codes, categories and theories) emerges from the data, constructivists assert that the researcher deliberately interprets the data to generate meaning. So, constructivist GTRM is quite apart from the founders’ conception: Glaser and Strauss conceived of a process of revealing or unearthing meaning from the data which was there, hidden, but required excavating. Charmaz (2006), more realistically in our view, acknowledges that meaning is created from data through a conscious sense-making process deliberately undertaken by the researcher. Indeed, Selden (2005) has said that if meaning and insight simply emerge then inexperienced researchers would be excellent researchers. In any case, the impact of the difference is in the process; it is

methodological. It is of little substantive consequence: “*The most important feature of research is its outcome, and it seems to make little or no difference whether the researcher conducted the research from a positivist/objectivist viewpoint or an interpretivist/ constructivist one*” (Bryant, 2014, p. 125).

The Research Process

The research project began unintentionally during a series of workshops the lead author of this paper conducted with Human Resource (HR) managers in Africa. It became apparent through group discussions and workshop activities that the generally accepted principles and practices regarding talent identification in organizations, whilst known and understood by the participants, were summarily rejected as unworkable in the African context by many participants. Numerous participants were initially reticent to detail the precise reasons for this view preferring to say instead things like ‘we have tried that but it doesn’t work for us’; ‘we can’t adopt those practices here’ and ‘ideas like that are strongly resisted.’

This experience prompted some broad questions which led to formal data collection through individual, semi-structured interviews with workshop participants and a review of the literature. GTRM proved to be a good choice for this study as it is considered an excellent research process when no other theory or no adequate theory already exists to explain the phenomena under investigation (Creswell *et al.*, 2007) which the literature review revealed to be the case. The broad questions concerned a desire to make sense of the HR managers’ views and the experiences that shaped those views in order to understand the HR managers’ rejection of accepted talent management practices for the African public sector. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method. As noted earlier, in GTRM a literature review is an on-going data collection activity too. Aside from semi-structured interviews being a proven and widespread data collection method in qualitative research, they were chosen for this research project for some additional, specific reasons. For example; according to Brinkmann (2014), semi-structured interviews are well suited to exploratory research which seeks to understand people’s experiences and the problems they encounter in their work. Semi-structured interviews also fit well with the constructionist orientation to research because when interviewing the interviewer is an active participant in the construction of shared meaning and the production of talk (Brinkmann, 2014; Cooksey and McDonald, 2010). Semi-structured interviews are also well suited to exploring emergent issues which materialize unexpectedly (Cooksey and McDonald, 2010); very appropriate for studies like the present one where very little is understood about the research topic. And finally, semi-structured interviews are widely advocated as being very suited to GTRM generally (Douglas, 2003; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell *et al.*, 2007; Urquhart, 2013; Bryant, 2014).

Consistent with GTRM, data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously (Charmaz, 2006; 2014). Data were analysed using a coding process which makes the data progressively more focused and the analysis progressively more theoretical. Data analysis was conducted manually whereby interview transcripts were initially coded line-by-line (open coding) and then subjected to three further coding processes (selective coding; axial coding and theoretical coding). In addition, the authors made use of analytic Memoing (Saldana, 2014; 2012) during data analysis. The exact coding process the authors followed to analyze data is detailed by Charmaz (2014).

The Research Participants

Twenty-two (22) public sector HR supervisors, managers and directors from a range of sub-Saharan African countries participated in interviews. Sixteen (16) interviewees were female and six (6) were male. The median age of the interviewees was 34.4 years and the median professional experience of the group in HR roles was 5.5 years. The participants came from the following countries: South Africa (5); Tanzania (5); Ghana (3); Botswana (2); Mozambique (2); Lesotho (1); Swaziland (1); Kenya (1); Cameroon (1) and Zambia (1). The interviewees worked in various types of public sector organizations including transportation services; energy and utilities; regulatory authorities and general government departments providing different types of public services. Interviews typically lasted for about an hour and were audio recorded with the participants’ permission. Standard protocols relating to informed consent,

participant privacy, data access, usage and storage, information confidentiality and interviewing ethics were adhered to.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The open coding process identified twelve (12) common explanations for why traditional talent identification practices have been unsuccessful in the African public sector in the view of those interviewed. Common explanations were those that were mentioned more than three (3) times during the course of the interviews. The twelve explanations and the number of times each was mentioned during the interviews are shown in Table 1. Selective coding then enabled the researchers to categorize the explanations into four categories (see Table 2).

