

## Attracting and retaining talent in the digital economy

By Debbie Craig

### Introduction

“The War For Talent Is Over, And Everyone Lost” was the headline of an article I read recently from Fast Company (see ref below), describing how most of the power has now shifted from the employer to the talented employee holding critical, relevant and highly sought-after attributes and skills. Talented individuals with a stunning resume, cultivated networks, social media savvy and digital fluency have the world at their finger-tips. Information about employers, roles, packages, benefits, their leaders and culture can be easily sought and personal introductions and recommendations made. This advantage is heightened in an economy and industries where there is a dearth of real talent for mission critical positions. In South Africa we have the added complexity of transformation targets and a limited pool of ready now candidates that have the qualifications, smarts AND robust experience of driving results in both good and tough times that builds insight, influence, resilience and humility.

However, the article goes on to say, that “instead of winning a war for talent, organizations appear to be waging a war *on* talent, repelling and alienating employees more successfully than harnessing their skills. For every one employee who is engaged and performing well, there are many more who are [underemployed](#), underperforming, and [just plain miserable at work](#). LinkedIn has estimated that figure at anywhere [between 45%](#) and [60%](#) of its more than 400 million users.”

So if the war for talent has been lost, how do organisations prepare for the next “revolution” which has already begun? This has been named the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution, the 21<sup>st</sup> century world of work or the digital economy in which many of the future jobs or skills have not even been identified yet. How do they keep their best talent that will navigate uncharted waters, attract new generation innovative blood, accelerate the readiness of potential successors of diverse people and build the long-term talent and skills needed to survive and thrive in this turbulent, evolving world of change and disruption??

To keep pace with shifting needs, talent management as a discipline is continually evolving. Each of the elements of the Catalyst talent framework we use below is continually being tracked, tested, refined and where necessary reinvented.

## A talent framework to guide systemic, evolving thinking in an increasingly digitised world



Many organisations do many of the activities listed above. Some of them are done in an ad-hoc, non-strategic, non-integrated way which delivers some but less than ideal data. Others have entrenched the process, but lack the follow-through to answer the **so what** after all the steps have been completed and all the data collated. Knowing who has the potential to fulfil which roles in the future, is great to know, however the actions required to ensure this cannot be taken for granted or left to the individuals concerned only. The 3 biggest areas of concern which require risk strategies are typically strategic sourcing, accelerated development and robust retention strategies – at an individual and at an organisational level. A 4<sup>th</sup> strategy in our country is the transformation challenge requiring some creative thinking and collaboration with the broader Employment Equity strategies. All of these need a leadership imperative to build an inclusive culture conducive to attracting, developing and retaining diverse talent.

### Critical questions for the evolving world of Talent 4.0

Some questions that we are exploring with the help of our client and wider Catalyst community are:

- Plan**
- Do we know what the organisation of the future will look like? How do you plan for roles and skills that may not exist yet?
  - What is the criteria for potential in a world of such high change?
  - Which attributes or skills will enable success regardless of the environment or role?
  - Are the traditional levels of work, performance standards, roles and jobs architecture still relevant in such a high change work environment? Is a lot of structure an enabler of consistency and equity or a constraint to flexibility and unique skills and talent?

<b>Perform</b>	How do we reinvent performance management that is agile, relevant, developmental, brain friendly, strategically aligned AND holds people accountable, plays to strengths, focuses on positive affirmations and informs relative reward?
<b>Identify</b>	How do we assess for potential in a way that is fast, friendly, fun (mobile, gamified) AND credible? How do we attract and access the talent of the contractors in the gig economy? How do we look broader and deeper to find the talent gems that have been overlooked before through poor education or opportunity but that have the potential to shine?
<b>Find</b>	How can we utilise sourcing technologies, social media networks and search algorithms in an appropriate and ethical manner? Is social media an accurate representation of the whole person AND how do we test validity of data?  How deep and wide do we invest in building our future pipelines of critical skills? Does it really make a difference to be an early engager or take what you can get at the time?  Does it help to communicate an EVP promise ... when the reality most often does not live up to the promise resulting in buyer's remorse?
<b>Develop</b>	To what extent can you accelerate development when it takes time and experience to learn the really important leadership lessons?  How can we provide access to learning, equip learners to be self-directed and build leadership capability to encourage and support continuous learning?
<b>Retain</b>	How can we use design thinking to develop retention strategies focused on the "user/talent experience"?  Reward is just a hygiene factor. How can we utilise the other aspects of retention such as a great reputation, an enabling, inclusive culture, inspirational leaders and challenging roles to really keep people interested, motivated and engaged?
<b>Review</b>	How can we utilise technologies to review talent continuously without the annual strategic talent review that requires loads of time and attention and still get the leadership attention it deserves (not becoming an HR numbers exercise)? Is there a future Facebook for talent?
<b>Manage</b>	Who owns talent? How do we ensure leaders are talent champions and multipliers and hold them accountable for such? How do we measure culture, leadership, engagement and retention risks continuously using pulse based input that everyone enthusiastically participates in?

We need to continue to explore the answers to these questions and work collaboratively to find appropriate solutions for our African-Global context.

"We need a shift that will allow us to meet the basic needs of every human on the planet... one that will be fairer, and focused on maximising human well-being." Stewart Wallis, New Economics Foundation, UK

## References

The War For Talent Is Over, And Everyone Lost, Dr. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, March 2017

<https://www.fastcompany.com/3069078/the-war-for-talent-is-over-and-everyone-lost>

#BizTrends2017: The march for talent 4.0, Stijn Smolders, January 2017

<http://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/424/155960.html>

For more information on our evolving talent practices, and how we can assist with facilitating future fit talent approaches, contact me at [debbie@catalystconsulting.co.za](mailto:debbie@catalystconsulting.co.za) or view our website [www.catalystconsulting.co.za](http://www.catalystconsulting.co.za)



### About the Author:

**Debbie Craig – a passionate adventurer, global traveller and mountain climber, curious dolphin swimmer and ocean lover, philosophical dreamer, hopeless romantic, dysfunctional over-achiever, compulsive seeker & sharer, courageous difference maker, patriotic South African, author, facilitator, yoga nut, wine snob, dog lover, guardian mom, step mom, wife and friend**

**Some interesting tit bits: travelled to more than 60 countries, hiked to Machu Pichu, Kilimanjaro and Everest Base Camp, over 60 swims with dolphins, over 5 trips to India to explore her inner world, facilitated over 50 personal transformational workshops, facilitated business workshops with people from over 30 countries in 5 continents, written 3 books, guardian mom to 3 kids, step mom to 2 kids**

**Also: adventured through life's darker parts including divorce, unhealthy relationships, sequestration, retrenchment, loss of loved ones, betrayal, broken bones and inner struggles to over-come self-doubt and be our best selves**

### The usual stuff

Debbie has over 20 years' experience in the field of strategy, leadership development, change management, talent management, high performance teams and organisational development. She has worked and consulted at leading local and global organisations in the private and public sector throughout Southern Africa and internationally in the UK, Australia, South East Asia, South America, Mexico, China, Canada, Europe and the USA. Debbie is a skilled strategist, design architect, team builder, a powerful facilitator, change agent and executive coach. Her passion is transformation and empowerment which she facilitates through individual coaching and empowerment workshops, team-development workshops, corporate training and consulting assignments and organisation wide strategic change interventions. Debbie is the founder and Managing Director of Catalyst Consulting which she has grown into a successful consulting company (now 21 years old). She is also the founder of World Alive, a personal empowerment and transformation company. She is a registered Master HR Professional through the SA Board for People Practices (SABPP).

Debbie has published 3 books "I am Talent", "I am Alive" and "Accelerated Learning", written numerous articles, appeared on radio talk shows, presented at conferences and does public talks. Debbie is a warm and down to earth facilitator, leader and life coach. She has many real examples in her own life and in many of her delegates on creating a fulfilling life of abundance. She is an engaging presenter with practical advice and information that is easy to apply.

### Some unusual stuff

Debbie is a regular hiker and has hiked to Machu Pichu, Kilimanjaro and Everest Base Camp. She swims regularly with dolphins in the wild and resonates with their playful, sensual, energy, their intelligence, their focus on protection and survival and their complex yet fluid social patterns. She looks after 3 guardian children and 2 step kids. Debbie is passionate and deeply committed to her own personal development journey, reads extensively and has participated in numerous in-depth transformation experiences including many trips to India where she has studied mindfulness and living a life of fulfilment, abundance and flow including mediation, dance, yoga, tai chi, art and experiential workshops. Debbie has designed and facilitated over 50 Personal Transformation workshops. She is passionate about South Africa and making a difference to People's lives.