TABLE 1
EXPLANATIONS FOR THE FAILURE OF TALENT IDENTIFICATION INITIATIVES

Explanation	Frequency <i>N=191</i>	% of total mentions
Absence of leadership: lack of snr. manager support/input/interest	37	19.37
Insufficient funding	30	15.70
Organization cultural issues (lack of trust / perceived as divisive)	27	14.13
Favoritism	19	09.94
Jealousy	16	08.37
Lack of internal expertise	16	08.37
Hidden agendas	15	07.85
Becomes an internal competition for power / status	8	04.18
Egotism	8	04.18
Never Prioritized or becomes de-Prioritized	6	03.14
Irrelevant (stay and get promoted anyway)	5	2.61
Employee disengagement	4	2.09

TABLE 2
CATEGORIZATION OF EXPLANATIONS

Organizational Absence of leadership Employee disengagement Organization culture issues (trust /divisive issue) Irrelevant (stay and get promoted anyway)	Personal Favoritism Jealousy Egotism
Political Hidden agendas Never Prioritized or de-Prioritized Becomes an internal competition for power/status	Pragmatic Insufficient funds Lack of internal expertise

Table 2 illustrates that through the coding process, four categories were able to be determined for the twelve explanations. The Organizational Category (OG) grouped explanations that pertained to broad organizational culture issues such as poor quality leadership; employee disengagement; disinterest and mistrust in talent management because it is seen as divisive; a culture of security and entitlement where promotion comes anyway so talent programs are irrelevant. The Personal Category (PE) grouped three explanations for the failure of talent identification initiatives: managers using the initiative to reward favorite employees this causing resentment within work teams; the increase in jealousy where some

employees are identified as talented and others are not; egotism on the part of those identified which causes fractious work relationships. The third category, Political (PO) grouped three explanations that related to internal organizational politics. They were: managers using talent identification to advance personal agendas; talent management initiatives deliberately being a low priority or being de-Prioritized having initially been approved; managers and departments using the initiative to build greater power or raise their status in the organization. The fourth category, Pragmatic (PR) associated two of the twelve most commonly mentioned explanations for the failure of talent identification initiatives. They were insufficient funding for the initiative and lack of internal expertise to design and implement the initiative.

It was interesting to note that some of the participants highlighted issues which the literature review revealed to be barriers to effective personnel management in African organizations. This suggests that the barriers to effectively applying western HR practices may also be the same as applying western talent management practices. The strongest example of this was the various forms of Favoritism highlighted in the literature review:

“There is no value to identifying the talented people because those who get promoted or selected for opportunities are those who know the right people...it is about being connected to the right people. So many feel why bother with special programs that will be overridden anyway.” (Female, 38, Tanzania)

“In our country tribal affiliation is very strong, I mean it is the most important thing in organizations because it comes with a sense of obligation to help...you know...to look after those of the same tribe. These ties are not limited to family matters; there’s no line drawn between different areas of life when it comes to your tribal affiliation.” (Male, 44, Ghana)

“If the talented person has no sponsor, and I mean of this a connection like family member, then he may as well not be talented because the stupid people with the sponsor will succeed.” (Male, 31, Cameroon)

The literature review also highlighted the critical role senior organizational leaders play in ensuring the success of talent initiatives through their support, involvement and interest. The absence of leadership engagement with talent identification initiatives was the primary explanation the participants gave for the failure of talent identification initiatives in their organizations:

“I would say they are not interested...why should they care? They are already at the top, they are comfortable with the good salary. Their interest is in themselves.” (Female, 27, Ghana)

“There is a lack of genuine commitment and buy-in from the leaders. They say the right things but then there’s no action from them, they want to appear supportive but want to involvement. I guess they just don’t see it as that important.” (Female, 33, South Africa)

Two further findings from the literature review regarding ensuring the success of talent management initiatives were also identified by the research participants as reasons why talent initiatives fail in their experience of African public sector organizations. Those explanations are funding/resourcing and internal expertise:

“Always we begin some grand program with high hopes and then the money runs out or is redistributed to other things and so the program goes nowhere. It always happens, people expect it.” (Female, 35, Botswana)

“The big problem is competency. We just don’t have the competency to do it excellently with our own knowledge. That’s why we come to programs like this; to build knowledge.”
(Male, 44, Ghana)

The literature review also highlighted that singling out individuals as talented and then providing them with opportunities that others do not have can result in negative consequences in terms of employee relationships and behaviors. Two findings from the interviews that correlate with this are the interviewee observations of jealousy of those selected for talent programs and egotism on the part of those who have been identified as talented:

“We found that if some are identified as talented that it creates jealousy among others. People feel they didn’t deserve this status or they got it not because of some talent but somebody above is helping them. So some don’t want to work with those who are identified as talented. It created bad feeling in our experience and we basically abandoned the program.” (Male, 40, Tanzania)

“The talented people, some of them, they became big heads overnight. As soon as they were identified for the talent program they changed. It is typical of African culture; those with status or wealth like everyone to know it. We are show offs. So this caused a lot of friction you see and it damaged the program. I wouldn’t want to go through that again.
(Female, 29, Kenya)

Two further interesting findings from the interviews, which were not mentioned in the review of the literature, offered as explanations for why talent identification fails in the experience of the participants were hidden agendas and the irrelevance of talent programs:

“Too many managers seize the opportunity to advance themselves, their team or their function through any opportunity. I sensed this happening with the talent exercise. It was all ‘look at my team, we have 3 people identified as top talent, how about a bigger budget?’ or ‘her team doesn’t need any new staff if they are all so talented, the next new hire should be for my team.’ (Male, 45, South Africa)

“It’s hard to get talent programs to work because this is the public sector; people stay for life because it is a secure, comfortable job with nice salary. If you stay long enough you will get the promotion or the development anyway, so people are happy to sit back and wait. (Female, 30 Mozambique)

CONCLUSION

The authors recognize that the present study has some limitations, the main one being sample size. Typically, in-depth, one-on-one interviews are few in number so this study’s sample size is comparative to similar studies. However, perhaps complementing the interviews with a survey and including the views of managers outside of the HR field would also have garnered richer data too. The fact that there is great diversity among the types of public sector organizations and African countries is also noted and to treat either as homogenous would be a mistake. This research is exploratory and the sampling was convenience. Furthermore, as qualitative research, the findings are not intended for transferability to other populations. For example; the findings may not equate at all to the experiences of HR managers in private sector African organizations or to north African countries like Egypt, Algeria and Morocco. This study reports what a small group of people have said about their organizations based on their personal experiences; further research is required and encouraged to ascertain the extent to which the present

findings may have wider resonance. A quantitative study using a survey instrument could, for example, contextualize as well as add depth and breadth to the present study's findings.

The findings of the study may have some important implications for organizations in the African public sector, for policy makers, HR professionals and organizational leaders. Public sector organizations in Africa might find it increasingly difficult to attract, develop, engage and retain high performing employees without a workable strategy to correctly identify high performers within the workforce. This, in turn, may limit those organizations' ability to compete for talent with the private sector which often manages talent well. There are implications for organizations within this regarding achieving organizational goals. For leaders in the African public sector, an apparent lack of engagement with talent initiatives could be one of the biggest barriers to success. The lesson from the research is that leaders are important for inspiring, directing and supporting initiatives to increase chances of success. For HR managers the research highlights the magnitude of their challenge in making talent identification work. The research participants highlight important issues that HR must address in the design and implementation of talent identification initiatives.

As a study employing a GTRM, the outcome should be the identification of a Grounded Theory (GT). There is a lot of public debate currently about what a theory is and is not, so before articulating this study's outcome it is worth clarifying what a GT is. "Grounded Theory" is a substantive theory as opposed to a formal theory. This means, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) clarified when devising the GTRM, a theory developed for use in a substantive area of inquiry. In this sense a Grounded Theory is better judged for its utilitarian value rather than its certainty. Or, as Bryant (2014) wrote, it is a theory that should be regarded as a tool and only useful for certain tasks and if a theory fits or works for the field of inquiry it pertains to then it can be judged on that basis as a research outcome "whether the results are regarded as theories, models, frameworks or something else" (Bryant, 2014, p. 134). Furthermore, GTRM, especially within the constructivist tradition, is characterized by iterative interaction, constant comparison and researcher interpretation; unsuited to ending with unequivocal proclamations. Bryant describes the process as a continuing dialogue whereby all outcomes are provisional thereby allowing for further research. So a Grounded Theory is a pragmatic outcome that is useful to those for whom the research area relates.

In the case of this study, with a focus on practice, the substantive theory is that based on the data it appears that numerous, disparate barriers exist that inhibit successful talent identification efforts in African public sector organizations. Further, that these barriers must be addressed by HR managers and senior organizational leaders through a process of cultural change and professional development initiatives to enhance commitment to important public sector values. Fundamental issues such as leadership, trust, communication, collaboration and ethical behavior appear to be key topics for any intervention. There would appear to be broader issues such as values alignment, team development and HR policies that public sector organizations should address as a precondition for launching future talent initiatives. It is noted that lack of funding and insufficient internal expertise regarding talent initiatives are challenges that need addressing through other means. If talent identification was Prioritized and actively supported by the organization's senior leadership then these two barriers could be determined.

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